



VIRGINIA FOUNDATION FOR
INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

UPDATE

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STEM-H EDUCATION AT VFIC SCHOOLS: Inspiring Innovation Through Discovery

AT THE VFIC, we know that the quality of life we all enjoy and our ability to simplify our lives through innovation are born out of how well we understand and apply science. That's why the VFIC works diligently with the sixteen schools in our consortium to encourage and support STEM-H education and research.

We've always been committed to STEM-H education, but we sharpened our focus on this effort in 2018. A grant from The Council of Independent Colleges funded a multi-college initiative designed to strengthen undergraduate STEM education at VFIC schools. This initiative created a forum for faculty at our schools not only to discuss the state of science education, but also to share best practices for enhancing their work in the lab and classroom.

Based on findings of this forum, we launched "Heat Watch," a multi-university effort to conduct research on a real life challenge that affects our environment. This program involved collecting highly detailed near-surface air temperature data for the purpose of relating land uses to temperatures. One of the project's main deliverables has been the VFIC Tree Planting Campaign. Our students and schools worked with the Virginia Department of Forestry to mitigate the social and environmental dangers of excessive urban heat by planting trees.

So in the course of four years, the VFIC initiated and financially supported planning a STEM-related program, designing and conducting research, and meeting community need with action. VFIC students, as well as members of communities across Virginia, were engaged and leading every step of the way.

During this same period, we've increased funding for undergraduate science research fellowships for students, secured STEM-H scholarships from Sentara for healthcare majors, and worked with organizations to provide internships. We've also acknowledged the many successes our faculty achieve in scientific research and education. This past year, all three H. Hiter Harris Family Award winners were faculty in the STEM field. Mednick Faculty Fellowships over the past two years have been awarded to faculty in environmental sciences.

As the pace of global innovation accelerates and the competition for STEM-H talent intensifies, it's important to know that the VFIC is committed to helping its schools cultivate a deeper understanding of science among its students. By doing so, we inspire them to pursue discovery with their eyes on the future.



Congratulations to the 2023 Ethics Bowl champions from Randolph-Macon College. From left to right team members include: Kelsey Johnson, Senior; Olivia Redman, Junior; Ren Hinchey, Sophomore; and Travis McDaniel, Senior



George Y. Birdsong, President & CEO, Birdsong Corporation (center) was honored at the Ethics Bowl dinner by Virginia Wesleyan University President, Scott D. Miller, Ph.D. (left) and VFIC President, Matthew D. Shank, Ph.D., (right).

RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE CLAIMS BATTEN TROPHY at 2023 VFIC Ethics Bowl

CONGRATULATIONS to the Randolph-Macon College student team for their championship victory at the 2023 VFIC Ethics Bowl. Mary Baldwin University was the runner-up at the event, which was held at Virginia Wesleyan University in Virginia Beach, Virginia, on January 29-30. The Ethics Bowl program celebrated its twenty-third anniversary this year.

“Rapidly evolving digital technologies and media create a host of ethical issues,” says Victor Branch, co-chair of the Ethics Bowl Committee, “so this year’s topic – Ethics and Digital Media – challenged sixty-nine VFIC students to address one of the most pressing issues of our time.”

Over the course of several rounds of discussion, teams competed for the highly

prized Batten Trophy. They were led by eighteen faculty coordinators, and their arguments were evaluated by thirty-four judges and moderators. The Ethics Bowl reflects how VFIC faculty teach by initiating academic challenge.

The Ethics Bowl Dinner, held on the first day of the event, recognized George Y. Birdsong, CEO of Birdsong Corporation, for his commitment to and support of the VFIC and the Ethics Bowl program. More than \$60,000 was raised at the dinner honoring Birdsong. This money will fund scholarships for VFIC students from Southeastern Virginia and South Hampton Roads.

“The schools in our consortium have a responsibility to help students establish an

ethical framework for making decisions,” says Branch. “They also need to encourage ethical leadership and responsible citizenship. The VFIC contributes to that effort by providing them with opportunities to explore the ethical impact of their actions when they make decisions about right and wrong.”

ETHICS
BOWL
2024

JANUARY 28-29, 2024
HOLLINS UNIVERSITY | Roanoke, Virginia

If you’re interested in financially sponsoring this event, please contact Mary-Beth Johnson (johnson@vfic.org). Sponsoring the Bowl gives your organization a high-profile opportunity to invest in ethical education and demonstrate your commitment to the highest ethical standards.

ETHICS BOWL EVENT AND DINNER SPONSORS

EVENT

SUPPORTING



OTHER GIFTS OF SUPPORT

Ken & Sheila Garren
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MEET ANITRA HOWARD, VWU '20

Ethics Bowl Former Champion Turned Volunteer

Anitra Howard is no stranger to the VFIC Ethics Bowl. She, along with her teammates from Virginia Wesleyan University, earned the Batten Trophy in 2020. After graduation, Anitra embarked on her career at the very same institution she graduated from and currently serves as VWU's Welcome Center Coordinator. Anitra began serving as an Ethics Bowl volunteer in 2022 as a judge and most recently served as a moderator at the 2023 Ethics Bowl. Here's what she had to say about her experience. Read the full story at www.vfic.org/vfic-programs/ethics.

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WHAT LED YOU TO JOIN THE ETHICS BOWL TEAM AS AN UNDERGRADUATE AT VIRGINIA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY?

I was a last-minute recruit during my freshman year as one of the other competitors was no longer able to participate. Since I joined the team so late, I didn't have as much practice and experience as my other teammates. What really made me fall in love with the Ethics Bowl were all the things that go on behind the scenes. I discovered that I loved fighting tooth and nail for our stances - both in practice and in competition, the fun car trips on our way to the Bowl, and getting to meet and talk with peers from other schools.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO SERVE AS A JUDGE AND MODERATOR FOR THE VFIC'S ETHICS BOWL AFTER HAVING BEEN A STUDENT COMPETITOR WITH VIRGINIA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY?

It was so interesting to see what it's like to be on the other side of the room. As a judge, while the case was being read, I found myself falling back into my habits of annotating the case and parsing out the main issues, stakeholders, and principles that could be used to make the case. Judging the competitors for me was such a fun experience because I was able to give them feedback as someone who had been where they were before. Being able to help the students hone in what to focus on or how to clean up their arguments was so valuable because it was what I as a competitor wanted to hear from my judges and I was given the opportunity to share that with the current students. This past year, serving as a moderator gave me the chance to watch both the judges and competitors while still being a part of the rounds. I did find it challenging not to give feedback - and there are notes to prove it - but overall it was so fun to see the rounds from a different perspective.

WHAT VALUE DO YOU FEEL YOU GAINED FROM BEING ON THE ETHICS BOWL TEAM IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION AT VWU?

The Ethics Bowl helped me with public speaking which is very valuable in my current position. The intellectual skills that I gained from the Ethics Bowl help me with my role at Eleanor's Norfolk, an intersectional feminist bookstore where I also work. Arguing the cases at the Ethics Bowl has helped me in my local literary activism not only through public speaking, but through being able to apply practical ethics to our events, programs, and discussions that we host.

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NEWS FROM OUR MEMBER COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

BRIDGEWATER COLLEGE

A new partnership with The Washington Center in Washington, D.C., offers a more accessible option for study away experiences starting in fall 2023. In the Bridgewater College to DC program (BC2DC), students will spend a semester in Washington, D.C. to complete their internships.

EMORY & HENRY COLLEGE

Members of the Board of Trustees approved the new 2023-2026 strategic plan “Elevate in Excellence,” at its March board meeting, which included a status change to move from a college to a private regional comprehensive university to be fully implemented as Emory & Henry University by Fall 2024.

HAMPDEN-SYDNEY COLLEGE

Launched in partnership with Hampden-Sydney and Longwood University, the Farmville SEED Innovation Hub, opening at the end of 2023, will foster business development within the greater Farmville community. Students will gain the opportunity to network, experiment with business ideas, and access state-of-the-art technology.

HOLLINS UNIVERSITY

Hollins received \$428,000 in federal government funding to enhance dual enrollment offerings for high school students in the Roanoke Valley region. Coordinated with Virginia Western Community College, this project will assist educators in Roanoke area public schools to build dual enrollment teaching capacity and opportunities.

MARY BALDWIN UNIVERSITY

The Virginia General Assembly formally honored President Pamela R. Fox on February 16 in Richmond for her 20 years of leadership at Mary Baldwin with a commending resolution for her service to higher education in Virginia.

MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

The Early Learning Academy (ELA), opening in fall 2023, will enable early childhood and higher education faculty and staff to provide preschoolers with a program that nurtures creativity and curiosity through play and hands-on learning.

RANDOLPH COLLEGE

Randolph College announced the creation of two new athletic teams with competition set to begin in the 2024-25 academic year. Women’s STUNT will compete as a NCAA Division III institution with the USA Federation for Sport Cheering (USA Cheer) and Men’s volleyball will compete as a NCAA Division III sport.

RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE

The College’s newest building, Duke Hall, is now home for much of R-MC athletics and the College’s new Physician Assistant Program. The PA Program welcomed its first cohort of 24 students on January 3.

ROANOKE COLLEGE

Six students and two professors will travel to South Korea in May for a research trip to explore the modern-day legacy of U.S. missionaries made possible by a national grant from the ASIANetwork’s Student-Faculty Fellow Program. Roanoke was one of just five colleges across North America to earn this funding.

SHENANDOAH UNIVERSITY

Eight students and two faculty members spent a weeklong experiential learning trip centered around Super Bowl LVII and related events in February. Students gained the opportunity to perform various tasks related to the game, including activities at the Phoenix Convention Center and game-day events at State Farm Stadium.

SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE

The College’s 13th president, Meredith Jung-En Woo, will step down at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 academic year after leading Sweet Briar for seven years. Under her leadership, the College underwent comprehensive restructuring of the curriculum to create an innovative Women’s Leadership Core, which emphasizes hands-on and immersive learning.

UNIVERSITY OF LYNCHBURG

The Bonner Leader Program transitioned to a four-year program as a result of its work and impact in the greater Lynchburg area. The University secured a three-year Enrichment Grant from the Bonner Foundation that will provide \$40,000 annually for outreach to include volunteerism, fundraising, service learning, and projects.

UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

The Associated Colleges of the South awarded funding for a collaborative faculty-focused project “Facilitating Constructive Dialogue in a Challenging World.” Total funding is nearly \$50,000 and includes three ACS schools: University of Richmond, Hendrix College, and Washington and Lee University, which is serving as the lead institution.

VIRGINIA UNION UNIVERSITY

The University held its 2023 Founder’s Day Convocation on January 25 in celebration of the University’s 158th anniversary. Dr. Darran T. Brandon, Sr., pastor of the historic First Calvary Baptist Church in Norfolk, Virginia, and President of the Virginia Baptist State Convention, was the keynote speaker.

VIRGINIA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

The VWU/Sentara joint Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Program celebrated the second cohort of pre-BSN students on Monday, January 23, in Brock Commons. The pre-BSN students will transition to the Sentara College of Health Sciences for the specialized nursing and clinical coursework to complete their degrees.

WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

Phase one of campus dining renovations are underway with upgrades to the Marketplace and Café 77 to enhance the dining experience for students and guests for the 2023 fall term. Further renovations will be made to John W. Elrod Commons, expanding the outdoor patio areas and offering additional seating to the Marketplace.



MARY BALDWIN UNIVERSITY

THE VFIC WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Inspires Women to Reach for the Top

ONE OF OUR OBJECTIVES AT THE VFIC is to help the undergraduate women who attend our schools cultivate their leadership potential at the same time faculty develop their intellectual capacity and broaden their career options.

We launched the VFIC Women's Leadership Development Summit in 2019 to accomplish this objective. Through this event, hosted biennially, and now in its third year, we're able to encourage women to reach for the top by engaging them in conversations about leadership earlier in their lives. This summit offers seventy-five of our female undergraduates the opportunity to look critically at the challenges women face today as they work to attain positions of leadership in both professional and personal ventures.

You can help these women accomplish their goals by financially supporting the VFIC's leadership summit. Please contact Mary-Beth Johnson (804-288-6609, johnson@vfic.org) to explore sponsorship opportunities. As a sponsor, you can join with Dominion Energy to help underwrite the costs associated with hosting the students at our biennial leadership summit.



2023 WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

THURSDAY – SATURDAY | OCTOBER 26 – 28, 2023
VIRGINIA CROSSINGS HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER
GLEN ALLEN, VIRGINIA



Join our Honor Roll of Donors by making a gift to the Annual Fund for Academic Excellence by June 30.

DONATE ONLINE AT www.vfic.org.

SENTARA HEALTHCARE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM SUPPORTS VFIC STUDENTS



SENTARA HEALTHCARE HAS AWARDED THE VFIC \$75,000 IN SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT as part of the company's Sentara Scholars and Project CHOICE programs. These two new pipeline development programs are designed to support full-time undergraduates majoring in a healthcare or healthcare related discipline with the intention of pursuing a career in the healthcare industry.

"Sentara created these scholarship programs in response to medical staff shortages plaguing our country's healthcare system," says Matthew Shank, president of the VFIC. "Sentara's goal is to remove financial barriers that might prevent students from enrolling in a healthcare major or staying in school to complete a degree."

Sentara Scholars and Project CHOICE attest to Sentara's commitment to building a stronger healthcare pipeline and advancing health equity through collaboration with educational institutions.

According to Becky Sawyer, Sentara executive vice president and chief people officer, "By reducing the financial burden on students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, offering stronger mentorship and training opportunities, and removing barriers to higher-paying and more meaningful careers, we are investing in the future of healthcare and empowering the next generation of professionals." The VFIC is grateful for Sentara's support of this important program.



VIRGINIA FOUNDATION FOR INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



SHERLEY, '23
University of Richmond
Major: Anthropology and
Global Studies

Sherley recently received the Joy of Giving Something Fellowship, a national award, for her portrait photography. In the fall of 2021, she traveled to Ghana to study globalization and cultural legacies, and created an on-campus exhibition of her photos. An anthropology and global studies major, Sherley will graduate this spring.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The VFIC is profoundly grateful for the financial support provided by the following companies, philanthropists, and trusts for the 2021-22 academic year who have an endowed or named scholarship program at the \$5,000 level or above. Their investment in today's students pays dividends for decades to our communities and our schools. If you would like to create a Brighter Futures scholarship, please contact Mary-Beth Johnson at johnson@vfic.org.

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Anonymous (3)

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