



# VCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Community Engagement | Service-Learning

## Service-Learning Annual Report 2013-2014

ENGAGING LEARNERS. MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES.



## Director's Message



Lynn E. Pelco, Ph.D.

Associate Vice Provost for Community Engagement  
Director, VCU Service-Learning Office

### Engaging Learners. Making a Difference in our Communities.

In 2013-2014, VCU launched RamPantry, an on-campus, student-run food pantry that provides in-need students with healthy, culturally appropriate emergency food. An average of 100 students receive food from the pantry each week. FeedMore, Central Virginia's Foodbank, provided more than 17 million meals last year to hungry citizens in 31 counties and 5 cities. Food insecurity is just one example of the societal problems that provide focus for VCU service-learning courses. These real-world social issues engage today's college students in ways that textbooks and lectures no longer can. Student engagement is important in light of national statistics that show 60% of U.S. college students fail to earn a bachelor's degree in 6 years. VCU data show that students who take even one service-learning class are more likely to graduate than are students who take no service-learning classes. Service-learning courses promote student engagement and address pressing social problems.

We are fortunate at VCU to have presidential-level support for service-learning. This year 87 faculty members taught service-learning classes to more than 3,300 students. Funding from the Provost enables the VCU Service-Learning Office to provide a variety of innovative programs. These programs include our biannual Service-Learning Institutes, the Service-Learning Faculty Fellows Program, the Service-Learning Project Awards Program, the Service-Learning Adjunct Support Program, and our new Service-Learning Travel Grants Program.

I am very proud of the scholarship that our service-learning faculty and students produced this past year. Service-learning instructors and their students made more than 40 refereed conference presentations about service-learning and published 9 service-learning related, refereed professional journal articles. Doctoral student, Kelly Lockeman's research received Honorable Mention in the 2013 Dissertation of the Year Award given by the International Association for Research in Service-Learning and Community Engagement. VCU service-learning scholars are creating new knowledge, increasing student success, and improving our communities.

This annual report spotlights just a few of the accomplishments that VCU service-learning scholars, instructors, students, and community partners have achieved together this past year. It is clear. VCU Service-Learning mobilizes community-university partnerships that generate innovative solutions to societal problems and prepare the engaged citizens of tomorrow.

Lynn E. Pelco, Ph.D.  
Associate Vice Provost for Community Engagement  
Director, VCU Service-Learning Office

**3,388**  
**STUDENTS**

were enrolled in service-learning courses.

**77**  
**INSTRUCTORS**

received training in service-learning to increase their understanding of high-quality service-learning pedagogy.

**174**  
distinct **courses** and

**224**  
**sections** provided students with diverse selection of service-learning courses.

# SERVICE-LEARNING SPOTLIGHTS

Course: Psychology of Women



**Kathleen Ingram,**  
assistant dean for  
academic affairs

Since arriving at VCU in 1995, Dr. Kathleen Ingram has taught the course Psychology of Women. After participating in the Service-Learning Mini Institute two years ago, Ingram decided to transition the class into a service-learning course. Since making that change, she has noted that students are more engaged than they have been in the past. Now, Ingram harnesses her desire to focus on a breadth of topics choosing instead to emphasize depth and synthesis of material in the course.

Ingram tackles the challenge of integrating meaningful service into the course by being inclusive of her five community partners in the course at every stage of development. This includes meetings with partners prior to the semester to determine needs and fit, a luncheon with partners during the first week of class, consistent communication with an appointed undergraduate Service-Learning teaching assistant throughout the semester and an invitation to attend student presentations at the end of the semester. Small group reflection is led by undergraduate students weekly to discuss student service and its relationship to course content.

Ingram acknowledges that lots of uncertainty exists in service-learning because there are many things that are outside of the control of the instructor. She has learned to embrace this challenge as an opportunity for students to practice being fully present in their learning, practice patience, develop observational skills and be more flexible.

“It’s great that not all of what we do in service-learning is scripted and linear, because life is not that way,” she said.

## AWARDS



**Kim Isringhausen and Lynn Pelco**

The Service-Learning Office, faculty and participating schools were recognized nationally this academic year. Dr. Lynn Pelco, associate vice provost for community engagement, won an award from the Gulf South Summit on Service-Learning and Civic Education in Higher Education for Outstanding Practitioner Contributions to Service-Learning in Higher Education. Some of her highlighted achievements included increasing the quality of service-learning at VCU; the implementation and success of the ASPIRE living-learning program and her continued commitment to supporting faculty and student development through innovative

measures. The School of Dentistry was also recognized by the Gulf South Summit for Outstanding Service-Learning Collaboration in Higher Education. Kim Isringhausen, associate professor and chair of the Oral Health Promotion and Community Outreach Program, described the award as having a phenomenal impact on faculty and students by recognizing their tireless efforts over the years.

Pelco and Erin Burke Brown, associate director for Service-Learning, were honored as part of the 35th Annual Telly Awards, winning the Bronze award for producing the “Best Internet/Online

Programs, Segments, or Promotional Pieces – Education.” The Telly Awards are the premier award honoring the finest film and video productions, groundbreaking web commercials, videos and films and outstanding local, regional, and cable TV commercials and programs. The short video, directed by VCU alumnus and former service-learning student Bryce Spivey, served as a training tool for students to learn about service-learning at VCU.

Watch the video at [youtu.be/p9398PnhsU4](https://youtu.be/p9398PnhsU4).

# 48

**Service-Learning  
teaching assistants**

supported service-learning courses.

# 130

More than  
**community partnerships** were  
strengthened and sustained through  
service-learning courses.

# 19

service-learning **projects**  
and more than

# 25

**community  
partners**

were supported through  
Service-Learning Office  
funding avenues.

## SCHOLARSHIP



Kelly Lockeman

Kelly Lockeman, assistant professor in the VCU School of Medicine and assistant director for research in the VCU Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care, was recognized Nov. 8 for her dissertation research at the 2013 International Association for Research

on Service-learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE) Conference held in Omaha, NE. In addition to being recognized by IARSLCE, Lockeman's research was also published as an article in the Fall 2013 issue of the Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning,

the premier publication for scholarship on service-learning in the United States. Her article, "The Relationship between Service-Learning and Degree Completion," demonstrates a correlation between college graduation and student participation in service-learning courses.

## MEASURING IMPACT

During fall and spring semesters of the 2013-2014 academic year, the Service-Learning Office implemented the VCU SLIM (Service-Learning Impact Measure) for students using REDCap. The electronic survey was sent to all 2,987 students enrolled for credit in service-learning courses during those semesters, and it was completed by 566 students (19 percent). Eighty-two percent of respondents that disclosed their student status were undergraduates, while 17 percent were graduate or professional students. Of the undergraduates who responded, 38

percent indicated that they are first-generation college students, and 31 percent of undergraduates indicated that they are Pell grant recipients.

When asked whether they have any desire or plans to continue serving at the location where they had their service placement, 40 percent said "yes." Of the surveyed items, the theme of working with others effectively emerged as the highest rated aspect of taking a service-learning course, with 82 percent of students citing that interactions with students were beneficial. When asked

to describe the degree to which the service-learning course helped them do various team-related activities, 85 percent believe they can work more effectively with others, 86 percent state they can be a team player and 83 percent can work collaboratively as a result of the course.

Other highly-rated aspects were the importance of the service to the course (82 percent) and an increased social awareness for students (84 percent).

**"I truly appreciated being able to learn outside of the classroom, and not just once. I liked being able to do it on my own time, with options, and apply things I learned!"**

**"I really feel like this class has helped me become a better advocate for issues that I care about."**

**"I realized the impact I can have on the community. If individually I can help this much, then just imagine what VCU as a whole could accomplish. It also helped me to work collaboratively with others. Physically and intellectually, our class came together to come up with beneficial ideas and worked to execute them."**

**67,760**  
**service hours**

were provided by  
service-learning students.



Service-learning faculty, staff and students generated

**41** conference presentations

and nine journal articles on service-learning topics.