President Eugene Trani leaves incredible 19-year legacy, paves the way for bright future

LAUREN LOMAKA
FRONT PAGE EDITOR

Have you ever “Googled” someone? Yourself maybe? If someone were to type your name into the search engine, what would you want them to see? Charity work, books you’ve written, positions you’ve held? If you were to Google our soon-to-be-leaving University President, his accomplishments pop up one by one. There is one, however, that appears again, and again; us. We, the students, professors, as well as VCU itself, are most notably Eugene Trani’s greatest accomplishment. Over the past 19 years, Trani has been the guiding force behind our university.

We could have referenced answers to standard questions such as “what is your greatest accomplishment at VCU?”, or “what’s next for you?” in this article. Instead, we wanted to highlight the work behind the scene of VCU’s transformation.

Eugene Trani took the position of VCU’s President in 1990. Since that time, he has made it his mission to increase the prestige and academic reputation of the university; he is possibly most known for his success with this. Trani has previously said, “Time for reflection over the past few weeks also has caused me to realize that the presidential priorities I set for myself as president have in good measure been accomplished, and that stepping down in 2009 is good timing for VCU, as our great institution considers the next phase of our dynamic history.” Many of us are enrolled in this institution due to the work and foresight of Trani, and the attention he has brought the urban university.

Most recently, VCU has undergone major renovations, resulting in a new Business and Engineering building, a new dorm, and an improved Cary Street Gym. This however, is only phase I of the plans Trani set in motion. Are individuals with this kind of drive and vision simply just born, made, or a combination of the two? The success of Trani’s expansion plan is unquestionable, but it was not without personal sacrifice and intense research. In 1995, he co-wrote The First Cold War: The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson in U.S.-Soviet Relations, which has been positively reviewed by more than 20 scholarly publications. He also gained respect for his book, The Presidency of Warren G. Harding, which was selected by Book: The Magazine for the Reading Life as the best book on President Harding. President Trani has devoted part of his life to studying the lives of great men and great leaders. The study of the past is almost a certain way to improve our future, and there was no shortage of brilliant leadership during Trani’s time in office.

Other Trani publications, including Dublin Diaries: A Study of High Technology Development in Ireland and Richmond at a Crossroads: The Greater Richmond Metropolitan Area and the Knowledge Based High Technology Economy of the 21st Century, were completed after his work overseas. They brought about many ideas on improving our own university and others like it.

Notably, the university will be different with the end of Trani’s time in office. However, his efforts and successes in beginning the plans to increase VCU’s prestige, as well as the inspiration and insight he brought to his task, have left their impression. As in all times of change, there is fear and excitement. Fear of the losing the old, familiar, yet a nagging excitement for what is coming next. With the ‘new’ just around the corner, VCU has been forever changed by Trani’s time; it’s time for the next leader to make their mark.
In recent times, we've all heard the word “green” growing into a more important context. It stands for a lot more than the blue-yellow combination we learned about in our toddler years. “Going green” refers to the environmentalist approach to transform our lifestyles to meet eco-friendly, low-impact habits that will help save our precious planet. As our society becomes increasingly scared of fossil fuels burning up, global warming, and pollution takeover, more and more people are making the switch.

You might ask yourself, besides sleeping more complacently at night, what good will going green have on your life? Well, the satisfaction of minimizing your carbon footprint feels pretty good, but using less water and electricity will also save you money if you pay your utilities. Walking, riding a bike, or even just carpooling, will save you gas, and even buying local food tends to be cheaper. Most “green” changes you can make to your lifestyle will save your hard earned cash while you improve the environment.

Colleges across the nation have begun their own student lead green efforts. Universities like Harvard, Yale, and even University of Virginia were ranked highly by the Princeton Review’s new environmental category. So how exactly does VCU fit in with these environmental ideals? Due to President Trani signing the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, new recycle bins were put up around both campuses encouraging students to take the green initiative. In addition, two solar power trash-compacters were installed. The goal is to increase recycled material by ten percent.

VCU’s only green student organization, Green Unity 4 VCU, officially started this semester. Promoting environmentalism around VCU, they work closely with the faculty and administration namely VCU’s Director of Sustainability, Jacek Ghosh, and VCU’s Recycling Coordinator, Steve Heinitz, to accomplish common goals. I had the pleasure of interviewing the President, Brantley Tyndall, who enlightened me on the purpose and inner workings of Green Unity. “By working together, the administration communicates what’s going on to the students and we tell them what students are interested in accomplishing. The strongest point in the organization is unifying everyone,” Tyndall informed me. Meetings are held at 9:30 p.m. on Wednesdays at Rodney’s and are open to all who want to transform VCU into a more eco-friendly campus. Regardless of what’s taking place in the world, global change starts at the local level. These simple changes in your lifestyle can truly make a difference.

Green Unity 4 VCU members pose for the camera after a day of street clean up. Like many others, the group is working to promote an eco-friendly lifestyle for students. Recently VCU has added many recycling bins as well as two solar powered trash-compacters on campus (photo courtesy of Green Unity 4 VCU facebook page).

Student picks up trash for Green Unity 4 VCU’s “Hell Block Clean Up” day. The organization is VCU’s only environmentalist group (photo courtesy of Green Unity 4 VCU facebook page).

---

Le Monde’s Suggestions for Living Eco-Friendly

*Recycle paper, plastic, and aluminum in designated bins around campus

*Waste less water with shorter showers, larger loads of laundry, and turning off water while brushing teeth

*Reuse a water bottle instead of buying bottled water

*Take a DIY approach to convert your stuff into useful things instead of waste

*Buy local food when possible—check labels at grocery stores to see where food comes from

*Carpool, ride a bike, or walk

*Plug appliances into power strips and turn off the entire strip when not in use
Features

Need Money? Look to the Honors College!

KIMBERLY THOMPSON
STAFF REPORTER

According to the Council of Graduate schools, the cost of graduate school has risen 60 percent between 1995 and 2006. However, by 2014, the number of applicants to graduate school is expected to increase by 12 percent. In addition to tuition costs, students are faced with the daunting task of paying for books, board, and other living expenses. At a combined cost of often over $150,000, higher education is a daunting investment. “You spend all your time worrying about how you’re going to pay for graduate school. Then you graduate and have a whole new set of financial problems in addition to your undergard debt,” freshman Elisabeth Moore said.

While there are many scholarship opportunities available to the students of the Honors College, many seem unaware of these possibilities for financial assistance. Scholarships can provide an opportunity to alleviate financial worry and make graduate school feasible. Of the plethora of scholarships available to the students in the Honors College, many are highly competitive. The Rhodes Scholarship is one of the most prestigious scholarship opportunities in the nation. It is available to graduating seniors with a GPA of 3.75 or higher and an outstanding record of volunteer experience, club participation, honors and awards. The Fulbright Scholarship is another scholarship opportunity for graduating seniors or graduate students. It is intended to forward personal development and international experience.

There are also several competitive scholarships available to juniors and sophomores. The Harry S. Truman scholarship provides a chance for juniors with exceptional leadership potential who are committed to careers in government, the nonprofit or advocacy sectors, education, or other public service fields. Students must have a GPA of 3.7 or higher to qualify.

The Barry M. Goldwater scholarship is available to sophomores and juniors with a GPA of 3.7 or higher and an interest in pursuing careers in mathematics, natural sciences, or engineering. The NSEP/Bo- ren scholarship is available to undergraduates with an intensive language education abroad. However, students may not study a Western European language and cannot study in Western Europe.

Finally, the Gates Cambridge Scholarship is awarded on the basis of a student’s intellectual ability and their leadership capacity. In addition, the scholarship is given to individuals who express desires to use their knowledge to contribute to the global society by providing service to communities and improving the lives of others. As the name denotes, students who receives this scholarship are given the opportunity to study at the University of Cambridge.

Most of the scholarships above are familiar to students; however there are a variety of lesser known scholarships available to Honors College students. For more information about any of these, or other, scholarships please contact Jeff Wing, the Honors College National Scholarship Coordinator at jawing@vcu.edu or 804-828-1803.

Do it yourself: Game Storage Box

JOSH KILLINGER
FEATURES EDITOR

Do it yourself (or DIY) refers to a philosophy of people being self-sufficient and using their own skills and resources to make or repair something. DIY is often tied in with being green or eco-friendly, specifically with regards to recycling. People with a “do it yourself” attitude find innovative applications for otherwise useless or unused objects. Here’s a fun and easy DIY project you can do at home!

Game Storage Box

We all have that hand-me-down Scrabble game with half the vowels missing. In this project, we’ll be making use of that otherwise unplayable board-game. We’ll be constructing a small game storage box out of an old board-game box. Any game board is fine, so long as it is square or rectangular with only one fold directly in the middle.

You will also need a knife (preferably box-cutters), glue or duct tape (depending on how nice you want it to look), a straight-edge, scissors, and a pencil.

Step 1: Place the game board face down with the fold running horizontally. Mark two lines a couple of inches away from the left and right edges, depending on how wide you want your box to be. (Make a note of how many inches because all other lines have to be drawn the same distance from the edges if you want the sides of the box to match up.) Make another two lines, one the same distance as above from the top of the board and one a couple inches below the fold in the middle.

Step 2: Using the box-cutters or knife, cut along those lines where the black part of the diagram is (you will want to remove these sections). Lightly score (making sure to not cut all the way through) the rest of the lines so that you can fold them at a 90-degree angle.

Step 3: You may want to glue or tape the inside (and maybe outside) of the joints created by the folds so that the box will hold its shape. You will most definitely have to glue or tape the corners of the box created by these flaps to maintain the “box” shape.

Step 4: You’re basically finished! You can add some finishing touches so that the box appears more “complete.” Some ideas may be to cover the corners with some kind of paper material from the game to hide the tape or glue. You could also cover the insides with felt. Another idea is to use the discarded pieces for dividers on the inside. At this point, the box is yours; be creative!
The Winter Season brings a variety of holiday fun...

**AMANDA HANN**
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

**Grand Illumination**
Downtown Richmond lights up Dec. 5 with the annual skyscraper lighting ceremony. This free event began at 6 p.m. and featured live music, clowns, magicians, and a visit from Old Saint Nick himself. Food could be purchased from one of the many vendors and for the first time ever free horse-and-buggy rides were added to the festivities. Thousands of Richmond locals took part to celebrate the holiday season and to countdown to the illumination of the city skyline.

**Richmond’s Annual Christmas Parade**
Ukrop’s and Retail Merchants combined to bring Richmond its annual Christmas Parade Dec. 6. Many joined in the fun as thousands of onlookers watched bands, majorettes, horses, Santa, and over 150 floats pass by. The excitement began in front of the Science Museum on Broad St. and ended two miles later in front of the Marriot Hotel. The free event also featured music, food, vendors, games, and giveaways at specified “Party Zones” sponsored by various local radio stations.

**GardenFest of Lights**
Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden offers a light show featuring more than a half million lights precisely arranged throughout the 25-acre garden. Indoor displays and decorations include handcrafted toy trains and gingerbread houses. Adding to the festivities are holiday dinners and hot cocoa, which can be purchased within the Garden Café. This special event runs through Jan. 12 and is one you won’t want to miss at just $10 per person.

**Winter Lights Celebration**
The University Student Commons and Activities Programs Office showcased their annual light celebration by lighting up the Student Commons Nov. 20. The ceremony included music and refreshments in addition to a synthetic ice skating rink located just outside the Commons. Many students partook in the excitement and were thrilled to see the ice rink, which might have to be added to the Winter Lights tradition.

**New Year’s Eve**
If you can’t make it to the Big Apple, DC is the place to bring in the New Year. The Gaylord National Hotel and Resort is throwing the largest bash in the DC area. The hotel is fully enclosed by a glass dome so there’s no need to worry about bad weather. The event includes endless open bars with no lines, first class cuisine, party favors, and access to all of the entertainment. There are sixteen distinctly themed party areas ranging from hip hop and electronica to Mardi Gras and Shamrock Fest; six dance floors; live bands and DJ’s; and fireworks at the stroke of midnight.

**Santa Isn’t the Only One Coming to Town**
In February, Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus brings its three ring act directly to the Richmond Convention Center. The famous show has been around for more than a century and showcases animals, acrobatics, trapeze artists, clowns, and magicians. Coming to Newport News that same month is Cirque Eloize: Nebbia -- a human acrobatic show that features no animals.

**James River Parade of Lights**
Boats floating along the James River seem commonplace, right? This is hardly the case when it comes to the annual Parade of Lights. For this spectacular event, boats are decorated to a tee in all the holiday hoopla one can imagine! The parade begins Dec. 13 at 5 p.m. in Richmond and ends at 9 p.m. in Henricus. Entertainment and refreshments are provided at this extraordinary event.
Business

Financial turmoil in a world economy: A student’s take on what to expect

KANWAR BIR S. ANAND
STAFF REPORTER

As a student in the economics department, the current economic crisis provides a good opportunity to learn more about the financial institutions in this country and how they can impact the markets. Federal Reserve Bank chairman Ben Bernanke has repeatedly stated that the liquidity problem is a challenge for the country. The high cost of energy has added to the problem. The illiquidity and high energy prices have impacted each and every segment of the economy. Financial institutions are not taking the risk of lending to people and businesses that do not have a good credit history. This has led to higher unemployment, high inflation and high long term interest rates.

The Federal Reserve Bank, Department of Treasury and the FDIC have been working together for the last one year to restore normalcy in the financial markets. They have been aggressively trying to stabilize the market economy because of the increased pressure from U.S. Congress and other countries. The fall of financial market giants, Bear Stearns, Indy Mac bank, Lehman brothers, Merrill Lynch, AIG and Washington Mutual has added to the problem. People with subprime loans could no longer make their monthly payments. The GSE Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae held over half of the one trillion subprime mortgages. In order to prevent bleeding of the GSE, the government decided to take them over. The government has also been trying to help out consumers and small businesses by directing federal agencies to help them.

Since 2008 is an election year, the lawmakers have taken unprecedented measures to help out consumers and businesses. The government passed Economic Stimulus Act of 2008, Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 and the Federal Housing Finance Regulatory Reform Act of 2008 in order to stabilize domestic and international markets. The President’s Working Group on Financial Markets has been working with the Federal Reserve Bank, the Department of Treasury and the FDIC to coordinate their actions to solve the illiquidity problem. The Federal Reserve Bank has been using Commercial Paper Funding Facility (CPFF) program, Term Auction Facility (TAF), The Term Securities Lending Facility (TSLEF) to provide short term credit to banks. The FDIC has also increased the deposit insurance to $250,000 to protect families, small business and people’s 401k’s and retirement plans. The government has also taken coordinated actions along with other central banks in the world as the turmoil has also impacted other economies.

Because of high prices, demand for energy has gone down. This has led to recession in some parts of the country. The government has provided tax incentives to companies that use alternative sources of energy to keep energy prices low. It is also planning to legalize offshore drilling.

Long term and short term interest rates are very high compared to the predictions that were made. The higher interest rate reflects that there is an added risk in the market while high interest rates explain the costs of this risk to the domestic and international banks. Inflation is also very high. As a result, the real interest rates are negative. This means that by keeping money in the banks, we are losing it as the rate of return is less than the rate of inflation. Therefore, during this crisis, people might consider investing money in stocks of companies that are undervalued. Contrary to the belief of market Guru’s who think that the economy will collapse; the government has taken lots of unprecedented measures to restore confidence in the markets. The stock markets will definitely strike back and it will reach the level that it was at a year before. Investors should not worry about diversifying their portfolio as most of the stocks are undervalued. The current phase is the accumulation phase. When the markets stabilize, the investors can diversify their portfolio in order to get a higher rate of return.

The current economic crisis has definitely changed the course of USA’s economic growth. The government is investing $900 billion in banks that are bleeding and financial institutions that have either collapsed or are on the verge of collapsing. An interesting question that arises now is “What type of jobs will be available after 2 or 3 years?” Since the U.S. government will become the biggest corporation in the world, there will be lots of federal jobs. There will be tighter regulations. Companies will be forced to dedicate more of their resources to making sure they are complying with the U.S. government’s regulations. People will be needed to plan, manage and conduct operations based on these tighter regulations. If we look at specific job profiles, there will be many jobs for regulators, auditors and compliance officers.

I am hoping, along with millions of other American families, for a fast recovery of the U.S. economy. We certainly need to appreciate how the federal agencies are reacting. This is our time to make sure that we understand what is going on in the economy so that we can make responsible decisions in the near future.

Have an exciting story to tell? Want to voice your opinions about our world? Contact a member of the Le Monde staff or the Honors College Idea Exchange with an idea or submission.

Email: vcu.hcie@gmail.com
Stars headline 2010 NBA Free-Agency class

NIYANT JAIN
SPORTS EDITOR

The current NBA season may have just begun, but all eyes are set on the 2010 season. A number of players headline the free agency class of 2010, including Miami Heat’s Dwayne Wade, Toronto Raptors’ Chris Bosh, and Cleveland Cavaliers’ LeBron James. With such star power, especially with James, many teams are vying for such talent on their squads.

LeBron James has definitely made his mark on the NBA scene, carrying his Cleveland Cavaliers to an NBA Finals. He made the cover of Sports Illustrated and played games on ESPN when he was a high schooler in Akron, Ohio. In Cleveland, he’s been on the cover of Fortune, Time, and Vogue. Averaging 27.8 points per game this season, it is such basketball aptitude that faltering teams like the New Jersey Nets or New York Knicks desire.

LeBron James is soon to be a prized free agent when his contract expires in 2010. Will he be leaving his hometown of Akron, Ohio for the lights of the Big Apple? Although James hasn’t expressed favoritism, he has many potential suitors. Most pundits point to a team in New York, either the Knicks or the Nets, pending their move to Brooklyn (photo courtesy of www.theshapnews.com).

Critics, including NBA Hall of Famer Charles Barkley, comment that the Cavaliers star is not showing respect for Cleveland fans and his teammates by discussing his possible free agency following the 2010 season. James just replied, “He’s stupid. That’s all I’ve got to say about that.”

Other notable players who will enter the free agent market in 2012 are Paul Pierce and Ray Allen of the Boston Celtics, Steve Nash of the Phoenix Suns, Manu Ginobili of the San Antonio Spurs, and Joe Johnson of the Charlotte Bobcats.

James’ first visit to Madison Square Garden this season came just days after the Knicks made two trades for a potential run at the Cleveland Cavaliers’ superstar in the summer of 2010. On November 21, the Knicks traded away Zach Randolph and Jamal Crawford to the Los Angeles Clippers and Golden State Warriors, respectively. With these transactions, 27 million dollars open up in the Knicks salary cap, and with such cap space, the Knicks will be able to afford James as well as the possibility of a star wingman. Placing the sport’s biggest player on arguably its biggest stage would be a fine fit.

“I think July 1, 2010, is a very big day,” James said when the Cavaliers were in New York. “It’s probably going to be one of the biggest days in free-agent history in the NBA. So a lot of teams are gearing up to try to prepare themselves to be able to put themselves in position to get one of the big free-agent market guys.”

Sports Illustrated has previously stated that the award is an embodiment of “the spirit of sportsmanship and achievement.” Phelps is the first swimmer to win the title. In regards to this, the magazine’s editor Terry McDonnell said that picking Phelps was “the easiest decision [he’s] ever made.” Phelps won eight gold medals at the Beijing games, the most won by any Olympian in a single Olympics. He set seven world, and eight Olympic records. With a total of 14 golds, Phelps has the most Olympic gold medals of any athlete.

Phelps got his start in his hometown of Baltimore, Maryland, at the age of seven. Since, he has reached unprecedented heights. He plans on competing in the 2012 London games.

Critics, including NBA Hall of Famer Charles Barkley, comment that the Cavaliers star is not showing respect for Cleveland fans and his teammates by discussing his possible free agency following the 2010 season. James just replied, “He’s stupid. That’s all I’ve got to say about that.”

Other notable players who will enter the free agent market in 2012 are Paul Pierce and Ray Allen of the Boston Celtics, Steve Nash of the Phoenix Suns, Manu Ginobili of the San Antonio Spurs, and Joe Johnson of the Charlotte Bobcats.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Plaxico Burress, wide receiver for last year’s Super Bowl winner the New York Giants, recently had an incident with the law. Burress accidentally shot himself in the thigh at a Manhattan nightclub Nov. 28. Burress did not own a permit for the handgun. Since, Burress has been suspended from his star role on the Giants, at least until the end of the season. He is now out on a $100,000 bail, after turning himself into the authorities. Burress is faced with two counts of illegal weapons possession, a minimum of three and a half years in prison. He is scheduled to return to court on March 31, 2009.

The incident has stirred a lot of attention due to the unlikely circumstances that followed. Contrary to state law, NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center did not notify police about treating Burress’s gun-related wound. The authorities only realized the event through a televised report.

New York Mayor Bloomberg had harsh words for both the hospital, the Giants, and Burress. He stated that it was an “outrage” for Burress to be given special treatment, saying that to not prosecute him would be a “shame, a mockery of the law.”

SUPRAJA RAJAGOPALAN
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Said by some to be the greatest Olympian to walk the planet, 23-year old Michael Phelps was recently given yet another title. Sports Illustrated has named Phelps Sportsman of the Year. Phelps beat out 39 other nominees, including NBA star Kobe Bryant and President-Elect Barack Obama.

Sports Illustrated has previously stated that the award is an embodiment of “the spirit of sportsmanship and achievement.” Phelps is the first swimmer to win the title. In regards to this, the magazine’s editor Terry McDonnell said that picking Phelps was “the easiest decision [he’s] ever made.”

Phelps won eight gold medals at the Beijing games, the most won by any Olympian in a single Olympics. He set seven world, and eight Olympic records. With a total of 14 golds, Phelps has the most Olympic gold medals of any athlete.

Phelps got his start in his hometown of Baltimore, Maryland, at the age of seven. Since, he has reached unprecedented heights. He plans on competing in the 2012 London games.
Student clears up misconceptions about Islam

UMAR ALAM
OPINION EDITOR

Last time I wrote an article dealing with the oneness of God in various religions around the world. This time I thought I would write an article about a religion that has been labeled at times as the ‘most misunderstood religion.’ Islam, which is my religion, is still not understood by many Americans; even after all of the publicity it has received over the last seven years or so. I’m not saying that people still think that it’s a terrorist religion, but I’m not all too convinced that people actually understand what my religion is really all about. Do we as a society understand the concepts of Islam? Let’s make it simple and try to explore the basic tenets of this faith and look at some common misconceptions.

Islam’s roots stem from the same line of faiths as Judaism and Christianity. Islam emphasizes the same fundamental principles such as the Ten Commandments and the Messianic teachings of Christ. Islam affirms all of the prophets found in the Old Testament of the Jewish faith, as well as John the Baptist and Jesus. It’s very easy for us to forget sometimes exactly how similar the beliefs are when all we ever think about is the turbaned man with an AK-47 or the woman in a full burqa.

There are five ‘pillars’ of Islam, or central duties that every Muslim must perform if they are able to do so. These pillars are: shahadah (profession of one God), salah (prayer), zakat (charity), sawm (fasting during Ramadan), and the Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca). These are the essential duties that someone must perform after they have taken the profession of faith. Being a Muslim myself, to me it seems that the most central dogma of Islam has to be the concept of Tawheed, or the oneness of God. Islam is very strict when it comes to associations and attributes ‘given’ to God. Islam teaches that there is no equal to God, and that his characteristics are not like those of men and that we are unable to have the deeper understandings that only He has.

It really is very surprising to me to see how misconstrued Islam has become by the media and almost everything else around us. I mean the only, truly, fundamental difference between Islam and the religious culture of America is whether Jesus died for the sins of his believers. The Islamic holy book is the Quran, which is filled with various stories about the prophets of the past like Adam, Jacob, Moses, David, and Solomon. It also contains a lot of fundamental Islam theology and is the foundation of the Islamic law, the Sharia. This Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammed. It was the duty of Muhammed to bring the Quran to the people and to set an example of how every Muslim should act. Muslims also believe in the angels of God like Angel Gabriel, and Angel Michael, and also believe in the Day of Judgment when all of mankind will be judged with regards to their behavior during their lifetime. Quite simply, that is the fundamental basis of Islam!

Now that we’ve covered a little bit about the basis of Islam, let’s look at some common misconceptions that I think are really important for us to deal with.

1. Islam is Extreme: I’ve come across plenty of people who believe that Islam is very aggressive toward people of other religions and that Muslims are free to use force to achieve their ends. This is not so. God says in the Quran, “Fight in the cause of God against those who fight you, but do not transgress limits. God does not love transgressors” (Quran 2:190), and “If they seek peace, then seek you peace. And trust in God. And God is with those who are merciful” (Quran 8:61). Clearly, Islam teaches to find resolutions diplomatically before escalating to any rash and physical means. Islam foremost teaches peace.

2. Islam Oppresses Women: I have to tell you, this is by far the most misconstrued ideology out there. People are so fast to claim that the hijab and modesty of the Muslim female is a sign of inequality and subordination. Islam teaches the equality of men and women. A whole surah (or chapter) is dedicated to Women, Surah 4: An-Nisa (meaning The Women). In Islam, women are granted rights to own property and business whether they are married or single, a concept that was never even heard of at the advent of the religion. Even though the rights of women are clearly outlined, it is the societies of various Muslim nations that must be blamed for the seemingly belittlement of the women. Thus, it is not the religion that has done wrong, but the culture that has been cultivated.

3. Islam Belittles Other Religions: Many people believe that Islam does not respect other religions and that Islam was primarily spread through the sword, but once again this is not so. Christian missionary T.W Arnold wrote, “…of any organized attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on the non-Muslim population, or of any systematic persecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion, we hear nothing. Had the caliphs chosen to adopt either course of action, they might have swept away Christianity as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain…” Islam was never an aggressive religion and the rights of minority religions were always protected. After conquering Jerusalem, the Caliph Umar assured the rights of the people and worshipping places of the Jews and Christians would be protected and safeguarded. In fact, under Islam minority religions had the right to set up their own court systems under their own jurisprudences to implement family law.

Hopefully, this has given you little bit of insight into what Islam really is. I encourage you to go and ask your Muslims friends about Islam and learn from them as well as the Muslim Student’s Association at VCU or local mosque. If you keep your questions inside, then you are fueling your prejudices and possible misconceptions. The only way to learn is to seek and in order to seek you must first ask.
Should the legal drinking age be 18? Student voices opinion on the Amethyst Initiative

EMILY HARDT
STAFF REPORTER

In July 2008 a group of U.S. university presidents came together to form the Amethyst Initiative. The group supports the idea of lowering the legal drinking age to 18. They believe this would eliminate problems with irresponsible drinking in college students.

Many college students under 21 have a problem with being able to vote, enlist in the military, and buy cigarettes when they are 18 but not being allowed to drink alcohol. In defiance, students often choose to use fake IDs or have an older student buy them alcohol. Having a drinking age at 21 also divides college campuses. Students may have college classes together, but if one is 21 and one is under, it would be awkward for them to hang out on a weekend night if partying was involved. Another huge concern is the amount of binge drinking incidents in under age students. The basic idea is that because it is illegal for those under 21 to drink, when alcohol is made available they tend to drink in excess. Most of these students seem to get a rush from breaking the law. If it were legal for them to drink alcohol, perhaps they would not be so excited when they see it. Instead, they might drink more responsibly.

Some groups of people such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) argue against lowering the drinking age because they are concerned with a potential increase in alcohol related car accidents. However, most college parties are held on campus or relatively close to campus so most students walk anyway.

It is understandable that college/university presidents want to lower the drinking age to unify the campuses and eliminate binge drinking. However, even when the thrill of rebelling against the law is gone, students may still continue to drink in excess and binge drinking will occur. This is because people over 21 still drink in excess even though it is legal. As long as the strenuous nature of college exists, students will continue to party and possibly go overboard with alcohol consumption. In addition, it cannot be proven lowering the drinking age will lower binge drinking problems. This may hold true for those who drink for the sensation of rebellion. However, some students simply tend to drink too much at one time; they will probably continue to do so regardless of the law.

While binge drinking is definitely a problem, college officials should not have to attempt to change a law to get students to stop drinking too much. An important part of college is learning to make healthy life decisions. Students should take responsibility to respect their body’s limits when it comes to drinking regardless of what the drinking age is. Instead of changing laws, colleges should attempt to educate students to drink responsibly and stay healthy.

Upcoming Events near Richmond

Richmond Ballet: The Nutcracker: 7 p.m. throughout December at the Landmark Theater
Virginia Stage Company: A Christmas Carol: 8 p.m. throughout December at Wells Theater
Night Before Christmas: 7 p.m. December 5 at the Landmark Theater
Richmond Symphony: Let It Snow: 8 p.m. December 6 at the Landmark Theater
3 Doors Down: 7:30 p.m. December 13 at Hampton Coliseum
Taking Back Sunday: 6:30 p.m. December 16 at The Norva
Mudvayne: 7 p.m. December 17 at The Norva
Glenn Miller Orchestra Christmas Concert: 8 p.m. December 20 at the Ferguson Center for the Arts Concert Hall
New Year’s Comedy Explosion: 7:30 p.m. December 27 at Hampton Coliseum
WWE Smackdown: 7:30 p.m. December 29 at the Richmond Coliseum
Reel Big Fish: 6:30 p.m. January 18 at The Norva
Michael Bolton: 7:30 p.m. January 29 at Ferguson Center for the Arts Concert Hall
Monster Jam Monster Truck Racing: 7:30 p.m. February 13 at Hampton Coliseum

Barack Obama was elected the 44th president of the United States of America on November 4th 2008.

(Cartoon by Otis Rease)