



Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Virginia Commonwealth University Richmond, Virginia

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) seeks as its next Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs an innovative and collaborative leader to advance a diverse, engaged and ambitious institution. The University and its academic health sciences center serve as one national urban public research institution dedicated to the success and well-being of its students, patients, faculty, staff and community.

The Provost is the chief academic officer with oversight of the curricular, student life, and faculty affairs of the institution. The Provost is the second-ranking executive officer at VCU and serves as the President's partner in the articulation and execution of a compelling vision that builds on a history of excellence and access in higher education.

Virginia Commonwealth University: An Overview

Virginia Commonwealth University is a Carnegie I Research University and a designated top 100 Research University by the National Science Foundation. Many of the University's schools and colleges are among the top 100 in the U.S., including engineering, the arts, business and medicine. Located in downtown Richmond, VCU enrolls more than 30,000 students in more than 200 degree and certificate programs in the arts, sciences and humanities. Twenty-two of the programs are unique in Virginia, many of them crossing the disciplines of VCU's 11 schools and three colleges and a robust Division of Student Affairs to support student success and well-being. The VCU Health brand represents the health sciences schools of VCU, the VCU Massey Cancer Center and the VCU Health System, which comprises VCU Medical Center (the only academic medical center in the region), Community Memorial Hospital, Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU and MCV Physicians. Today, VCU serves an integral role in the economic health of the city of Richmond and the region by providing the highest-quality education for the current and future workforce, advancing research across a broad range of academic disciplines and enhancing the translation of research to serve the needs of the Commonwealth and nation. The University and its health system combined contribute more than \$6 billion annually to the region's economy and therefore play a significant role in regional development and community planning.

Strategic Plan

The University is guided by [Quest 2025: Together We Transform](#). VCU is a rare place of both access and excellence. The strategic plan charts the course over the coming years for VCU's rise as a preeminent urban, public research university committed to equitable access to social, economic and health success.

The plan addresses significant issues faced by all institutions of higher education, as well as those specific to VCU. The issues include:

- Growing cynicism that public higher education serves the public good and may not be worth the expense to individuals
- The significant challenge of the rising cost of education and providing affordable access and support for timely degree completion regardless of students' particular demographic or group
- Increased competition in public higher education for students, faculty, government and philanthropic support and national prominence
- Dependence on urban universities to lead in solving vexing societal issues, including health and economic vitality
- A recognition that resourcing the plan's strategic priorities will require an integrated, pan-university approach and will call for hard choices around resource allocation

Academics

Offering more than 200 degree and certificate programs, VCU is a premier urban, public research university with a genuine commitment to student success and community service. One of just a handful of universities to receive both a "Very High Research Activity" status and a "Community Engaged" designation from the Carnegie Foundation, VCU also boasts 10 programs in the *U.S. News & World Report's* top 10, as well as the region's top-rated medical center. VCU is ranked among the top 100 U.S. schools (no. 68) by the National Science Foundation. Likewise, the University's emphasis on discovery and innovation creates an entrepreneurial spirit on campus, embodied by the tagline, "Make it real." This mindset saw VCU awarded more than \$335 million in sponsored research funding and 30 patents in the last year alone. VCU has a rich history in research and continues to be home to pioneers in discovery and world-renowned scientists.

In addition to its contributions to the City of Richmond, VCU's Qatar campus offers undergraduate and graduate-level degrees, helping to advance the social, economic and environmental development of that region. VCU's character, however, extends far beyond just the numbers. One of the most diverse campuses in the country, the unique backgrounds of the faculty, staff and students create a vibrant, supportive atmosphere both in and out of the classroom.

Colleges and Schools

[College of Engineering](#)

[College of Humanities and Sciences](#)

- [Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture](#)
- [School of World Studies](#)

[School of the Arts](#)

[School of Business](#)

- [VCU da Vinci Center](#)

[School of Education](#)

[Honors College](#)

[L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs](#)

[School of Social Work](#)

[VCU Graduate School](#)

[VCU Life Sciences](#)

[University College](#)

[College of Health Professions](#)

[School of Medicine](#)

[School of Nursing](#)

[School of Pharmacy](#)

[School of Dentistry](#)

Note: The last five schools listed – College of Health Professions, Schools of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Dentistry – report to the Senior Vice Provost for Health Sciences/ Chief Executive Office of VCU Health System.

Accreditation

VCU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award baccalaureate, master's, doctoral, and first-professional degrees. The University is committed to continuous improvement of its programs and services to ensure the quality and accessibility of its offerings. Accreditation and academic compliance are essential features of this process.

Leadership

Michael Rao, Ph.D., became the fifth president of Virginia Commonwealth University and the VCU Health System in 2009 and has continued to cement VCU's place among the nation's premier urban, public research universities. Under the [Quest 2025: Together We Transform](#) strategic plan, Rao has piloted strategic efforts focused on academic quality, student success and research that foster regional economic development and improve lives.

As president of VCU and the VCU Health System, Rao leads a national research university with a leading academic medical center that is the largest employer in the Richmond area—with more than 20,000 employees—and the sixth largest in Virginia. Rao is responsible for one of the nation's most comprehensive academic health centers, which is ranked among the best hospitals in the country and was named the No. 1 hospital in the Richmond region by *U.S. News & World Report*. VCU's community impact, both economic and cultural, continues to grow and is evident in many ways, including the University's renowned athletics program, a surging College of Engineering and the landmark Institute for Contemporary Art.

Under Rao's leadership, VCU's place among national research universities continues to rise, with more than 20 graduate and first-professional programs ranked among the top 50 in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*, including the nation's No. 1 sculpture and nurse anesthesia programs. He also oversaw one of the largest-ever expansions of VCU's master site plan, including the Grace Street living-learning corridor, the James W. and Frances G. McGlothlin Medical Education Center, the Academic Learning Commons and an expansion of the James Branch Cabell Library.

Rao has been in higher education administration for more than 25 years, beginning in California in 1992, when he became president of Mission College and was, for a time, the youngest college president in the nation. He went on to serve as chancellor of Montana State University–Northern and president of Central Michigan University.

Rao holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of South Florida and a Ph.D. in higher education from the University of Florida. He and his wife, Monica, a watercolorist and graphic designer, have two sons.

Finances

Historically, VCU has been a strong partner to and economic anchor for Richmond and its surrounding communities. Combined, VCU and the VCU Health System are the largest employer in the Richmond metropolitan area and the sixth largest employer in the Commonwealth of Virginia. VCU, its health system and other related entities have cash and investments of approximately \$2.0 billion, which includes \$1.4 billion in quasi endowment funds. VCU's sponsored research has grown steadily in recent years and continues its upward trajectory. It attracts about \$335 million (FY2020) annually in sponsored research and, based on the NSF HERD 2018 survey, ranks among the top 15 percent of all US research universities. The University's operating budget for FY2021 is \$1.3 billion.

Location

Richmond became the Commonwealth of Virginia's capital in 1779. The Richmond region is a vibrant, diverse and growing community of nearly 1.3 million people and is the ideal combination of small town feel with intimate neighborhoods and local businesses and big city offerings that include myriad theaters, galleries, music events, festivals, sports attractions and more. The city borders the James River and offers more than 550 acres of parks, making it the perfect place for outdoor recreation. Richmond's location in the middle of the state allows for day or weekend trips to the beach, the mountains or Washington, DC. *Travel + Leisure* magazine recently named the Richmond region as one of five top wine regions to visit. The metropolitan area is also home to seven Fortune 500 companies and ten Fortune 1000 companies, a broad base of financial companies, hospitals and media firms, high-tech manufacturing companies, as well as state and local government agencies. The city is home to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, VCU's Institute for Contemporary Art and additional cultural institutions that add deep enrichment opportunities.

For more information on the city of Richmond, please visit:

www.grpva.com/living-in-richmond

www.visitrichmondva.com

The Role

The Provost reports directly to the President and partners closely with the President, the Senior Vice President for Health Sciences & CEO of the VCU Health System and other executive officers of the University in formulating the goals, priorities and policies of the Institution. The Provost will work with the deans and all campus leadership to design and implement the programs, organizational structure, and resource distribution for the institution. Direct reports to the Provost include 12 campus deans, the Vice President for Strategy, Enrollment Management and Student Success, the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, the Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, the Senior Vice Provost for Student Affairs, the Vice Provost for Life Sciences and Research, and the Executive Assistant to the Provost, as well as executive leadership of the Institute for Contemporary Art, Continuing and Professional Education, the Global Education Office, Online@VCU, Institutional Research and Decision Support, Academic Finance and Administration, Strategic Communications and the Office of the VCU Ombudsperson. The University's Chief Information Officer (Technology Services) and Vice President for Athletics are dotted line reports to the Provost.

Key Opportunities and Challenges

Serve as a voice for the University

As the second ranking official and chief academic officer of VCU, the Provost will represent the President in his absence and in doing so, represent a united vision for VCU. They will disseminate information to the campus community in a clear and thoughtful manner that empowers faculty, staff and students to fulfill the mission and achieve the strategic goals that position VCU as the premier urban public research university. The office will have oversight for the collection and analysis of academic and institutional data and must always deliver an evidence-based message to all constituents in advancing institutional priorities. The Provost will stay abreast of issues relating to the State of Virginia and higher education as they impact the institution and disseminate that information as appropriate. In addition, they will engage in crisis and reputation management, addressing institutional challenges and clearly communicating those challenges and resolutions to both the campus community and external constituents.

Promote a culture of shared governance

The Provost must have a commitment to shared governance and be a consistent and vocal advocate for faculty, tapping into its great potential to advance research, creative endeavors, teaching, mentoring and service. They will work to promote a culture of transparency and collaboration across all constituencies by building consensus and trust in policy decisions that will advance institutional priorities. The Provost will offer decisive management after seeking input and valuing contributions from the campus community and will communicate a clear sense of direction, then advocate for and empower community members to advance priorities and the larger vision and goals of VCU.

Foster an inclusive academic community

VCU takes pride in both its intentionally diverse community and its access mission which is designed to provide underserved populations, first-generation students and low-income families entrée to an outstanding and transformational education through blind admission to the University. The institution has evolved to reflect the diverse city it calls home and the increasing diversity and complexity of the world. With a focus on equity and inclusion, the Provost will lead efforts to attract and retain students, faculty

and staff who will contribute to the diversity of individuals and thought at VCU. In addition, they will cultivate an inclusive and supportive environment that enables and promotes all student success and full engagement in the academic enterprise. The Provost must have also demonstrated executing thoughtful strategies to recruit, retain and develop underrepresented faculty and staff at VCU.

Advance One VCU

The leadership of VCU and the Health Science campus along with the boards of VCU and the Health System are committed to One VCU, an entity that emphasizes that together through integration, a greater level of success can be achieved. This is reflected in the development of one strategy that incorporates public relations and communications, research, fundraising, development, government relations, and audit and compliance. The Provost will partner with President Rao, the Senior Vice President of Health Sciences and CEO VCU Health System and other senior leadership to create opportunities that will have a greater impact on the success of the entire enterprise.

Support and grow funded research

Enhancing the University's reach, impact and productivity in research, scholarship; creative activity, and outreach across the disciplines, with a particular focus on expanding VCU's funded research portfolio, will be an important area of focus for the next Provost. Since President Rao's arrival at VCU, funded research has increased by more than 60 percent. The Provost will continue this trajectory as VCU establishes itself as the premier urban public research university in the country. They will bring a holistic view of the research funding landscape and present a research program strategy that positions VCU for success in identification of funding opportunities and receipt of awards. The Provost will be an important partner to the Vice President of Research and Innovation and deans to promote the VCU research agenda.

Optimize Resources

The Provost is expected to wisely and creatively allocate resources to achieve the academic mission of the University while also helping to develop additional resources to further the mission. In addition to managing the academic budget for the institution, they will actively engage in University-wide budget discussions and decisions and participate fully in fundraising and donor relations. They will work to create an environment where innovation and excellence are priorities in resource allocation. In addition, the Provost will drive discussions surrounding financial barriers that impact student access and persistence and work to ensure resources are available to support students in overcoming these barriers.

Inspire the Deans and Academic Leadership

The Provost will serve as a cooperative and supportive partner to the University's deans in further integrating their efforts and encouraging synergies and partnerships across disciplines and colleges — while also allowing each academic unit the autonomy to create compelling opportunities and define success. The Provost will clearly outline the integrated role the deans play in advancing the institutional agenda and define clear goals surrounding enrollments, fundraising and curriculum that will contribute to the larger University's success. They will ensure alignment between the academic units and the University by providing consultative and transparent leadership and mentoring to the deans on educational, organizational, resource management, fundraising and leadership agendas. In partnership with the deans, the Provost will ensure that learning and research infrastructure is in place to support the academic initiatives and priorities of VCU.

Focus on Students

The Provost must bring a student-centric approach to their work and ensure all decisions are made with consideration given to student engagement, success and persistence. Addressing the unique barriers to retention and graduation for underrepresented students will be essential in increasing overall student outcomes. They will ensure that students have opportunities for learning, participation and leadership both in and out of the classroom. They must address crisis situations and student activism directly and swiftly, guiding conversation and seeking resolution. Integrating new technologies to strengthen learning opportunities and outcomes will be important as VCU expands delivery options. The Provost must provide direction and leadership support for the Division of Student Affairs which is tasked with supporting the academic mission of the University.

Experience and Qualifications

The ideal candidate will hold a terminal degree and bring a distinguished academic record that merits appointment as a tenured full professor at VCU. In addition, the individual must have significant administrative experience appropriate to the size and complexity of VCU.

Additionally, the next Provost will possess many of these skills and attributes needed to be an effective Provost at VCU:

Knowledge of the research/teaching environment in an urban public research university will require:

- The ability to work closely and collaboratively with the President, senior administration, deans, faculty, staff, students, community partners, donors and the Board of Visitors;
- Experience in working collaboratively with faculty, staff and students in an environment of shared governance;
- Exceptional budgetary and financial management skills, including awareness of the near-term interdependencies and long-term implications of financial decisions in a large, complex organization;
- The ability to guide and assist deans and department chairs in managing and structuring their organizational resources to function effectively;
- Advanced skills in managing grievances, complaints and crises;
- Experience managing staff and administrative budgets; and
- A commitment to accountability through clear and relevant metrics.

Experience in higher education and a vision for the future of urban public research universities will require:

- A commitment to leading VCU's efforts to retain, improve, and expand its education programs, including evaluating and implementing the use of new technologies for educational delivery;
- Experience in faculty and staff hiring, retention, development, and tenure and promotion;
- The ability to support excellence in faculty research and teaching;
- A demonstrated commitment to and record of accomplishment in furthering access, diversity, equity and inclusion across the organization and an understanding of how to advance these priorities;
- A deep commitment to student success that includes experiences both in and out of the classroom;

- A commitment to the importance of VCU’s outreach and service beyond its campus boundaries in the city of Richmond, using the knowledge created by the University to serve the larger community, state, nation, and world;
- Creativity in designing admissions programs that are grounded in access and educational excellence; and
- Experience in partnering with alumni around engagement and philanthropy
- The ability to actively involve and include community members in campus involvement and philanthropy.

Personal skills and values that result in effective leadership at VCU will require:

- Unwavering personal integrity;
- A sense of responsibility and urgency to complete tasks that advance the institution;
- A collaborative approach to working with staff, faculty, students, and fellow senior administrators that treats everyone as a respected partner;
- A strong set of communication skills that lead to effective interactions both inside and outside the University;
- A dedication to being part of the VCU and Richmond communities;
- A deep commitment to the importance of VCU to the state of Virginia and the importance of the urban public research university to the nation and larger world; and
- A commitment to and appreciation of transparency, open communication, integrity, and trust-building.

Procedure for Candidacy

The review of credentials will begin immediately and will continue until the position is filled. Candidates should complete the basic personal and demographic application through the VCU job site at: <https://www.vcujobs.com/postings/101902>. Candidates should provide a curriculum vita, a letter of application that addresses the responsibilities and requirements described above, a diversity statement and the names and contact information of five references. References will not be contacted without prior knowledge and approval of candidates. All nominations and applications shall be confidential until finalists are named. Requests for information and all written nominations and applications should be directed to:



Susan VanGilder, Partner
 Julie Tea, Partner
 Beth McCarthy, Senior Associate
VCUProvost@storbecksearch.com

The material presented in this position specification should be relied on for informational purposes only. This material has been copied, compiled or quoted in part from VCU documents and personal interviews and is believed to be reliable. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and factual situations govern.

Virginia Commonwealth University is committed to providing accessible and equitable living, learning and working environments free from discrimination and harassment based on race, color, religion,

national or ethnic origin, age, sex (including pregnancy), political affiliation, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or disability.