

# COUNCIL COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS & REFLECTIONS

2024 - 2025

# COUNCIL *for* COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE, SEE UPDATES FROM:**

COUNCIL FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CO-CHAIRS  
POLICY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE  
PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
GRANTS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE  
RESEARCH COMMITTEE

CELEBRATING PROGRESS,  
PARTNERSHIPS, AND  
PURPOSE-DRIVEN ENGAGEMENT

# 2024 - 2025 Council For Community Engagement

## CO-CHAIRS:

**Maghboeba Mosavel, Vice Provost, Community Engagement**  
**Sheryl Garland, Chief of Health Impact, VCU Health System**

Division of Community Engagement: Provides Institutional Support

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- Adrien DeLoach, Division of Student Engagement and Impact, Co-Chair
- Stephen Barr, Business Services
- Ezrah Medina, Finance and Administration, OSVPHS
- Elvin Price, School of Pharmacy
- Sarah Raskin, Wilder School
- Rich Sliwoski, Facilities Management

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- Logan Vetrovec, Office of Health Equity, Co-Chair
- Lydia Klinger, Research and Innovation
- Jose Alcaine, School of Education
- Glenny Escoto, Massy Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Ariana Bracalente, Development and Alumni Relations

## RESEARCH COMMITTEE

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- Maghboeba Mosavel, Vice Provost, Community Engagement, Co-Chair
- Camille Coy, Enterprise Marketing and Communications
- Jered Wendte, School of Nursing
- Faika Zanjani, College of Health Professions
- Susan Bodnar-Deren, CHS-Sociology
- Michael Newsome, Office of the Vice President Research and Innovation
- Emily Zimmerman, School of Public Health
- Jill Blondin, Global Education Office
- Amy Salisbury, School of Nursing
- Jason Hardin, School of Nursing

## PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE

- Verenda Cobbs, VCU Community Engagement, Co-Chair
- Danielle Pearles, VCU Career Services, Co-Chair
- Tyler Agee, VCU Health System
- Kelsey Jones, OSLEL
- Lauren Mortenson, College of Health Professionals
- Brent Fagg, Tech Transfers and Ventures
- Officer Caine Green, VCU Police Department
- Katie Ferguson, Development and Alumni Relations
- Theresa Mealha Salgado, VCU School of Pharmacy
- Kevin Harris, School of Medicine
- Michael Gesme, Massey Cancer Center

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

- Stephen Davenport, Division of Community Engagement, Co-Chair
- Alison Miller, Human Resources, Co-Chair
- Aloni Hill, Robertson School of Media & Culture
- Ann Kildahl, Sustainability
- Edward Howard, Continuing & Professional Education
- Elizabeth Prom-Wormley, School of Public Health
- Garret Westlake, VCU Da Vinci Center for Innovation
- Jimmie Gahagan, Associate Vice President for Transformative Student Experiences
- John McHugh, Procurement Services

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

- Challen Wellington, Division of Community Engagement, Co-Chair
- Shanza Isom, VCU Engaged Transformative Learning, Co-Chair
- Vaughn W. Garland, VCU Mary and Frances Youth Center
- Kaylynn Hill, Development and Alumni Engagement
- Jo S. Murphy, VCU Forensic Science
- Michelle McGregor, VCU School of Dentistry
- Jacqueline Smith-Mason, VCU Honors College

# DRIVING ONE VCU FORWARD

## BUILDING A UNIFIED APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Virginia Commonwealth University and VCU Health understands that lasting impact begins with strong and sustainable community partnerships. This year, university leaders have advanced this commitment by laying the foundation for the "One VCU" model for community engagement — an ambitious effort to create an aligned, coordinated, and respectful approach to internal and external community partnership work.

As co-chairs of the VCU Community Engagement Council, Maghboeba Mosavel, VCU, and Sheryl Garland, VCU Health, in partnership with Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, have spearheaded a visioning and operationalization process to define what it means to engage communities as "One VCU." Their work has focused on bridging the efforts of the academic campus and the health system to ensure that community engagement efforts are collaborative, consistent, and mutually reinforcing.

The development of the One VCU engagement model includes both an internal and external engagement framework, rooted in the recognition that VCU's priority partner communities deserve thoughtful and coordinated strategies. This model takes into account the importance of ongoing collaboration across the campuses in light of proposed leadership structure changes on the health sciences campus. In this context, the leadership team has maintained its focus on cultivating an integrated and sustainable model of engagement that aligns the missions of teaching, research, service, student engagement and clinical care.

Over the past year, two priority partner communities — Charles City County and Petersburg — have been central to piloting this evolving approach.

In Petersburg, VCU/VCU Health has launched a strategic framework that connects academic and health system programs through a newly designated community engagement coordinator. This role provides a direct point of contact for residents and organizations seeking to engage with VCU/VCU Health resources. A VCU/VCU Health strategic work group is being established to design a model that will enhance visibility, strengthen communications, and foster collaboration across programs.

In Charles City County, VCU/VCU Health has been working collaboratively with local leadership to formalize engagement efforts through the creation of a community coalition focused on addressing identified health needs, with the support of the Chickahominy Health District.

VCU is ready to engage representatives from units, centers, departments, and the Community Engagement Council to shape the next phase of the One VCU internal and external engagement models. As this model evolves, the leadership team remains committed to fostering a culture where every engagement reflects the values of partnership, respect, accountability, and impact — truly embodying the spirit of One VCU.

# Recognizing Community Engagement in All Things

The committee, composed of faculty and staff from VCU Monroe Park and Health campuses representing academic departments and administrative units, explored what it means to be a community-engaged campus. Each person shared their examples, from creating formal research partnerships, providing free health services through clinical rotations, offering SNAP in our VCU Rams market, volunteering together as an office, and collecting data to support dual enrollment.

From those rich conversations and aha moments emerged the frame we used for the Carnegie self-study: At VCU, community engagement is indeed present and pervasive across VCU. As a university, we have to learn to see it, value it, and invest in doing it with excellence.



## Confirming the Values That Define Us



The committee reviewed the identity and context of the Carnegie Community Engaged University Reclassification application. Their oversight and input ensured that the narrative accurately reflected the values that define VCU - the values we share no matter where we sit or the lens we look through - and the evidence of their practice through our actions. The Committee collectively informed and helped prioritize what was essentially VCU and what mattered, critical with the Application's tight word counts. Members flagged missed components, what needed emphasis, what we are most proud of, and where we need to grow.

In a time of rapid change, the committee will focus on securing a sustainable vision for VCU as an anchor institution. The work plan will include confirming what an Anchor Institution means and reviewing VCU policies through a community engagement lens to recommend and advocate for any changes that might enhance and/or sustain the Anchor role. As appropriate, we will consult with the Economic Development Committee, as this work may overlap with their agenda.

## Next Steps - A Sustainable Vision for VCU as an Anchor Institution





## Building Stronger Partnerships: From Vision to Action



Over the past several months, members of the VCU Council on Community Engagement's Partnerships committee have been active as connectors, innovators, and practitioners—working to deepen and expand partnerships within VCU's priority communities: Jackson Ward, Carver, Petersburg, Charles City, Blackwell/Manchester/Southwood, and East End/Church Hill. The team has focused on identifying exemplary partnerships, surfacing shared practices, and launching collaborative projects that respond to community-identified needs. This includes supporting the work of partners like the Peter Paul Development Center, Carver Elementary School, and the Ealey Project, as well as neighborhood and civic associations. In its role as a strategic connector, the committee continues to share funding resources, opportunities, and pathways for engagement with partner organizations across VCU's priority communities. Ongoing conversations across the university have centered on public health career pathways, community health needs assessments, and capstone projects that prioritize equity and impact. These initiatives further demonstrate how VCU is moving toward integrated, responsive, and community-centered engagement practices through a collaborative approach that aims to increase access, reduce duplication, and support long-term sustainability. Our chair, Verenda Cobbs, and co-chair Danielle Pearls also work closely with the committee team members in their roles at VCU to expand the focus of the increasing partnership committee.

As relationship-builders, the committee has also been instrumental in advancing the Collaboratory pilot. With support from units like the School of Medicine and VCU Career Services, this tool is helping lay the groundwork for coordinated outreach and increased impact. Additionally, the group has supported efforts tied to Carnegie Classification reapplication, working with key colleagues to share the importance of sharing partnership data and strengthen institutional alignment. As part of this effort, the team is working on the Fall 2025 development of a Community Partner Subcommittee, designed to elevate partner voice and ensure that VCU's engagement strategies remain equitable and community-informed.

The Partnerships committee continues to support opportunities to celebrate and recognize collaborative impact, helping to connect people and stories that reflect VCU's values. This year, the Excellence in Community Engagement Awards introduced a new category to recognize outstanding community partners. While the Partnerships committee was not directly responsible for planning the awards, it contributed by amplifying awareness, encouraging nominations, and engaging in dialogue with the planning team. This engagement highlights how the group serves as a bridge between partners and the university, helping ensure that recognition is inclusive and reflective of shared impact.

VCU's momentum around engagement is also visible through several collaborative initiatives including the CONNECT 2024 and MLK Week Events as both university and community co-lead initiatives; career and internship fairs provided meaningful connections between students and local organizations, helping build service and workforce pathways; and student-led events, such as The Big Event, offered immersive experiences that supported community-identified needs through hands-on collaboration. These moments of shared work and visibility reflect a larger effort to coordinate outreach, expand community networks, and strengthen partnerships across the institution. As VCU continues to invest in strategic engagement, the committee remains a driving force in connecting internal collaborators with external opportunities to amplify collective impact.



Between August 2024 and March 2025, the Partnerships Committee has helped lay a stronger foundation for strategic, community-rooted engagement. Whether by elevating partner voices, supporting new platforms like Collaboratory, or circulating timely funding and engagement opportunities, the group has positioned itself as a key convener and bridge-builder across VCU and the broader community. The committee is advancing a culture of collaboration—bridging departments, disciplines, and neighborhoods to co-create systems that honor both institutional knowledge and community expertise. We are not just imagining a more connected future—we're building it. Together.

# EDUCATION WORKGROUP LAUNCHES NEW TRAINING TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT VCU

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## CREATING A NEW ENTRYWAY FOR LEARNERS

Content development for a shorter Canvas course happened over several meetings and included many conversations about what was important for an introductory course and what could wait for future course modules. One of the key highlights that needed to be included was the importance of community engagement and how it can bridge the gap to policy change through civic engagement and listening to the needs of the communities we work with. In addition to the “why”, the group decided to highlight the significance of being a Carnegie-classified institution, which is due to the incredible work of community engagement being done across VCU. By spotlighting these aspects, the course is able to further convey the importance of community engagement and how it can be mutually beneficial to both the institution and the community.

## BUILDING A SHARED CULTURE OF ENGAGEMENT

The Education Workgroup began its year with a desire to create training opportunities to build a strong shared campus culture around the practice of community engagement. Currently, community engagement education is robust through a Canvas course medium that can be overwhelming for the new community engagement learner. Through conversations about educational options and modalities, the group decided on a condensed course about community engagement that provides a more streamlined overview of the content and allows participants to take a step into community engagement on a quicker, micro level.



## LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Looking ahead, the education workgroup envisions more mini Canvas courses that are co-created with community partners to ensure there is always collaboration on new materials about the priority partner communities. There are so many ways to promote and create educational opportunities in community engagement and the workgroup is excited about the possibilities of how we can continue to engage the community.



# INCREASING ACCESS TO LEARNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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The Economic Development workgroup partnered with the da Vinci Center for Innovation to catalyze community-focused economic development by consolidating a wide range of workforce training opportunities into a single, accessible platform. By centralizing these resources, ranging from career readiness to small business development and digital literacy, the Economic Development workgroup is helping ensure that learners, job seekers, and entrepreneurs can easily navigate and engage with skill-building programs that are often fragmented across different institutions. This streamlined approach reduces barriers to entry and accelerates pathways to employment, entrepreneurship, and advancement by providing a transparent, cohesive training ecosystem. Through this model, VCU amplifies its role as an anchor institution, driving growth and economic mobility in the Richmond region.

## Available Economic Development Badges

The Division of Community Engagement at VCU recognizes the vital role that faculty, students, and community partners play in fostering economic development and social impact. Our **Economic Development Badges** highlight key areas of engagement that contribute to economic mobility, workforce development, and business growth in our communities.

[Click here to see the available badges](#)



## Bringing VCU Expertise into the Community

The Economic Development workgroup has actively collaborated with Richmond Public Schools (RPS) and VCU Central HR to demonstrate the tangible value anchor institutions contribute to their communities through direct, hands-on engagement. Last spring, VCU's Human Resources staff partnered with Communities in Schools to offer mock interviews for students at Armstrong and Highland Springs high schools. By working directly with 27 students to strengthen their interviewing skills and build confidence, VCU helped bridge the gap between education and employment readiness. The impact was clear and immediate: 25 of these students secured jobs following graduation.



## Looking Ahead

The Economic Development workgroup is excited to build on recent successes while identifying new opportunities to deepen community impact. Future efforts will focus on expanding access to on-campus resources for local residents, supporting VCU Procurement's initiatives to increase university spending with local businesses, and exploring innovative strategies to drive sustainability in our surrounding communities. Through these efforts, the workgroup aims to strengthen VCU's role as a catalyst for economic growth and community resilience.

# VCU CELEBRATES OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACROSS CAMPUS AND BEYOND

**Richmond, VA - The Awards Committee at Virginia Commonwealth University has been diligently recognizing and celebrating outstanding contributions to community engagement across the VCU and VCU Health System community.**

In Fall 2024, the committee reviewed nominations for the 2024 Recognition for Outstanding Community Engagement and successfully planned and hosted a vibrant awards ceremony honoring the incredible efforts of 16 faculty and staff. These individuals were recognized for their dedication and impact in advancing community-engaged initiatives across disciplines and neighborhoods. The event drew an enthusiastic crowd of over 50 attendees, celebrating a shared commitment to community-centered work.



***“What you're doing really matters. This is not easy work. This requires thoughtful, intentional work,”***

-Dr. Maghboeba Mosavel, Ph.D., Associate Vice President of Community Partnerships in the Division of Community Engagement

Building on that momentum, the Spring 2025 semester brought a focused effort on preparing for the Excellence in Community Engagement Awards. The committee developed a robust nomination process highlighting five distinct categories of excellence:

- Excellence in Community Engaged Teaching
- Community Engaged Research Partnership
- Demonstrated Impact in Community Engagement and Outreach
- Excellence in Community Engagement by a Student or Group of Students
- Outstanding Community Partner

To ensure widespread participation, the call for nominations was promoted through Telegram, social media channels, and targeted email outreach. A diverse 12-member review committee was assembled, and the committee crafted detailed review criteria and evaluation forms to guide the selection process.

Currently, the committee is preparing for the Excellence in Community Engagement Awards Ceremony on May 13th, which is expected to draw up to 100 attendees. This event promises to be a meaningful celebration of partnerships, innovation, and the transformative impact of community engagement at VCU.

For more information and updates on the upcoming ceremony, stay connected through VCU's community engagement platforms.



# RESEARCH WORKGROUP

## IMPACT AT A GLANCE

2024-2025 ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING SESSIONS

November 7, 2024



### Highlights:

- Sharing stories
- Best practices
- How to navigate relationship building
- Gaining community trust

Zoom | 1hr

33

Registrants

4

Panelist

April 16, 2025

Zoom | 1hr

13

Registrants

3

Panelist

### Key Outcomes:

- Identified need for grant-writing resources
- Assistance needed with research development and implementation



March 24, March 31, April 10, April 28, 2025



### Key Outcomes

- Project feedback
- Networking
- Building connections

Zoom | 1hr

2-6

Registrants per session

### SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

- Collaboratory onboarding
- Performing grant/award reviews
- Reviving scholars compass
- Contributing to Carnegie Reclassification
- Connect conference planning

### RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT:

- Free community-engaged research trainings
- Community-engaged funding opportunities





# Thank you

To every council member, thank you for your continued commitment to making community engagement meaningful and impactful at VCU.

Let's keep building trust. Let's keep listening. Let's keep connecting.

*With appreciation,*

**VCU Division of Community Engagement  
Office of the Provost**





**ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN ALL WE DO**  
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