

UNIONITE



VIRGINIA UNION UNIVERSITY

WINTER 2012 / UNIVERSITY NEWS

CONVERSATION
WITH
THE ELDERS
PAGE 10

HOMECOMING
2011
PAGE 14

TOM HARRIS
DEDICATION
PAGE 20

BREAKING NEW GROUND
THE LIVING AND LEARNING CENTER AT VUU

VUU From The President

Dear Alumni and Friends of Virginia Union University:

Long term progress at our university is sustained by the engagement of our major constituents with a common set of goals guided by a shared vision for the future. The work and commitment of our Board of Trustees, alumni, friends, faculty and staff have served as the foundation to lead us towards limitless possibilities. On behalf of the university family, we are most grateful.

This is an exciting time to be a "Panther." The articles in this edition of the Unionite tell our story. The Robert J. Brown Living and Learning Center will be the first new construction on VUU's campus in 15 years. The Center will address the University's goals of invigorating academic programs, improving the quality of life for students, and enhancing VUU's efforts to positively impact

the adjoining community. The concept of the Robert J. Brown Living and Learning Center will focus on connecting the new living accommodations with a learning environment that will embrace a holistic community model. The Community Conference Center portion of the building will provide a flexible and high tech atmosphere where students can engage in extended learning opportunities in individual and group settings and have access to electronic resources in the library and other subscribed locations around the country. The facility will also provide a venue for small and large group conferences that are curricular related, student leadership forums, and/or community based endeavors.

Mr. Brown's pledge to the University in support of the construction of the Living and Learning Center, as well as the gifts and pledges of others towards this building are tangible votes of confidence in the direction in which Virginia Union is heading.

The pages of this magazine will give you a brief glimpse into the life and work of your university. Enjoy the articles. Come visit your campus. Tell the VUU story! Great things are happening at your university!

Claude G. Perkins

Claude G. Perkins, Ph.D.

President





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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CAMPUS BRIEFS

DMV 2 Go	4
STEM Initiative	5
62nd Annual John Malcus Ellison Convocation	6
Kappa Eta Chapter of Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society Induction	7
Graduate School/University Career Fair	8
Dominion Explosion	9

COVER STORY

Living Learning Center	12
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FEATURES

Conversation with the Elders	10
Homecoming	14
Bells for Peace	18
Tom Harris Dedication	20

ATHLETICS

Twins Pack Twice the Punch	22
Basketball Schedule Men's and Women's Teams	24

FACULTY NEWS

Faculty Profiles	25
Dr. Willis Barnett	26
Dr. Shaheen Islam	28
Faculty and Staff Updates	29

ALUMNI NEWS

Andre Hudson	30
Reverend Tyrone E. Nelson	32
In Memoriam	33

UPCOMING EVENTS

Calendar	35
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VUU needs your commitment and support. To make an ongoing difference in the lives of our students, contact the Division of Institutional Advancement at 804.342.3938 or use the envelope enclosed in this issue for your convenience.



DMV's mobile customer service center – **DMV 2 Go** – made its debut at Virginia Union University on Tuesday, November 29, offering another convenient method for college students and university faculty and staff to do their DMV business. DMV held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the new partnership. A number of local dignitaries including Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones, Senator Henry Marsh, Delegate Jennifer McClellan, Delegate Betsy Carr, City Council President Kathy Graziano and VUU President Dr. Claude Perkins attended the ribbon-cutting event and delivered remarks.



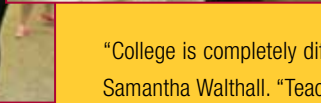
Elected officials toured DMV2Go with Dr. Perkins. Mayor Jones took the opportunity to renew his driver's license.



Virginia Union University's (VUU) Center for the Study of the Urban Child and the African American Lecture Series Committee held a lecture featuring Professor **Michelle Alexander**, a highly acclaimed civil rights lawyer and author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, on September 26, 2011. Professor Alexander is a graduate of Stanford Law School and Vanderbilt University. Her book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, challenges the wisdom that with the election of President Obama, our nation has "triumphed over race." Alexander argues in her book that the sudden dramatic mass incarceration of African American men, through the War on Drugs, has created a new racial under caste.



The Fine Arts Department presented their first production of the academic year – **Big Momma N 'Em** in October. The play was directed by Cheryl Williams, Chair of the Fine Arts Department.



STEM

Picture this... An all expenses paid, all-inclusive, 4-week experience that offers great food; access to the Tricky Tom Harris Fitness center; an opportunity to learn from brilliant professors in the morning; Zumba dance instruction in the afternoon, and entertainment at night! Sounds pretty good right? Oh, and did we mention the weekend cultural trips to Washington DC, museums, and theatres? Not only is all of this FREE, participants get paid \$200 a week to be a part of the program. Sound too good to be true? Not for the 13 VUU freshmen who participated in the **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) Initiative** this summer on VUU's campus, funded by MeadWestvaco. The program was developed in hopes of attracting more students in the areas of mathematics and science to the University. The Mathematics and Science Departments are areas where VUU is committed to

growth and seeking external funding from partners like MeadWestvaco to achieve it. The STEM project was funded for two years by MeadWestvaco. "The program is designed to prepare students for the rigors of their first year of college with a focus on math and science," said Dr. Phillip Archer, Dean of the School of Science, Mathematics and Technology, "Eligible students will receive scholarships to VUU in the fall". One of the highlights of the program for Dr. Archer was "working with these scholars. They all came to us with very high GPA's and very diverse backgrounds."

"College is completely different from high school –completely different!" said STEM participant Samantha Walthall. "Teachers here expect you to use your common sense and critical thinking skills to figure out how to get something done; whereas high school teachers give you directions and tell you to go do it."



The former Consolidated Bank and Trust Company, now owned by Premiere Bank gifted Virginia Union University with the papers of Consolidated's founder **Maggie L. Walker**, along with several pieces from her art collection. The art and papers will be housed in the L. Douglas Wilder Library. "Consolidated and VUU have had a long lasting relationship, as the university has been one of the banks biggest supporters," said Ms. Doretha Fowlkes, Board Member for Consolidated and Premier.

"We wanted the items placed in an environment where our community would enjoy it," said Darius Johnson, President of Premier Bank. Many of the papers date back to 1903, the beginning and founding of Consolidated Bank and Trust Company, and will be stored in archives at the VUU library. The documents show bank records, transactions, deeds, board meetings and minutes. The papers will be accessible to students, faculty, staff, and the community by Fall 2012.

Clergy from across the country gathered November 14-17 to attend the **62nd Annual John Malcus Ellison Convocation** held by Virginia Union University's Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology (STVU). The theme, "Preaching in Context: Proclaiming the Gospel", allowed for participants to address social, theological and/or ethical issues affecting the church. Worship was led by Minister Keith Armstead. Dr. Audrey Thompson, a 2003 graduate of STVU and Assistant Professor of Homiletics at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and Dr. Boykin Sanders, VUU Pastoral Theology professor, conducted lectures. The morning messages were given by Dr. Selwyn Bachus, a VUU School of Theology graduate. Bachus currently serves as the Senior Pastor of Salem Baptist Church in Omaha, Nebraska. He was recognized as one of the top 20 pastors to watch in the nation by the African-American Pulpit Journal. The community worship was held nightly at Trinity Baptist Church. Dr. Rudolph McKissick, Jr. and Dr. Gina Stewart delivered the messages for the week. Dr. Rudolph McKissick, Jr. is Senior Pastor of Bethel Baptist Institutional Church located in Jacksonville, Florida and a 1990 STVU graduate. Dr. Gina M. Stewart has served as pastor of the Christian Missionary Baptist Church for 13 years and will begin teaching classes for the School of Theology in January 2012. In the future the event will carry the name Ellison Jones Convocation as it was announced that Dr. Miles Jerome Jones' name would be added to "to reflect the contributions of both Dr. Ellison and Dr. Jones," said Dr. James H. Harris, VUU Preaching and Practical Theology professor and Faculty Chair of the now Ellison Jones Convocation. "We think it is appropriate for the convocation to be combined. Ellison was a mentor to Jones and was instrumental in exposing Jones to preaching."



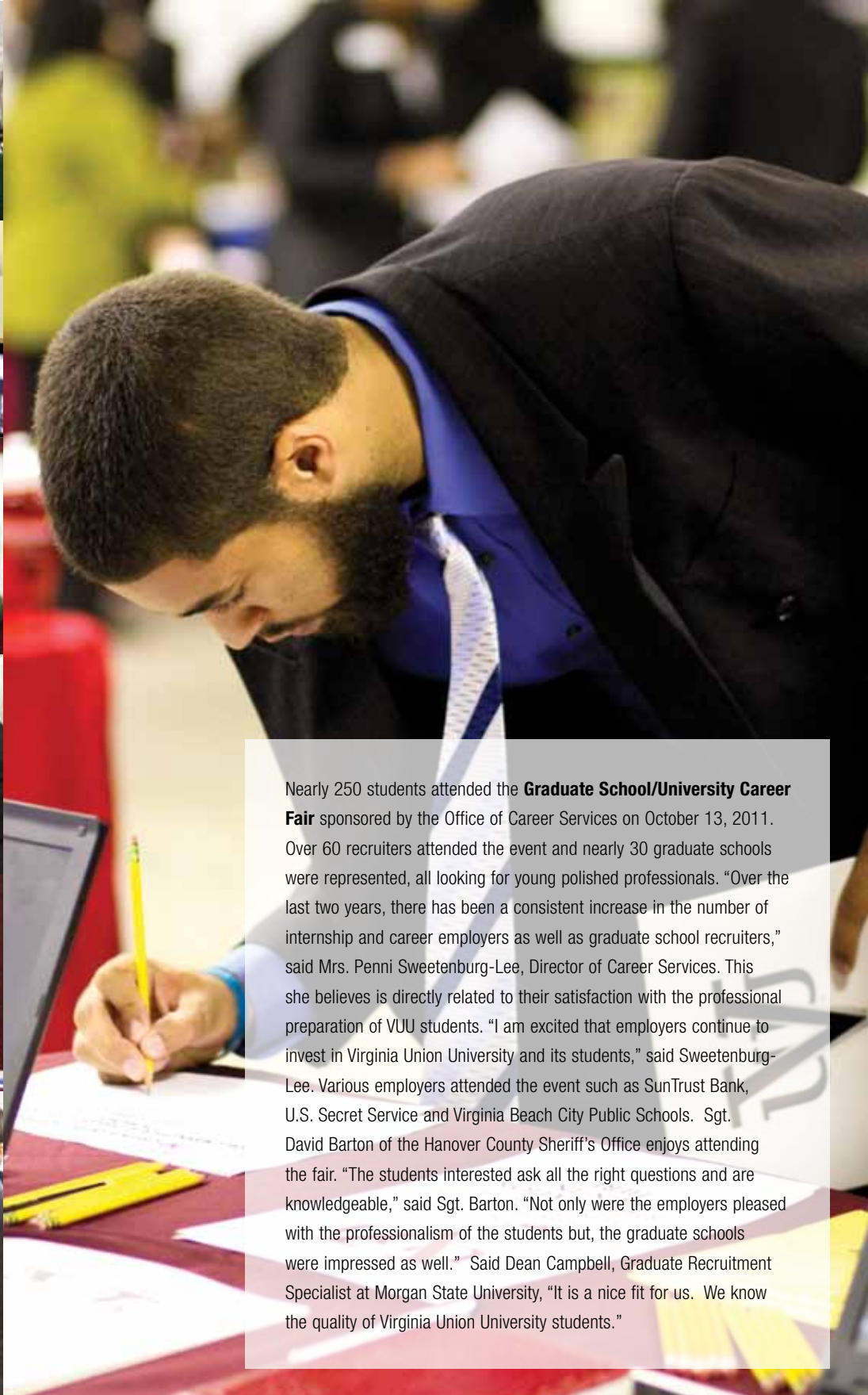
Left- Dr. John Kinney, dean of the School of Theology conducts a session. Middle- Dr. Gina Stewart stirred up the congregation at chapel service. Right- Dr. Allix B. James, 7th President of Virginia Union was in attendance.



The **Kappa Eta Chapter of Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society** inducted 11 new members into the honor society on November 30, 2011. Membership is open to juniors and seniors who have a grade point average of 3.3 or above, and are in the top 10% of their class. After a number of years in inactive status, the Virginia Union University Kappa Eta chapter was reinstated in 2010. The chapter has started a mentoring program to encourage students toward academic excellence; and they have also sent care packages to members of the armed services who are overseas. The new inductees are: Corey Barnett, Tiara Brunson, Ashley Glover, Lela Hatcher, Cheston Hickman, Lillian Ike, Jahtoya Josephat, Emily Piercy, Philip Varnes, Ryan Washington

and Juan Wilson. Guest speaker at the induction ceremony was Shena L. Crittendon, 92, Special Assistant to the President and a past member of the Kappa Eta Chapter.





Nearly 250 students attended the **Graduate School/University Career Fair** sponsored by the Office of Career Services on October 13, 2011. Over 60 recruiters attended the event and nearly 30 graduate schools were represented, all looking for young polished professionals. "Over the last two years, there has been a consistent increase in the number of internship and career employers as well as graduate school recruiters," said Mrs. Penni Sweetenburg-Lee, Director of Career Services. This she believes is directly related to their satisfaction with the professional preparation of VUU students. "I am excited that employers continue to invest in Virginia Union University and its students," said Sweetenburg-Lee. Various employers attended the event such as SunTrust Bank, U.S. Secret Service and Virginia Beach City Public Schools. Sgt. David Barton of the Hanover County Sheriff's Office enjoys attending the fair. "The students interested ask all the right questions and are knowledgeable," said Sgt. Barton. "Not only were the employers pleased with the professionalism of the students but, the graduate schools were impressed as well." Said Dean Campbell, Graduate Recruitment Specialist at Morgan State University, "It is a nice fit for us. We know the quality of Virginia Union University students."



The Office of Career Services sponsored **Dominion Explosion** on November 9, 2011. Executives from departments throughout Dominion VA Power were on hand to review students' resumes, help prepare them for interviews, talk about prospective internship opportunities with the company, and career opportunities. This is the second Dominion Explosion Day held on campus. Dominion's CEO, Paul Koonce, is a member of VUU's Board of Trustees.



A Conversation with the Elders

Dr. Lerone Bennett and Dr. Vincent Harding Visit VUU

Students, faculty and staff at Virginia Union University sat enthralled, listening to living history, when civil rights icon Dr. Vincent Harding and world-renown historian Dr. Lerone Bennett led a dialogue on the campus during Homecoming week.

Sponsored by the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology, Harding and Bennett shared wisdom and engaged the audience in a thought-provoking conversation about the state of African-Americans in the United States, and the future of historically black colleges and universities.



“Predominantly black institutions taught as though their lives depended on it,” said Bennett. “At HBCUs you’re about a life and death decision that most other institutions in this society cannot deal with – the great art of teaching black children and saving their lives.”

Added Harding, “Black colleges teach blacks to transform the world.”

These two elders have in their own ways transformed the world – Born in Harlem on July 25, 1931, Vincent Harding was a trusted advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a theologian, historian and nonviolent activist. Known for his wisdom on contemporary divisions and confusions, Harding says America is still a developing nation when it comes to democratic encounter across real difference. But he finds hope in the young people he’s been bringing into creative contact with civil rights elders for decades. They are his answer to the question that drives him: “Is America possible?”



Dr. Lerone Bennett is perhaps best known as the long time editor of Ebony Magazine and for the most comprehensive history of African-Americans in America, *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America*. Born in Mississippi in 1928, Bennett attended Morehouse College and considers it the center of his academic development. A series of articles originally published in Ebony resulted in Bennett’s seminal work. Before the Mayflower, with its comprehensive examination of the history of African Americans in the United States, gave Bennett a reputation as

a first-rate popular historian. In his eight subsequent books, Bennett has continued to document the historical forces shaping the black experience in the United States. His other works include, *What Manner of Man?*, *Pioneers In Protest* and *The Shaping of Black America*. His written work deftly explores the history of race relations in the United States as well as the current environment in which African Americans strive for equality.

The current political climate and economic downturn in the United States precipitated many of the questions Harding and Bennett were asked during their appearance. In response to a theology student’s question about what kind of difference young people can make in the world, Bennett responded, “Do something where you are. Everyone is responsible for their own space.”

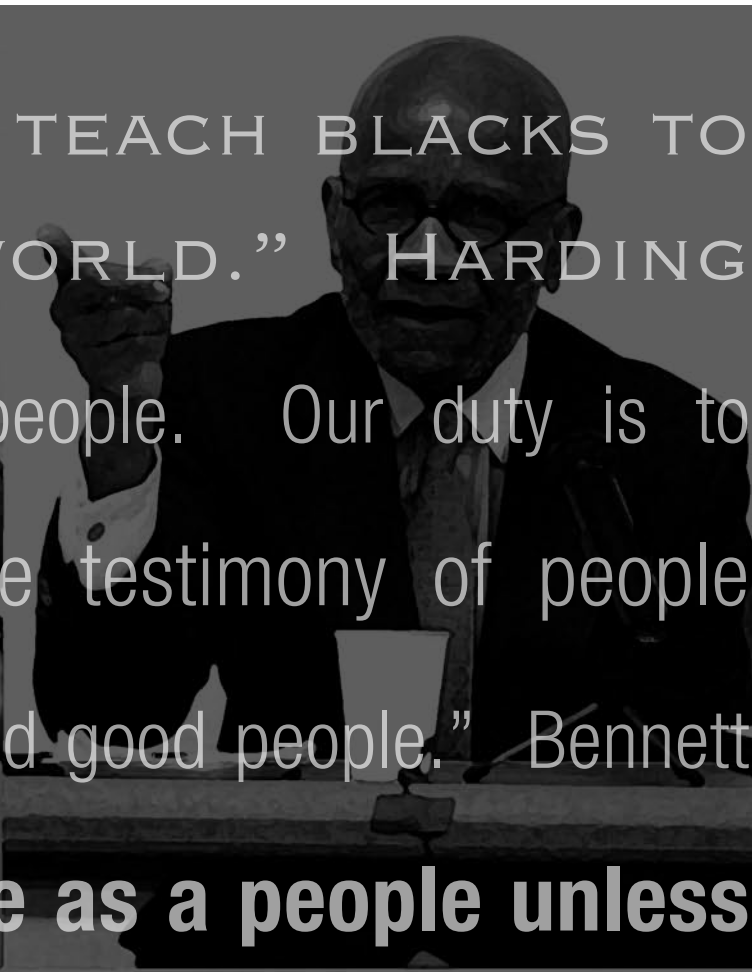
Harding chimed in saying, “What do Black young people have to do now? Who is going to decide what your role is now? A lot of time it is easier not to know... to not ask, ‘What’s my purpose in life?’ We have no future as a country – we have no future as a people unless some of you are willing to get off of your beaten paths and be willing to be sent in another direction.”

“The pundits talk about us being in crisis”, said Bennett, “and I don’t disagree, but I recall that the Japanese symbol for the word crisis literally means a time of great danger and a time of great opportunity. We’re not going to do very well in this challenging century before us if we don’t have more institutions like this one (Virginia Union University).”

Even with all the challenges, the historians left with astute insight and perception. “We’re probably in the worst situation we’ve ever been in. Everything bad is happening to us. I don’t think I’ve ever lived in America at a time where there’s more confusion in Black leadership, Black organizations, Black students,” said Bennett, “But against that background, remember, by all odds we should have been destroyed in the slave trade; by all odds we’ve survived everything that’s been thrown against us. We’re an extraordinary people. Our duty is to survive and warrant the testimony of people who said we’re a great and good people.”




“BLACK COLLEGES TEACH BLACKS TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD.” HARDING



We're an extraordinary people. Our duty is to survive and warrant the testimony of people who said we're a great and good people.” Bennett

“ ...we have no future as a people unless



some of you are willing to get off of your beaten paths and be willing to



be sent in another direction.” Harding

“Do something where you are. Everyone is responsible for their own space.” Bennett

VUU to Name Living and Learning Center for Robert J. Brown

A member of the Virginia Union University Board of Trustees has pledged \$2 million to the University toward building a Living and Learning Center on the campus.

Robert J. Brown, is a former Special White House Assistant in the Richard Nixon administration, and the founder, chairman and CEO of B&C Associates, a successful management consulting, market research and public relations firm specializing in reputation management and image enhancement located in High Point, NC. His pledge of \$2 million is the largest gift (excluding bequests) from a single donor to the University in its history.

Brown, who attended Virginia Union for a year, said he was “inspired” during his time as a student at the University. “I had to leave for family reasons, but during my time at Virginia Union I got such a solid foundation. I met and was inspired by people who genuinely cared about my well-being. Virginia Union has been in my heart for many years and when I look around here and

see the amazing accomplishments that are happening, I can’t help but want to continue to contribute to this success story.”

“Mr. Brown’s gift is but one example of Virginia Union’s resurgence and the belief in our ability to do great things here,” said Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, chairman of the VUU Board of Trustees. “Virginia Union is flourishing and people are seeing that and want to be a part of it. We’re excited about the future at VUU.”

Added Dr. Claude Perkins, President of Virginia Union University, “The impact that Virginia Union had on Mr. Brown during his time as a student here, is the same impact that we continue to have on all our students today. He knows how committed we are to providing the best possible experience to our students. Construction of this new facility will add to that. Mr. Brown’s pledge and the pledges of others toward this project are tangible expressions of the confidence people have placed in Virginia Union.”

In recognition of Brown’s gift, the VUU Board of Trustees unanimously approved naming





the new facility, the Robert J. Brown Living and Learning Center. Groundbreaking for the 240 bed facility, with a banquet conference capacity for 450 people is expected to begin in the Fall of 2012.

Brown said he wants his donation to serve as an inspiration to others to give back to their community financially or through the investment of one's time and talent: "It is not how much but how often that matters, giving of one's self is the most important thing."

Left: Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson and Dr. Perkins with Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Brown

Middle: Mr. Brown expresses his appreciation to Virginia Union University.

Right: Board members, Robert Arthur, Jeannie Baliles, Dr. Richardson pictured with Mrs. Cheryl Perkins and Mrs. Arthur.

Top: Architect's Rendering of the Robert J. Brown Living and Learning Center

Robert J. Brown

Four years and two months of incredible are the words Robert J. Brown uses to describe his time working for the Nixon Administration. As President Nixon's special assistant for civil rights, Brown dealt with issues related to civil rights legislation, funding for jobs and inner city housing. He was also responsible for promoting funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) which caused President Nixon to double aid to black colleges and issue an executive order denying tax deductions for contributions to segregated schools. Today, the importance of his work continues to be felt on the campus of Virginia Union University (VUU)—where Brown was a former student and currently serves on the Board of Trustees.

Brown's recent pledge of \$2 million towards the building of the Living and Learning Center on Virginia Union's campus is just another example of his commitment to HBCUs. While Brown's gift to the university may seem extraordinary, his commitment to education and service has been unwavering. Brown's attitude toward education and service can be attributed to his grandmother who instilled in him the importance of giving. Her words guided his career toward a life of public service. He became a police officer in his hometown of High Point, North Carolina in 1956 and started one of the largest minority-owned public relations firms, B&C Associates, four years later. Brown took a leave of absence from the firm to serve on President Nixon's Administration from 1968 – 1973. In the early 90's he founded South African Booksmart Foundation, which has shipped more than two million books to South Africa.

Brown continues to be a leader in the community and remains active on the boards of High Point University, Boston University (Board of Overseers), National Urban League, Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center Board of Visitors, Horatio Alger Association and the Richard Nixon Foundation. He holds 10 honorary doctorates and multiple awards and achievements.

As the VUU prepares the brick and mortar to build the Living and Learning Center which will be an estimated 68,000 sq. ft. and cost more than \$14 million, they guarantee that Brown's professional legacy will continue to live on. VUU's motto of "The Promise of a Limitless Future" certainly speaks to the path he has taken throughout his career. The naming of the building for Brown will prompt students to ask questions, research his legacy and spark dialogue so that they too can make contributions to education and service in the communities they serve.



HOMECOMING AT VUU

BY JULIAN CARRINGTON '13

Homecoming for Virginia Union students is an annual break from the everyday mundane campus life. It seems as if every year it comes at the right time, just before schedules get so repetitive students can't take it anymore. Greeks prepare with friendly trash talk and diligent practice for epic performances at the annual step show. The football players show a sense of maturity and readiness unnoticed weeks prior with plans to ensure a win for the student body and alumni. Butterflies build as the days before homecoming seem to move slower and slower. It's the time of year that the administration ensures extracurricular activities consume a large portion of students' time. Homecoming gives freshmen the chance to experience a side of Virginia Union they didn't get to see on their campus tour, an opportunity for them to know what Panther Pride is all about, and to observe why alumni and upperclassmen have such a huge love for this small campus. This grand event gives students a reason to join together and cheer on the football team, or represent their hall in the dorm step off. As the football game and tailgating commence a sense of unity overwhelms the campus. Unity that reminds us of the struggle the first graduates of VUU overcame, and strengthens the respect we have for them. With live music and food fresh off the grill there are times one

has to stand back and remind himself he's still on 1500 North Lombardy Street, and hasn't stumbled into the middle of Mardi Gras! For most students homecoming is more highly anticipated than the last and first day of classes combined, and when it's gone it's missed more than our own mother's home cooking.

For alumni homecoming is an even greater occasion. After graduation the college life is over and the real world hits. A trip back for homecoming gives that nostalgic feeling of days once lived. It brings back positive memories of time hanging out in the square or late nights running around the dorms. They get a chance to relive the year the football team won the CIAA Championship or the time their organization captured the step show title. Homecoming is a chance to reconnect two roommates that ended up on opposite sides of the country following graduation. It's the time to have a conversation with their Miss VUU and to see what new heights she has reached. They have an opportunity to tell what secret crushes they had when they were sitting in Dr. Yancey's speech class or Ms. McDonald's English class. Whether old memories being relived, or new memories being made, homecoming brings the Union family together and fills us all with Panther Pride.





Homecoming brings the Union family together and fills us all with Panther Pride.



Bells For Peace

It had rained all day... so hard that the scheduled dedication program for the Bell Carillon in the Vann Tower inside the historic Belgian Building had been forced inside.

November 16, 2011 marked the culmination of a seven year labor of love for Bells for Peace Founder, Dianne Watkins and members of her organization. Founded in 2004, the organization had worked tirelessly to bring the melodic sound of bells to Virginia Union University. The Building's original carillon rings from Hoover Tower at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California. A bell tower without bells is like a larynx without vocal chords. It is without a voice, mute, speechless. Back in 1939, at the New York World's Fair, the Belgian Pavilion bell tower was downright garrulous with the full-throated voice of a 35-bell carillon. But as the Fair came to an end, the carillon sounded with less frequency. By the early 1940s the bells in the tower were silenced. They were surgically removed, and the tower, a hollow core, was shipped, along with a good portion of the building, to Virginia Union University. The structure with the voiceless bell tower would come to be known simply as the Belgian Building. Virginia Union's Belgian Friendship Building, once the Belgian Pavilion of the 1939 NY World's Fair, is listed as a National Treasure by the Department of Interior, and a landmark by the Virginia Landmarks Commission.

Against this historic background, Bells for Peace raised \$25,000 to install the electronic carillon inside the Vann Tower. Hundreds of supporters and invited guests showed up at the dedication ceremony to acknowledge this gift to the University, including Ambassador Herman Portocarero, Consul General of Belgium; Kathryn Hausman, President of the Art Deco Society, New York, and a delegation from the African country of Gabon.

"The Belgian Building is a national landmark," said Watkins. "It's a Virginia treasure. It was a gift from an international entity. And it was my uncle (VUU's first African-American President, Dr. John Ellison) who raised the funds to bring it to Richmond. Restoring the bells to the tower, so long mute, is just another symbol of the revival of this university. It's the bells, but it's beyond the bells. It's the bells, the building and using that leverage to help promote a renaissance in educational excellence at Virginia Union."

And so at the dedication ceremony as each invited dignitary and members of the Bells for Peace Foundation spoke about the significance of Belgian Building, the crowd made their way onto the balcony of the Henderson Center.

At exactly two o'clock, the clouds parted, the sun shone, and the beautiful peals of Amazing Grace were heard on the campus and throughout the Northside of Richmond... a beautiful benediction and endorsement of the tireless work of Bells for Peace.





“Restoring the bells to the tower, so long mute, is just another symbol of the revival of this university. It’s the bells, but it’s beyond the bells. It’s the bells, the building and using that leverage to help promote a renaissance in educational excellence at Virginia Union.”

— Dianne Watkins

VUU Names Fitness Center in Honor of Coaching Legend

Thomas Harris arrived on the campus of Virginia Union University in 1950 and became virtually a one-man athletic department, coaching football, basketball, baseball, tennis, track and golf. During his “spare time”,



Coach Thomas Harris

he served as Athletic Director. Through the course of his remarkable tenure at Virginia Union, he influenced hundreds of young men and women. Those former players showed up on

October 7, 2011 to reminisce and pay tribute to the man known as “Tricky Tom” when Virginia Union honored him by naming the campus fitness center the Thomas “Tricky Tom” Harris Fitness Center.

Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, chair of Virginia Union’s Board of Trustees spoke about the importance of honoring Coach Harris. “Today we come to celebrate Tricky Tom Harris, who was a legend,” said Dr. Richardson. “Without him the athletic department at Virginia Union University would have been non-existent. Without him many young men and women would not have been inspired to reach their heights. It is important that we stop, pay attention, recognize, celebrate, and find ways to affirm the people who made the way for us.”

In a room filled with laughter and shared memories, several of Coach Harris’ former players reminisced about their coach. Barvenia Wooten-Cherry, current Women’s Basketball Coach at VUU, and a member of the 1983 National Championship team, remembered Tricky Tom as her father away from home. “He wanted to give us all the glory”, she said. “He told us he had gotten all he needed. He left a lot of inspiring memories.”

Hall of Fame Coach Dave Robbins spoke about the courage Coach Harris displayed in hiring him, “He caught a lot of flak for hiring me,” said Robbins. “...For four years he was like a father to me, always so helpful. He could decipher a game in a minute...”

Evidence of Coach Harris’ impact is abundant. Dr. Leroy Vaughn, president of the Tom Harris Alumni Chapter and a former football player under Coach Harris described him as “a true original. There will never be another Tricky Tom,” said Vaughn.

In a tribute in 1972, Chancellor John Malcus Ellison said, “His genius is so illusive that he is often described as ‘Tricky Tom’. He prizes defeat as well as victory; for defeat in games or in contests to him is preparation for victory.”

Coach Harris is remembered for having said, “I want to leave [the earth] serving Union.” He was true to



Tom Harris' former players—Hugh Brown, Walter Cowan, Warner Braxton, Barvenia Wooten-Cherry, and his colleague Lou Hearn, fondly reminisced about “Tricky Tom”.

his word. When he died, on February 27, 1982 during the CIAA Women's Championship game in Norfolk, VA, he was 16 minutes away from his second consecutive championship with the women's team. Assistant Coach Lou Hearn completed the game and victory.

Perhaps though, Tricky Tom's legacy is best summed up by the man himself, “The beautiful thing about this job,” he said, “has been watching my boys grow up while they're here, then go out and become a useful part of the world. I believe I've coached more professional people than most coaches. I've coached lawyers, doctors, teachers... and a few hustlers.”

Highlights of Coach Thomas Harris' Career at Virginia Union University

- **Men's Basketball** – Coach Harris' record (1950-74) was 273 victories and 230 defeats. During the time when CIAA teams had to qualify for tournament participation, he led them to the tournament 13 times. He was selected four times as CIAA Coach of the Year. Between 1951-55 he won four CIAA titles.
- **Football** – Coach Harris' (1950-73) record was 98 victories, 83 defeats and 5 ties. In his first season Coach Harris did the improbable – his football Panthers defeated their arch rival Virginia State College for the first time in 17 years.
- **Women's Basketball** – Coach Harris retired from major men's sports in 1974 and as athletic director in 1979. However, that retirement was short lived. The women's basketball team needed a coach and who better to fill that position than Coach Harris.
- When he died, on February 27, 1982 during the **CIAA Women's Championship game**, he was 16 minutes away from his second consecutive championship with the women's team. Assistant Coach Lou Hearn completed the game and victory. Coach Willard Bailey, at the time of Harris' death noted, “He was the greatest innovator I've ever known...”
- Willie Spence, played quarterback for Coach Harris' football teams in the mid 1960s at VUU. “**He would sacrifice a game if he thought it would teach a lesson.** He was more interested in your future as opposed to what was happening right then... He'd take a puff on that cigar of his, say a few words then he'd take another puff... I think that if he could have written a script for his own death, he'd have written it just like it happened. He went out doing what he loved best...influencing young people.”
- “**His nickname was Tricky Tom**, yet he was probably the most honest, straightest dealing man I ever knew,” said legendary Winston Salem State University coach Clarence “Big House” Gaines, prior to his own death. “He loved his work too. I probably had less success against him than any other coach. Yet winning wasn't that important to Tom. It was the association with the kids and everyone else involved he cherished most. Yeah, he may have had slow words, but he had a fast brain.”

Twins Pack Twice the Punch

With only 16 minutes separating them at birth and 15 seconds separating them from first and second place during the Bowie State Challenge on September 21, 2011, the dynamic duo, Tamara and Savannah Gillard are shattering records as members of the Virginia Union University women's Cross Country team.

Eating pasta and discussing strategy the night before a meet are just some of the rituals for the fraternal twins. "Before a cross country race, we'll do a run-out off the line, do a handshake and then we run back," said Tamara. Similar to most twins, the two have their days of dressing alike. "We buy the same clothes," said Tamara. "Everything we get, we get two of," adds Savannah.

Attending college and continuing to run was a must for the Staten Island, New York natives. And they wanted to stay together. "We applied to the same schools, and got into the same schools," said Tamara. The two reached out to VUU's Head Track Coach Wilbert Johnson for the opportunity to attend Virginia Union University and join the team. He checked out their stats and made them an offer to attend.

The transition from high school to college track hasn't been that difficult. The Gillard twins were already disciplined and are becoming familiar with Coach Johnson's style. He believes Tamara and Savannah have the talent to do a lot of things in a lot of different areas in track and field. "They bring unity and the winning edge," said Coach Johnson.



Additional motivation for the twins comes from their cousin, Melvin Lister former member of the USA Olympic Track and Field team. But they also depend on each other for motivation. "We use each other to propel," said Savannah.

As members of the women's cross country team they have big plans and goals, including going to Nationals and the Penn Relays. "This year you can expect a lot of records to be broken," said Tamara. Tamara, marketing major, and Savannah, criminology major, have already made an impression since

joining the team. Their talents helped VUU women's cross country team place seventh out of 17 in the HBCU Classic on Saturday, October 2, 2011.

Both Tamara and Savannah will participate in indoor track and field. According to Tamara, "It's [racing] like a big performance and we like to perform."



With only 16 minutes separating them at birth and 15 seconds separating them from first and second place during the Bowie State Challenge on September 21, 2011, the dynamic duo, Tamara and Savannah Gillard are shattering records as members of the Virginia Union University women's Cross Country team.



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2011-2012 VUU Women's Basketball Schedule

1/16/2012	Johnson C. Smith University (H) Richmond, VA	5:30 p.m.
1/19/2012	Fayetteville State University (H) Richmond, VA	5:30 p.m.
1/24/2012	Shaw University, (H) Richmond, VA	5:30 p.m.
1/26/2012	Virginia State University, (H) Richmond, VA	5:30 p.m.
1/28/2012	Chowan University, (H) Richmond, VA	5:30 p.m.
1/30/2012	Lincoln University (PA) (A), Lincoln University, PA	5:30 p.m.
2/2/2012	Bowie State University (A) Bowie, MD	5:30 p.m.
2/4/2012	Elizabeth City State University, (H) Richmond, VA	5:30 p.m.
2/11/2012	Virginia State University, (A) Petersburg, VA	5:30 p.m.
2/13/2012	Chowan University, (A) Murfreesboro, NC	5:30 p.m.
2/18/2012	Lincoln University(PA), (H) Richmond, VA	5:30 p.m.
2/20/2012	Bowie State University, (H) Richmond, VA	5:30 p.m.
2/23/2012	Elizabeth City State University, (A) Elizabeth City, NC	5:30 p.m.
2/27-3/3/2012	CIAA Tournament, Charlotte, NC	

2011-2012 VUU Men's Basketball Schedule

1/15/2012	Virginia State University, (A) Richmond Coliseum	7:30 p.m.
1/16/2012	Johnson C. Smith University, (H) Richmond, VA	7:30 p.m.
1/19/2012	Fayetteville State University, (H) Richmond, VA	7:30 p.m.
1/28/2012	Chowan University, (H) Richmond, VA	7:30 p.m.
1/30/2012	Lincoln University (A) Lincoln University, PA	7:30 p.m.
2/2/2012	Bowie State University, (A) Bowie, MD	7:30 p.m.
2/4/2012	Elizabeth City State University, (H) Richmond, VA	7:30 p.m.
2/13/2012	Chowan University, (A) Murfreesboro, NC	7:30 p.m.
2/18/2012	Lincoln University (PA), (H) Richmond, VA	7:30 p.m.
2/20/2012	Bowie State University, (H) Richmond, VA	7:30 p.m.
2/23/2012	Elizabeth City State University, (A) Elizabeth City, NC	7:30 p.m.
2/27-3/3/2012	CIAA Tournament, Charlotte, NC	

Excellence Dedication Talent

Virginia Union University has a diverse and well-learned faculty. They are leaders in their disciplines, recipients of many distinctions and awards and research savvy. In each issue of the Unionite, we will highlight a few of our faculty members who are the heartbeat of the institution.

Listening to his father's gospel quartet practice in a living room full of musical instruments is how Dr. Willis Barnett remembers falling in love with music. At the age of five, he began to play several instruments, including the piano, clarinet, and violin. Barnett has a passion for music. "I like all kinds of music," he said while sitting in his office scattered with sheet music and filled with the sounds of classical tunes playing by in the background.

As a full time music professor at VUU, Barnett strongly believes that music impacts lives. "It has a tremendous impact and it reflects what's going on in society," said Barnett. "We live in a world where we need to be aware of everyone's culture," he said, explaining why he believes that courses such as music appreciation are an important part of the academic curriculum.

In 1983, Barnett was invited by Dr. Allix B. James to teach during a VUU church leadership conference and has been affiliated with the university every since. He has taught a number of classes and since 2001, he has directed the growing university choir at VUU. Working at VUU has been a joy for Barnett. He enjoys "having the opportunity to interact with and to impact the lives of young people, who I hope will transform our world," said Barnett. "I almost feel like they're my sons and daughters." He received his bachelor's degree in music education and a master's in music theory and composition from Norfolk State University. He obtained his doctorate from Virginia Union in 1997.

A self-described introvert, Barnett has a long musical performance resume. Performing with the Norfolk Symphony, playing behind Isaac Hayes, the Stylistics, and Dionne Warwick are just a few of his many accolades. Several pieces of his music have been performed by the Baltimore Symphony and the Columbus Symphony. He has also served as the Music Director for the Hampton University Ministers Conference.

When he isn't teaching piano, encouraging students, or fulfilling his many obligations as a professor, he enjoys reading, listening to some of his favorite composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach and Thomas Bell, or teaching Sunday school at his church, Fifth Street Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia. Barnett is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha and is heavily involved in Masonic activities. He often performs around the city and at nursing homes as an act of service.

Barnett finds his job extremely rewarding. "I enjoy seeing a transformation happen in the lives of my students as a result of my teaching. When they come to VUU they don't like this, they don't like that. Then I see them grow and change and then come back and say 'Doc, you were right!'"



Dr. Willis Barnett

“It (music) has a tremendous impact and it reflects what’s going on in society. We live in a world where we need to be aware of everyone’s culture.”

– Dr. Willis Barnett



Scenes from the 2011 Winter Choir Concert under the direction of Dr. Willis Barnett

VUU Faculty & Staff

Challenging students to “simply think” is what Dr. Shaheen Islam has done for almost 20 years as a Professor of Physics at Virginia Union University.

Islam hit the ground running upon arrival to the Lombardy Street campus in 1992. During her first year at VUU, she submitted a grant proposal to enhance the curriculum and it was awarded in the amount of \$300,000 from the U.S. Department of Education. The grant allowed for major curriculum development in mathematics, physics and computer science. She also established the National Society of Black Engineers on VUU's campus, for which she still serves as advisor.

Islam's firm and passionate nature regarding the success of her students, is but one of the reasons she was awarded the Scott and Stringfellow Outstanding Professor Award at the May 2011 Commencement exercises. Humbled and excited, she says she was “thrilled” to accept the award before her colleagues and her students.

Islam received her Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame in 1988 and began teaching physics immediately after. “I have a passion for teaching,” she says. “Physics explains everything and how things work around us. It's intriguing!” Students understand her level of professionalism which is expressed in many of her teacher evaluations. She not only challenges her students in the class but out of the classroom as well. She wants to ensure that her students are competitive with students from other, larger universities and pushes them to conduct research.

In April 2011, Islam and a few of her students traveled to Northeastern University, in Boston, Massachusetts, to conduct research, which was funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF). “I strongly believe that to prepare our students for graduate school or modern working environments we should promote and strengthen undergraduate research in academic departments”, she said. In addition to the research at Northeastern University, she has also established collaborations with Jefferson



Dr. Shaheen Islam

National Laboratory, the Naval Research Lab (NRL) and Brookhaven National Lab (BNL) in New York, one of the nation's and world's leading research institutions.

The Outstanding Professor has no plans to rest on her laurels. Said Islam, “One of my greatest joys at VUU is seeing how my students appreciate the effort I make to improve their education.”

“I have a passion for teaching. Physics explains everything and how things work around us. It's intriguing!”

– DR. SHAHEEN ISLAM

Faculty and Staff Updates

Dr. Yung Suk Kim, Assistant Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity in the School of Theology launched the on-line Journal of Bible and Human Transformation. He is the editor. The peer-reviewed, online, free journal, can be found at www.bibleandtransformation.com.

Dr. Shyamal Premartne, Assistant Professor of Biology had a peer reviewed, full-length publication in the October 2011 issue of *Vascular and Endovascular Surgery*.

Associate Professor Vanessa Moody Coombs was awarded a scholarship from AVID Corporation's Strategic Education Scholarship Program. The scholarship allowed Professor Coombs to attend a five-day editing workshop at AVID Headquarters in Burlington, Massachusetts. Workshop attendees were instructed in professional nonlinear editing techniques on AVID Media Composer, including horizontal, multilayered, and motion special effects. Professor Coombs plans to incorporate the advanced editing techniques in her television production classes next semester.

Dr. Monique Leslie Akassi is a new Assistant Professor of English Composition and Rhetoric at Virginia Union University in the Department of Languages and Literature. She recently published two books in 2011 – *Neo Hybrid Pedagogy in Post Colonialism Composition: an Investigation on Writing Portfolios for African American Students*, the first quantitative study on Writing Portfolio and, *Post-Colonial Composition Pedagogy: Using the Cultures of Marginalized Students to Teach Writing*, an anthology featuring both national and international scholars. In addition, her article, "Towards a Rhetoric of Enfranchising African American Students by Teaching Grammar and Language Varieties," was recently published in the *Journal of Assembly for the Teaching of English Grammar* Vol.21.1 Summer 2011. She recently presented "Paradigm Shifts in Composition Courses for the Marginalized: Towards A Rhetoric of Post Colonial Composition Pedagogy" at the International Conference on "Africa and People of African Descent," which was held on September 14-16, 2011 at Howard University, Washington, DC; she also presented "Teaching Grammar to African American Students Through Neo Hybrid Pedagogy" at The Assembly for the Teaching of English Grammar's 22nd Annual Conference on July 29-30, 2011 at Prince George's Community College in Largo, Maryland. She also represented Virginia Union University at the thirteenth annual "International Conference on Sociocriticism" at the University of Perpignan in France on October 12-14, 2011.

Dr. Heidi Villanueva, Chair of the Department of Psychology and Chair of Virginia Union University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research in Human Subjects hosted the 5th Annual Virginia IRB Consortium Conference on October 14, 2011. Approximately 75 participants from across the state and from as far away as California attended the one day event entitled "Advancing the Culture of Subject Protections in Social and Behavioral Research". This year's conference focused on research conducted at small colleges and universities, which often focus on social and behavioral research. Topics presented included "The Nuts and Bolts of Establishing an IRB", "Options for Protecting Confidentiality" and "Working with Student Researchers". This event was funded by a grant from Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research (PRIM&R), which is dedicated to advancing the highest ethical standards in the conduct of research.

Dr. Peter Sutton, Assistant Professor of Philosophy was elected Vice-President of the Virginia Philosophical Association at their annual business meeting on October 22. He will work with the VPA's president and secretary to plan the 2012 conference and select the papers that will be presented.

Dr. Thomas Fensch, Associate Professor and Chairman of the Mass Communciations Department recently published a new book: *The Man Who Changed His Skin: The Life and Work of John Howard Griffin*.

Dr. David Adewuyi, Associate Professor and Director of the Center for International Studies was recently published in the *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education* and also authored a chapter (Terminological Exactitude: Understanding Key Educational Concepts for Effective Teaching and Learning) in the book *Educational Management in Developing Economies: Cases 'n' School Effectiveness and Quality Improvement*, which will be published in 2012.

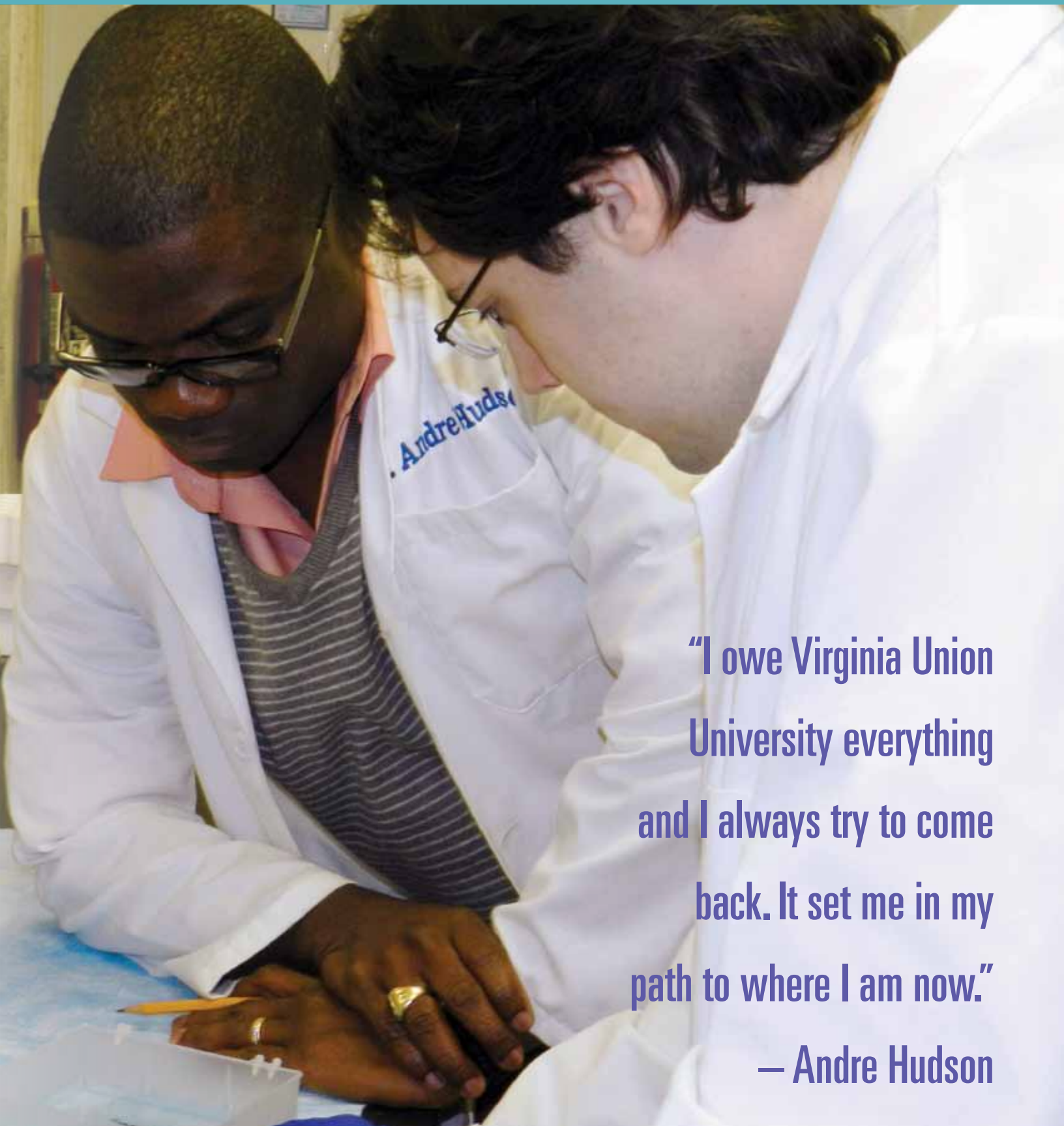
Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology Professor and alumnus **Dr. Adam Bond '01**, is one of the recipients of the first book grant program for minority scholars by the Louisville Institute for 2011-2012 academic year. The grant will assist Bond to complete a major book project and spend an entire academic year devoted to the project and focusing on some aspect of Christianity in North America, while free of other professional responsibilities. Bond teaches the History of Christianity in the School of Theology.

VUU NEEDS YOUR COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT. TO MAKE AN ONGOING DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OUR STUDENTS, CONTACT THE DIVISION OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT AT 804.342.3938 OR USE THE ENVELOPE ENCLOSED IN THIS ISSUE FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE.

Andre Hudson, '00

Virginia Union University alum Andre Hudson, '00 is an assistant professor in the School of Life Sciences in the Rochester Institute of Technology's College of Science; where he and colleagues "recently deciphered the structure of an essential enzyme in the photosynthetic organism that is a target for algaecide development," said Hudson. "Algae is often associated with the production of toxins, lethal to wildlife, fish, plants and harmful to humans and animals." Hudson attended Virginia Union on an academic scholarship. Becoming a participant in the Minority Access to Research Careers Undergraduate Student Training in Academic Research (MARC U*STAR) program anchored his decision to pursue academia and research as a career. According to Hudson, "the MARC U*STAR program steered me on the path I am on today because it was more rigorous as far as research is concerned." While attending VUU Hudson received a summer internship at Purdue University; and it was this experience that convinced him to enroll in graduate school. He received his Ph.D. from Rutgers University in New Jersey in 2006 in Molecular Biology/ Bio-Chemistry. Even though he's hours away from VUU, he still keeps in touch with one of his former professors, Dr. Anthony Madu. "Dr. Madu is still my mentor. When I need advice, he's only a phone call away," said Hudson. Hudson credits VUU for his success and career. "I owe Virginia Union University everything and I always try to come back. It set me in my path to where I am now," said Hudson.





“I owe Virginia Union University everything and I always try to come back. It set me in my path to where I am now.”

— Andre Hudson

In an office surrounded by photos with The Honorable L. Douglas Wilder '51, Dr. E.D. McCreary '40, Senator Henry Marsh '56, Mayor Dwight Jones '70, Reverend Jeremiah Wright and President Barack Obama, the Reverend Tyrone E. Nelson, a 2003 Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology graduate and pastor of the Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, has much inspiration. Nelson will be following in the footsteps of many great VUU alumni in the political arena, when he is sworn in as the newly elected Henrico County Board of Supervisors for the Varina District in January 2012. Nelson, a native of Richmond, Virginia, will be joining Dr. Frank J. Thornton, Fairfield District Supervisor and VUU foreign language professor, as the second black representative on the board. However, Nelson will become the first-ever black representative for the Varina District. Nelson contributes much of his success to Virginia Union University. "If you look at many African Americans in Richmond who are successful or who have done things to impact the community, most of them have some type

of ties to Virginia Union," said Nelson. "I'm proud to say I'm a graduate. Hopefully, when my kids get older, I'll be encouraging them to be Unionites too." Nelson ended Varina Supervisor Jim Donati's 20 year tenure during the November 7, 2011 election. He captured 53 percent of the vote in the three way race for supervisor. "We can enjoy the moment, but we need to remember we have a lot of work to do to make things happen," said Nelson.

"If you look at many African Americans in Richmond who are successful or who have done things to impact the community, most of them have some type of ties to Virginia Union."

— TYRONE NELSON



Reverend Tyrone E. Nelson, '03

Alumni Updates

Clarence D. Johnson '76, Executive Vice President and General Manager of the Army and Intelligence Sector of NCI Information Systems, Inc., has been named a Cambridge Who's Who Executive of the Year in Information Technology. Johnson earned a Bachelor of Arts in history and government from VUU.

Jonnette M. Hayes completed her MBA at the University of Phoenix in February 2011 and began a new job in May @ More Solutions Youth and Family Services.

Rev. Tyrone E. Nelson '03 was elected to the Henrico, VA Board of Supervisors. He is the first African American to be elected from the Varina district.

David Mims was added to the Kansas City Chiefs active roster. Mims, a 6-8, 335 lb. offensive tackle from Charlotte, N.C., spent the first 11 games of the 2011 season on the Chiefs practice squad after entering the NFL as a rookie free agent with the club.

Alberta Barrett-Johnson' 90 has published her first book- Learning Letters from Brave Brandon. Barrett-Johnson's vision is to educate children in a safe and conducive manner. The book presents real-life safety tips for students who communicate on-line, by email and text messages and through cell phones and web cams. The Got 2 B Safe rules teach children safety skills and how to be aware of unsafe zones.

Thomas Miller '82 opened TDM Enterprises in 2011, a credit restoration and money management business in Richmond, Virginia. The mission is to help people restore their credit, develop good money management skills, and offer real solutions to their financial challenges. Miller is a graduate of the Sydney Lewis School of Business with a BS in Business Administration.

in memoriam

Mrs. Frances C. Andrews, '44

Mr. Joseph Hilton Banks, '45

Mrs. Fannie Alice Beale, '62

Mr. Jerry C. Crews, '88

Dr. Joseph B. Harris, '49

Mrs. Martha L. Hodge, '67

Ms. Paulette Kelley, '71

Mr. Harry O. Lewis, Jr., '69

Mr. Christopher C. Melvin, '38

Mrs. Julia E. Parker, '51

Dr. Milton A. Reid, '55

Mrs. Gwendolyn E. Adams Scott, '62

Ms. Olivia C. Swinton, '65

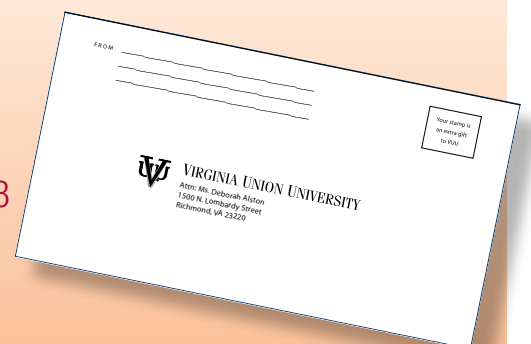
Mr. Jaye Walker

Reverend Barry J. Williams, Sr.

ALUMNI

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www.vuu.edu or contact the
Office of Alumni Relations 804.342.3938



Virginia Union University Upcoming Events

EVENT	DATE
Classes Begin	January 12, 2012
Founders' Day	Coburn Hall, 11am February 3, 2012
Basketball Homecoming (VUU vs. Lincoln University)	Barco-Stevens Gym, 7:30 p.m. February 18, 2012
CIAA Basketball Tournament	Charlotte, NC February 27 - March 3, 2012
STVU Annual Church Leadership Conference	Coburn Hall, 8:30am March 10, 2012
Human Services Fair	Henderson Center 10-12 March 27, 2012
University Career Fair	Henderson Center 10-12 March 28, 2012
Panther Fest 2012	April 9 - 14, 2012
Mr. and Miss Virginia Union University Pageant	Coburn Hall April 10, 2012
Honors and Academic Achievement Recognition	April 19, 2012
Baccalaureate Ceremony	Coburn Hall May 11, 2012
Commencement	May 12, 2012
Panther Preview	June 16, 18, 22, 2012
Fall Convocation	October 5, 2012
Homecoming (VUU vs. Lincoln University)	October 6, 2012



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