



VCU HUMAN RESOURCES

ANNUAL REPORT

2020



VCU

Human Resources

TABLE OF CONTENTS



I. Transformation @ work

- A. Wellness resources
- B. Resources for caregivers
- C. Benefits working for you
- D. State and federal resources
- E. Supporting student workers

II. Strengthening partnerships @ work

- A. HR professionals
- B. Office of the Provost
- C. Female employee retention
- D. Building career communities

III. Making an impact @ work

- A. Learning and development
- B. Executive search
- C. Service and support
- D. Tuition benefit
- E. Community service
- F. Looking toward the future

WHERE WE ARE NOW

A note from the AVP

This pandemic taught us many things; chief among them that VCU employees are resilient and adaptable to change. The transition to telework in early 2020 allowed VCU employees to focus on the health and safety of themselves, their families and the university community as a whole. Human Resources, alongside our VCU Administration colleagues, led the movement to a virtual telework environment and paved the way for staff to follow by providing training and sharing best practices. The telework transition was a major accomplishment that enabled university spaces to be prioritized for student safety and employees to continue supporting the VCU mission.

At the onset of the pandemic, VCU HR surveyed employees to determine what resources were needed most. The responses drove the strategy for creating vital resources and curating services provided by community partners. Many resources were already in place and ready to use as a part of the recent RamStrong initiative, a website dedicated to employee well-being. Partnerships with other VCU schools and units were strengthened as a result of this important work, which further positioned VCU HR as a strategic business partner at the university.

Many policies developed by the recent Great Place: HR Redesign were already in place to support employees, like alternative work solutions that allow caregivers flexibility with balancing home and professional responsibilities. Through the implementation of these policies, VCU HR continues to support the university's commitment to diversity and inclusion for all.

The impact of this work on the university community continues to be seen through the success and gratitude of our colleagues. I look forward to what 2021 has in store for VCU and Human Resources.

With great appreciation,

Cathleen Burke



I.

TRANSFORMATION

@work

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we live and work. As the university transitioned to telework, employees had questions and VCU HR developed answers. Using LinkedIn Learning, VCU HR curated a list of learning opportunities for employees to ease the transition to telework.

Three LinkedIn Learning courses used the most in 2020:

Remote working for employees

Remote working for managers

Best practices for working from home

>80%

of VCU employees

began teleworking at the start of the pandemic to ensure the health and safety of the university community.

<20%

of VCU employees

remained on campus as designated employees with essential duties.



WELLNESS RESOURCES

The **work, life and well-being team** brings VCU employees programs like strength training, meditation and mindfulness sessions, financial wellness seminars, investment tips, and more. In 2020, the dramatic changes to life as we knew it proved that a focus on well-being was more important than ever. With **more than 100 programs** to choose from in 2020, there was something for everyone.

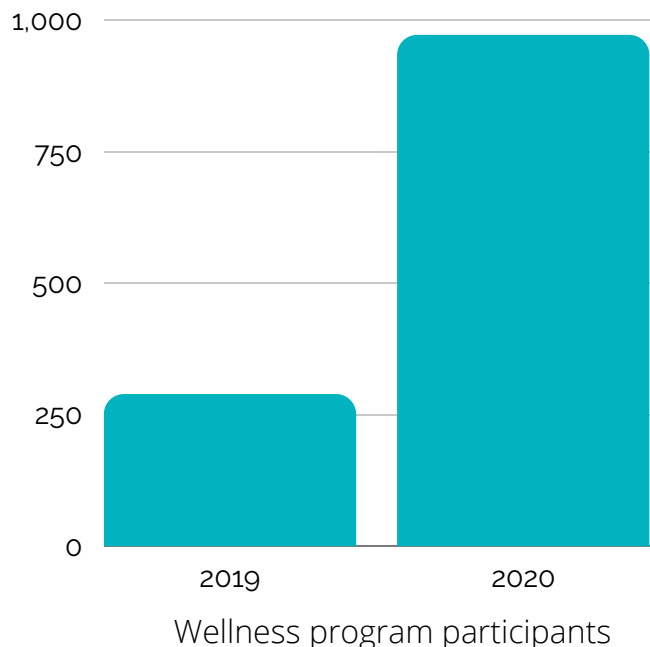


I appreciate that VCU, through HR and my home unit of Engineering, has demonstrated how much it cares about employees during this pandemic. Intentionally offering classes to support health and well-being, that I can access right from my computer while working remotely, sends an important message that we are valued. To me, that matters a lot.

-Kendra Gerlach, College of Engineering



The number of program participants **tripled** from fall semester 2019 to fall semester 2020 with the use of virtual sessions and strategic communications.



RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS

Caregivers have been navigating the scarcity of child and adult care while balancing professional responsibilities for many months during the pandemic. VCU offers support by providing paid leave, flex schedules, compressed work weeks, job sharing, restructured teams and reduced schedules.

HR continues to support caregivers by curating **more than 50 community resources** for caregivers including support for child care, internet connectivity, elder care, flexible work solutions, learning opportunities, mindfulness, sample work schedules, and helpful articles. These resources are found at hr.vcu.edu.



The **VCU RamStrong** website offers additional resources for the eight dimensions of wellness: physical, emotional, financial, intellectual, occupational, environmental, social, and spiritual. During the pandemic, HR expanded these resources.

New information included peer support groups for faculty and staff, among others. In 2021, an expanded range of mental health resources will be added to RamStrong. Learn more at ramstrong.vcu.edu.



BENEFITS WORKING FOR YOU

As part of the pandemic response, the benefits team developed **enhanced flexibility** of the VCU 403(b) retirement savings plan, deferred compensation plan and cash match plans to allow in-service **withdrawals and loans** for Coronavirus-related reasons. (T&C apply.)

This ensured that employees dealing with unexpected financial challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic who needed access to additional funds could use these plans as a resource.



STATE & FEDERAL RESOURCES

VCU HR provided additional leave options for employees impacted by the coronavirus, including leave for caregivers of children whose daycare or schools were closed due to the pandemic. VCU HR also administered CARES Act funds for the university.

Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL) used by 394 employees

Families First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA) used by 157 employees

Wage Paid Leave (WPL) used by 69 employees

CARES Act retirement plan distributions \$1,043,896 to 116 participants in 2020

CARES Act retirement plan loans \$68,000 to 2 participants in 2020

CARES Act retirement plan loan deferments 70 loan deferments issued in 2020



SUPPORTING STUDENT WORKERS

University leadership decided to fund student pay despite students working remotely or, in some cases, not at all. VCU was one of only a few universities to make this commitment in the face of such financial uncertainty. Along with Payroll Services, VCU HR devised and implemented methods to fairly provide payment to student workers during the pandemic.



All student workers received an income during campus closure. This decision gave students more financial peace of mind to focus on a rapidly changing education environment as they pivoted to new course modalities.

1800+

student workers
paid during
pandemic

II.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

@work

VCU HR strengthened many interdepartmental partnerships while developing a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In partnership with HR, **Employee Health Services** developed a hotline to field employee calls concerning a potential exposure or positive cases on campus. **Technology Services** worked with HR to develop the daily health check process, return to campus smartsheets, and procedures for collecting mandatory surveillance testing data. **Return to campus coordinators** and HR worked to ensure proper cleaning occurred across the university after a case had been confirmed.

Two groups proved to be significantly impactful partners during the pandemic response – **HR professionals** in schools and units and the **Office of the Provost**.



HR PROFESSIONALS



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This past year has been very challenging for Human Resources and I could not have done my job without the partnership of VCU HR.

Recently, HR professionals assisted with identification of employees for vaccine prioritization. Although at first glance it seems easy, there are many caveats that made it complicated. Whenever I reached out to VCU HR, they were so responsive and helpful. VCU HR has been such a partner to help guide us with our questions.

- Meredith Stockman, College of Engineering

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OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

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Responding to the pandemic and meeting the needs of our students would have been impossible without the collaboration, cooperation, consensus, and constant communication between Human Resources and the Office of the Provost. We never lost focus on our shared vision and kept moving forward through many rapid changes during a very complex year. HR remains a valued partner and the past year magnified the need for this key relationship.

- Gypsy Denzine, Ph.D., Office of the Provost

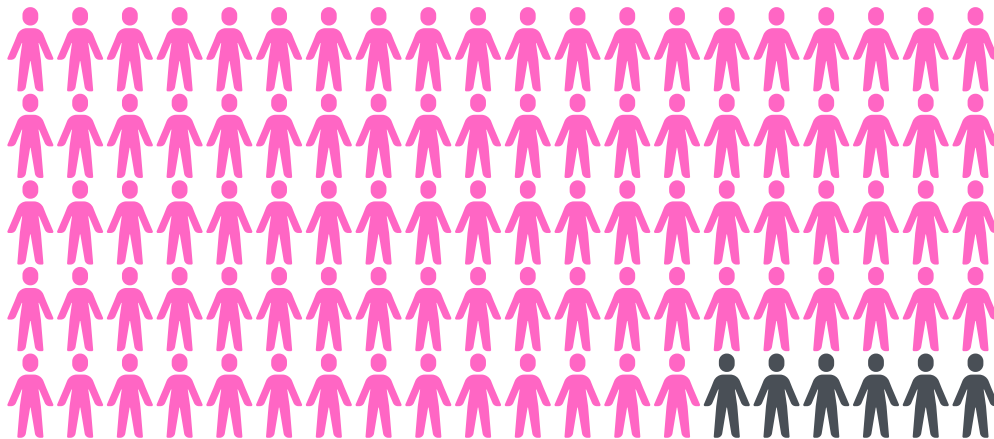
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FEMALE EMPLOYEE RETENTION

According to the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR), "a recent Gallup article noted that the workforce is currently down 500,000 more women than men compared to before the pandemic. The cause? Many women have left or drastically reduced their working hours to care for young children or school-age children who are learning virtually at home."

While this concerning statistic may be true for many colleges and universities across the nation, this was not the case at VCU. Due to flexible work solutions and the development of resources for caregivers, VCU outperformed peer institutions in the U.S. in the category of female employee retention. In fact, males separated from the university at the **same rate** as females in 2020.



94% female employee retention



94% male employee retention

BUILDING CAREER COMMUNITIES

Career communities are made up of employees across the university who are doing similar work or have similar career interests. These groups are designed to connect regularly to network, strengthen competencies, promote innovation, and share best practices. VCU HR launched four new communities in 2020: Academic Affairs, Library Services, Finance & Procurement and Development career communities.



Career communities launched at VCU:

- Academic and Faculty Affairs
- Career Advisors
- Communications
- Development
- Facilities Management
- Finance and Procurement Services
- General Administration
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Leadership
- Legal, Audit and Compliance
- Library Services
- Research
- Student Services

Career communities coming in 2021:

- Athletics
- Community Engagement
- Environmental Safety and Risk Management
- Health Sciences
- Museum and Fine Arts
- Police

2,600+

career community
members at VCU



MAKING AN IMPACT

@ work and beyond

VCU HR supports employees with continuous learning opportunities throughout the year. The comprehensive suite of trainings have been converted to a virtual environment due to the pandemic and are provided by HR Office of Learning, Development and Organizational Culture (LDOC).

Top course selections in 2020

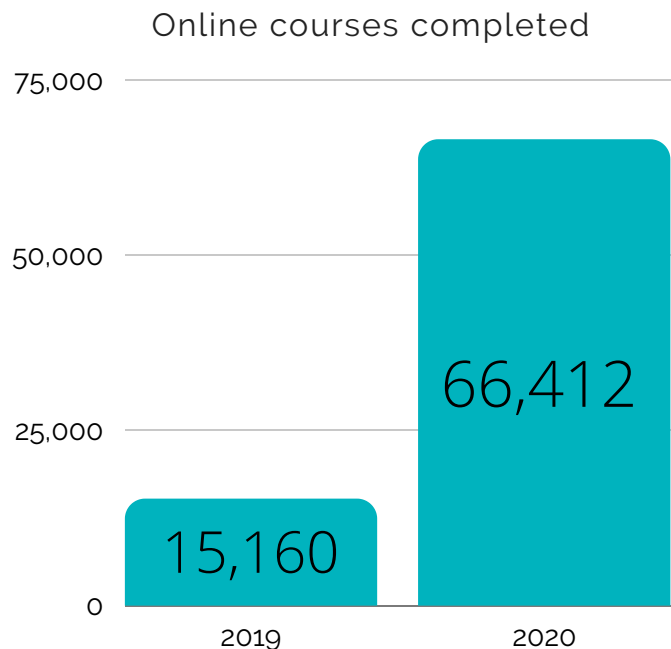
- Remote work foundations
- Time management tips
- Prioritizing your tasks
- Communication within teams
- Personal effectiveness tips
- Unconscious bias training

98%

of VCU employees completed VCU Reboarding training to learn about safety protocols while on campus

LDOC reports that the number of completed online courses soared in 2020 with the availability of virtual "e-learnings" and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employees working from home took this time to sharpen skills and boost their knowledge using LinkedIn Learning and the Talent@VCU system.



EXECUTIVE SEARCH

The executive search team is an internal group comprised of recruiting and search associates dedicated to identifying and attracting exceptional leaders to Virginia Commonwealth University. EST completed a total of **11 placements** in 2020. Hear from a new placement at VCU as well as a search committee participant about their experiences working with the HR executive search team.

“

Reflecting on my experience with the Executive Search Team and my burgeoning VCU journey, I am appreciative of the responsiveness and professionalism I received throughout the process. The attention to my expertise, skills, lived experiences, and 'whole person,' made the decision to join and advance VCU's vision and mission, one of the most important decisions for my family. I appreciate the ethic of care and enthusiasm shown by Carol Ann Lawson and the entire team."

**- Cleo Magwaro, AVP Institutional Equity
VCU Inclusive Excellence**

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The executive search team team:

- Ensures diverse search committee representation;
- Trains committee on fair candidate treatment and creating an inclusive search process;
- Develops strategies to attract candidates from underrepresented groups;
- Identifies criteria for consistent evaluation and screening;
- Ensures that each candidate is set up for the same successful experience.

“

I recently utilized the HR executive search team services provided at VCU. The dean was thrilled with the sourcing, detailed services and thorough information provided by the team. Their close attention to detail, continuous communication and assistance provided has exceeded that of other firms that I've worked with for years.

- Search committee participant

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SERVICE AND SUPPORT

VCU HR implemented a robust self-service ticketing system for employees to submit HR service requests, search HR information and find answers to questions. **More than 450 customer service tickets** were resolved last year.

The HR information systems team provides technical systems expertise VCU HR and the university.

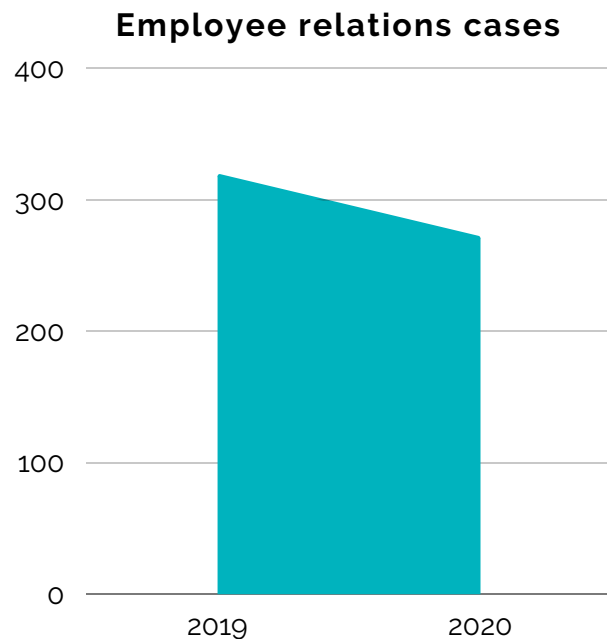
In 2020, the team hit **two major milestones** related to the VCU Reporting Center, a database comprised of employee data for department use.



VCU HR provides confidential assistance to university employees and managers to help resolve work-related situations.

In 2020, the employee relations team saw a **14.8% decline in the number of cases** handled by ER associates. Formal discipline decreased by 36%.

Since 2018, terminations during probation have dropped 69% and employee grievances have decreased 72.2%.



TUITION BENEFIT

One of the benefits of working at a university is the access to pursuing or continuing your own education. VCU offers the tuition benefit to faculty, adjunct faculty, university employees, and classified staff. Hear from employees who took advantage of this great university benefit.

“

I'm in my final year earning my MBA. It's definitely one of the reasons I've stayed at VCU. I appreciate the ability to flex my time and to apply what I've learned in my current role. I also love that my degree can be outside my current "wheelhouse." This shows VCU is supportive of my development, which makes me want to stay and grow here. Getting my masters by 50 wouldn't be possible without the tuition benefit.

- **Monica Johnson, Human Resources**

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I learned about the tuition benefit during New Employee Orientation. While it was not a factor in joining VCU, it has definitely been a factor in staying here. Tuition benefit is one of the best incentives for people to come to VCU. Where else can you get a greatly reduced, or in some cases free, education?

- **George Kelly, Student Affairs**

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COMMUNITY SERVICE

VCU provides many types of leave for employees, including community service leave. This leave type encourages VCU employees to get actively involved with a good cause in the VCU community or greater Richmond area. Hear how VCU employees used their community service leave this year.

“

For the past year, I have used my community service leave to give blood for the American Red Cross. Every pint donated has the ability to save 3 lives. I have had several friends and family members whose lives were saved because of blood transfusions provided by generous donors. The American Red Cross holds safe, clean donor events where they are respecting COVID-related precautions.

- **Kathleen Blankenship, Human Resources**



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This year, I used community service leave to donate to the Hanover Safe Place. VCU HR sponsored a family from Hanover Safe Place during the winter holiday. I created an Amazon wish list for each family member with items like diapers, socks, shoes, clothes, toys, etc. Items donated to the family equaled a value of roughly \$1800 and the family was so grateful for their gifts.

- **Sara Vorlop, Human Resources**

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2021 AND BEYOND

VCU Human Resources developed a work plan to continue important projects that support the university mission in 2021. Read on to learn about the next big projects in the pipeline.

HR work plan for 2021

- Support VCU's pandemic response, employee vaccine distribution and eventual return to campus.
- Launch organizational effectiveness function, including "Reinvention Thinking" learning tools and training.
- Assess and ensure effective communications of mental health resources for VCU employees.
- Meet identified learning needs including resilience, mental health awareness (manager training), generational differences (manager training), and understanding higher education.
- Continue with phase II of Cherwell ticketing system implementation.
- Complete implementation of VCU Career Communities.
- Continue to improve VCU HR communications and execute HR strategic communications plan.
- Complete HR service delivery model implementation.







A sign placed outside the VCU Health Medical Center during the pandemic in 2020.



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