Dear VCU School of Education alumni and friends,

Like many states, Virginia has struggled to recruit and retain highly effective teachers. Its traditional teacher preparation programs have been unable to meet staffing needs, both in graduating a sufficient number of teachers and in producing teachers who are well-prepared for the challenges of high-needs schools and who will consider a career in these schools. These factors contribute to high teacher turnover and shortages of highly effective teachers, conditions that negatively affect student achievement and have adverse economic impacts on Richmond and the surrounding area.

Striving to be the leader in urban education, the VCU School of Education is poised to make a positive impact and help address these challenges in the Richmond and surrounding communities. We are actively working with neighboring school divisions to develop innovative and collaborative educator pipeline initiatives. We have also formed an SOE Educator Pipeline Taskforce to develop solutions that will attract and better prepare teachers for success in high-needs schools, increase teacher preparation pipelines, significantly decrease the teacher shortage in our communities and help RVA become the national location for student-centered innovative teaching and learning.

None of this work would be possible without your support as alumni and friends. Whether it’s time, talent or treasure, we thank you for your dedication to the mission of the VCU School of Education. Whether it’s time, talent or treasure, we thank you for your dedication to the mission of the VCU School of Education.

Andrew P. Daire
Dean, VCU School of Education

Why Do You Give to the School of Education?

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Making an Impact Through Planned Giving

chool of Education alumni and friends are making an impact on their own terms — and timeline. Gift planning, commonly referred to as planned giving, is now a preferred way for many to give a personally meaningful gift to the school.

“Estate planning is a great way to support the mission and vision of the school without feeling it in the monthly budget,” said Ed Kardos, SOE’s senior director of development. “Planned giving puts the donors in control so they may make a gift that can also provide financial or tax benefits.”

A bequest is a gift made through a donor’s will or trust by which they leave a lasting legacy. Donors who have chosen this way to give know that they retain control of their assets and can make changes to their plan as their personal need dictates. The estate tax savings, although significant, is rarely the deciding factor in making this kind of gift.

“I found that loyal donors to the school like to leave a ‘legacy’ gift through gift planning. Although we don’t see the impact of their generosity today, we recognize these donors now because we appreciate their commitment to the future of the school,” concluded Kardos.

A bequest is one of the easiest gifts to make. With the help of an advisor, donors can include in their will or trust language specifying a gift be made, to family, friends or the VCU School of Education, as part of their estate plan.

There are other ways to make planned gifts and if interested in learning more, please contact Ed Kardos at egkardos@vcu.edu.

THE HERITAGE SOCIETY
recognizes donors who have made provisions for the VCU School of Education in their estate plans. Members are invited to participate in various on-campus functions and receive exclusive donor mailings.

Anonymous
Virginia A. Arnold
Miriam S. Blake
William E. Blake
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Leila Chistensbury
Concerta M. Davis
Michael D. Davis
Carolyn R. Eggleston
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John S. Oehler
Mary S. Oehler
Donna S. Shari's
Mary Ann H. Wright

Stephanie Holt
VCU’s School of Education helped to change my life, and I realized that by endowing a scholarship I could help young people to attain their goals of teaching, especially in an urban environment. It is important to me to make sure that students can realize their dreams, and continue their education at VCU through the teacher preparation programs in the School of Education.

Virginia Arnold
Teaching, learning and developing materials for children and their teachers were factors in my life’s work. So it makes sense that the VCU School of Education and I make a perfect partnership! Such a relationship also keeps me in the circle of idea development and helps me connect to students to help them meet their financial needs.

Carolyn Eggleston, Ph.D., and Thom Gehring, Ph.D.

We are graduates of the Ph.D. in Urban Education at VCU and received a world-class education from the school, which we applied toward successful careers in higher education. We appreciated the quality of the curriculum, faculty and support staff; the quality made us better people and prepared us extremely well for future positions. We have stayed in touch with VCU and have observed that the quality has continued in the same way. These are the reasons we give to the VCU School of Education.

soe.vcu.edu/giving
A student on the floor of Virginia Commonwealth University’s Stuart Siegel S. Craig, a center group of Richmond Public Schools students hit basketballs into a net, using specialized hoops with sensors that measure the speed of the ball. At another station, kids kicked soccer balls with sensors that track the flight and spin of the ball and the score of another station, students shot tech basketballs that calculate each shot’s arc, speed and rotation.

“We’ve got a lot of nice facilities and a lot of cool technology that we use to collect data on our students’ abilities,” said Tim Lampre, Ph.D., senior associate athletic director for athletic facilities with VCU Athletics. “We thought, ‘What other kinds of stuff could we do if we could connect all of VCU’s information — that accumulated knowledge about math and science, engineering and math?’

“The purpose of this event is to provide students with an opportunity to experience sport-specific technology that is used to enhance performance,” said Mstislaw Wajciechowski, assistant professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning in the School of Education.

One station was an exploration of simple machines, such as axles, and allowed the students to compete against each other in short races.

By tying together sports and STEM, Wajciechowski said, the event was geared toward both students who love sports and those who are not necessarily the best athletes but might be inspired by seeing how science, technology, math and engineering are used in sports.

“When they come here, they’re seeing the science and technology and they’re seeing how the concepts they’re learning in science and math class are being used to help athletes get better on the field,” she said. “It’s real-life learning. Real application.”

In addition to the stations that analyzed basketball, baseball and soccer, a variety of other stations gave RPS students a chance to see sports technology in action.”

At one team, a group of Richmond High School students were to show future mathematically inclined students how friction and how different surfaces can affect the speed or spin of the ball.

At a station demonstrating Blast Motion — sports analysis technology that uses motion analysis and video capture — VCU School of Education students used the technology to measure the RPS students’ ability to jump, bend and twist.

“We want to do every sport that is more than just physical strength and ability,” saidкольский, a senior student in math education in the School of Education. “A lot of science and math goes into sports, as well. So these kinds of devices give a lot of metrics, statistics and numbers that we can use to show the kids that there’s a lot more that goes into sports.”

Fenix Hussain, a sophomore majoring in math education in the School of Education, helped Richmond Public Schools students as they worked out “Saving Technology” that measures how fast they swing the ball.

Meanwhile, in the Basketball Development Center, the RPS students checked out the basketball team’s weight room, heard from VCU Athletics’ dietitian Lili Wernemark, who learned about how sports teams use video analysis and saw a demonstration by VCU soccer player Zecur Sazama, who was wearing a biomechanic sensor on his chest.

“With the biomechanic information, I know how fit I am,” Sewell told a group of students. “That helps me improve my performance.”

Fifty students from the School of Education helped staff the event, and many were responsible for designing the event as part of a VCU internship. “It’s amazing to see kids engage with science, technology, math and engineering through sports — which is something they can relate to,” she said.

For the RPS students, the event was meant to hook their interest in STEM — and possible future careers as they’re going to be exposed to the world of science and technology. So all of a sudden, they’re going to think, ‘Wow, I did this cool thing in college. I’m going to go talk to the PE teacher or go talk to the technology person. And now, we can do something that ties together math, technology and physical education.’” she said.

“It’s an interdisciplinary, cross-curricular, out-of-the-box way of thinking and teaching,” said Kathleen Billings, a senior student in math education in the School of Education. “A lot of science and math goes into sports, as well.”

The VCU School of Education is also well known for its research into the impact of technology on learning. “We had a little bit of English and math, and they were interested in it. They couldn’t get enough of it,” she said. “A lot of our kids are in the same platform as that. But you also have the kids who aren’t necessarily interested in playing a sport — but they love the science and STEM side.”

More than anything, Lampre said, the organizers hope the RPS students walk away from the event having made connections between sports and what they’re learning in class. “It’s not about the sports. We’re using sports as the bait. They’re interested in basketball, baseball and soccer, and the other sports we have here today. But we want them to make the connection and look at the force, speed, spin and trajectory of the ball, and the other components they learn about in math and science class, and actually see it, touch it and understand it,” he said.

“If they think they’re not good at math or science, they’re trying. They’re good at it; they just don’t know how to identify it. That’s what we’re trying to achieve today.”

Asein Ta’s Journey to a Cutting-edge Sports Technology

Brian McAllister

VCU University Relations

A student at a station demonstrating Blast Motion — sports analysis technology that uses motion analysis and video capture — VCU School of Education students used the technology to measure the RPS students’ ability to jump, bend and twist.

“A student at a station demonstrating Blast Motion — sports analysis technology that uses motion analysis and video capture — VCU School of Education students used the technology to measure the RPS students’ ability to jump, bend and twist.”

The VCU School of Education Celebrates Its Students at Scholarship and Awards Ceremony

VCUSOE Faculty Make an Impact in the Richmond Teachers for Social Justice

A year of teaching social studies and English in the Dominican Republic and five years in New York City’s Dominican neighborhood, Hilary Parkhurst wanted to make an impact on the urban city of Richmond, Virginia. To do that, Parkhurst, assistant professor in the VCU School of Education Teaching and Learning department, joined Richmond Teachers for Social Justice group (RTJ-S) soon after moving to Richmond in 2016.

“RTA-S is a teachers’ union to support teachers in any way they can with issues of social justice facing their schools and students, including developing curricula that addresses issues of social justice.”

The RTA-S mission is to support teachers in any way they can with issues of social justice facing their schools and students, including developing curricula that addresses issues of social justice.

“The hope is that teachers across the country will take a portion of their instructional time to teach a lesson on the importance of public education,” said Parkhurst.

The organization has initiated national teacherials and their website includes lesson plans and other helpful classroom resources. In addition, the organization launched a nation-wide public school for students with events like LOVE Public Teacher Awards.

One of the RTA-S projects that emerging awareness of the importance of public education for a healthy democratic society.

The group also advocates for better funding of local schools and more just disciplinary processes.

Asein Ta’s Journey to a Cutting-edge Sports Technology

A sein Ta first elementary school education was will be the start his Richmond Teacher Residency program in May 2017.

“It’s interesting because I am going to teach elementary education but I never went to elementary school,” said VCU senior Asein Ta, who will be studying early elementary education at the VCU School of Education.

Living in a small town in Myanmar, a country run by a military dictator, Ta’s family struggled financially. He could not afford to send him to his school. After his father’s death, his mother soon fell ill. Wanting a better life for her son, she made sure he could leave.

“She asked me to go with her on a trip. I had no idea where she was taking me up so a different path,” said Ta.

He was 10 years old when he left Myanmar with his uncle, who frequently made these trips for people who needed to get out.

“We had to get through the city but there wasn’t a way to get through the soldiers. They were blocking the gates,” said Ta. “They travelled through the woods with only one bag of belongings with them until they reached the border.”

“I didn’t know where we were going but we ended up at a refugee camp called Mae La with other children in Thailand.” After his uncle settled him at a monastery, Ta was on his own and was brought by Buddhist monks.

“The last time I saw my uncle at the camp was when he came to tell me that my mother had passed away,” he said. “I stayed in the camp for five years and got to know a lot of people. We had a little bit of English and math, a little bit of English and math,” said Ta.

A recent concern was voiced during a monthly panel meeting last December, when local Richmond teachers expressed their worry for their undocumented immigrant students in light of the current political climate.

In response, on March 18, RTA-S and PLUMAS at VCU held an Undercoverully Training for teachers. The training provided instruction for K-12 educators about supporting undocumented immigrant students and their families. PLUMAS is a student organization of Latin students who cares for the rights and welfare toward ensuring social action for the rights of Latinas in the United States.

The first training was so successful they hosted another one on April 22.
Celebrating Dr. Diane Simon
Ahead of Retirement

During her 29 years of service at the VCU School of Education (VCU SOE), Dr. Diane Simon has touched the lives of many students, whom she refers to as “her children.” As her time at the school is coming to an end as she approaches retirement this June, Dr. Simon thinks back fondly at her VCU experience that shaped her professional life — and much more.

“Over the years, getting the card, call or visit to say ‘thank you’ has been incredibly humbling and gratifying. Building these relationships has so enriched my life and my experience at VCU,” said Dr. Simon.

Before her time at VCU, Dr. Simon served as chair of the Division of Education and Psychology at Virginia Union University, where she developed and taught courses for the Speech and Hearing minor in the Special Education program.

Having joined the VCU SOE in 1988 as assistant dean and special education professor, Dr. Simon is now the senior associate dean for student affairs. Together with the Student Services Center staff, which she directs, she has supported and assisted thousands of students who came into the five-year teacher preparation program as freshmen, as well as students in other graduate programs, until they walk across the stage at graduation.

“The opportunity to meet and work with so many wonderful students has been most rewarding. I watch them grow, mature, graduate and move on to become successful educators,” she said.

A large part of Dr. Simon’s role at the SOE has been guiding the school through the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), now CAEP, process. She has prepared for six visits since coming to VCU. The last review was the most successful yet, with full approval from NCATE and multiple commendations.

“Preparation for accreditation is a collaborative venture and the faculty is always critically important in the preparation and success of a visit — they have always been an integral part of the process,” said Dr. Simon.

Another part of her time at VCU that made a lasting impression has been meeting so many students who were struggling financially to get through school. They were taking out loans, working two jobs just to stay afloat.

That is when Dr. Simon decided to also become a generous donor for the School of Education.

Together with her husband, Dr. Simon established the Elaine West Johnson Scholarship in honor of the first teacher she knew, her mother. Her mother spent 30 years teaching deaf children at the elementary school level, which inspired Dr. Simon to continue the family tradition.

When asked how the SOE has changed over the years, Dr. Simon echoed Dean Andrew Daire’s belief that we can only be as good as the school systems around us. During her time with VCU SOE, she has seen the number of local schools interested in partnering and working with the university increase.