This report explores the ways in which Virginia Commonwealth University can embark upon a plan of comprehensive internationalization. It examines current structures and proposes additional steps the university can take to impact the learning experience of every student in preparation for an increasingly globalized world.
Executive Summary

On December 19, 2011 the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs charged a task force to begin the process of institution wide analysis on internationalization. That group represented many constituencies from across the university and met several times, reviewed resources on current best practices and met with consultants and VCU internal constituencies to begin the process. They focused on three particular areas: education abroad, international students, and partnerships.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS
Through its research, the task force found that to truly affect change in the area comprehensive internationalization, VCU must devote effort to four key areas: resource development, university-wide engagement, curriculum assessment and program regulation.

Resource development: The university must dedicate human and financial resources to support international recruitment, education abroad and university partnership programs. It must also invest in the technology necessary to support its internationalization efforts.

University-wide engagement: All university stakeholders must have a voice in the conversation about comprehensive internationalization. The perspectives of faculty and both international and domestic students at all levels, must be used to inform the university’s decisions regarding comprehensive internationalization. Faculty should be encouraged to participate in international endeavors and deans and department chairs should incentivize these efforts.

Curriculum assessment: Comprehensive internationalization must include an assessment of VCU’s current curriculum. The university must ensure that an appropriate breadth of internationally focused and foreign language courses are offered, as well as consult with students, faculty, deans and department chairs regarding the role of VCU’s curriculum as it relates to global engagement.

Program regulation: Lastly, the university could benefit from increasing its regulation of any VCU-sponsored international activity. Programs going abroad should be required to register with the Global Education Office, and academic advisors and student affairs staff should be better informed about how they can contribute to the global engagement of students.

SUMMARY OF NEXT STEPS
The report concludes that the Task Force for Comprehensive Internationalization should continue its work under expanded leadership, membership and structure. In addition to the current chair, two faculty co-chairs should be identified, and faculty and student representatives should augment the task force’s current membership. The previously identified working groups should continue to explore their relative topics and new working groups should be identified as the task force advances its research.
Introduction

OVERVIEW
Comprehensive internationalization requires more than signed agreements or a few highly visible projects. More than an ornamental accessory, it is intrinsic and suffuses the spirit and essence of an institution. While internationalization depends on the passion and energy of individuals, it must be institutional in breadth, seeking to impact the learning experience of every student in preparation for an increasingly globalized world.

Internationalizing a university embraces matters of curriculum, education abroad, international research and scholarship, university engagement, and the recruitment, retention and meaningful engagement of international students and scholars on campus.

VCU has made great strides towards internationalization over the past decade, tripling its enrollment of international students and constructing a global network of universities. The university’s new strategic plan presents an opportune moment to embark upon an institutional plan for internationalization.

BACKGROUND
In her remarks to the task force on December 19, 2011, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Beverly Warren, made the following points:

Our new strategic plan, Quest for Distinction, clearly asserts that, as the premiere, urban public research university in Virginia our overarching goal is to graduate students who are prepared to engage in a 21st century global environment. Our goal is to “internationalize” the university in a systemic, meaningful, sustainable way. That means addressing our commitment to global education as it relates to each Quest Theme.

Theme One articulates our determination to become a leader among national research universities in providing all students with high quality learning/living experiences focused on inquiry, discovery and innovation in a global environment. What are we doing to provide our students with the knowledge, skills and experiences they will need upon graduation to succeed in an increasingly global environment?

Theme Two states our intention to attain preeminence as an urban, public research university by making contributions in research, scholarship, creative expression and clinical practice that bring national and international recognition. What structures are in place to support our faculty in gaining international recognition for research, scholarship, creative expression and clinical practice?

Theme Three says that we will achieve national recognition as a fully-integrated research university with a commitment to human health. Human health is a global concern, affected by regional economic, social and cultural trends. How can we use our international contacts to enrich our research, teaching and service related to health?
Theme Four envisions VCU as a national model for community engagement and regional impact. Our community, like those around the world, is increasingly shaped by the global movement of people, goods and ideas. How might VCU serve as a bridge connecting the emerging needs in our communities with resources and expertise of our network of international partner universities?

During its initial phase, the Provost asked the task force to address three specific areas of concern:

Continue to increase the number, quality and engagement of our international students. What is the ideal combination of mechanisms to attract and retain the best students (i.e. dual/joint degree programs, bridge programs, agents, alumni, etc.)?

Continue to increase the global engagement of our students. How do we determine and expand the best options for study abroad; for engaging international students and scholars on campus; for maintaining virtual relationships with peers at partnership institutions, and for local heritage communities?

Investigate alternative opportunities for partnership. The International Partnership Universities have been at the center of internationalization efforts at VCU, and certainly with some good results. But we also have promising initiatives emerging beyond the partnership roster. How can we develop a consistent, strategic system of partnerships that is flexible enough to respond to the evolving priorities of academic units? And how do we measure our success at achieving the greatest return for our investment?

THE PROVOST’S CHARGE
The Provost’s charge to the task force was threefold.

1) Identify national best practices that merit emulation.

2) Inventory current goals, practices and resources to determine strengths and areas for growth and convergence at the institutional level.

3) Establish goals and benchmarks as well as the strategies to achieve them.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS
• Omar Abubaker, Chair, Oral Surgery, School of Dentistry
• Chezdan Baker, Student, Monroe Park Campus and Lead Greeter, Housing
• Carine Binyam, Student, Monroe Park Campus
• Leslie Bozeman, Coordinator of Doctoral Studies, School of Education
• R. McKenna Brown, Executive Director, Global Education Office (Chair)
• Ann Nichols-Casebolt, Associate Vice President for Research Development
• Jan Chlebowski, Associate Dean for Graduate Education, School of Medicine
• Kamlesh N. Davé, Board of Visitors
• Nicholas Farrell, Professor, Department of Chemistry
• Reggie Gordon, CEO, Red Cross of Greater Richmond
• Samantha Marrs, Senior Associate Vice Provost for Development
• Derek Mires, Student, School of Pharmacy
• Laura Moriarty, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
• Angelina Overvold, Associate Professor, School of World Studies
• Reuban Rodriguez, Associate Vice Provost & Dean of Student Affairs
• Nancy Scott, Associate Dean, School of the Arts
• Judy Twigg, Professor, Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs
• Weiyong Zhang, Assistant Professor, School of Business

MEETINGS
December 19, 2011 (Provost’s charge)

January 24, 2012

March 22, 2012 (Presentation by Susan Carvalho)

April 17, 2012

May – work in Subgroups
Resources

In its efforts to explore best practices, the task force turned to the American Council of Education (ACE), whose Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement offers programs and services that enhance comprehensive internationalization on U.S. campuses and situate U.S. higher education in a global context. Through ACE, two consultants were identified to invite for campus visits during the spring 2012 semester. In addition, the task force identified the ACE Internationalization Laboratory as a resource for developing goals and strategic plans related to university internationalization.

CONSULTANTS

Susan Carvalho, Associate Provost for International Programs at the University of Kentucky, has held various administrative positions in addition to her faculty role. She has served as Associate Dean in the College of Arts & Sciences, chair of the General Education Reform Steering Committee, interim chair of the Departments of Hispanic Studies and Political Science, and as Director of the Spanish School at Middlebury College in Vermont. She also spent a year as a Fellow of the American Council on Education, in the offices of the Chancellor and Provost at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. In her role as Associate Provost, she oversees the Office of International Affairs, including the divisions of Education Abroad, International Student and Scholar Services, and International Outreach, in addition to the Asia Center and Confucius Institute. Her campus-wide role includes enhancing global research and curriculum initiatives within each of UK’s colleges, and chairing the International Advisory Council. In her departmental work, in addition to teaching courses on Spanish American literature, she has directed 26 dissertations to successful completion.

Dr. Carvalho visited VCU in February, 2012 and met with task force members, GEO staff and senior administrators. Her findings are included throughout later portions of this report. (Visit Agenda: See appendix 1).

Dr. Barbara A. Hill is a Senior Associate with the American Council on Education’s Center for Effective Leadership, working with member institutions to promote international learning and to help leaders think strategically about internationalization. Hill served as a senior consultant to the Higher Education for Development program (formerly the Association Liaison Office for University Development), working to develop organizational infrastructure to serve international development through university partnerships and organizing conferences to disseminate expertise in international development. Hill has been a regular participant in the Visiting Advisors Program of the Salzburg Seminar, consulting with universities in Russia and Eastern Europe about governance, management, finance, academic structure, and program quality. Hill continues to moderate the Intellectual Renewal Seminars for Leaders, begun at Radcliffe College/Harvard University, which are seminars on leadership, ethics and the good society for various professional groups.

Hill serves as chair of the board of directors of the Maryland Humanities Council. She earned a B.A. in English literature with honors from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, and a M.A. and Ph.D. in English literature from the University of Washington, Seattle. Hill has held senior level administrative
positions at several higher education institutions, including acting director of admissions at Hood College (1979-1980), associate dean of the faculty at Barnard College/Columbia University (1983–86), provost of Denison University (1986-1990), and president of Sweet Briar College (1990–1996). Hill was an ACE Fellow in 1979–80.

Dr. Hill visited VCU in March 2012, and met with task force members, GEO staff and senior administrators. Resulting from her visit was an invitation to VCU to join the tenth cohort of universities in the Internationalization Laboratory, described below. (Visit Agenda: See appendix 1).

ACE INTERNATIONALIZATION LABORATORY
ACE’s Internationalization Laboratory provides institutions with customized guidance and insight as they review their internationalization goals and develop strategic plans.

As part of the Internationalization Laboratory, experts from ACE work with institutions to help them:

- Form an internationalization leadership team on campus
- Review current internationalization activities to clarify institutional goals
- Develop a strategic action plan based on an analysis of current activities on campus

Participating institutions also have access to:

- On-campus site visits by ACE staff, involving a roundtable discussion with the leadership team and key stakeholders to facilitate dialogue, define key questions and issues, clarify goals and build support for the internationalization process
- Three meetings of the entire 2012-2014 Internationalization Laboratory cohort, hosted by ACE in Washington, DC
- Regular contact with and guidance from ACE staff as the campus conducts its review, analyzes findings and develops its action plan

Working Groups
As recommended by the consultants, to more effectively address the three areas of concern identified by the Provost, the task force self-selected into three working groups that carried out their research during the April and May. Their conclusions are presented below.

GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP
Members: Chezdan Baker, Nick Farrell, Samantha Marrs, Reuban Rodriguez, Judy Twigg (Chair)
The Global Engagement Working Group was charged with examining issues related to the international activities and exposure of students across both campuses. Its work was guided by VCU’s current strategic planning document, *Quest for Distinction*, which holds as its first-listed mission a commitment to “inquiry, discovery, and innovation in a global setting.” The vision guiding *Quest* also includes a commitment to “the global engagement of students, faculty and staff that transforms lives and communities.”

The working group’s goal was to deliver a preliminary assessment of current activity aimed toward fulfillment of this part of the university’s mission. Its work was focused on four main issue areas: education abroad, departmental and program curricula, student groups and living-learning communities.

**Education Abroad:** The working group met with Stephanie Davenport, Director of Education Abroad, and received from her extensive data on student activity in this area at VCU and other institutions. VCU’s student numbers, in terms of outgoing and incoming international exchanges, have been growing steadily each year for which records are available. The majority of VCU students studying in other countries participate through VCU faculty-led programs (32 programs in summer 2012). Students also take advantage of International Student Exchange Program opportunities, programs sponsored by other universities, departmental/partnership exchanges and independent study. By country, the most popular destinations are New Zealand, Italy, United Kingdom, Spain, Barbados, the Netherlands, Austria, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, France and Panama.

Preliminary examination indicates the primary current barriers to expansion of study abroad activity are:

- **Financial.** Although VCU’s Office of Financial Aid provides valuable services, and GEO provides Education Abroad scholarships ($41,250 in 2011-2012 to 49 students), VCU does not enjoy a level of financial support in this area that is common in many of its peer institutions. The Working group recommends examining development opportunities that might lead to donor-funded study abroad scholarships and advancing the current proposal for funding of education abroad through a dedicated student Global Engagement fee at the university level.

- **Staffing.** The Education Abroad office provides excellent outreach and advising to the VCU community, but on a per student basis, it is staffed at levels below those of many peer institutions. Old Dominion University, for example, with a 22,000-student total enrollment and 250 students traveling abroad each year, has two more full-time Education Abroad staff members than that of VCU (with 32,000 students and 500 students going abroad annually). The working group recommends a thorough needs assessment of staffing in the Education Abroad office.

- **Faculty/Departmental Incentives and Engagement.** Currently, there is no incentive structure in place to encourage faculty to propose study abroad programs, yet a large number of such programs take place each year. These programs tend to concentrate within a fairly narrow range of academic fields: language and culture, history, cinema and the arts. It is possible that the university has reached maximum marginal return on the faculty-led model. The working group recommends consultation with deans and department chairs to identify structures and incentives that could result in regular, ongoing, department-specific study abroad programs forming an integral part of departmental curricula in previously unrepresented or underrepresented disciplines.
Foreign Language Instruction. Without sufficient language proficiency, students are likely to gravitate toward study abroad programs in English-speaking countries. The working group recommends an assessment of VCU’s current foreign language course offerings in comparison with those of peer institutions, to ensure that resources are available for students to acquire competence across an appropriate number and range of languages. In particular, consideration should be given to offering instruction in the languages of emerging economies (the BRIC countries—Brazil, Russia, India and China, for example) and those languages identified by the U.S. government as those of strategic importance (Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Turkish and Urdu) and in other languages that are likely to offer maximum employment potential for graduating students.

Departmental and Program Curricula: Integrally related to education abroad are issues regarding departmental and program curricula. The working group carried out a preliminary review of internationally-focused courses and programs currently offered by academic units across the university. The College of Humanities and Sciences requires that its undergraduate students, in all majors, complete one course under the rubric “Diverse and Global Communities.” No other school shares a similar requirement, though several have specialized international concentrations within their primary degree programs (for example, the Global Business concentration in the School of Business MBA program).

For most academic majors, however (even within the College), it is difficult to ascertain from a cursory review the extent to which internationally oriented subject matter and experiences are integrated into the study of course material in the major discipline. Although it is not reasonable to expect significant curriculum additions or changes within disciplines that already have very tight requirements for accreditation and student graduation, it is also the case that all students—even those whose degree programs do not, on the surface, appear to “need” an international dimension—should be prepared for citizenship and careers in an increasingly global world. The working group recommends a comprehensive and detailed review of academic courses and curricula across the university, to provide a greater understanding of internationally focused course content and degree offerings/requirements. Deans and department chairs should also be surveyed to discover their receptivity—and the required resource base and incentive structure—to internationalization of some component of the curriculum within each academic major.

International Student Groups: The working group carried out a preliminary review of VCU student organizations, through listings on the university website. There are literally dozens of VCU student associations related to countries and regions outside the United States, with substantive focus including dance, music, culture, ethnicity, religion, art, scholarship, athletics/sports, international development, global health and social justice. Without further inquiry, it is difficult to know whether these groups are enclaves that operate largely in isolation, or if they successfully (as many of their mission statements claim) integrate internationally oriented subject matter into the wider on-campus audience. It is also not clear whether most of these student groups are institutionalized and sustainable, or if their level of activity depends primarily on the energy and dedication of just a few current students. These student organizations might also benefit from interactions with their “matching” local ethnic, religious, cultural and community groups. The working group recommends that surveys and focus groups be conducted among the leadership and membership of these groups, and of the student body as a whole, to ascertain the
groups’ modes of operation and impact.

**Living-Learning Community:** Currently, the university provides an opportunity for first-year students to live in a residence hall community with peers who share common interests. There are eleven of these “Residential Villages (RVs),” sharing space with other residential students in three large residence halls. One of these RVs is “Globe Trotters,” for students interested in international affairs and study abroad. In the fall of 2012, a new dedicated residence hall will open that links living and learning together over a four-semester period for students interested in service learning and community engagement. A second dedicated residence hall is currently under construction, with plans to offer a living-learning experience for students interested in global issues. The task force recommends that, as this initiative progresses, all living-learning programs at VCU be monitored to assess their impact on the students directly taking part, as well as its broader impact on internationalization across both campuses.

**Conclusion:** In sum, the working group proposes in-depth curriculum and resource assessments, surveys and focus groups among VCU students and faculty, and consultation with deans and department chairs, across several issues related to global engagement. Through analysis of the collected data, the Group would hope that strategic structures and incentives can be identified to inaugurate new and enhance existing international experiences for VCU students, enabling both students and faculty to achieve their core missions – whatever their disciplines – more richly and successfully through the incorporation of international elements and experiences.

**INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, SCHOLARS AND VISITORS WORKING GROUP**

*Members: Carine Binyam, Jan Chlebowski (chair), Derek Mires, Laura Moriarty, Angelina Overvold*

The charge to the International Students, Scholars and Visitors Working Group was the assessment of the degree to which VCU is currently meeting the needs of the international scholar community. The working group examined three primary areas to assess the level of service the university currently provides to international students and scholars: Global Education Office, peer institution websites and international institutions.

**Global Education Office Organization and Services:** As an initial step in the assessment of the role of Global Education Office (GEO) in meeting the needs of the international scholar, a pair of interactive sessions was held with the head and/or designee of the various GEO offices, including International Admissions, Immigration Services, English Language Program, Education Abroad, Student Advising and Community Connections.

The objective of these sessions was to provide the working group membership with an initial perspective on the span of functions and responsibilities of these offices in their current form. In addition, each of the offices was asked to prepare a short description of the office and suggestions as to areas in which the functions of the office might be expanded and improved along with an identification of the resources which might be required. All units did respond and these responses have been provided in this report as Appendix #2. Particularly rich responses were provided by Education Abroad and Community Connections. Worthy of mention is that in the most recent survey of international students at VCU, among
those that reported using the services of a GEO office or program, 87% rated the quality of service as good or excellent.

While we are at the early stages of this self-study, it is already evident that the provision of suitable on-campus housing for international scholars is an area meriting attention. Constraints owing to the structure of housing contracts, the quality of housing and, most critically, the absence of a process to match appropriately international and domestic scholars will represent a barrier to recruitment and retention of international students. The task force needs to address this particular area in some depth and include representation from Student Affairs in our deliberations. There is some thought that the Learning Communities approach will address some of these issues for some scholars. However, identification of the number of international students who would be impacted positively by the Communities and the relationship to enrollment targets for international scholars remains to be determined.

Website Review: As a means of initiating a comparison of the marketing of international resources inside and outside VCU and to gather information regarding the organization of international offices at other institutions, the electronic locations of descriptions of “international offices” at the six primary peer institutions identified in the Quest for Distinction were identified and appear below. An initial examination of these sites allowed some preliminary observations that will be expanded as the work of the task force moves forward.

| University of Louisville       | http://louisville.edu/internationalcenter/ |
| University of Cincinnati      | http://www.uc.edu/international.html      |
| University of South Florida   | http://global.usf.edu/                    |
| University of South Carolina, Columbia | http://www.ip.sc.edu/index.php |
| University of Illinois, Chicago | http://www.ois.uic.edu/                   |
| University of Alabama, Birmingham | http://main.uab.edu/Sites/students/32678/ |

The degree of difficulty in finding resources that would be required by a prospective international student varied considerably among the six sites. In several cases, location of the site or sites was difficult as neither directories nor internal search engines provided guidance in identifying the resource. This was made more difficult if the primary office had been given a name that did not incorporate “international” and did not provide a complementary directory entry to facilitate site location. For example, at the University of South Florida this unit was called “USF World,” and University of Alabama Birmingham was named “International Scholar and Students Services” (the name is fine but there was no such entity linked to the primary website making it close to impossible to find). It appears that at both these institutions, services for internationals are highly decentralized and, at least on an initial examination, were very difficult to identify.

The working group in its proposed expanded form (including international scholars) should conduct a
review of the GEO website using the “peer” sites as a frame of reference to assess the efficacy of the website in serving to attract potential scholars (to both ELP and academic programs) and in providing a user-friendly path to the submission of applications and the generation and communication of required immigration information. We are aware of the university initiative to manage student enrollment through a more centralized approach. However, the review and observations that will be conducted by the task force will have relevance irrespective of the “location” and integration of admissions functions. Indeed, the ongoing work of the task force in the immediate future may help to shape the evolution of the enrollment management initiative.

The current and future use of the web site as a resource for the international scholar once enrolled also would be examined. The international scholar community at all levels would be consulted to assess the level of satisfaction with the programs and services provided by GEO at present and to perform a “needs assessment” from the perspective of the international scholar.

**Practices at International Institutions:** An additional strategy to inform the planning process is the examination of practices for the provision of services to international scholars as conducted at institutions outside the U.S. Many universities are emphasizing international student recruitment for a variety of reasons and may provide a unique perspective on assessing and meeting the needs of the international scholar. Our partnership institutions would be a good starting point and surveying the experiences of VCU students who have studied abroad would be an additional source of relevant information. There will be great variability in the approaches being taken (e.g. a working group member has indicated that institutions in France do not regard this as a high priority; in contrast, the University of the West of England has a robust set of resources available to prospective and enrolled students at their website: [http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/comingtouwe/internationalstudents/internationalstudyatuwe.aspx](http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/comingtouwe/internationalstudents/internationalstudyatuwe.aspx)

Information from the University of Iceland (which hosts a surprising number of international scholars) includes a guidebook for the international student (in English) which is very nicely done and might serve as a model for GEO. The url for the Office of International Education (which was recently visited) follows: [https://english.hi.is/university/office_of_international_education](https://english.hi.is/university/office_of_international_education)

The University of Iceland has a limited number of partner universities and has developed an on-line nomination mechanism for student exchanges within their partner institutions which may be of interest at VCU.

**Sources of Information and Perspectives:** To be successful, internationalization of VCU will need to be embraced by the university community. We see a need to survey each of the VCU schools and colleges to obtain insight into the interest, provision of services, needs and issues related to the international scholar population. Interviews with the school /college leadership may provide a productive approach to eliciting this key information.

**Working Group Composition:** Our initial limited activities exploring the services provided to prospective and resident international scholars made it clear that an expansion of the working group membership is needed to better inform the exploration of resources and services by the working group.
The composition of the working group will require modification to meet its objectives during the course of the year. Key additions would include the following:

**Faculty** – a representative of the ELP faculty and one or two faculty members whose classes have historically drawn a large number and diversity of international students;

**Students** – international students need to have a voice on the working group. This might include a student from the ELP program and perhaps an ELP student who has transitioned to a degree program as well as an international who has matriculated directly into an academic program. The student representatives should include both undergraduate and graduate students from the Monroe Park and MCV Campus locations. VCU students with an interest and participation commitment may be added to provide the perspective of domestic students.

**Post-doctoral scholar** - The working group might also productively include an international post-doctoral scholar.

Students may be identified to serve on a representative basis to maintain a reasonable working group size. Working group participants must contribute to scheduled activities and assigned tasks to assist in meeting the objectives of the task force. Individuals unable to meet these modest objectives should be replaced. We believe that the size of the working group should not be greater than 8-10 members.

The gathering of international scholar perceptions and suggestions via on-line surveys and focus groups will be a component of the information gathering needed to formulate a comprehensive plan. It is our expectation that members of the working group will be willing to assist in these activities.

**Recommendations:**

1. Modify the working group composition as outlined above.

2. Establish questions to pose to the members of the international community in the several scholar categories.

3. Conclude review of GEO current organization and resources.

4. Initiate and coordinate information gathering from schools and colleges and international scholars including ELP students, undergraduates, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

5. Systematically collect “best” and “worst” practices information by reviewing domestic and international institutional websites.

**INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS WORKING GROUP**

*Members: Omar Abubaker, Leslie Bozeman, Ann Nichols-Casebolt (Chair), Nancy Scott*

The charge to the International Partnerships Working Group was to examine current VCU partnerships to begin an assessment of how to develop a consistent, strategic system of partnerships that is flexible enough to respond to the evolving priorities of academic units, and is an effective and efficient use of resources. Members of the International Partnerships Working Group met three times and this report is
based on a review of the partnership MOUs, several partnership annual reports and a meeting with several of the VCU directors of the partnership universities.

The Value of Partnerships: During its research, the working group found it was beneficial to articulate why it is important for VCU to have partnership programs. The group determined that the partnership model:

1. Provides stability over time in VCU’s relationships with other universities.
2. Builds institutional relationships rather than just faculty-to-faculty
3. Provides structure and support in collaborative efforts
4. Provides funding to maintain and sustain the partnership

General Comments from Partnership Directors: The success of a partnership program relies on three key components: the value it adds to the university, important relationships and manageable goals. In order to be successful, a partnership program needs to demonstrate that it adds value to the university. It must be more than just a good experience for faculty and students; rather it must equip them to do something in a better or more enlightened way. In addition, VCU deans and department chairs need to see that there is value-added to faculty engagement with international partners. For this to occur, departments need to determine how international partnerships fits within their goals, and how faculty and students should be “rewarded” for their participation. For example, when students receive course credit toward their degree requirements for work at the partner institution, it is a true incentive for them to participate.

In addition, partnership directors must have the time to build relationships with key people, which is a process that cannot be rushed. It was agreed that programs should start with small projects that have the potential to be successful and incorporate manageable components that are likely to work. Early success will help motivate and sustain continuing partnership activities.

Concerns for Partnership Programs: The following is a list of issues that have at times been barriers or obstacles for international partnerships.

- **Cost:** The high tuition and travel costs (especially Curtin & KwaZulu Natal) for students from partnership universities can be prohibitive. At times there appear to be inconsistencies in tuition charges, suggesting a need to have written policies and guidance with regard to tuition modifications and/or exceptions for international students.

- **Language barriers:** Language barriers create an obstacle for some partnership programs. Generally there is a basic understanding of a common language, i.e. English, but lack of language proficiency limits what can be done and who can do it.

- **Bureaucracy:** Requirements of foreign travel (e.g., visa issues) to the U.S. from some partner countries can be cumbersome. While GEO has been extremely helpful with these issues, the time and complexity associated with international travel is frustrating to directors and travelers alike.

- **Institutional match:** Several partner universities are professional schools with a disciplinary focus in medicine or engineering. Establishing a robust partnership with the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research in India, for example, is hampered by the lack of an education component, thus limiting what can be done with this partner.
**Interest and incentives:** There is, at times, a lack of interest on the part of some chairs/deans for faculty participation in partnership programs. With limited resources, international activity may be a low priority within some units giving faculty minimal incentive to engage in such activities.

**Role of the partnership director:** There is a need to clarify partnership directors’ roles and responsibilities in relation to partnership activities and the evaluation of their success. For example, should there be a role for the directors in follow-up with the major initiative grants? If so, what would be that role? And, who makes the decision as to when the director is involved and the extent of their role?

**Recommendations**

1. There should be short and long-term goals with corresponding metrics established for each of the partnership universities

   - The partnership directors should work together—and with other stakeholders—to establish some common goals, as well as any unique goals for each partnership. Other stakeholders would include faculty, students and individuals from the partner universities.

   - The goals should clearly illustrate the ‘value-added’ to both VCU and the partner university by maintaining the partnership, and should directly relate to the Quest for Distinction. The goals should address both quantity (e.g., number of students and faculty participating) and quality (e.g., the outcome of their participation).

   - Each goal should have associated metrics/measures (e.g., # of faculty exchanges; external dollars generated, etc.) that will be used to assess program toward goal achievement.

   - Strategies/activities for achieving the goals should be presented with resource (both human and monetary) implications.

   - Each partnership should develop a budget that relates to achievement of its goals.

   - There should be an expectation that each partnership will begin to generate revenues to help cover costs of activities and partnerships should be evaluated each three to five years to determine if they should continue. What value have they added?

2. Assessment of progress toward goal achievement should be done at least annually.

3. If a partnership is unable to make progress toward its goals, there should be consideration of discontinuation as a partnership university. There may still be collaborative activities with the university, but it would not be recognized and supported as one of the partners.

4. GEO should implement some capacity building for partnership directors (e.g., knowledge and skills for working with issues related to faculty and student exchanges; best practices for sustaining partnerships; budget development; assessment skills; etc.).
5. Partnership directors should attend all regular meetings scheduled to share information and address issues.

6. There should be some consideration for establishing an advisory board for each partnership. The advisory board can assist the director in setting goals, budgets and conducting the annual assessment.

7. There needs to be some assertive outreach to deans and department chairs to identify their views about international involvement of their faculty and students, especially as it relates to the partnership universities.

8. Partnership directors should develop additional strategies for highlighting partnership accomplishments to the university community.

9. Criteria for establishing new partnerships should be developed. Additional partnerships should only be considered if there is a clear “value-added”; there also need to be well established goals and objectives for measuring success.

10. The university needs to look for ways to generate external funding for the partnerships. Having an individual who solicits funding opportunities would be beneficial.
Conclusion

Through its preliminary research, the task force has identified recommendations for the comprehensive internationalization of VCU in the following four key areas: resource development, university-wide engagement, curriculum assessment and program operations.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (human, financial and technological)

- Conduct in-depth resource assessments, surveys and focus groups among VCU students and faculty, and consult with deans and department chairs across several issues related to resources needed to support increasing global engagement.

- Develop a revenue plan that will allow staff size to grow as the number of incoming international students grows.

- Examine development opportunities that might lead to donor-funded study abroad scholarships and revisit prior proposals for funding of education abroad through a dedicated student Global Engagement fee at the university or departmental level.

- Conduct a thorough needs assessment for current and future staffing and resource needs of the Education Abroad office.

- Explore designation of staff to support external funding efforts for the partnerships.

- Consider the strategic and cautious use of third-party providers, which is the norm at many institutions.

- Make the leap to batch transfer with SEVIS, which most schools of VCU’s size use.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE ENGAGEMENT

- Consult with deans and department chairs to identify structures and incentives that could result in regular, ongoing, department-specific study abroad programs that could serve as an integral part of departmental curricula in previously unrepresented or underrepresented disciplines.

- Surveys and focus groups should be conducted among the leadership and membership of international student groups, and of the student body as a whole, to ascertain the groups’ modes of operation and impact.

- Survey each of the VCU schools and colleges to obtain insight into the interest, incentives, provision of services, and needs and issues related to the international scholar population, and faculty involvement in international activities. Interviews with the school or college leadership may provide a productive approach to eliciting this key information.
• Faculty should be encouraged to establish partnerships that move their research forward, or that hold the potential for student mobility or grants, but centralization of all of international MOUs is a SACS requirement (standard 3.4.7).

CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT
• Conduct in-depth curriculum assessments, surveys and focus groups among VCU students and faculty, and consult with deans and department chairs across several issues related to Global Engagement.

• Conduct an assessment of VCU’s current foreign language course offerings in comparison with those of peer institutions to ensure that resources are available for students to acquire competence across an appropriate number and range of languages. In particular, consideration should be given to offering instruction in the languages of emerging economies (the BRICS countries, for example) and in other languages that are likely to offer maximum employment potential for graduating students.

• Conduct a comprehensive and detailed review of academic courses and curricula across the university to provide a greater understanding of internationally focused course content and degree offerings/requirements. Deans and department chairs should also be surveyed to discover their receptivity – and the required resource base and incentive structure – to internationalization of some component of the curriculum within each academic major.

PROGRAM OPERATIONS
• The international scholar community at all levels should be consulted to assess the level of satisfaction with the programs and services provided by GEO at present. A “needs assessment” from the perspective of the international scholar should also be conducted.

• Evaluation and enhancement of the website as a resource for international scholars and students needs to be conducted.

• Mechanisms need to be developed for assessing the continuation of current international partnerships and for establishing new partnerships.

• Implement administrative regulations to force all groups going abroad under VCU “auspices” to register with GEO and purchase travel medical/evacuation insurance (and malpractice insurance if clinical).

• More regulatory than advisory. This will be an area to work on, perhaps by partnering with academic advisors or student-affairs programming folks to adopt more of their philosophies about customer service and mentorship.
Next Steps
As it concludes its initial stage, the task force will adjust its structure and composition in the following way.

LEADERSHIP
Two faculty co-chairs to be identified and current chair R. McKenna Brown will serve as co-chair to help coordinate the supporting role that GEO will play in the collection, documentation and analysis of data.

MEMBERSHIP
The task force will be expanded from its current number of 18 to approximately double its size, to include representatives from faculty and the student body.

Faculty representatives should include members of the following groups: Faculty Senate, English Language Program, and instructors of classes historically drawing large numbers and diversity of international students

Student representatives should include members of the following groups: international students (ELP, ELP graduate, undergraduate and graduate, Monroe Park and MCV Campuses, post-doctoral scholar) and VCU students with an interest and participation commitment.

STRUCTURE
All task force members will participate in topic-based working groups tasked with specific areas. Topic groups, in addition to the three current subgroups, will be identified through discussion and approval by the new task force membership.

(This section under development to include “Expected Outcomes”)

PARTICIPATION IN ACE INTERNATIONALIZATION LABORATORY
To support the work of the task force, beginning in fall 2012 VCU will participate in the ACE Internationalization Laboratory. As part of the Internationalization Laboratory, ACE provides assistance to leadership teams as they engage in a comprehensive review of internationalization efforts on campus. Steps include self-assessment, site visits, peer reviews and a final report.

While ACE works with each institution to customize a process that best suits its needs, institutions are asked to commit to the following:

• Forming an internationalization leadership team

• Engaging in a review of current internationalization efforts, with the goal of sharpening institutional and student learning goals and developing or updating an action plan

• Allocating sufficient staff time to accomplish the review
- Participating (at least two team members) in three meetings of the Laboratory, one in conjunction with the January Internationalization Collaborative meeting in Washington, DC

- Paying a membership fee for the Laboratory plus travel expenses for site visits.

Specific activities will likely include:

**Initial One-Day Site Visit.** ACE staff visits each campus to help institutions prepare for the self-assessment. The visit generally includes a meeting with the leadership team and a roundtable with key stakeholders to begin the dialogue, define the key questions and issues, clarify goals, and build support for the process across campus.

**On-Campus Review Process.** This process is based on materials presented in *Internationalizing the Campus: A User’s Guide* that outline a process for reviewing current strategies and activities and developing a strategic plan. This review process culminates in a written report produced by the leadership team.

**Regular Contact with Laboratory Staff by Phone and E-mail.** ACE provides assistance to individual leadership teams as they go through the process of completing a comprehensive review of internationalization efforts on campus. This guidance includes a preliminary review of prepared assessment materials, plus recommendations for enhancing the materials to generate a more comprehensive report.

**Peer Review Team Visit.** Upon completion of the self-assessment report, a team of ACE staff and experts in the field of internationalization visits individual campuses. These site visits last one to two days and include meetings with the president, senior administrators, board members, faculty, administrators, and students.

**Development of a Report by the Visiting Team.** This report analyzes the status of internationalization at the member campus and makes recommendations for future work in internationalization.
Appendix 1: Visit Agendas

Susan Carvalho, Ph.D.
Associate Provost for International Programs
University of Kentucky (Lexington, Kentucky)

The Doubletree Hotel
301 West Franklin Street
Richmond, VA 23220
(804) 644-9871

Wednesday, March 21st

11:45am Arrival at Richmond International Airport (Delta 1040 from Atlanta); Groome Transportation to the Doubletree Hotel to drop off luggage – Elizabeth Hiett will meet you at the hotel to walk to the academic campus

1:00pm Lunch with Dr. McKenna Brown (Executive Director, GEO)

2:15pm GEO Directors Meeting
817 W. Franklin St, room 104

3:15pm Ms. Stephanie Davenport (Director, Education Abroad)
817 W. Franklin St, room 124

4:00pm MASC 439 PR Campaigns
Temple Building, Room 1137

Thursday, March 22nd

8:00am Breakfast with R. McKenna Brown

9:00am Tour of Richmond

11:30am Mr. Osama Alami (Associate Executive Director, GEO)
817 W. Franklin St, room 112

12:30pm Lunch with Ms. Elizabeth Hiett (Coordinator, International Partnership Universities)

1:30pm Tour of GEO offices and brief tour of Monroe Park Campus

3:00pm Institutional Internationalization Task Force meeting
817 W. Franklin St, room 104

4:00pm Dr. Beverly Warren (Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs)
Ginter House, 901 W. Franklin St.

6:40pm Pick up from the Doubletree Hotel by Dr. Tim Hulsey (Dean, Honors College) and Dr. Lettie Flores (Director of the Center for Psychological Services and Development) for dinner – *(they will be waiting outside of the hotel in a red VW)*

**Friday, March 23rd**

9:15am Check out from the Doubletree Hotel (leave bags at Doubletree)

9:30am Dr. Michael Rao (President, VCU)
*President’s Office, 910 W. Franklin St.*

11:00am De-briefing meeting with McKenna Brown

12:00pm Lunch with International Partnership Directors

12:45pm Walk to Doubletree hotel to pick up luggage

1:10pm Groome Transportation to Richmond Airport (2:46pm flight departure)
Barbara Hill, Ph.D.
Senior Associate for Internationalization
American Council on Education (ACE)
Washington, D.C.

The Jefferson Hotel
101 West Franklin Street
Richmond, VA 23220
(804) 649-4750

Monday, April 2nd

10:12am      Arrival into Main Street Station – call the Jefferson Hotel at (804) 649-4615 for pick-up when you arrive at the station (no charge shuttle service)

11:30am      Pick-up from the hotel by Dr. R. McKenna Brown (Executive Director, Global Education Office)

12:00pm      Institutional Internationalization Task Force
             Alumni Boardroom, University Student Commons

1:00pm       Subcommittee Chairs – Institutional Internationalization Task Force
             Alumni Boardroom, University Student Commons

2:30pm       Stephanie Davenport (Director, Education Abroad)
             817 W. Franklin St., room 124

6:00 – 9:00pm  India Chair in Democracy and Civil Society Inaugural Dinner
                Hilton Richmond Hotel and Spa, 12042 W. Broad St.

Tuesday, April 3rd

7:30am       Pick up from the Jefferson Hotel by McKenna Brown

8:00am       Council of Deans Meeting
             Compass Room, Shafer Court Dining Center

9:30am       International Business Forum
             Commonwealth Ballroom, University Student Commons
10:30am  Dr. Michael Rao (President)

11:00am  International Partnership Directors  
*Global Education Office Conference Room, 817 W. Franklin St.*

12:00pm  Dr. Beverly Warren (Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs)  
*Ginter House, 901 W. Franklin St.*

1:00pm  GEO Directors Meeting:  
Murali Venugopalan – English Language Program  
Amber Hill – International Student Advising  
Ingrid Mercer – Immigration Services  
Pam Haney – Community Connections  
Sarah Young – International Admissions (attending for Blair Brown – Director)  
Elizabeth Hiett – International Partnership Universities

3:00pm  Debriefing with McKenna Brown and return to Jefferson Hotel

4:15pm  Pick up from the Jefferson Hotel by Groome Transportation (5:25pm train departure from Staples Mill Station)
Appendix 2: Responses from GEO units serving International Students, Scholars and Visitors

VCU INTERNATIONAL ADMISSIONS

**Function.** The VCU Office of International Admissions is charged with receiving, evaluating, processing, and communicating admissions decisions for all applicants to VCU who are not U.S. citizens, Asylees, Refugees, or Permanent Residents. This includes the initial issuance of immigration documents required for either the F-1 visa or the J-1 visa.

**Staff.** The Office of International Admissions operates with four FTEs (one processor, one credential evaluator, one coordinator, and a director).

**Key Selected Resources:**
- Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) through Intelliiworks
- Online Application through Intelliiworks
- ImageNow

**Opportunities to Enhance the International Student Experience:**
- Having an additional staff member dedicated to detailed initial communication with (and follow up with) prospective students using the full capabilities of the CRM.
- Charging the same staff member with organizing “admissions open houses” for prospective international students in the Richmond community, including current non-degree (i.e., ELP) students. This would make the student experience and transition easier.
- Increase staffing of the credential evaluation at VCU. Currently, only one professional credential evaluator serves the entire VCU community. This is a specialized function, and if this person were to leave, operations would be critically affected. This becomes especially important as we look to increase operations in India and China via 1 + 1 and 2 + 2 agreements.
- Adding scholarships specifically for international students, either merit based, or to increase the diversity of countries represented.

**Enhancement of Inter-Office Coordination:** Current operations with the Graduate School and Undergraduate Admissions are in good condition with respect to daily operations and communication. ImageNow has aided this greatly. Long term, strategic planning in terms of enrollment management between and among the offices could be augmented.

IMMIGRATION SERVICES

For an international population of approximately 1,500 undergraduate and graduate students, and approximately 400 visiting scholars, researchers, and faculty, Immigration Services in the Global Education Office provides a complete range of advisory support, from the issuance of initial visa documentation to post-graduation work authorization. Our office of three advisors (Ingrid Mercer, Meghan Barger, and Eduardo Vidal) is the only one on campus providing immigration advice, and
assistance in regulatory compliance, to VCU’s students, faculty, and staff, for the F, J, H-1B, O, and TN visa categories, as well as permanent residence petitions. Our extremely high ratio of foreign nationals to advisors makes our office one of the smallest in the nation for a university of VCU’s size.

Immigration Services’ functions are split between advisory encounters with foreign nationals, either in person, over the phone, or through email, and performing regulatory compliance tasks, which are accomplished through the SEVIS system for F and J status visitors, who comprise the majority of foreign nationals at VCU. Both sets of functions are equally essential to the continued internationalization of VCU’s campus, but the ability of our office to provide the highest level of advisory support would be greatly ameliorated by the provision of additional resources to alleviate the burden of regulatory reporting.

Specifically, one of our most time-consuming tasks has been the verification of each F-1 status student’s enrollment every semester, which must be done manually in SEVIS. We have recently moved to purchase the Sunapsis software that enables us to enroll in SEVIS’ “batching” program, which allows all properly enrolled students to be registered automatically. Once we have to register fewer students manually, then we will devote more time to student encounters, which would then in turn provide a more personal, friendly experience for foreign nationals working and studying at VCU. Word of mouth among potential students and scholars is a tremendous recruiting tool for VCU, and increasingly personalized support services aide in building our reputation internationally.

Our office’s most important function, in the eyes of our students, scholars, and employees, is the dissemination of information on everything from work authorization to visa applications. With an increased amount of time to dedicate directly to our international population, we will be better able to disseminate information via emailed newsletters, topical workshops, and consultations on both general processes and specific situations.

**GEO STUDENT ADVISING**

It is the task of GEO’s academic advising program to inform international students of the available resources, to create resources in needed areas, to work with faculty to address the particular needs of international students, and to work with all parties invested in an international student’s success – faculty, UC and program advisors, staff in GEO (Immigration Services, Community Connections, International Admissions, English Language Program, peer mentors, graduate interns), the Writing Center, the Campus Learning Center, Counseling Services, Health Services, and Embassy sponsors - to ensure that an effective system is in place to give international students the greatest chance for academic success and personal satisfaction at VCU.

Academic advising is having a positive effect, with student and faculty reviews positive, and a high rate of students returning for additional services. The implementation of academic advising in GEO has cast a spotlight on the particular issues of international students, and, very quickly, demand for advising services and support in GEO has equaled the resources and highlighted the areas in which additional resources are needed.
Ongoing initiatives to expand GEO Advising’s reach and effectiveness include: additional personnel to provided strategic academic support to the growing numbers of international students who seek it; growing the peer mentoring program and support for graduate interns and assistants; reworking the orientation program for international students to foster deeper understanding of academic expectations at VCU and knowledge of the resources available to help them; identifying effective ways to take advantage of the new Global Education Living-Learning Community and sources of sustained support for the GELLC; and the development of peri- and post-ELP programs, such as an English Language Bridge program and a workshop series for English Language Learners.

It is also important to support the full integration of GEO, international students, and the university’s many academic units. This is reflected in the recent creation of the GLED rubric and the developing Global Education curriculum (for the GELLC); the revision of the ELP to more closely reflect the academic curriculum; the introduction of collaborative graduate application workshops for international students and formal advising for peri-ELP students; and an ongoing review of international students’ academic standing and retention and graduation rates. Institutional support for efforts to increase and further formalize faculty and student exchanges with VCU’s international partners would encourage this integration across the curriculum, as would the appointment of VCU’s senior international officer as a vice-provost, bringing VCU in line with its peer institutions.

VCU’s Global Education Office is one of very few international student programs in the country to offer explicit and dedicated academic support to its students (which number some 1500 in Spring 2012). Together with the planned Living-Learning Community, VCU’s partnerships with universities around the globe, and the strong support of VCU’s faculty for fully including international students in classes and programs, VCU has an opportunity to distinguish itself nationally in what it offers to and for international students. Fully developing the academic components of GEO and articulating the role of GEO and of things international throughout the university’s curriculum will fulfill the Quest for Distinction’s “commitment to the global engagement of students, faculty and staff that transforms lives and communities.”

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Pre-Arrival and Acclimation

- Pre-arrival correspondence with new students, scholars and post-docs regarding permanent and temporary housing, airport pick-ups, tuition payment information, immunization requirements, orientation and other general questions. A New Student/Scholar Information packet is sent electronically to each accepted international student and any scholars with whom we have contact.

- Provide new students/scholars with transportation from the Richmond International Airport, Amtrak or Greyhound stations

- Post-arrival on and off-campus housing assistance, including an explanation of the American system of contracts, utilities, and transportation

- Plan and implement English Language Program (ELP) new student orientation
• Offer orientation activities for new academic and ELP students, including banking, purchase of furnishings for apartment or dormitory room, Wal-Mart shopping, and cell phone purchases

Personal Issues

• Assist with health insurance, Social Security, Virginia driver’s license and state ID cards, car insurance, day care, on-campus employment opportunities

• Assist, advise, and refer students with personal, legal, health, financial and cultural adjustment issues. Academic and immigration issues are referred to appropriate advisors.

University Cooperation

• Confer with GEO and VCU staff, ELP and VCU faculty and university officials regarding student issues

• Work closely with Student Health Services regarding TB testing for ELP students and other health issues of international students.

• Serve on the VCU Public Health Response Team, which discusses potential health crises, the impact on students, and response procedures.

• Work closely with Residential Life and Housing, University Counseling Services, VCU Police, VCU Card Office and Student Accounting concerning student issues

Community Involvement

• Organize community involvement through Residential Host, Friendship Partner, and Conversation Partner programs, as well as Thanksgiving holiday visits

• Facilitate student/scholar involvement in community volunteer service opportunities

Educational/Social Activities

These programs and activities build a sense of community and support among international students, scholars and post-docs, who often find it difficult to make friends with their American peers.

• The bi-weekly International Cafe, providing a place for international students, scholars and post-docs to make and meet international and American friends, practice spoken English, and learn about upcoming GEO, campus and community activities and events.

• Plan and implement monthly cultural, educational, and social activities, including trips to Washington, D.C., Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown, the Blue Ridge Mountains, Pennsylvania Amish trip, Fourth of July celebration.

• Assist campus and community volunteers and organizations which offer special activities for international students and scholars
Challenges/Budget Considerations

- **Residential Hosts:** Finding American families or individuals who have the time and interest in being a residential host has been challenging. Many of our hosts live in the suburbs, where public transportation is limited or non-existent. Students and scholars living with these families must have a car, further limiting those whom we can place. Although provided with a family visit and information about the distance in advance, a number of students assigned to a suburban host family move back to campus after a short time, citing distance as primary reason. **Solution:** Funding for increased advertising to targeted populations near VCU or on a bus line that provides late-night transportation. This includes the placement of ads in publications such as the Fan District Association’s FanFare and Style Weekly, and the production and strategic placement of eye-catching posters, particularly in the Fan and Museum District areas.

- **Volunteer and Student Handbooks:** Funding for the purchase or publication of educational handbooks for volunteers and international students/scholars as an effective resource to increase cultural sensitivity and understanding.

- **International Film Night:** In an effort to support the internationalization of the university and promote intercultural understanding and dialogue, Community Connections would like to offer an international film on campus twice per semester. Open to the VCU community, international students, scholars, and post-docs from the highlighted country would be available to answer questions at the end of the film, concluding with snacks, further discussion and conversation. Funding for film rental, audio tech, snacks and advertising would be needed.

- **On-Campus Housing:** The Residential Life and Housing office has been very helpful to Community Connections staff and international students residing on campus, most of whom are in Gladding Residence Center, where 5 2-bedroom apartments are reserved for ELP and international undergraduate students. The dormitory apartments allow international students to stay during the VCU breaks and provide kitchens important for students with cultural or dietary concerns. A number of international students sharing dorm rooms with American roommates have had difficult experiences. American roommates may have his/her boyfriend/girlfriend stay in this shared room overnight, an extremely uncomfortable and culturally offensive situation for many international students, who choose to sleep on the living room couch or move out on nights/weekends to avoid this encounter. Housing policy states that if the roommate agrees, a student may have a partner or significant other stay overnight. International students are reluctant to state their true feelings to their American roommates for fear of negative repercussions in the relationship and the avoidance of direct confrontation common to many cultures. The most prevalent complaint of international students is American roommates who lack consideration of others, who can be rude, belligerent, and self-centered, whether it be a refusal to go elsewhere when using drugs or consuming alcohol in the room, repeated middle-of-the-night cell phone conversations/ TV/visits of noisy friends, mocking a student’s religious practice or literally never speaking to the international student. The international student’s attempts to discuss her/his concerns are sometimes met with hostility. A common retort of Americans has been, “This is my room and I can do what I want”. This stress takes a toll on international students academically and emotionally. After hearing so many similar stories, we now no longer recommend that international students live with American roommates in the dorms unless we know something about
the potential roommate. **Solution:** Offer and reserve international students space in a dormitory or floors in a dorm which are substance free and single gender with no overnight guests of opposite gender, an option provided by some universities. Americans with a genuine interest in other cultures could apply for international roommates in designated spaces.

- **Staffing:** Community Connections has 2 full-time and 1 part-time staff members, which is currently sufficient. However, as future programming initiatives increase, there may be a need for the part-time position to become full-time to effectively coordinate and implement the support services and programs. Projected programming includes an increase in community volunteer programs and volunteer service opportunities for international students/scholars, a mentorship program matching international students/scholars with professionals in the students’ fields of study, American and international student/scholar panel discussions on topics such as gender roles in society, religion and politics/public policy, and environmental issues, and sponsorship of a group for spouses of international students, scholars and post-docs which provides educational, social and cultural programming and support.

**Concluding Comments.** International students and scholars have unique needs and challenges. The Global Education Office staff is committed to the belief that international students and scholars who are well-supported perform better academically, are more successful in attaining their educational goals, are less likely to transfer and recommend VCU to their family and friends.

GEO’s centralized system provides many advantages for the GEO staff and excellence in customer service for international students, scholars, post-docs and university faculty and staff. GEO’s “one-stop shopping” provides ease of service similar to what Harris Hall offers the greater university population. The units within GEO are interconnected, working closely together on a daily basis to meet the particular needs of international students and scholars. Frequent visits or conversations among the staff occur as we work together to solve student issues which may cross several units. Colleagues at CAA institutions with decentralized international education programs look with envy at GEO’s physical cohesiveness and voice the disadvantages to both staff and students of units being located in different departments across the campus. Although International Admissions will report to the Vice Provost for Strategic Enrollment Management effective July 1, I encourage the committee give strong consideration to a recommendation that this office remain housed in its current location among GEO colleagues to better serve our international students, scholars and post-docs.

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM**

Providing intensive English language learning to non-native speakers so that they can become successful in U.S. Higher Education.

- ELP includes 340 students (not including March admits, expected to be about 45, which would bring enrollment to a near-high of 385);
- A new high of 13 full-time instructors;
A total of 25+ faculty including FTEs, J contract, and adjunct-status teachers – each with at least an M.A. in TESOL or a related field and with experience teaching, studying and/or living in at least one other country;

One office manager plus two academic advisors provide assistance to ELP students re. advising, class observations, peer mentoring, conversation partners and registration;

A new ELP Tutoring Center;

A new ELP Computer Lab;

A new means of testing & placing students – Compass Test (online);

A new means of helping students with pronunciation & oral communication – Carnegie Speech (software);

Three-level curricula featuring the following:

- Level 1 – 27 hours of intensive English language learning per week with courses in Written Communication (15 hours/wk.), Oral Communication (8 hours/wk.) and Conversation (4 hours/wk.)
- Levels 2 & 3 – 22 hours of intensive ESL learning per week with four core courses: Written Communication (8 hours/wk.), Oral Communication (8 hours/wk.), Vocabulary & Idioms (3 hours/wk.), and an academic preparatory course (3 hours/wk.)

Level 1 students receiving more one-on-one help to improve their English skills;

Level 3 students receiving more direction re. student success at ELP as they begin their studies at VCU;

All students receiving enhanced ESL instruction through the new Computer Lab;

New textbooks focus on curricular consistency re. Oral & Written Communication skills;

New means by which to monitor student success: Skill coordinators and Level chairs provide assistance and direction to ELP students;

**EDUCATION ABROAD**

Education Abroad serves international exchange students that come to VCU through two general avenues:

- The International Student Exchange Program (ISEP: http://www.isep.org)
  - Semester or year
  - Typically undergraduate, sometimes graduate
  - Not degree-seeking
• Enrolled full-time while at VCU

• International Partnership institutions (including VCUQ semester exchange students in School of the Arts)
  o Semester or year
  o Typically undergraduate, sometimes graduate
  o Not degree-seeking
  o Enrolled full-time while at VCU

Our unit provides the following services to the exchange students:

• Admissions and Advising (with assistance of Dr. Amber Hill, international student advisor in GEO)

• Immigration support (with assistance of Immigration office in GEO)

• Pre-departure preparation

• Housing reservations (with assistance of Barb Sabol in VCU Residential Life & Housing)

• Billing and posting of scholarships and tuition waivers (with assistance of Paul Ginder, financial manager in GEO, VCU Student Accounting and Financial Aid)

• Airport pickup service

• On-site two-day orientation (with assistance from Counseling Services, VCU Police, Student Health, Wellness Center, Residential Life and Housing, Immigration Services, Card Office, Cabell Library, Honors College)

• Social activities (with assistance of Pam Haney in Community Connections in GEO)

• Buddy program which matches exchange students with returned study abroad student “buddies”

• General support