Summary Report of Phases One and Two: Great Place Initiative (GPI)

By: Maike Philipsen, Ph.D. (GPI Co-Director)
Great Place Initiative (GPI)

In support of its Strategic Plan, *Quest for Distinction*, VCU developed the Great Place Initiative (GPI). Its goal is for all people who are part of VCU to experience the university as a great place to learn, work, and live.
the Great Place Initiative

Service excellence

Because great places produce great people.
And great people produce excellence.

VCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY
The Great Place Initiative

**Equal opportunities**
- Recognition
- Resources
- Safety
- Transparency
- Wellness and benefits
- Work/life balance

**Service excellence**

**Accountability**
- Civility
- Fairness
- Honesty
- Respect

**DATA COLLECTION**
*Phase I: Spring 2013*

*How are we doing?*

*Data collection:*
- Climate survey
- Focus groups
- Town halls

**PLANNING**
*Phase II: Summer 2013*

*What do we need to make VCU even better?*
- Assessment
- Planning of programs, policies and benefits

**IMPLEMENTATION**
*Phase III: Fall 2013 and beyond*

*How do we achieve results?*
- Modify/develop
- Implement programs and policies

VCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Make it real.
## Climate Survey: Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Full-time</td>
<td>1,489</td>
<td>2,651</td>
<td>56% (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Part-time</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>4,304</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A&amp;P Faculty:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Full-time</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Part-time</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T&amp;R Faculty:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Full-time</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>2,047</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Part-time</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1,179</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Full-time</td>
<td>1,311</td>
<td>3,020</td>
<td>43% (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Part-time</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>1,233</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Climate Survey: Key Findings

**Strengths** [*positively rated and correlated with overall satisfaction*]
- Relationships with colleagues
- Relationships with department leaders
- The working environment
- A culture of inclusiveness

**Positives** [*positively rated but not correlated with overall satisfaction*]
- Perceptions of Senior Administration
- Wellness programs

**Opportunities** [*negatively rated by a substantial number*]
- Rewards and recognition
- Opportunities and support for development/advancement
- Upward communication and fear of reprisal
- Perceived treatment of Collateral and Adjunct Faculty
Suggestions (by McKnight & Baird):

1. Solicit from faculty and staff suggestions for:
   - Increasing their sense of having a “voice”
   - Reducing fear of retribution
   - Improving recognition for performance
   - Increasing “transparency” of Senior Administration

2. Increase communication about issues identified by participants to be unclear
Thoughts on VCU as a Great Place
Diversity, Colleagues, Students

Note: Question posed to focus group participants was, “When you think about VCU as a great place to work, what comes to mind?” Resulting Wordle represents participant responses.
**Strengths Consistent with Climate Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity</th>
<th>Working Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- culture</td>
<td>- professionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- variety</td>
<td>- support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- inclusiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colleagues</strong></td>
<td>- valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- respect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focus Group Interviews: Participation (total n: 55)

- Classified Staff: 8
- Hourly Workers: 4
- Graduate Assistants: 5
- Administrative and Professional Faculty: 10
- Teaching & Research (T&R) Faculty (tenured): 8
- T & R Faculty (tenure-eligible): 10
- Non-tenure-eligible T & R Faculty: 6
- Qatar Campus Faculty and Staff: 4
# Additional Strengths

- Smart  
- Flexibility  
- Freedom  
- Athletics  
- Fun  
- Opportunities  
- Richmond  
- Urban  
- Benefits
Opportunities Consistent with Climate Survey

- Compensation
- Recognition
- Trust
- Opportunities for advancement
- Communication
# Group-Specific Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment/Group</th>
<th>Highest Priority</th>
<th>Second Priority</th>
<th>Third Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A &amp; P faculty</td>
<td>Compensation and non-monetary recognition</td>
<td>Trust and confidentiality</td>
<td>Funding and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenured T&amp;R faculty</td>
<td>Funding and support for research</td>
<td>Inclusion in decision making</td>
<td>Compensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure-eligible T&amp;R faculty</td>
<td>Salary and position parity</td>
<td>Improvements and transparency for evaluation system</td>
<td>Clarity, fairness, transparency and support for tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non tenure-eligible T&amp;R faculty</td>
<td>Leadership, authority and transparency</td>
<td>Compensation for everyone</td>
<td>Appropriate resources and benefits for LBGTQ employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Assistants</td>
<td>Graduate assistant employment structure and process</td>
<td>Advocating and taking responsibility for self</td>
<td>Central online place for information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hourly Workers</td>
<td>Culture of trust and welcome</td>
<td>Fun Days and team building opportunities</td>
<td>Clear path to advancement and to qualify for benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classified Staff</td>
<td>Increased communication</td>
<td>Accountability for supervisors</td>
<td>Money and salary equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar Campus Employees</td>
<td>Respect and equality</td>
<td>Visibility and recognition for Qatar achievements within the university community</td>
<td>Qatar representation within university government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strengths/Opportunities at-a-glance

Initiatives

Strengths:
People, Diversity, Inclusion, Working Environment

Opportunities:
Compensation, Recognition, Trust, Advancement, Communication
PROPOSED INITIATIVES:
RECOGNITION*

• Strengthen support for employees who seek national recognition (through Academic & Faculty Affairs and other offices)
• Improve research and publicizing of available national awards
• Launch process to report on/recognize faculty and staff personal achievements, continuing education, special awards and personal development

* not in rank order
PROPOSED INITIATIVES: TRUST*

• Explore consistency of employee evaluation process
• Provide professional development to supervisors/chairs/directors on how to provide constructive feedback and evaluation
• Strengthen mentorship programs for faculty, staff, administration

* not in rank order
PROPOSED INITIATIVES: TRUST (continued)

• Encourage meet-and-greet opportunities within units to enable faculty and staff to meet/talk to supervisors in person

• Provide mandatory leadership development for chairs/deans/supervisors
PROPOSED INITIATIVES: COMMUNICATION*

• Standardize meetings and communications at the department and school levels (a mix of regular written and face-to-face communications and opportunities for discussion)

• Encourage units to pursue best practices for engagement and communication (open the doors to consider changes)

• Promote at all levels that active, two-way communication is encouraged and valued

* not in rank order
PROPOSED INITIATIVES GENERAL:

- Timeline and/or key milestones will be published on GPI website as they are established.
- An ad hoc committee will be recruited from GPI to research best practices on:
  - Recognition
  - Trust
  - Communication

VOLUNTEERS???