

July 2023



Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Plan

Master of Public Administration Program



VCU

L. Douglas Wilder School of
Government and Public Affairs

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Plan

Master of Public Administration Program

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Governing Principles

The following principles serve as guideposts to developing this equity, diversity, and inclusion plan.

Virginia Commonwealth University

VCU is an urban, public research university committed to diversity, creativity, working with the community, and finding solutions to today's most pressing problems.

Mission

Virginia Commonwealth University and its academic health sciences center serve as one national urban public research institution dedicated to the success and well-being of our students, patients, faculty, staff, and community through:

- Real-world learning that furthers civic engagement, inquiry, discovery, and innovation
- Research that expands the boundaries of new knowledge and creative expression and promotes translational applications to improve the quality of human life
- Interdisciplinary collaborations and community partnerships that advance innovation, enhance cultural and economic vitality, and solve society's most complex challenges
- Health sciences that preserve and restore health for all people, seek the cause and cure of diseases through groundbreaking research, and educate those who serve humanity
- Deeply ingrained core values of diversity, inclusion and equity that provide a safe, trusting, and supportive environment to explore, create, learn, and serve

Vision

As a preeminent national, urban, public university and academic health center, Virginia Commonwealth University will be distinguished by its commitments to inclusion, access, and excellence; innovative and transformative learning; impactful research; exceptional patient care; and beneficial community impact.

Values

- **Accountability:** Commit to the efficient and transparent stewardship of our resources to achieve institutional excellence
- **Achievement:** Pursue excellence in learning, research, and scholarly pursuits; service; and patient care
- **Collaboration:** Foster respect, collegiality, and cooperation to advance learning, entrepreneurship, and inquiry
- **Freedom:** Strive for intellectual truth with responsibility and civility, respecting the dignity of all individuals
- **Innovation:** Cultivate discovery, creativity, originality, inventiveness, and talent

- **Service:** Engage in the application of learning and discovery to improve the human condition and support the public good at home and abroad
- **Diversity and inclusion:** Ensure a climate of mutual trust and respect where individuals of different cultural backgrounds, identities, abilities, and life experiences are embraced, engaged, and empowered to drive excellence and success
- **Integrity:** Adhere to the highest standards of honesty, respect, and professional and scholarly ethics

VCU Strategic Goals – Quest 2028

The four strategic plan themes are:

1. **Diversity Drives Excellence** – Champion diversity, equity, and inclusion in all that we do and advance a conscientious drive to support a climate where excellence and success for all people are valued and differences are celebrated.
 - Nurture an institutional culture and climate that is diverse, inclusive, equitable and engaged.
 - Implement an organizational infrastructure to support, sustain and scale DEI initiatives that infuses them into clinical care, curriculum, scholarship and practice.
 - Demonstrate national and international DEI thought leadership.
2. **Student Success** – Ignite student success through curricular innovation, a holistic culture of care and an engaged and empowered workforce.
 - Transform curriculum so that all students engage in inquiry, discovery, innovation, experiential learning, civic engagement and creative expression to prepare them for the future of work.
 - Enhance the university culture of care and responsiveness supporting student engagement, success and sense of belonging.
 - Retain and attract a diverse community of highly qualified faculty and staff that reflects a culture where everyone matters and belongs; ensure the culture supports career satisfaction and growth.
3. **Research and Innovation** – Distinguish VCU as a vibrant public research university where researchers, educators, practitioners and entrepreneurs innovate together to improve lives and address societal challenges.
 - Amplify VCU's impact on society through excellence across all disciplines, knowledge creation and transdisciplinary research.
 - Build a collaborative research culture that powers meaningful change and impact and is based on ethics, integrity, inclusive practices and critical and analytical thinking.
 - Implement a research infrastructure model that is scalable, nimble and ready for growth.
4. **Thriving Communities** – Deliver on our commitment to solving social and health inequities in partnership with communities.
 - Collaborate to build an adaptive infrastructure that meets the evolving needs of VCU and communities.
 - Partner with communities to help inspire authentic gains in health, education and economic prosperity.

- Create and leverage pathways that demonstrate that our academic and healthcare goals and innovations benefit and complement the objectives of our community partners.
- Actively seek community partnerships and opportunities to elevate awareness and collaborative action between VCU and communities.

L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

The L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University blends theory and practice, preparing students for jobs that make a difference. The Wilder School offers undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees in criminal justice, homeland security and emergency preparedness, public administration, public policy and administration, urban and regional planning and studies, and graduate certificates in several related fields. The Wilder School's centers provide expertise in research, consulting and training, partnering with government agencies, nonprofits, and businesses. Our location is just blocks away from the state Capitol, and a two-hour drive from the nation's capital means our students have plenty of opportunities to make public policy real.

Mission

The mission of the Wilder School is to:

- Engage, teach, and inspire students and leaders to understand and solve challenges in our world.
- Advance research that informs public policy and decision-making to improve our communities.
- Collaborate with communities through innovative partnerships to enhance quality of life.

Vision

Our vision is to be the premier resource for public policy expertise and social justice in public safety, governance and economic and community development. Our academic excellence attracts the highest quality faculty, staff and students, and our graduates are leaders in their professions. Our research and consulting practices have global impact. We reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.

Strategic Goals

As part of the Quest 2028 strategic planning, the Wilder School engaged in a strategic planning process beginning in Summer 2022.

The L. Douglas Wilder School is founded on our guiding statements - Mission, Vision and Values - to provide strategic direction for administrators, faculty, staff, and students interacting with our academic programs, research centers, and institutes. Over the next five years, the Wilder School Strategic Plan aligns our efforts with the VCU Quest 2028 to transform our school through social equity in action.

Our Wilder School VCU Quest 2028 themes include five strategic priorities to be advanced over the next five years:

1. Diversity Driving Excellence – Increase strategies to champion diversity, equity, and inclusion in all that we do
2. Student Success – Student Success is a priority in the Wilder School. Our goal is to increase undergraduate and graduate enrollments through curricular innovation, strengthen our culture care, and by recruiting and retaining faculty and staff.
3. Research and Innovation – Strengthening Research and Innovation across academic programs and centers and institutes is a strategic priority for the Wilder School. Our goal is to increase the impact of the Wilder School Research Enterprise.
4. Thriving Communities for All People – Thriving Communities for All People underscores our commitment to solving social and health inequities in partnership with communities. For more than three decades, the Commonwealth Poll has been a vital indicator for policymakers and journalists who are interested in electoral politics and potential midterm wedge issues. Our goal is to conduct annual public policy polls in areas like public safety, economic development, education, mental health and housing.
5. Promoting Social Equity in Action – Promoting Social Equity in Action focuses on the use of evidence-based approaches to identify disparities and close those disparities by targeting structures, prioritizing funds and reallocating resources to advance equity.

The core elements of the strategic plan include goals and action steps that provide a blueprint of strategic initiatives to be implemented with our accountability partners over the next five years.

In the final stage of developing how we define and lead the school in a strategic direction of the Wilder School over the next five years, we adhere to a short-term, intermediate, and long-term strategy to achieve our goals across VCU Quest 2028 strategic initiatives. Over the short-term (AY 2023-24), intermediate (AY 2024-25 through AY 2026-27), and long-term (AY 2027 - 28) approach, our goal-based strategic plan complements the university outcomes and champions the VCU uncommon approach to leading and convening during these times.

Diversity Statement

As part of a larger effort, the Wilder School developed and the faculty adopted a school-wide diversity statement. In support of the Wilder School's Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) subcommittee on teaching and curriculum, the DEI committee proposed a syllabus statement for all Wilder School courses in Spring 2021. The request was that faculty not only include this statement on their syllabi but that they participate in conversations via a workshop regarding the implementation and enactment of the policy and that they fully embrace and commit to the statement in their teaching activities.

Beginning in Fall 2021, the following statement has been included in all Wilder School course syllabi.

The L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs places diversity, equity, and inclusion at the forefront of its work. In this class and throughout the school, every student is seen as an important and equal member of the group. Each student's unique background and

identities – including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, physical and mental ability, socioeconomic status, age, national origin, religion, political affiliation, and other characteristics – strengthens and enrich the learning environment. In this class, you are encouraged to share your own experiences and point of view to the extent that you are comfortable; you are also expected to allow others to do the same. You are encouraged to speak freely, ask questions, and challenge assumptions while also ensuring that you remain respectful to and considerate of your classmates, and, as your instructor, I will do the same. If you have any concerns, you are welcome to contact me to discuss them. You may also contact VCU's Equity and Access Services, Dean of Students/Title IX Office, and Office of Inclusive Excellence.

Master of Public Administration Program

The Master of Public Administration Program (MPA) program at the Wilder School equips students with skills in public management and policy analysis. Our graduates pursue careers at nonprofits and federal, state, and local governments, as well as for-profit organizations that cooperate with the public sector.

Mission

The mission of the MPA program is to develop creative, principled leaders who understand the demands placed upon local, national, and global public and nonprofit institutions and are equipped with skills in program management and policy analysis. Applying theory and practice, the program addresses complex social problems while advancing collaborative, effective, equitable, and ethical democratic governance.

Goals and Objectives

The program's mission includes the following goals:

1. Prepare professional public managers, public officials and citizens to meet the challenges of public service in both government and nonprofit sectors
2. Advance the state of knowledge in the field of public administration through scholarly research and publications
3. Serve the profession and local, state, federal and international communities by extending faculty expertise and intellectual resources

MPA Program Faculty

In addition to a cadre of qualified adjunct faculty, the Wilder School's MPA Program identifies the following faculty as members of the nucleus in our self-study report (SSR): RaJade Berry-James, Lindsey Evans, Susan Gooden, Myung Jin, Saltanat Liebert, Anthony Starke, and Wenli Yan (all tenure or tenure-track), and Richard Huff and Eric Campbell (non-tenure track faculty).

Table 1: MPA Faculty, Rank, Status, and Qualifications, 2022-2023

Name	Rank	Tenure Status	Qualification	Degree
Berry-James, RaJade	Professor	Tenured	Academically	PhD
Campbell, Eric	Other (UAP)	Non-Tenure	Professionally	MPA
Evans, Lindsey	Assistant Professor	Tenure-Track	Academically	PhD
Gooden, Susan	Professor	Tenured	Academically	PhD
Huff, Richard	Associate Professor	Non-Tenure	Professionally	PhD
Jin, Myung Hun	Associate Professor	Tenured	Academically	PhD
Liebert, Saltanat	Associate Professor	Tenured	Academically	PhD
Starke, Anthony	Assistant Professor	Tenure-Track	Academically	PhD
Yan, Wenli	Associate Professor	Tenured	Academically	PhD

MPA Climate Surveys

In our self-study year (SSY), the MPA program administered surveys to current students and faculty to ascertain respondent attitudes and perceptions regarding various aspects of the program's diversity and culture of inclusiveness. This section presents key findings from survey responses relevant to current program successes (glows) and areas for continued improvement (grows). The MPA Equity, diversity, and inclusion plan's goals, strategies, and anticipated outcomes are informed by survey findings. Overall, survey findings indicate faculty (n = 16) have mixed opinions and attitudes regarding the program's commitment to diversity, and student responses (n = 49) regarding the program's culture of inclusion are overwhelmingly positive.



Faculty Survey Responses

In Fall 2022, a faculty climate survey was sent to the MPA program's full- and part-time faculty. It was designed to gather information from recent program faculty (last three years) on their experiences and diversity and inclusion practices. Qualtrics was used to administer the 29-question survey. A unique email link was sent to 21 instructors and was open for participation from October 29, 2022, until November 14, 2022. Qualtrics sent weekly reminders to individuals who still needed to respond leading up to the survey closing date. The response rate for the instructor survey was 76%.

Snapshot of MPA Faculty Demographics

The information presented below is based on 16 responses to the survey completed by the MPA program faculty (full-time) and instructors (part-time) in Fall 2022.

- 42% of MPA instructors were first-generation college students (someone who enrolled in post-secondary education and whose parents/guardians do not have any post-secondary education experience).
- Most (87.5%) MPA instructors are employed full-time.
- One-third of MPA instructors are adjuncts, one-third are tenure-eligible, and one-quarter are non-tenure or term faculty.
 - 13.3% are assistant professors, 33.3% are associate or full professors, and 46.6% are instructors.
- Over one-quarter of faculty are 44 years old and younger, 40% are between ages 45-54, and 33% are 55 years old and older.
- 20% of instructors are foreign-born naturalized citizens, and three-quarters were born in the United States.
- Half (50%) of MPA instructors identify as female.

- One-quarter of MPA instructor survey respondents are Black or African American, 12.5% are Asian or Asian American, 6.25% are Native American, and 56% are White.
 - 77% of core/nucleus MPA faculty are persons of color.
 - 44% are Black or African American.
 - 14.29% of MPA instructors are Hispanic or Latinx.
- 15.3% identify as LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, intersex, asexual/aromantic/agender).
- Close to one-third (30.7%) are a person with a disability.
- 14.2% are non-native English speakers.
- 18% of MPA instructors have an annual household income of \$79k or less.
- 42.8% of our instructors are from urban hometowns, 14.2% are from suburban hometowns, and 35.7% are from rural hometowns.
- 7.6% of MPA instructors are Buddhist, 7.6% are Muslim, and 76.9% are Catholic or Christian.
- 42.8% characterize their political views are mixed/neutral/independent, 35.7% as mostly liberal, and 21.4% as consistently liberal.



Grows – Areas for Continued Improvement

- Although most respondents agree they feel accepted by MPA faculty colleagues (93%) and students (100%) whose racial/ethnic background differs from their own, 57% say they minimize their racial/ethnic background to get along with other faculty.
- 19% of faculty respondents reported discrimination (e.g., prejudice, racism, sexism) has been a source of stress for them in the MPA program.
- Although most faculty agree (66%) the program is committed to enhancing diversity, more than 1/3 of survey respondents neither agree nor disagree (30%) on the program's commitment to enhancing diversity in terms of ability status (40%), age (33%), political affiliation (47%), religious affiliation (43%), and social background (40%).
 - There is an opportunity for the program to welcome and engage people who identify differently among these groups.
- Respondents generally agree (81%) the program welcomes diverse faculty, but some do disagree when it comes to certain groups, namely, Latino/American (13%), Native American (13%), Pacific Islander (7%), differently abled (13%), non-native English speakers (7%), and non-cis-gendered (7%) faculty.
 - There are opportunities to be more welcoming of those who identify among these groups.



Glows – Current Program Strengths/Successes

- In their faculty role, respondents report frequently engaging in discussions of diversity, equity, and/or inclusion at the MPA program level (62%), Wilder School (93%), professional associations (50%), and the community (62%).
- The majority of faculty respondents agree (a) diversity should be reflected in the curriculum (88%), (b) a diverse student body enhances the educational experience of all students (88%), and (c) that it is important for the MPA program to promote diversity among the faculty (94%). They also disagree (69%) that promoting diversity leads to too many under-prepared students being admitted.
- Respondents also agree there is support for integrating diversity-related topics into courses (88%), and they report regularly integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion topics into their courses (88%).
- 88% of faculty respondents agree it is important to teach students tolerance and respect for different beliefs, and 94% agree that promoting racial understanding in the MPA program is important.
- Respondents agree (93%) women faculty and faculty of color are treated fairly in the Wilder School.
- Survey respondents (97%) agree they feel comfortable with other faculty colleagues regardless of their social identity.



Student Survey Responses

In Fall 2022, a survey was sent to all current students in the MPA program. It was designed to better understand our students, their experiences, and the program's climate of inclusion. Qualtrics was used to administer the 29-question survey. A unique email link was sent to current students and was open for participation from October 29 until November 14. Qualtrics sent weekly reminders to individuals who still needed to respond leading up to the survey closing date. The response rate for the student survey was 48%.

Snapshot of MPA Student Demographics

The information presented below is based on 49 responses to the survey completed by current MPA students in Fall 2022. The table offers a comparative view of national, state, and program demographics.

Table 2: National, State, and Program Demographics

	United States	Virginia	MPA (Students)	MPA (Faculty)
Gender¹				
Male	164,350,703	4,273,931	20	8
Female	167,543,042	4,368,343	28	8
Non-binary/Non-conforming	n/a	n/a	2	0
Race²				
White	204,277,273	5,208,856	30	9
Black/African American	41,104,200	1,607,581	17	4
American Indian and Alaska Native	3,727,135	40,007	0	0
Asian	19,886,049	615,436	4	2
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	689,966	7,156	0	0
Other	27,915,715	446,650	0	1
Two or More Races	33,848,943	705,707	n/a	n/a
Ethnicity³				
Hispanic or Latino	62,080,044	908,749	4	2
Not Hispanic or Latino	269,369,237	7,722,644	43	12
Age⁴				
18-24	30,225,003	817,784	12	0
25-34	45,079,228	1,156,847	23	2
35-44	43,733,561	1,178,430	9	2
45-54	40,693,717	1,079,930	2	6
55-64	42,815,034	1,121,045	4	3
65-74	33,778,204	855,903	0	2
75+	22,113,810	550,577	0	0
Household Income⁵				
0 - \$49,999	36.5%	31.2%	17	0
\$50,000 - \$99,999	29.6%	27.8%	16	2
\$100,000 - \$149,999	16.3%	17.8%	9	2
\$150,000 +	17.7%	23.2%	6	7
Ability Status⁶				
With a disability	42,485,034	1,045,046	8	4

¹ Source: 2021 ACS 1-Year Estimates

² Source: 2020 DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171)

³ Source: 2020 DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171)

⁴ Source: 2021 ACS 1-Year Estimates

⁵ Source: 2021 ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Table

⁶ Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables

- Many (62%) respondents are enrolled in the MPA program part-time (enrolled in 1-8 credit hours this semester).
- Two-thirds (66%) of survey respondents are continuing-generation college graduates, while 34% are first-generation college graduates.
- Survey respondents report financing their graduate studies using a mixture of funding sources.
 - 47% of respondents self-pay for their graduate programs and/or secure aid that must be repaid (loans, etc.) (35%).
 - 43% of respondents have employer assistance and/or have aid that need not be repaid (grants, scholarships, military funding, etc.) (20%).
- About half (46%) of respondents are between the ages of 25-34, one quarter (24%) are under age 24, 18% are between ages 35-44, and 12% are ages 45 and older.
- Most (80%) respondents and their parents were born in the U.S., while 14% were born in the U.S. with one or both non-U.S.-born parent(s).
- 56% of respondents identify as a woman, 40% as a man, and 4% as non-binary/non-conforming.
- Over half are White (58%), one-third (33%) are Black/African American, and 7.8% are Asian or Asian American. Additionally, 8% of our students are of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.
- 16% of respondents identify as having a disability. These respondents indicated having the following disabilities: cognitive (21%), hearing (7%), learning (36%), psychological (29%), and visual (7%).
- Most (94%) of MPA student respondents are native English speakers.
- About one-third (29%) of respondents have annual household incomes less than \$40k. About one quarter (23%) have annual household incomes between \$40k-69k, 17% between \$70-99k, and 31% have yearly household incomes of \$100k or higher.
- Half (54%) of respondents are from suburban hometowns, one-quarter (28%) are from urban hometowns, and 16% are from rural hometowns.
- About one-third (31%) of student respondents identify as atheists, and 40% as Catholic or Christian.
- A small percentage (4%) characterize their political views as conservative, while one-quarter (27%) characterize their political views as mixed/neutral/independent, and the majority (69%) characterize their political views as liberal.



Grows – Areas for Continued Improvement

- Student survey responses neither agree nor disagree the MPA program is committed to enhancing diversity in terms of ability status (38%), immigration status/national origin (38%), political affiliation (34%), and religious affiliation (44%).
 - There are opportunities for the MPA program to affirm its commitment to diversity in these areas.

- Respondents neither agree nor disagree the program welcomes students who are Middle Eastern or North African (40%), Native American (38%), Pacific Islander (35%), differently-abled (44%), and non-native English speakers (37%).
 - While most respondents agree (68%) the program welcomes students who identify with the aforementioned social groups, a significant number of respondents neither agree nor disagree. There is an opportunity for the program to develop specific strategies to receive and engage these groups.
- While 70% of respondents believe the program has a sense of community among students, 19% disagree.
 - There are opportunities to affirm a sense of belongingness and community among all MPA students.
- Although the overwhelming majority of respondents have not been singled out in class (88%) or heard faculty express stereotypes (80%) based on race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or religious affiliation, some do report having been singled out because of their social identity (8%) or being stereotyped by faculty (12%).
 - This suggests there may be a need for additional bias and sensitivity training for program faculty.



Glows – Current Program Strengths/Successes

- Most survey respondents agree the MPA program encourages students to have a public voice and share their ideas openly (76%), fosters inclusion among racial/ethnic groups (72%), has campus administrators who regularly speak about the value of diversity (80%), promotes the appreciation of cultural differences (78%), respects the expression of diverse beliefs (76%), and is committed to diversity (82%).
- Respondents agree the program is committed to enhancing diversity among people of various ages (79%), genders (75%), races/ethnicities (87%), sexual orientations (76%), and social backgrounds (71%).
- Students also generally agree that the program is welcoming to Asian (65%), Black/African American (75%), Latino/American (67%), English speakers (88%), female (79%), male (83%), non-cis-gendered (71%), and LGBTQ+ (77%).
- Most respondents agree the program is caring (83%), communicative (85%), friendly (92%), and respectful (92%).
- Respondents also believe the program's culture is **NOT** ableist (63%), ageist (76%), homophobic (86%), racist (86%), sexist (86%), xenophobic (80%), or prejudiced against religious beliefs (75%).
- It appears respondents have had positive classroom experiences and engagement with program faculty. Respondents agree (89%) that instructors create an atmosphere of fairness, equity, and respect in which they are comfortable sharing their perspectives.

NASPAA Diversity Standards

The equity, diversity, and inclusion plan for VCU Wilder School's Master of Public Administration program addresses the following NASPAA diversity standards:

- **Standard 3.2 Faculty Diversity:** The program will promote equity, diversity, and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, retention, and support of faculty members.
- **Standard 4.4 Student Diversity:** The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, admissions practices, and student support services; and
- **Standard 5.1 Universal Required Competencies:** To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

To promote diversity among MPA faculty, students, and alumni; to ensure that our graduate students and alumni can effectively engage with a diverse and changing society; and to foster a climate of inclusiveness at Virginia Commonwealth University, we are committed to following goals and strategies to continuously improve the diversity and culture of the MPA program.

Standard 3.2 – Faculty Diversity

Goal for Faculty Diversity: The MPA program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusion through its recruitment and retention of faculty members.

Faculty Diversity Strategies: The program will utilize resources available from the Provost to focus on recruiting underrepresented faculty and actively participate in professional development activities promoting cultural competency.

Faculty Diversity Outcomes

VCU Organizational Culture and Climate Survey

The Office of Institutional Equity, Effectiveness, and Success monitors and reports on the university's progress toward a more diverse and inclusive culture and climate. Major academic and administrative units are assessed every 18 months and are rated and ranked based on their performance on three indices: diversity index⁷, inclusion index⁸, and engagement index⁹. These data are used to determine

⁷ The *Diversity Index* consists of three main factors: compositional diversity (faculty and/or staff reflect our overall student population), representational equity (leadership is representative of gender/gender identity diversity), and system diversity (policies, practices, priorities and procedures reflect a commitment to diversity and inclusion).

⁸ The *Inclusion Index* consists of four main factors: cooperative environment (leadership encourages communication and collaboration), empowering environment (faculty and/or staff have the resources and support to excel), fair environment (faculty and/or staff are treated equitably and fair, and open environment (leadership supports diversity in all ways).

⁹ The *Engagement Index* consists of three main factors: intrinsic work experience (faculty and/or staff share feelings of motivation and competency regarding roles in the workplace), leaders lead (faculty and/or staff

whether academic and administrative units meet expectations for a more diverse and inclusive culture and climate. According to the [VCU Organizational Culture and Climate Survey 2021 Rankings](#), the Wilder School is ranked 9th overall using the Diversity Index (3.25), Inclusion Index (3.88), and Engagement Index (4.10). As the public administration program continues to improve efforts that advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, our strategic goal is to rise above the administrative units and divisions at Virginia Commonwealth University. In the MPA program, we know that diversity drives excellence by demonstrating empathy and kindness among faculty, staff, and students, by building community across academic programs and student services, by implementing a human-centered approach to civil rights, by leading the accessibility charge to ensure accessibility across our program and our campus, by bringing our positive attitude to making change and to making VCU better, by supporting new policies to support pregnancy and parenthood, and by inspiring students and faculty to do their own research to understanding Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC).

I. Recruitment

As a preeminent national, urban, public research university and academic health center, Virginia Commonwealth University is committed to organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion – an environment where all can thrive in their pursuit of excellence. VCU demonstrates its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through several initiatives, including an NSF ADVANCE-IT grant to increase the recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority (URM) faculty in STEM disciplines and iCubed, a multi-faceted program designed to recruit URM faculty to collaborate with community partners in transdisciplinary cores to develop promising solutions that enhance the vitality of urban communities. Wilder School faculty are actively engaged in both initiatives.

The L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at VCU has over 40 full-time faculty. It is currently ranked #39 among Public Affairs graduate programs by U.S. News and World Report, which places us in the top 15% of more than 250 schools across the United States. Our mission includes engaging students and leaders to understand and solve challenges in our world, advancing research that informs public policy and decision-making to improve our communities, and collaborating with communities through innovative partnerships to enhance the quality of life. In addition to the Master of Public Administration degree, we offer academic degrees in urban planning, criminal justice, homeland security and emergency preparedness, and a doctorate in public policy and administration. We also advance research and training through several of our centers and institutes. Our location in Richmond, the capital of the Commonwealth of Virginia, combined with our proximity to Washington, DC, provides numerous opportunities for engaged scholarship, teaching, and community service activities.

The Wilder School is committed to faculty diversity, including the namesake of our school, The Honorable L. Douglas Wilder, 66th Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation's first elected African American Governor, Virginia's first black lieutenant governor, Virginia's first African-American state senator since Reconstruction, and the first popularly-elected Mayor of Richmond, the former capital of the Confederacy, in decades. He is an African-American whose grandparents were enslaved and a veteran who received a Bronze Star in the Korean War. Governor Wilder is a distinguished

perceive integrity among leadership), and supervisor's support (faculty and/or staff's interpersonal relationships with supervisor includes trust, respect and support).

professor of government and public affairs and is actively involved in the programming and operations of the school, where he regularly lectures or serves as a guest/keynote speaker and attends conferences and hosts events. Additionally, the leadership of the Wilder School is also diverse. Within the Wilder School's Dean's office, all four administrative officers are female, and 75% are African American. Governor Wilder's legacy of social justice and the Wilder School's commitment to racial equity under the leadership of the Dean's office attract many scholars and researchers interested in social equity.

When recruiting new faculty members, the MPA program uses best practices to [post](#) and [advertise](#) job announcements when recruiting tenure-track, non-tenure-track, and adjunct faculty. For example, as part of its Racial Equity Action Plan, the Wilder School uses Recruiting Inclusive Champions (RIC) allyship to assist with hiring and onboarding. Wilder School human resources staff also provides committee members with guidelines that clarify and align search and screen practices with [VCU's Faculty Search Process](#), electronic documents on [inclusive search tips](#), and requires all committee members to complete central H.R.'s mandatory university-wide online search committee training for creating a successful, diverse, and inclusive search process at VCU before beginning their appointment as a committee member. Other practices include but are not limited to requiring applicants to submit a statement of contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion, providing access to additional implicit bias training for search committee members through VCU's online home for learning, performance management, and career development, and having committee members document and submit their procedures to human resources to improve process equity.

During our self-study year, the program welcomed three new faculty: RaJade Berry-James¹⁰, Eric Campbell¹¹, and Anthony Starke¹². Of the three new faculty, two (2) are male, one (1) is female, 100% are African-American/Black, one (1) is tenured, one (1) is tenure-eligible, and one (1) is non-tenure eligible, two (2) are academically qualified and one (1) is professionally qualified. This new faculty cadre features demographic representation from underrepresented groups and diverse perspectives and professional experiences. Dr. Berry-James is tenured and academically qualified. She serves as Professor and Senior Associate Dean of Faculty and Academic Affairs, building on her many years of expertise in social equity, research methods and analysis, program evaluation and assessment, and accreditation. Mr. Campbell is non-tenure eligible, professionally qualified faculty¹³ and joins the MPA program as Senior Practitioner-in-Residence after spending over 20 years in various positions in Virginia's local government. Dr. Starke is an academically qualified, tenure-eligible Assistant Professor of Public Administration, contributing his expertise in race and public policy, public administration theory, and social equity to the Wilder School's MPA program.

II. Retention

¹⁰ Her official title is Senior Associate Dean of Faculty and Academic Affairs. She joined us as a tenured professor.

¹¹ We use the term "faculty" broadly throughout the report. Technically, the official title for Eric Campbell is Senior Practitioner in Residence. This is a UAP (University and Administrative Professional) position. However, Professor Campbell's job description fulfills all the functions of a full-time faculty member in our program and meets the definition of a nucleus faculty. Therefore, when referring to professor Eric Campbell, we use the term "faculty". And he is a nucleus faculty member in our MPA program.

¹² He joined us a tenure-track assistant professor and is part of the nucleus faculty.

¹³ Again, we use the term "faculty" broadly as he fits the definition for "nucleus faculty" for our MPA program.

Over the last five years, the MPA program has had two long-serving faculty retire (Wooldridge and Stutts) and has added four new full-time hires(Berry-James, Campbell, Evans, and Starke). These new hires were made to account for these retirements and invest in the program's growth and advancement. The MPA program has seven nucleus faculty members.

Table 3: MPA Faculty Retention, 2018-2023

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Tenure-track	-	-	1**	1	2**
Tenured	5	5*	4	4	5**
Professional (non-tenure)	2	2	2	2*	2**

Notes: * indicates retirement; ** indicates new hire

III. Culture of Inclusion

Senior members of the Wilder School faculty welcome and support new colleagues by serving as informal mentors. Wilder School faculty mentors help new faculty navigate onboarding challenges and prepare for promotion and tenure. New faculty are assigned two senior faculty mentors: program faculty and Wilder School non-program faculty. Salta Liebert served as a mentor to Anthony Starke during the SSY. Dr. Liebert also served as a program faculty mentor to Lindsey Evans the year before SSY.

During the SSY, Anthony Starke participated in the NASPAA Next pre-conference workshop. The workshop provides emerging department or program leaders with practical tools that will enable them to become more engaged and dynamic members of their campuses and communities. The 2022 NASPAA workshop theme was *Addressing Racialized MPP/MPA Programs*.

In the two years before SSY, the Wilder School co-facilitated the 2020 NASPAA Next pre-conference workshop. The workshop focused on "Building the Civic Square: Centering Racial Equity." The three workshop sessions explored: Centering Racial Equity in Public Affairs Research; Ensuring Equity & Access in Student Engagement, Experiential Learning, and Career Development; and, Principles and Practices that support successful engagement with Minority Communities.

That same year, Lindsey Evans was a member of the 2020 Class of NASPAA Next.

Standard 4.4 – Student Diversity

Goal for Student Diversity: The MPA program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, admissions practices, and student support services.

Student Diversity Strategies: The MPA program will secure available resources from the university to support its diversity recruitment efforts; the MPA program will use its dedicated appropriation for student diversity to provide financial assistance to underrepresented students; and the MPA program will target recruitment to outlets that reach underrepresented students.

Student Diversity Outcomes

I. Recruitment

The MPA program is supported by the Wilder School's Office of Student Success (OSS) and its Director of Recruitment. Specific to the MPA program, OSS offers information sessions for targeted populations (e.g., state and local government staff, alumni networks, and persons in positions eligible for education benefits). Prospective students also have virtual access through perspective student one-on-one with the Wilder School's faculty and staff and/or opportunities to visit MPA classes in-person or online.

Based on responses from the student climate survey, 73% of students are satisfied with the demographic diversity of the MPA student body, and 63% agree that publications accurately reflect student diversity.

Additionally, the program has partnered with the Department of African American Studies to offer undergraduate students a 4+1 degree with a general focus on African American Studies and a concentration in Public Administration, culminating in Bachelor of Arts and Master of Public Administration degrees effective fall 2023. Dr. Starke will serve as affiliate faculty in the Department of African American Studies. The program will continue to seek opportunities to partner with other VCU academic departments to create MPA degree pathways when possible.

Additionally, the Wilder School has developed a strategic relationship between the Public Policy & International Affairs (PPIA) Program and the NASPAA to recruit exceptionally talented students. The school's flagship initiatives are its participation in the PPIA Public Service Weekend and its membership in the PPIA Graduate School Consortium. The first recruits were promising undergraduates from PPIA's established network of more than 4,000 alumni. PPIA alumni are high-achieving students from across the country who receive access to many experiential programs and professional development opportunities, such as Public Service Weekend (PSW), which exposes selected participants to the rewards of a public sector career through an intensive three-day conference. The first Wilder School PSW took place in June 2019 and was an enormous success and attracted two dozen students from 17 states and 21 universities. Highlights of the weekend included a keynote address by Governor Wilder, a Virginia Capitol tour, meetings with alumni, and state and local policymakers. Students also attended professional development workshops hosted by the Wilder School's Center for Public Policy research faculty. The second membership initiative, the PPIA Graduate Consortium, offers participating schools a direct pipeline to exceptionally qualified PPIA alumni through recruitment events and special admission incentives. In exchange, the Wilder School waives application fees for specially qualified recruits and pledges a guaranteed minimum one-time financial award of \$5,000 to accepted students. Though separate initiatives, both are administered by the school's Office of Student Success.

II. Admissions Practices

The MPA admission process considers a broad range of factors beyond undergraduate GPA and standard test scores. Applications are considered holistically. Consideration of diversity in socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, and educational background is given along with an attempt to recognize the potential and talent of each applicant. An applicant's personal statement of purpose, résumé, and references are given appropriate weight in relation to academic achievements and

extracurricular activities. Whenever possible an applicant’s accomplishments, within the context of their socioeconomic circumstances, are considered. Outreach through early communication with accepted applicants (welcome letter, email communication) may reveal financial barriers and other situations, such as navigating the admission process, which can be addressed early in coordination with Student Services and Advising and the Office of Student Services (fellowships, scholarships). The MPA program prides itself in the diversity of its students and that pride is reflected and its admission procedures.

The MPA degree is designed to be a two-year program (four semesters) for a full-time student. However, our program is tailored to accommodate working professionals by offering evening, online, and summer classes, so many of our students choose to pursue their degree part-time, taking one or two courses a semester while working full-time. Applications and admissions statistics for the last five years are presented in the table below.

Table 4: MPA Applications and Admissions, 2018-2022

	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022*
Applications	33	45	58	52	59
Admissions	23	37	55	48	49
Admission Rate	69.7%	82.2%	94.8%	92.3%	83%

*Note: Includes online admissions

III. Student Scholarship and Aid

A key component of the Wilder School's commitment to equity is ensuring access to a quality graduate education. In the MPA program, securing and distributing financial resources to subsidize students' education occurs in several ways, including the Wilder Graduate Scholars Fellowship program, scholarships, and graduate assistantships. The Wilder School's Office of Student Success, which encompasses outreach, recruitment, admissions, and retention, also offers ad hoc and one-time funds to students in need. Specifically, the Wilder School provides emergency grants for students needing non-recurring financial support to cover expenses such as books, fees, etc., that would otherwise prevent successful matriculation. There are also funds earmarked for Wilder School Racial Equity and Action Scholarships that offer financial aid for students completing internships and/or conducting research emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion. These aid packages make it possible for MPA students to overcome financial challenges that may otherwise hinder them from accessing education, pursuing curricular and co-curricular experiential opportunities, and achieving their dream of public service.

Wilder Graduate Scholars Fellowships

Highly-qualified graduate students are also eligible to apply for the Wilder Graduate Scholars Fellowship. This prestigious fellowship provides top full-time students with professional work experience, in-state tuition, and a stipend. Wilder School fellows are placed with employers around the Richmond region each year, including nonprofits, government agencies, and businesses, for a one-academic year appointment. Wilder fellows are expected to work 20 hours a week during the fellowship period.

Since the program's inception in 2006, the Wilder Graduate Scholars Fellowship has placed over 170 Fellows with nearly 50 sponsoring agencies, connecting Wilder School graduate students with more than \$4 million in graduate funding and meaningful professional experiences. During the SSY, all four MPA student fellows were female: three African American/Black and one Asian/Pacific Islander. Since 2006 one hundred and one (101) MPA students have served as Wilder Fellows receiving nearly \$1.7M in aid. Moreover, during that same period, the Wilder Fellows program matched those 101 MPA students with host agencies. Of note is the diversity of the organizations MPA students have served as Fellows. They include local governments, varied state agencies, and nonprofit organizations:

- Bent Ear Solutions
- County of Henrico
- HDAdvisors
- Housing Opportunities Unlimited
- Office of Emergency Preparedness
- Richmond Development and Housing Authority
- Richmond Memorial Health Foundation
- Richmond Region 2007
- The Community Foundation Serving Richmond & Central Virginia
- VA Department for the Aging
- VA Department of Health Professions
- Virginia Department of Corrections
- Virginia Lottery
- VA Department of Housing & Community Development
- VA Resources Authority
- VCU Center on Human Needs
- VCU Development & Alumni Relations
- VCU Development & Donor Relations
- VCU Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute
- VCU Performance Management Group
- VCU Public Policy Training
- VCU Research Institute for Social Equity
- VCU Survey and Evaluation Research Lab
- Virginia Association of Counties
- Virginia State Board of Elections

Table 5: MPA Wilder Fellows, 2006-2023

Academic Year	Number of MPA Student Wilder Fellows	Amount of Funding (Total)
2006-2007	4	\$74,164
2007-2008	2	\$38,208
2008-2009	4	\$81,200
2009-2010	4	\$84,344

2010-2011	2	\$42,672
2011-2012	3	\$65,718
2012-2013	3	\$69,604
2013-2014	7	\$164,517
2014-2015	5	\$119,497
2015-2016	4	\$97,116
2016-2017	4	\$98,572
2017-2018	2	\$55,286
2018-2019	4	\$106,536
2019-2020	4	\$118,344
2020-2021	5	\$144,985
2021-2022	7	\$202,979
2022-2023	4	\$122,600
Total	101	\$1,686,342

Scholarships

In SSY-1, six (6) MPA students received institutional scholarships from the Wilder School totaling \$14,000 (see Table 6).

Table 6: MPA Student Scholarship Recipients, Fall 2022

			Amount
Victoria	Ball	Jeffrey S. Cribbs, Sr. Scholarship in Philanthropy	\$2,000
Diamoneek	Green	Edward E. Willey Graduate Award for Excellence	\$4,000
David	Lansdell	Eva S. Hardy Scholarship in Public Administration	\$2,000
David	Lansdell	Jeffrey S. Cribbs, Sr. Scholarship in Philanthropy	\$2,000
Quinn	Mathlin	Eva S. Hardy Scholarship in Public Administration	\$2,000
Sean	Sukol	Thomas C. and Cathleen C. Burke Scholarship	\$1,000

Lindsay	Welch	Elizabeth Roderick Scholarship in Public Administration	\$1,000
Total	7 Awards to MPA Students		\$14,000

In the same year, an additional eight (8) scholarships totaling \$22,000 were awarded to seven (7) students to take effect beginning Fall 2023 for the 2023-2024 academic year.

Table 7: Fall 2023 MPA Student Scholarship Recipients **Amount**

Sean	Sukol	Excellence in VA Gov't Awards Scholarship	5,000.00
Charles	Miller	Eva S. Hardy Scholarship in Public Administration	2,000.00
Tyrrah	Rock	Eva S. Hardy Scholarship in Public Administration	2,000.00
Stephanie	Collins	VLGMA Temple Scholarship in Public Administration	2,000.00
Henry	Bendon	Edward E. Willey Graduate Award for Excellence	4,000.00
Jessica	Gonzalez	Elizabeth Roderick Scholarship in Public Administration	1,000.00
Katharine	Hines	Thomas C. and Cathleen C. Burke Scholarship	1,000.00
Charles	Miller	Wilder School Racial Equity & Action Paper & Internship	5,000.00
Total	8 Awards to MPA Students		\$22,000

Since 2016, the MPA program has distributed 43 scholarships totaling \$84,100.

Graduate Assistantships

The Wilder School also collaborates with VCU's Graduate School to offer teaching and research assistantships for current and incoming graduate students. Graduate assistants are structurally similar to the Wilder Graduate Scholars Fellowship in terms of deliverables and benefits, except assistantships are made up of a funding mix in which the graduate school offsets the cost of tuition, and the Wilder School designates stipend funds. Graduate assistantships are typically reserved for Wilder School doctoral students, but on occasion, master's students receive G.A. appointments. In SSY,-1, for example, MPA student Sophia Webb received a graduate assistantship appointment in the Wilder School's Office of Student Success totaling \$26,997 in stipends (\$14,000) and tuition benefits (\$12,997).

Funding Trends

Over the last five years, many students received institutional aid and scholarships to support their graduate enrollment. The table below lists the average assistance to full-time MPA students over the previous five years.

Table 8: Average Aid for Full-time MPA Students, 2017-2022

	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Institutional Aid	\$16,773	\$8,811	\$8,316	\$2,918	\$5,137
Grant Aid	\$12,149	\$10,576	\$8,973	\$112,24	\$8,619

Note: Financial aid award data is based on full-time enrollment only.

Standard 5.1 – Universal Required Competencies

Student Learning Goal: The program will engage in curricular and co-curricular strategies to expose students to diverse perspectives.

Student Learning Strategy: Faculty in the MPA program may include diverse perspectives through course content, faculty engagement, or service-learning opportunities.

Student Learning Outcomes:

I. Academy and Professional Associations

The Wilder School has made significant and strategic investments in several leading professional organizations, including the American Society for Public Administration, Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration, the National Academy of Public Administration, Virginia Local Government Management Association, the Association of Public Policy Analysis and Management, the Journal of Social Equity and Public Administration, and the Conference of Minority Public Administrations, to name a few. In addition to financial sponsorships, Wilder School faculty contribute extensively to these organizations' diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts through their participation, service, and leadership.

Participation

[American Society for Public Administration \(ASPA\)](#): Annual Conference on Protecting Democracy for the Next Generation: The Role and Responsibility of Public Administration, several P.A. faculty and graduate students presented at the online conference held March 20-24, 2023. Many, if not all, of the activities faculty engaged in at ASPA, were centered on social equity, diversity, and/or inclusion.

- Dean Susan Gooden moderated a panel, "Live! Racial Equity, COVID-19 and Public Policy: The Triple Pandemic" with MPA faculty presenting (Lindsey Evans and Blue Wooldridge); presented live on the following panels "DEI in the Academy: Redefining Research, Teaching and Service Agendas," and "What I Wish I Knew Six 'Seasoned' Women Reflect on Their Life in the Academy."
- Anthony Starke was a live discussant and presenter on the following panels: "JSEPA: Advancing Racial Healing, Promoting, Social Justice, Reviewing Artifacts," and "SPAE Teaching Symposium."
- RaJade Berry-James presented "Mentors, Sponsors, and Champions: Finding Your People and Support Structures" as a discussant and presented Live! At the ASPA H. George Frederickson Center for Social Equity, a workshop on "Diversity Accountability through the Praxis of Social Equity and Public Administration Leadership," SPAE Teaching Symposium." Her co-authored paper, "Professional Insights and Academic Experiences During COVID-19," was also presented on a panel.
- Salta Liebert, MPA Faculty, presented a co-authored paper, "The Needs of Immigrants for Integration Services: A Comparison of Perspectives for Immigrants and Nonprofits."
- Lindsey Evans, MPA Faculty, was an invited discussant for the live ASPA Conference Student Workshop on Social Equity and presented a paper, "Racial equity, COVID-19 and public policy: The triple pandemic."
- Grant Rissler, an MPA Affiliate Faculty, moderated and presented a recorded session on "Community and Cultural Equity."
- Nakeina Douglas-Glenn, MPA Affiliate Faculty, moderated a recorded session on "Equity and Justice for All: Examining Public Policy Impact."
- Yali Pang, Affiliate Faculty, was a convener and discussant on the recorded session, "Equity and Justice for All: Examining Public Police Impact."
- Blue Wooldridge, MPA Professor Emeritus, presented live as the master of ceremonies for the Nesta M. Gallas Award and Lecture.

[Journal of Social Equity and Public Administration \(JSEPA\)](#): Two MPA students (Elizabeth Harden and Sophie Webb) and three faculty (Susan Gooden, RaJade Berry-James, and Anthony Starke) attended the inaugural Journal of Social Equity and Public Administration 2022 Equity Summit. They were also joined by Distinguished Career Professor and Professor Emeritus Dr. Blue Wooldridge and several Wilder School alumni.

- Dean Gooden delivered the keynote address, "Equity in Administration: A Global Challenge, " addressing global inequities.
- Berry-James moderated a panel session entitled "Black Women Been Knew: Understanding Intersectionality to Advance Justice."
- Starke served as a panelist and discussed the historical traditions contextualizing how Black women have remained resilient despite systematic racism and injustice.

As a key sponsor of the JSEPA, the Wilder School centered social equity challenges in public administration, it intentionally engages in co-curricular activities that support faculty engagement and student learning opportunities.

[Social Equity Leadership Conference \(SELC\)](#): In the SSY, several faculty and students presented their research and participated on panels at the [2023 Social Equity Leadership Conference \(SELC\)](#) on June 12 – 14, 2023, hosted by the University of Kansas in Kansas City, KS. The conference program includes Wilder School in-person presenters and all paper authors, including:

- Philip J. Rutledge Award Winner – Susan T. Gooden, Dean and Professor, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, Virginia Commonwealth University
- "We Vote with Our Feet: Voices and Choices of URM Students" panel in Concurrent Session 2, organized and convened by RaJade Berry-James with several VCU Doctoral Students (Amidu Kolokoh and Keandra Davis)
- "Racial Equity, COVID-19, and Public Policy: The Triple Pandemic" panel in Concurrent Session 3, convened by Susan Gooden and VCU panelists (RaJade Berry-James, Curtis Brown, Nakeina Douglas-Glen, Blue Wooldridge, and Elsie Harper-Anderson)
- "Looking Back to Look Ahead: The Journal of Social Equity and Public Administration" panel convened in Concurrent Session 5 with VCU panelists Susan Gooden.

In the year before the self-study (SSY-1), several faculty and students also attended the 21st Annual Virtual Social Equity Leadership Conference hosted by the University of San Francisco on June 8 – 10, 2022. The conference program includes the following Wilder School online presenters and all paper authors:

- "Ensuring Language Access Equity and Leadership in Virginia Services" moderated by Wilder School doctoral student (Sombo Muzata) and MPA adjunct faculty (Nakeina Douglas-Glenn and Yali Pang), MPA student (Elizabeth Harden) and doctoral student (Keandra Davis)
- "Academic Research to Support Social Equity through the Intergovernmental System" with discussant MPA adjunct (Nakeina Douglass-Glenn)
- "Guided Discussion: Using Research Opportunities to Graduate Student Competencies in Social Equity" with MPA student panelist (Whitney Brown) and doctoral student (Keandra Davis)
- "Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Public Service Pedagogy" with MPA faculty (Blue Wooldridge)
- "Interdisciplinary & Applied Public Service Pedagogy to Foster Inclusion & Social Equity" with MPA faculty (Lindsey Evans)
- MPA faculty member Lindsey Evans organized a roundtable panel presentation of Wilder School graduate students' social equity research papers on "Criminal Justice and Education Reform: Comparative Social Equity Policy Analyses in the U.S." MPA student presenters included Anthony Burley and LaShae Lambert and graduate students from other Wilder disciplines

II. Guest Lectures

During the SSY, several experts shared their diverse perspectives as guest lectures. These experts include:

- Chad Abresch, Ph.D., Executive Director of CityMatCH, assistant professor, chief of the Division of Child Health Policy, and vice chair of culture for the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. In PADM 691, Dr. Abresch guest lectured on maternal and child mortality and policies affecting women's reproductive rights.
- Shahrin Upoma, Ph.D., is a President's Postdoctoral Fellow in the leadership and management area at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. In PADM 691, Dr. Upoma guest lectured on intersectional perspectives of diversity, equity, and social justice in nonprofit management.
- Kasey J. Martin, Ph.D., is the Branch Chief, Research and Program Evaluation, Innovation Center – Data Analytics Division, Rural Development, United States Department of Agriculture. She is an applied social science researcher who is passionate about social equity. In PADM 625, Dr. Martin guest lectured on her work improving rural Americans' prosperity and quality of life by supporting strategic decision-making through portfolio analysis, technical assistance, and impact measurement of USDA Rural Development investments.

III. Wilder School Institutes and Initiatives

Research Institute for Social Equity (RISE): In 2019, the Wilder School created the new Research Institute for Social Equity (RISE) as a hub for social justice initiatives. RISE was developed to connect community groups, provide advocacy resources and establish professional development experiences to educate and prepare leaders to confront social justice issues. The goal of the Research Institute for Social Equity is to become the national leader in advancing and informing public policy, governance, and practice to improve conditions for marginalized voices within society, including communities of color, LGBTQIA individuals, people with disabilities, incarcerated populations, veterans, survivors of domestic violence and women.

In SSY, RISE has received \$3 million from the Commonwealth of Virginia to expand social equity research, academic scholarship, and public engagement. Several MPA faculty have served as faculty affiliates for RISE, a vital engagement that impacts faculty research, community engagement, and learning in the classroom. Through these efforts, the MPA program has contributed to the real-world in terms of social equity through our Centers and Institutes, such as the Vaccine Equity study, language accessibility, equity in emergency management.

2020 Racial Equity Action Plan: In June 2020, Dean Gooden initiated a town hall meeting for all Wilder School community members. The purpose of this meeting was to join together to check in on each other amidst the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and social unrest and to discuss how members of the Wilder School community could actively contribute to achieving a healthy society. Over 50 faculty, staff, and alumni joined Dean Gooden in a Virtual Wilder School Town Hall on June 5, 2020.

The eradication of racism in the U.S. requires the active cooperation and participation of individuals, organizations, and institutions to examine what works well and where improvements are needed. In response to these complex issues, the Wilder School created the Racial Equity Action Team to develop a plan for anti-racism within the school's infrastructure. Four action teams of 36 volunteers (including MPA faculty and instructors) were created from the Wilder School community. A fifth area, Cabinet Level Priorities, was added. With the assistance of administrators, faculty, staff, students, and alumni,

the Wilder School is actively committed to being a part of the solution to eradicate the problems of institutional racism.

The Wilder School Racial Equity Action Plan was developed to create a framework for eliminating racism within the school's infrastructure. Dean Gooden set an aggressive agenda to move the needle on action. The intent was to work beyond conversations and data gathering, focusing instead on the work that needed to be completed.

The Wilder School Racial Equity Action Plan was formally adopted by the School's leadership in October 2020. The resulting plan outlines five action areas and 17 strategic goals to achieve the school's agenda for advancing racial equity. Goals have been assigned Short-Term, Medium, or Long Term timelines, and progress is monitored via a Dashboard. The action areas include:

- Cabinet Level Priorities
- Student Support
- Teaching & Curriculum
- Research & Scholarship
- Community & Alumni Engagement

The L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs is nationally recognized for its commitment to social equity in our teaching, research, and service. Our faculty, staff, students, and alumni are not bystanders to social injustice and believe we must aggressively contribute to eliminating institutional racism. The Wilder School has a history of devoting resources to diversity, equity, and inclusion issues and programs. The work of our Racial Equity Action Plan will complement and enhance the ongoing work of the School's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee while also involving a much broader group of faculty, staff, students, and alumni working together to improve the Wilder School, our students, and current and future public sector employees and leaders.

Racial Equity, COVID-19, and Public Policy: The Triple Pandemic: In the SSY, as part of the Wilder School Racial Equity Action Plan research priorities, Elsie Harper-Anderson, Jay Albanese, and Susan Gooden co-edited a book volume, "Racial Equity, COVID-19, and Public Policy: The Triple Pandemic," published by Routledge on February 13, 2023. This volume critically examines how many existing areas of racial inequality in the United States rose to the surface due to the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020. Broad and interdisciplinary in its approach, the collection of original research unites faculty from each of the Wilder School's program areas. Several MPA faculty were authors of chapters in the book. In addition, the book includes a foreword from our school's namesake, Governor L. Douglas Wilder.

Action Plan

The mission of the MPA program is to develop creative, principled leaders who understand the demands placed upon local, national, and global public and nonprofit institutions and are equipped with skills in program management and policy analysis. Applying theory and practice, the program addresses complex social problems while advancing collaborative, effective, equitable, and ethical democratic governance.

To support equity, effectiveness, and success, our program faculty have pledged to support the following action strategies:

MPA Program Goal	Strategy	Findings of Self-Study	Wilder School Strategic Goal	VCU Quest 2028
<p>Create pathways to engage Latino/American, Native American, Pacific Islander, differently abled, non-native English, and non-cis-gender researchers/scholars and faculty through guest lectures, visiting scholars, and affiliate faculty appointments.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities to collaborate with other VCU academic units to create MPA degree pathways (e.g., Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies, Religious Studies, International Studies, etc.). Partner with VCU's Global Education Office to establish international partnerships and formalize institutional exchange agreements. 	<p>Respondents generally agree (81%) the program welcomes diverse faculty. Still, some do disagree when it comes to certain groups, namely, Latino/American (13%), Native American (13%), Pacific Islander (7%), differently abled (13%), non-native English speakers (7%), and non-cis-gendered (7%) faculty.</p>	<p><i>Increase strategies to champion diversity, equity, and inclusion in all we do.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance equity and broaden outreach efforts to diverse groups that engage strategies and educational practices. 	<p>Theme 1: Diversity Drives Excellence (DDE) – Champion diversity, equity, and inclusion in all that we do and advance a conscientious drive to support a climate where excellence and success for all people are valued, and differences are celebrated</p>

MPA Program Goal	Strategy	Findings of Self-Study	Wilder School Strategic Goal	VCU Quest 2028
<p>Develop a regularly recurring series of presentations and events that explore policies and current events to engage W.S. community in discussions of their impact on people with disabilities, immigrants and resident non-citizens, political and religious affinity groups.</p>	<p>3. Begin by partner with the Wilder School on their regularly recurring Lunch and Learn – where the MPA program hosts/coordinate one Lunch and Learn a semester</p> <p>4. Cohost events with the Public Administration Student Association on these topics</p>	<p>Student survey responses neither agree nor disagree the MPA program is committed to enhancing diversity in terms of ability status (38%), immigration status/national origin (38%), political affiliation (34%), and religious affiliation (44%).</p>		
<p>Engage in active and targeted recruitment to increase the number of qualified applicants that are disabled, immigrant/non-native, and/or members of affinity (i.e., political, religious) groups.</p>	<p>5. Work with the Wilder School office of recruitment to developed targeted community outreach for specific groups.</p> <p>6. Invite individuals to join live class sessions</p>	<p>Student survey responses neither agree nor disagree the MPA program is committed to enhancing diversity in terms of ability status (38%), immigration status/national origin (38%), political affiliation (34%), and religious affiliation (44%).</p>	<p><i>Increase undergraduate and graduate enrollments through curricular innovation, strengthening our culture of care, and recruiting and retaining faculty and staff.</i></p>	<p>Theme 2: Student Success (S.S.) – Ignite student success through curricular innovation and a holistic culture of care</p>
<p>Engage in active and targeted recruitment to increase representation among Middle Eastern or North African, Native</p>		<p>Respondents neither agree nor disagree the program welcomes students who are Middle Eastern or North African (40%), Native</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase new student enrollments in academic 	

MPA Program Goal	Strategy	Findings of Self-Study	Wilder School Strategic Goal	VCU Quest 2028
American, Pacific Islander, differently-abled, and non-native English speakers.		American (38%), Pacific Islander (35%), differently-abled (44%), and non-native English speakers (37%).	<p>programs and curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen access and opportunity in recruitment, retention and graduation among vulnerable student populations (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status and/or first-generation status) 	
Establish recruitment and admissions practices and engage in programming that recognizes and honors students of different ability status, age, political and/or religious affiliation, and social background.	7. Engage underrepresented communities in targeted recruitment strategies (e.g., political and faith-based groups, social groups and associations).	Although most faculty agree (66%) the program is committed to enhancing diversity, more than 1/3 of survey respondents neither agree nor disagree (30%) on the program's commitment to enhancing diversity in terms of ability status (40%), age (33%), political affiliation (47%), religious affiliation (43%), and social background (40%).		
Increase program faculty participation in ad hoc and ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion training both internally and externally.	8. Secure additional funding for DEI professional development. 9. Incorporate DEI discussions into	Although the overwhelming majority of respondents have not been singled out in class (88%) or heard faculty express stereotypes (80%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase national recognition for teaching excellence. 	

MPA Program Goal	Strategy	Findings of Self-Study	Wilder School Strategic Goal	VCU Quest 2028
	program faculty meetings quarterly.	based on race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or religious affiliation, some do report having been singled out because of their social identity (8%) or being stereotyped by faculty (12%).		
Secure funding and other resources to help the Public Administration Student Association increase its in-person programming.	10. Partner with VA ASPA Chapter and VCU Development and Alumni Relations to co-sponsor networking events.	While 70% of respondents believe the program has a sense of community among students, 19% disagree.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthen alumni engagement in signature initiatives. 	

Appendix for 3.2.2 Current Faculty Diversity Efforts

2023 Project Overview by the Wilder School's
Research Institute for Social Equity starts on the
next page.



VCU Research Institute for Social Equity

L. Douglas Wilder School of
Government and Public Affairs

2023 Project Overview

Governor L. Douglas Wilder Digital Collection and Library

Objective: In partnership with Virginia Union University (VUU), we seek to extend and make readily available the work, continuous career, and life of Gov. Wilder to the greater community and country. Through the digitization of the Gov. Wilder, we will honor and showcase the impact the first African American elected Governor in the United States has had on policies, social equity movement, individuals, and the country.

Commitment: RISE will assist in the initial development of digitizing the collection, obtaining the metadata for the digital collection, building and maintaining the digital library website, and building the digital collection platform housed on VUU library website.

Equity within Housing Programs in Virginia (VCU Quest Fund)

Objective: To address this housing disparity and its consequences, exploratory methods will be used to gather contextual and descriptive information as it relates to Virginia's ability to prevent future evictions (e.g., eviction prevention programs). This exploratory research project, funded by VCU's Quest Fund, will collect preliminary data on three Virginia eviction prevention programs for a future randomized controlled trial study to be submitted to Housing and Urban Development (HUD). There are three aims of this research project: (1) equity within processes and practices, (2) accessibility, and (3) applied research experience for VCU students.

Commitment: RISE will be conducting a mixed method approach to collect data, including secondary data analysis, individual interviews, and a review of policies and procedures. Findings will be disseminated through future grant proposals, publications, and conference presentations.

Girls for a Change

Objective: To understand the assets of Black Girls in Richmond and their peers to provide a broader narrative about their lived experiences. As a result, the proposed report will raise awareness about the quality of life of Black girls. In addition, this empirical-based report will benefit future offerings of GFAC and Black girls across Richmond by contributing an asset-based perspective to the body of research on Black girls.

Commitment: RISE is creating a status report of the quality of life of Black girls in Richmond using Girls For A Change (GFAC)'s girl-centered programs as a vehicle for exploration.

Hazard Risk Reduction in Historically Marginalized Communities

Objective: To develop actionable strategies and identify grant opportunities to mitigate or prevent the negative impact of degraded critical infrastructure on marginalized communities due to climate change and extreme weather events. The project will collect and analyze hazard impact information to create data packages to support the development of hazard mitigation grant applications to prioritize the protection of historically marginalized communities located near and around critical infrastructure in the Richmond, VA metropolitan area.

Commitment: RISE will support this grant funded opportunity by coordinating community engagement efforts to collect and analyze data on climate change, critical infrastructure, environmental justice, and disaster resilience efforts within historically marginalized communities.

Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI): Increasing Success of Transfer and Minority Students in STEM

Objective: To increase the success and retention of transfer students (specifically those from community colleges) into STEM fields at VCU, with a specific focus on non-traditional students. By non-traditional we mean individuals who self-identify as Black or African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Black African, Jamaican, Indigenous (i.e., Hawaiian, Native American, Pacific Islander), Middle Eastern or North African) and first-generation students. The grant's goals are to increase inclusive teaching practices as well as develop successful transfer systems and after-transfer supports for students using an equity lens.

Commitment: RISE is involved in evaluating initiatives with a focus on inclusive teaching.

VDSS SAVES Grant

Objective: To (1) facilitate the implementation of domestic violence safety policies, procedures, and outreach activities to enhance safety for victims of domestic violence in the child support program; (2) increase access to child support services for parents not currently receiving child support due to safety concerns; (3) develop, test, and implement model practices for safe access to child support and parenting time services.

Commitment: RISE is working with the Virginia Department of Social Services's Division of Child Support Enforcement, to create a process map of their child support, paternity and parenting time services with the goal of revising policies and protocols and developing survivor-informed, good cause protections.

Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRCWH)

Objective: To provide support to increase the success of early-stage faculty candidates whose research focuses on health care for women and underrepresented minorities. This project will implement a novel, interdisciplinary mentoring approach matching scholars with mentors who will bring varied perspectives to the scholars' research and career development.

Commitment: RISE is involved in evaluating initiatives associated with this grant

ADVANCE VCU

Objective: To increase recruitment, retention and advancement of underrepresented female faculty in STEM departments at VCU. By underrepresented female faculty we mean individuals who self-identify as Black or African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Black African, Jamaican, Indigenous (i.e., Hawaiian, Native American, Pacific Islander), Middle Eastern or North African). The grant's goals are to increase DEI within VCU policies and procedures related to recruitment, retention, and advancement, as well as deliver three programs focused on increasing DEI within departments (i.e., Council of STEM Chairs, Female Faculty PODs, ITC workshops).

Commitment: RISE is involved in evaluating initiatives associated with this grant.

3.2.2 Appendices Continued.

Timeline of the JPSEPA Journal

