

# Advocate for patient-centered care earns Health Administration Lifetime Achievement Award

Kenneth R. White, Ph.D. (VCU '96) was honored with the VCU Health Administration Lifetime Achievement & Service Award at a ceremony at the College of Health Professions on Nov. 9.

White is a professor emeritus who joined VCU Health Administration in 1993, and in more ways than one: as a doctoral student, an instructor, and associate director of the graduate programs in the 1990s.

From 2001 to 2008, he directed the MHA program and is credited with reshaping the department's curriculum to be more patient-centric and interprofessional. That meant putting students in suits alongside those in scrubs to witness patient life in hospitals, public health settings, at home and in palliative care. And sometimes it meant putting students in scrubs to shadow residents, nurses and other care team members.

"Until then, there was nothing in the curriculum that put these young people, who in a few years were being trained to go out and make critical decisions about operations, in front of patients," says White. "How can you comprehend life events such as new diagnoses of life-limiting illnesses, acute trauma, birth of a baby or death and dying if you don't witness it firsthand?"

While MHA director, White saw the opportunity to recruit students and move up in national recognition which would up the rankings. He led a program leadership team that began actively recruiting students to VCU — as if chasing a business deal. "We sold the place," he says.

He purposefully targeted diverse students, especially those from historically Black colleges and universities, diversifying a traditionally white student body. "I went to these schools with



**Kenneth White receives the award from Paige Laughlin (MSHA '17), COO of HCA Florida Blake Hospital and chair of the department's Alumni Advisory Council.**

students, set up information tables and raised money for scholarships for students of color, first-generation college students and those who identified as LGBTQ," he said.

Admissions soon grew — as did rankings. Today, VCU is ranked No. 3 in health administration programs in the nation by U.S. News & World Report. In 2006, White was named the inaugural Charles P. Cardwell, Jr., Professor of Health Administration and in 2012 was named the department's first inaugural Sentara Healthcare Professor. He retired from VCU in 2013 and joined the University of Virginia; before he left, students in the MHA Class of 2013 raised more than \$26,000 to name the Kenneth R. White

Scholarship in his honor.

## **An advocate for diversity and equity**

White was the first man to serve as president of the American Academy of Nursing before passing the gavel this year. He is

*—continued on page 8*



## **SPOTLIGHT**

**Jonathan Perlin delivers Paul A. Gross Landmarks in Leadership lecture.**

*(story on page 8)*





# An open door policy to keep healthcare's doors open

A NOTE FROM SALEEMA A. KARIM, Ph.D., INTERIM CHAIR, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

VCU stands among many truly prestigious Health Administration programs in America. So how do we differentiate ourselves and attract students?

It's a question I've been asking since stepping into the role of interim chair this summer. And I believe the answer is that outstanding healthcare leadership education doesn't merely come from teaching and textbooks. Instead, it comes from faculty, staff and an alumni network who work hard to create a supportive environment for students, to constructively challenge and guide them to success and aspire to see them someday pay it forward.

And this is where VCU Health Administration thrives. I am so humbled by the work and dedication of our students, staff, faculty and alumni. It is their commitment that truly makes VCU Health Administration an outstanding program.

Our new MHA and executive education (MSHA) cohorts arrived in Richmond in late August, entering a field where ever-rising healthcare costs and hospital financial performance — my own interest in the field — is on the forefront of everyone's minds.

To rein in costs requires a deviation from traditional leadership and thinking and doing things differently than before. We emphasize this on day one — the need to become a modern, forward-thinking non-traditional healthcare leader. They must focus on prevention, closing the

gaps between the haves and have-nots and recognize that while a hospital is a building, *healthcare* is a partnership with education, with government and with the community.

As a program, we don't have all the answers, but we have the tools our students can use to discover them and the support systems and prestigious alumni networks it will take to succeed. This is why we have an open door policy in our offices — to encourage fresh ideas, to be a sounding board to students and peers and to encourage

**“[Our students] must focus on prevention, closing the gaps between the haves and have-nots and recognize that while a hospital is a building, *healthcare* is a partnership with education, with government and with the community. ”**

better communication. An open door policy here will keep healthcare's doors open out there.

Another hallmark of an exceptional healthcare leadership program is to be cognizant of our own challenges. As a program, we are working to uncover more opportunities for interprofessional education with students and faculty from other health professions. We also want to increase the diversity of our faculty and have two positions we hope to announce soon.

**On** the horizon, we are actively preparing (read: paperwork!) for our Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME) site visit this spring for

program accreditation. I have no doubt we will be reaccredited on this seven-year cycle, and it will be for the reasons I have outlined here.

Shortly before this academic year started, I spent some fast-paced weeks mostly focused on the day-to-day managing of the program and preparing for the coming year. Now more than two months into this semester, I have learned about the complexities of the decision-making process at a higher education institution and respect how all decisions that are made try to keep the

university's, college's and department's mission in mind. And I'm also touched by how our department has been there to support the university community by raising funds and collecting food for the Ram Pantry food bank that serves VCU students.

I am always sure to ask myself, and I hope my peers at VCU and elsewhere do the same: How is the work I am doing today impacting student learning tomorrow? Where are we giving them opportunities to grow? Because it is the success of our students, the ideas they dream up and the change they are able to make that will continue to position VCU as a top healthcare leadership program in America.

# Salley, Carroll, White earn alumni honors



**Verlon Salley**  
(MHA '02)  
ALUMNUS  
OF THE YEAR

When accepting his MHA in 2002, Verlon Salley had a plaque under his gown that said, "Thank you for allowing me to achieve all your dreams."

The plaque was for his father, the son a sharecropper and a maid, and for his mother, the daughter of a yard man and a cook.

"I handed the plaque to my dad," says Salley, vice president of community health equity at the University of Alabama at Birmingham Health System. "He looked at me and said 'Son, these are not our dreams for you ... this is God's will, and we're only here to give you direction.'"

Salley on Nov. 9 received the Alumnus of the Year award for "uncommon excellence" and service to the community.

At UAB, Salley instituted a dedicated service line focused on rectifying the socioeconomic disparities impacting community health outcomes, and he forges robust partnerships with internal and external stakeholders while pursuing the organization's health equity blueprint. Salley also played a key role developing and implementing enterprise-wide radiology operation initiatives for UAB Medicine.

Over two decades, he's also served in key roles at Pittsburgh Medical Center, the University of Virginia Medical Center and Sentara Healthcare.

He's president of the Alabama chapter of the National Association of Health Services Executives (NAHSE) that promotes growth of Black healthcare leaders while elevating care for marginalized communities. Under his leadership, UAB Medicine collaborates closely with NAHSE to confront implicit biases and their profound influence on health disparities.

Shortly after receiving the award, Salley noted he's a product of his parents' courage, competence, wisdom and empathy.

"I give back because I was taught to," he says.



**Michele Carroll**  
(MHA '14)  
YOUNG  
PROFESSIONAL  
AWARD

You're not in control of your life. That's the greatest lesson Michele Carroll learned during her career.

"No matter how well-prepared you are, it doesn't matter. Things are going to happen," says Carroll, vice president at Sentara Martha Jefferson in Charlottesville. "Life happens."

Carroll became vice president of operations at Sentara Leigh Hospital in Norfolk right before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

"We went through some of the greatest challenges ever," Carroll said upon receiving the Young Professional Award. "But I learned a lot."

Carroll facilitated significant growth in operations and programs at Sentara Leigh Hospital while improving workplace safety and enhancing community access to imaging services and streamlining operations within the OR and cardiovascular service line. She also played key roles in Sentara's orthopedic service line, focusing on clinical performance improvement and service line growth.

At Sentara Martha Jefferson, Carroll manages surgery, radiology, facilities, food, and other critical services while overseeing the oncology program, strategizing over the hospital's direction and supervising campus construction. Carroll, past president of the Healthcare Administrators of Tidewater, is also an active community volunteer.

"Have fun. Love what you do," Carroll says. "Love the people you work with. This exact moment is where you're supposed to be at this time. And when it's time to move on, you'll know."



**See page 1 for Ken White's Lifetime Achievement Award.**

## Dr. Ann Shih Receives VCU Breakthroughs Fund Award

### AWARD IS PART OF THE ONE VCU RESEARCH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES PLAN



Shu-Fang (Ann) Shih, Ph.D., assistant professor in Department of Health Administration, has received the Breakthroughs Fund Award – an internal fund supported by the One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan.

The VCU Breakthroughs Fund supports transdisciplinary teams to design unique, creative and innovative large-scale approaches to confront grand societal challenges.

Shih collaborated with colleagues from the schools of Education, Medicine and Social Work on a project titled "Promoting Emotional Wellbeing of Service Providers in Early Childhood." Their research aims to design innovative approaches to support the emotional wellbeing of service providers in early childhood settings.

# Health Administration leader receives honor for forging connections, inspiring colleagues

September 13 has always been a special day for Beth Williamson Ayers, MS — it’s her birthday.

But it was even more special this year because it was also the day she was presented with the College of Health Professions’ Staff Excellence in Outstanding Achievement Award for the dedication she brings as the Department of Health Administration’s director of outreach and professional affairs.

Ayers, a face of the department who has served in numerous roles during her 20-year tenure at the College, is known for her inviting personality as she creates connections between colleagues and alumni. Ayers, her colleagues say, is instrumental in organizing alumni events, handling fundraising efforts and leading building tours — among many duties.

She is the second recipient of the annual award, which was created last year to honor an exceptional CHP staff member who exemplifies the College’s mission and values.

“This award is very meaningful to me as I have the privilege of working with incredible colleagues, students and alumni every day,” Ayers says. “I enjoy connecting students with our alumni, and I particularly appreciate the opportunity to work with our accomplished alumni and supporters to create opportunities for our students.”



Beth Ayers with her son, Owen.

Health Administration Associate Professor Laura E. McClelland, Ph.D., nominated Ayers for the award, calling her “a role model of the kind of human and colleague so many of us aspire to emulate.”

“I continue to be impressed and in awe of the way in which she fosters belonging and community,” McClelland, director of the Ph.D. program in Health Services Organization and Research, wrote in Ayers’ nomination letter. “She truly is the glue that keeps our department so closely connected with our alumni population.”

Many others offered letters of support for Ayers, including Kenneth R. White, Ph.D., APRN-BC, FACHE, FAAN, president of the

American Academy of Nursing and emeritus faculty of VCU Health Administration. White served as director of the MHA program from 2001 to 2008 and was the inaugural Charles P. Cardwell Jr. Professor of Health Administration. He describes Ayers as an “unsung hero.”

“She has worked quietly and efficiently in building connections with alumni, donors and community partners,” White wrote. “Beth continues to work unselfishly behind the scenes to support alumni and donors in the mission of the Department and College.”

Ayers says she’s grateful for the Staff Excellence Award recognition and for the letters of support.

“It is a pleasure to be a part of this talented community,” Ayers says.



Three students represented the MHA Program at the recent Everett V. Fox Health Administration Student Case Competition hosted by the National Association of Health Services Executives. Jordan Cosey and Brianna Mills, both Class of 2025, and Grace Wynn, Class of 2026, developed solutions for a case based on cybersecurity issues, regaining the trust of the community and increasing growth in volume and revenue following a breach. Although the team did not advance, we are very proud of their hard work and performance.



We were delighted to accept an invitation to participate in the 7th Annual Robbins Case Competition in Healthcare Management at Baylor University. Our students traveled to Waco, Texas, where they had 24 hours to analyze, collaborate, and deliver an effective plan to a panel of judges. Advised by Nathan Carroll, Ph.D., a team comprised of Lauren Mulholland, and Sydney Belt, both Class of 2025, and Ireland Miller, Class of 2026, proudly represented the MHA program. Congratulations to team captain Lauren Mulholland for earning the Best Presenter Award!

## HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH:

# HA students hone leadership skills while sharing experiences through national mentorship program

Two MHA students were selected through a competitive process for a mentorship and leadership development program designed for students and early careerists through the National Association of Latino Healthcare Executives (NALHE). NALHE is the premier professional society for healthcare leaders who identify as Latino as well as their allies.

It is known as the La Mesa Emerging Leaders Program—a yearlong cohort-structured leadership development program that provides a safe space for sharing of lived experiences, exchange of knowledge, connections, networking and open discussions with prominent healthcare executives from across the country. The program only accepts 25 participants each year from across the nation.

Augusto Gonzalez and Victor Melo from VCU's MHA program first became aware of the opportunity through Stephan Davis, DNP, MHSA, CDE, FACHE, FNAP, FAAN, the College's associate dean for inclusive excellence and belonging and executive director of inclusive leadership education in VCU's Department of Health Administration.

Melo, a first generation Hispanic American whose family is from Mexico, took part in the La Mesa program in 2022 and now is part of a committee involved in planning upcoming events and activities for current and future participants. He reflects on the difficulties of identifying professionals with shared backgrounds and lived experiences until participating in the La Mesa program, which he credits with helping him and others from various disciplines connect on a number of topics, including financial literacy, executive presence, resume writing and professional presentation.



**Victor Melo and Augusto Gonzalez are MHA students who have been involved with the National Association of Latino Healthcare Executives' La Mesa Emerging Leaders Program.**

"We have talked about our upbringings, challenges and barriers we've faced and our different experiences," said Melo. "La Mesa provides a safe space for our development and a way for us to interact and connect. It certainly feels like we empower each other. We want to make change and bring that change through our diverse experiences."

Gonzalez, who is of Argentinian descent and a first-generation student, recently completed a year as a participant in the La Mesa program. He says he was particularly drawn to other cohort members being in different aspects of their careers as well as the values each of the members have in common.



**Read the full story in Featured News.**



For the last 3 years, the College of Health Professions has run a food drive benefiting the VCU Ram Pantry. This year, the department asked students, faculty and staff to consider cash donations that a Health Administration team used to shop for pantry donations. In just over one week's time, we raised \$1,100!



Three of our first-year students volunteered to represent VCU in the DMV Case Collaborative at George Mason University. Nyny Nguyen, Yusuf Mozahem, and Jamshaid Iqbal participated in this interdisciplinary competition, collaborating in teams of students from four other MHA programs to solve current healthcare challenges regarding aging services. Nguyen's intercollegiate team, which included students from Johns Hopkins University and Uniformed Services University, placed first.



**Amber Turner**  
Hampton University  
Political Science

**Abigail Warren**  
James Madison University  
Health Administration

**Grace Wynn**  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Health Physical Education & Exercise Science

## MSHA STUDENTS

**Sylvia Cortez**  
Inova

**Angela (Angie) Dove**  
VCU Health  
Tappahannock Hospital

**Kristin Fessick**  
MCV Physicians

**D'atra Franklin**  
Virginia Department of Health

**Payton Hardinge**  
Children's Hospital Foundation supporting the Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU

**Eric Hayes**  
Coastal Virginia Surgery Center

**Corey Johnson**  
University of Virginia Health

**Angela (Angie) Lindsay**  
VCU Health

**Omar Magee**  
Henrico Doctor's Hospital

**Pamela McClain**  
Adventist HealthCare

**Chansa Mwila**

**Gabriele Quaranta**  
University of Virginia Health System

**Stephanie Richardson**  
Sentara Healthcare and Riverside Regional Medical Center

**Laura Robinson**  
Ensemble Health Partners

**Rida Sehrish**

**Rebecca Snell**  
VCU Health

**Paola Suazo**  
VCU School of Dentistry

**Anjali Talwar**  
VCU Health

**Susha Verghese**  
Zybs Consulting

**Douglas Wise**  
Sentara Healthcare

## Ph.D. STUDENTS

**Ashwag Abdulrahim**  
University of Khartoum  
Health Economics

**Naana Adjei**  
University of Ghana  
Public Health

**Ngan Bui**  
University of Richmond  
Business Administration

**Noah McLemore**  
James Madison University  
Health Services Administration

**AJ Smith**  
University of Georgia  
Health Administration

# WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST COHORTS

## MHA STUDENTS

**Andre Aboite**  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Psychology

**Diamond Anderson**  
Hampton University  
Health Science: Policy and Administration

**Cameron Buck**  
Virginia Tech  
Systems Biology

**Lauren Clayton**  
James Madison University  
Health Services Administration

**Abby Crawford**  
Utah Valley University  
Marketing

**Madison Espiritu**  
James Madison University  
Health Services Administration

**Alex Hansen**  
University of Utah  
Nursing, L&D

**Kaylee Hughes**  
Virginia Tech  
Microbiology

**Jamshaid Iqbal**  
University of Sindh  
Medicine

**Claire Kraft**  
East Carolina University  
Health Services Management

**Nicholas Logan**  
Virginia Tech  
Sports Medicine

**Rachel Medeiros**  
Longwood University  
Kinesiology

**Ireland Miller**  
Baylor University  
Health Science Studies

**Jenna Minter**  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Psychology

**Yusuf Mozahem**  
West Virginia University - Morgantown  
Health Services Management and Leadership

**Nyny Nguyen**  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Kinesiology

**Malcolm Richards**  
Morgan State University  
Social Work

**Yusuf Rizvi**  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Biology

**Andrew Robertson**  
Baylor University  
Finance

**Samvel Sahakyan**  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Biology

**Renee Sarpong**  
Randolph College  
Biology

**Hope Sheirich**  
James Madison University  
Health Services Administration

**William (Liam) Simpson**  
University of Richmond  
Healthcare Studies

**Joshua Taylor**  
Brigham Young University of Idaho  
Health Administration

# VCU HSOR student selected as Tillman Scholar

Kristin MacDonald, a student in VCU's Health Services Organization and Research program (HSOR) in the College of Health Professions, has been named a 2023 Tillman Scholar by the Pat Tillman Foundation.



**Kristin MacDonald**

MacDonald, who has worked as a clinical dietitian and nursing home administrator, is among 60 U.S. service members, veterans and military spouses chosen for the scholarship that provides funding for higher education and recognizes the recipients' service and leadership potential. MacDonald's husband serves as a judge advocate general in the U.S. Army.

The Tillman Scholars program supports United States active-duty service members, veterans and military spouses

by investing in them through education, lifelong leadership development and a global community of high-performing peers and mentors to help them develop as leaders and make an impact at a local and global scale.

"Kristin is not only a tremendous scholar and instructor, but she is a strong leader in the College," said Laura McClelland, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Health Administration and director of the doctoral program in HSOR. "She is so deserving of the Tillman scholarship. She works exceedingly hard while brilliantly balancing the demands of being a military spouse and mother of young twins."

MacDonald says she always knew she wanted to work in health care and is passionate about long-term care because of her professional experience in that field. Her research focuses on direct care workers in the long-term care setting.



**Read the full story in Featured News.**

## FACULTY UPDATES

■ **Stephan Davis, DNP, MHSA, CDE, FACHE, FNAP, FAAN**

Davis was recently appointed associate dean for inclusive excellence and belonging, a shared position with the VCU School of Nursing.

■ **Saleema Karim, Ph.D.**

Karim was awarded second place for her poster titled "Lights...Camera...Action! Using Role Playing in Classroom Budgeting Simulation Exercise" at the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA).

■ **Laura McClelland, Ph.D. and Jessica Mittler, Ph.D.**

McClelland and Mittler both received the Outstanding Reviewer Award from the Academy of Management's (AOM) Division of Healthcare Management. The award recognizes members who go above and beyond the call of duty in their efforts reviewing papers and symposium proposals submitted to the academy's annual program.

■ **Shu-Fang (Ann) Shih, Ph.D., MSc, MBA**

Shih received the Excellence in Interprofessionalism Award from the VCU Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care in May 2023. The award recognizes demonstrated leadership and involvement in promoting interprofessional education and activities.

## Health Administration faculty publish paper on price transparency



**Read the paper online.**

Shu-Fang (Ann) Shih, Ph.D., Nathan W. Carroll, Ph.D., Saleema A. Karim, Ph.D., and Shoou-Yih (Daniel) Lee, Ph.D., in collaboration with other colleagues outside of VCU, recently published a paper titled "Hospital Compliance with Price Transparency Policy in the U.S." in the Journal of Hospital Management and Health Policy.



Shih

Carroll



Karim

Lee

## Kenneth White, *continued from page 1.*

certified as a palliative care nurse practitioner and is a fellow of both the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) and the American Academy of Nursing. He has held visiting professorships and completed consultancies around the world.

In 2004, White became the first openly gay member elected to the ACHE Board of Governors. He founded its LGBTQ Forum (now the LGBTQ+ Healthcare Leaders Community) and was its first president. White's mentee, VCU Assistant Professor Stephan Davis, DNP, MHSA, CDE, FACHE, FNAP, FAAN, who serves as associate dean for inclusive excellence and belonging at both the College of Health Professions and School of Nursing, followed him in this role.

"Health administration students nationwide are still afraid to come out. I don't mean to offend, but health administration is a conservative profession," White says. "We've come a long way, but we have a long way to go."

### What's next for White

Today, White lives in Boston with husband and ophthalmologist Carl Outen, M.D. (VCU '78) and serves as dean and professor of

the School of Nursing at the MGH Institute of Health Professions and associate chief nurse for academic affairs at Massachusetts General Hospital. Among other writings, White has co-authored five editions of the award-winning textbook, *The Well-Managed Healthcare Organization*, and is hard at work on the 10th edition, due to his publisher in May.

At UVA, the Eleanor Crowder Bjoring Center for Nursing Historical Inquiry now maintains the Kenneth R. White Papers, which trace his professional activities and interests from his early nursing days in 1973 to 2020, when he retired from UVA. The center continues to receive his papers and documents, especially from his time as president of the American Academy of Nursing.

"I've spent a lot of time advising people about their lives and careers, including well-known physicians and people in all life stages," he says. "It's satisfying to me to have been able to help others and to have also derived so much satisfaction in my own two careers: healthcare management and nursing. I'm grateful for that."

**A longer version of this story appears online, where White also outlines the three challenges for healthcare leaders. See it in full at [ha.chp.vcu.edu/about-us/featured-news](http://ha.chp.vcu.edu/about-us/featured-news).**

## Health equity. Environmental sustainability. Learning. Performance integration and improvement.

"H.E.L.P." is The Joint Commission accrediting organization's agenda to address the myriad challenges facing healthcare organizations, its workforce and patient care. It was outlined to VCU Health Administration students by Jonathan B. Perlin, M.D., Ph.D., MSHA, MACP, FACMI, the Commission president and CEO and the 2023 Paul A. Gross Landmarks in Leadership Lecture series headliner.

Over the hour-long presentation, it was the "E" — Environmental sustainability — where the three-time VCU graduate invested the most time.

"As an untoward side effect of intending to do good, as we wish to do in our communities, we're doing harm. Healthcare workers need [to] take the lead in actually remediating some of the adverse effects of what we're doing," Perlin told the MHA and MSHA students, admitting that even when he started at The Joint Commission in March 2022 after top leadership roles with HCA Healthcare, he was unaware of the linkages between the industry and climate change.

In fact, he explained, if "Healthcare" was a country, it would be the fifth highest-polluting nation. And that harm also impacts patients in "an unvirtuous cycle," he said,

explaining how as temperatures and carbon dioxide levels rise, the effects ultimately exacerbate cardiac and respiratory diseases — especially in already vulnerable patient populations.

"Climate change, and our role in healthcare, is not only an environmental and social justice issue, it's an issue of health equity and ultimately patient safety," he said.

**A longer version of this story appears online, where Perlin expands on the three "levers" health administrators can pull to combat climate change at a system level. See it in full at [ha.chp.vcu.edu/about-us/featured-news](http://ha.chp.vcu.edu/about-us/featured-news).**



**VCU** College of Health Professions

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