VCU Tour

Introduction

Hello and welcome to VCU! My name is J.R. and I am from the small town of Gloucester, Va. I am studying theatre, psychology and nonprofit management here at VCU.

VCU is made up of two campuses in Richmond, Va. — the Monroe Park Campus located in the Fan District and the MCV Campus, which is downtown adjacent to the state Capitol and is home to our VCU Medical Center. VCU also offers students the opportunity to earn degrees in fashion design, graphic design or interior design at our campus in Doha, Qatar. Today I’ll be leading you on your self-guided tour of the Monroe Park Campus.

Stop 1  Welcome Center, Siegel Center, Student Health Center, Ackell Residence Center and Barnes & Noble @ VCU

We are now at Stop 1, VCU’s Welcome Center on Broad Street. As you exit the Welcome Center, you’ll see a brick tower on the opposite left-hand corner. This is our Siegel Center. It is where we host basketball and volleyball games, concerts, guest speakers and large social gatherings. Some of our past guests have included Bill Cosby and presidential candidates.

The Siegel Center also holds a state-of-the-art fitness center. Our gym has great hours — it’s open from 6 a.m. to midnight during the week. It’s a great way to get those endorphins moving before morning classes or pump out stress from the day.

On the far left side of the Siegel Center, in the brick building, is our Student Health Center. It is staffed with doctors and nurses who are ready to see our students. You just have to call and make a doctor’s appointment and you can even use the center’s pharmacy to fill your prescriptions at a discount.

Across the street from the Welcome Center is the Ackell Residence Center, one of our upperclassman residence halls. It offers apartment-style living for VCU sophomores, juniors and seniors. These residence halls are comprised of two-and four-bedroom apartments with one or two full baths, fully furnished single bedrooms, a kitchen with full-size appliances and a fully furnished living room.

Next to the Welcome Center is our new Barnes & Noble bookstore. Besides a great selection of reading and class materials, our bookstore offers many essentials for campus living. It’s within walking distance of the residence halls and has a Quiznos, so it’s a great place for students to grab lunch with friends.

Walk through the bookstore and see for yourself what it has to offer. The tour will continue at the corner of Shafer Street on the other side of the store.

Stop 2  School of the Arts Building and RAMZ Hall

We are now at Stop 2, the VCU School of the Arts Building.

Located directly across Broad Street, our School of the Arts Building is where our sculpture, printmaking, and craft and material studies programs can be found. The building houses a foundry and a welding shop, woodshops and a computer and video-editing room for our students.

Across Shafer Street to your right, in the brick and gray building, is RAMZ Hall. This is another upperclassman residence hall with two-bedroom apartments. Below RAMZ Hall, we have a ton of eateries for students to choose from, all within a short walking distance of campus.

Some restaurants even take VCU RamBucks — a way to use your VCU ID card as a debit card. You can use RamBucks for groceries, laundry, printing in the library and even gas! To load RamBucks onto the VCUCard, students and parents can use their credit card online or over the phone, or send a check in the mail.

Next, we will follow Shafer Street heading south away from Broad Street. Cross Grace Street and continue to the next corner, stopping at Franklin Street.

Stop 3  Franklin Street

Welcome to Stop 3, Franklin Street.

Franklin Street is lined with beautiful buildings, many of which house VCU administrative offices. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, some of Virginia’s wealthiest families lived in these houses. The undergraduate admissions office and the Office of the President, as well as offices for academic programs, can be found on this street.

For Stop 4, make a left onto Franklin Street and continue to the next corner, Laurel Street.
Stop 4  Residence halls

We are now at Stop 4, the freshman residence halls.

I like to call this area “freshman central” because it’s where you’ll find our three main freshman residence halls — each is uniquely different. Johnson Hall, located across Franklin Street, is our oldest residence hall and it served as a luxury high-rise apartment through the “Roaring ’20s.” It still maintains the luxury of high ceilings and wrought iron stair railings. Brandt Hall, the first high-rise building ahead of you, is our newest residence hall and offers suite-style living. Rhoads Hall, just beyond Brandt Hall, was built in the late ’60s and reflects the retro look of the time.

All of our residence halls have 24-hour security. Students swipe their ID at the security desk and show the security guard their photo to gain access to the building. Guests register at the security desk during visits and residents accompany them while they are in the building.

The residence halls offer air conditioning, wireless Internet and phone and cable connections in each room. Each room has an associated mailbox for students to receive packages from friends and family.

Each floor in the residence halls has an R.A., or resident assistant, for the students. An R.A. is an upperclassman who is responsible for creating a supportive living environment for residents by helping to mediate conflicts, solve problems and organize activities to meet other residents. An R.A. is available in each building 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Each hall features a community room with a large flat-screen TV for students to use. You can grab a couple of friends and some popcorn for a movie night or check out the Xbox or Nintendo Wii and make it a game night!

To get to Stop 5 on the tour, continue walking east on Franklin Street to Belvidere Street and make a right. Stop at the corner of Belvidere and Main streets, and as you walk along the border of Monroe Park, I’ll fill you in on the history.

The park was acquired by Richmond City Council in 1851 for just over $13,500. State and national agricultural fairs were held on the grounds from 1853 to 1858. From 1861 to 1862 the park became a Civil War “Camp of Instruction.” Confederate soldiers from all over the South — including Stonewall Jackson and Virginia Military Institute cadets — held mock battles and other training.

Today, Monroe Park plays host to many events and celebrations. The Monument Avenue 10k, one of the nation’s largest 10ks, actually ends right here in the park. We’ve even had celebrities like Sheryl Crow, Jack Johnson and the Beastie Boys perform here for us! The park has wireless Internet access and is a quiet place to sit and do homework or a great spot to play Frisbee during the warmer months.

Stop 5  Monroe Park Campus Addition and West Hall

Across Belvidere Street is Stop 5, the Monroe Park Campus Addition, which opened in spring 2008.

Housed in the single brick building in front of you, Snead and East halls are the new homes to the schools of Business and Engineering. Snead Hall features a fully functioning capital markets and trading room with a real-time stock ticker, collaborative learning rooms, tiered case-study classrooms and team-building breakout rooms.

East Hall, a 115,000-square-foot expansion of the School of Engineering, is primarily a research facility. The da Vinci Center for Innovation in Product Design and Development creates a central location for the schools of the Arts, Business and Engineering to partner on product design and development.

On the opposite corner of Belvidere is West Hall, the original home of the School of Engineering. West Hall provides advanced engineering, chemical and life science labs for our students.

Located one block down Belvidere, on the same side as Snead and East halls, is our newest upperclassman residence hall. It features a Chili’s, Starbucks and the Cary Street Market. Also, connected to Cary and Belvidere is our Jefferson Street Parking Deck, with direct access to the downtown expressway.

To continue on the tour, follow Main Street, the one-way street adjacent to Monroe Park, away from Belvidere and up to the corner of Laurel Street.

Stop 6  Gladding Residence Center and the Landmark Theatre

Located on your left, at the corner of Main and Laurel streets, is Gladding Residence Center, Stop 6 on our tour. This residence hall has both suites and apartments.

While we’re here, I’d like to make a quick point about security. Near the entrance to GRC, and as you walk around campus, you may notice yellow flashing lights. If you ever have an emergency on campus or need an escort to your car, locate one of these lights and press the emergency button located below. Each security box is equipped with GPS and will connect you directly to our police department. For more information on security at VCU be sure to pick up a copy of our Annual Security Report from the Welcome Center, or download a copy at www.vcu.edu/police.

To your right, on the opposite corner of Main, is Richmond’s Landmark Theatre. The theater was built in 1926 by Shriners. While not a VCU property, the university often hosts events in the Landmark Theatre, including some of the New Student Orientation activities. As one of Richmond’s most popular...
stages, the Landmark hosts a variety of events, including Broadway, symphony, ballet, children’s theater, concerts and fashion shows.

For Stop 7, continue west on Main Street until you reach Linden Street. Make a left onto the pedestrian walkway and follow it until you get to the large brick circle.

**Stop 7  Temple Building, Oliver Hall and Life Sciences building**

Welcome to Linden Street, Stop 7 on the tour and what I like to call the academic hub of our campus. Here we have Temple Building on your left, Oliver Hall on your right and VCU Life Sciences in front of you.

Temple Building houses the School of Mass Communications and most of our lecture halls. These large classes hold up to 300 people and are devoted to our general education classes — mostly 100- and 200-level math, science and ethics courses. These large classes often break down into smaller groups of 15 to 20 students for discussions and labs.

The Life Sciences building contains state-of-the-art biology and chemistry labs and the VCU Life Sciences program. Two large lecture halls — holding 200 and 300 students each — can be found here, as well as several smaller classrooms.

Oliver Hall is divided into two sections. Our first wing houses classrooms and labs for math, physics, chemistry and biology. The second wing is devoted to VCU’s School of Education.

Continue down Linden Street to the next corner for Stop 8 of our tour.

**Stop 8  Cary Street**

We are now at Stop 8, Cary Street.

The Cary Street Gym is one of my all-time favorite locations on campus. An additional 100,000 square feet were added to our main fitness center in 2010. It includes two pools, a rock climbing wall, racquetball and basketball courts, a track, a weight room and an aerobics mezzanine.

Across from the gym are the Cary Street Fields. Students can come out to enjoy a game of rugby, flag football, ultimate Frisbee, field hockey and even Quidditch! The Thalhimer Tennis Courts are available for students year-round. During the winter months a heated, inflatable bubble is placed over the courts to keep them warm.

To get to Stop 9, turn around and head back toward Main Street. Grace E. Harris Hall is across the street on your left. Once you cross the street, stop on the sidewalk between Harris Hall and the University Student Commons.

**Stop 9  Grace E. Harris Hall, VCU Student Services Center**

We are now at Stop 9, Grace E. Harris Hall, home of the VCU Student Services Center.

The VCU One-stop Student Services Center in Harris Hall brings essential student services to one location on the campus. This center offers a convenient single point of contact for students to conduct business with the university. Services related to financial aid, registration, student accounting and cashiering are addressed in the center by a group of professional, well trained and customer-friendly staff.

To get to stop 10, go up the ramp on the right and walk around to the opposite side of the Commons plaza to find the main entrance.

**Stop 10  University Student Commons**

We are now at Stop 10, the University Student Commons.

The Commons is a very popular spot for students at VCU. Downstairs we have what we call the "Underground." Students can hang out in the game room or start a round of cosmic bowling and billiards. The CNN café offers a quiet place for students to catch up on the news and some homework.

The meditation room, located just next door, offers a quiet place for reflection and prayer.

Our student organization office is located in the Commons. VCU offers more than 300 different student organizations ranging from service and volunteering to sports and even a pancake club that I happily belonged to! If you have a special interest, we most likely have a club to match. If we don’t, you can start your own! All you have to do is grab four other friends who all meet the minimum academic requirements. VCU will even help fund your organization. This is how we have grown to offer so many choices for our students and how VCU students are able to contribute their skills and talents to the community.

On the first floor you’ll find our Career Center, which offers free career development services. Our Off-Campus Student Housing and Disability Support Services offices are located here, along with eateries such as Subway and Chick-Fil-A.

On the second floor we have meeting spaces and ball-rooms available for student organizations and other social gatherings.

Exit through the Floyd Avenue entrance, near the information desk and the Commons Theater. Cross Floyd Avenue for Stop 11, the James Branch Cabell Library.

**Stop 11  James Branch Cabell Library**

The James Branch Cabell Library, Stop 11 on our tour, is the main library on VCU’s Monroe Park Campus. When you first
go in, you’ll see the circulation desk, group study tables, research services and current periodicals, all located on the first floor.

Between Cabell Library and Tompkins-McCaw Library on our MCV Campus, we have nearly 1.9 million books and almost five city blocks worth of manuscripts. Cabell Library’s Special Collections and Archives contains nearly 40,000 volumes in a variety of subjects, such as Virginia and Richmond history and literature and pop culture. The library’s Comic Arts Collection has more than 100,000 items, including graphic novels, editorial cartoons, comic strips memorabilia and more than 30,000 comic books.

The basement and first floor house two large computer labs. A large media archive is available for students on the third floor and an international newsroom is situated on the first floor. Our library has study areas to suit each student’s study needs. The higher you go, the quieter it gets. The first and second floors are devoted to group study. The third floor is sotto voce, or a dull whisper, and the fourth floor is completely silent. During final exams we have what we call “24/5,” when the library is available 24 hours a day for five days a week.

Now exit the library through the main doors and go to the left. We’ll stop at the compass in the center of the pedestrian area for Stop 12.

Stop 12 Compass, W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts and Hibbs Hall

Welcome to Stop 12. Hibbs Hall, located directly in front of you, houses VCU’s University College. The UC includes the Campus Learning Center, New Student Programs and academic advising. The UC also offers free tutoring in any subject offered on campus. Students can choose between drop-in tutoring or meet with a tutor regularly.

Look to the left and just past Hibbs you’ll see a brick building.

This is the W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts. It houses the theatre and music departments of the School of the Arts. Directly across the street from the Singleton Center is the James W. Black Music Center. This recently renovated building features additional state-of-the-art classrooms, practice rooms and performance space for music students.

Next, continue to Shafer Court Dining Center on your right for Stop 13. You can enter the dining hall through the main doors in the circular area of the building.

Stop 13 Shafer Court Dining Center

Stop 13, Shafer Court Dining Center, is the main dining facility on the Monroe Park Campus.

Shafer Court is divided into two sections. The main facility is located on the second floor and features a market-style buffet with individual kiosks providing made-to-order dishes. Our dining stations range from vegan and vegetarian fare and made-to-order sushi to burgers and fries, pizza and pasta. During special occasions, such as Mardi Gras and Cinco de Mayo, our chefs prepare authentic dishes for students. Downstairs, Camille’s Sidewalk Cafe offers made-to-order wraps, grilled paninis and deli sandwiches.

Conclusion

This ends our tour for today. To return to the VCU Welcome Center, you can continue down the pedestrian walkway and up Shafer Street until you reach Broad Street. The Welcome Center will be down the block to your left.

We thank you very much for coming out to visit us and look forward to seeing you in the future! If you have any questions regarding the admissions process, or would like to follow up on a submitted application, we invite you to visit our Web site at www.ugrad.vcu.edu. You can also give us a call at (804) 828-1222 or (800) 841-3638. Again, we thank you for visiting and hope to hear from you soon!