After Virginia Commonwealth’s amazing performance this last season, fans can’t help but wonder what made the team so successful this year.

VCU’s record last year was 19-10 regular season and 11-7 in their CAA conference. This year, however, their 27-6 record for the regular season and 16-2 record in the CAA led them to a victory against Duke University in CAA tournament that will be remembered throughout college basketball history.

Starters on the team include Jesse Pellot-Rosa, Eric Maynor, Jamal Schuler, B.A. Walker, and Will Fameni. For every tough spot that the team was in, star plays allowed the team to come back with fierce vengeance. “Maynor doesn’t have the phrase, ‘9 points, 2 minutes’ attached to his name for nothing,” says Priyanka Grover, a VCU basketball fan. “There’s one word that comes to mind if I had to describe him, and that’s sick…just plain sick.”

Cheered on by fans throughout the games, this year VCU really showed the world of college basketball what we’re about. After the remarkable victory against Duke, emotions ran deep at the VCU vs. Pitt game. When asked what she felt that night, a diehard fan replied, “I screamed with anger when that buzzer rang, but as soon as I saw Maynor’s face, I started crying. They deserved that game more than anything else, but there’s always next year, and I believe we’re going to go far.”

From fans, to teammates, to experts, everyone has a different view of what led the team to outclass George Mason, last year’s miracle team. However, VCU has more pride than to accept being called a “miracle team”. With their hard work and talent, they deserved every win that came their way. The Honors College dorm had meeting times to walk to the games together, sometimes in the cold wearing nothing but body paint.

Often, people don’t realize how important spirit is when it comes to school name. However, without spirit for the school in which we area part of, the purpose of any organization goes awry. Spirit serves a number of purposes including fostering a healthy community, unity, and the ability to come together in times of trouble.

From black and gold colors, to Rodney the Ram, to the letters “V-C-U”, we are a group of students that have created one community and one home. Everyday, people go into the bookstores to buy clothing and school supplies that bear these symbols of spirit.

There is a reason that people wear their college gear for life. May the spirit live on.
Virginia Commonwealth University offers many study abroad programs. It is a once in a lifetime chance for honors students to be able to balance the weight of classes while journeying in another part of the world.

The VCU Honors College recently had two outstanding students, Nitin Yerram and Rajshri Mainthia, travel abroad and study at Oxford University. Priyam Vyas interviews them about their experiences from last semester:

Q: How did you find out about the study abroad program at Oxford University?
A: The Oxford University program is not a direct program through VCU. We did some research and found an opportunity through the International Studies Council and applied to be full students at Oxford.

Q: What attracted you to Oxford University instead of another country such as Spain or France?
A: Rajshri- There were several reasons that I picked Oxford. I visited my sister at LSE, the London School of Economics, while I was in high school and fell in love with Oxford. Also, Oxford is unique compared to every other school because of the rich tradition and superior level of academics.
A: Nitin- Oxford was a complete 180 degree change from VCU and I was attracted to the academics, the rich tradition, and the history of the prestigious school.

Q: What was the experience like at Oxford in an academic and social perspective?
A: The academic experience at Oxford was quite different than in the United States. Classes were 1 on 1 teacher and pupil based. Each week, a 10 page paper was due that you had to present in front of your professor. The professor would usually ask you questions on your level of understanding of the topic and how you could have improved your paper. The style was much more independent and student based than here (at VCU). In chemistry classes, responses required long essays instead of the typical short answers or mathematical responses. It was a challenge at first, but we both enjoyed the classes. Socially, the unique thing about Oxford is that it is a very close knit university, with a central courtyard, dining hall, and a central focus. When you step outside, Oxford is its very own city with shops, stalls, and vendors with plenty of things to do. We had a great time.

Q: What did you guys do in your free time?
A: There are many museums around Oxford, and there is a lot of history. Each of the three colleges has its own story and its own history. There were plenty of things around the city to do. Also, we both were members of the rowing team and trained about three to four times a week for the large Regatta at the end of the semester which included 39 different colleges. There is great college pride for Oxford. There are also many places to visit around the school. We visited Bath, Stonehenge, and Cambridge. We were also able to visit Spain, France, and Amsterdam after the term had been completed.

Q: What was the culture like in England?
A: Living in the city is not much different than Richmond. There is more walking involved compared to at VCU. Oxford and England are special because of the rich history and tradition. There are formal dinners where students are required to dress in “commoners gown” which meant bowties for gentlemen and dresses for women. At each formal dinner there was a toast to the queen and other small traditions and rituals. There are also college photos where the freshmen were assembled together in bowties and formal dress to take large class pictures. Overall, there was a lot of history and we enjoyed the experience.

Q: What did you like best about studying abroad at Oxford University?
A: Rajshri- I loved how incredibly diverse the people where there. It was a great opportunity to make quality friends. A number of the students were Rhodes scholars and other distinguished students that were equally excited about meeting new people as we were and we made some close friends.
A: Nitin- The University and people at Oxford were amazing. They were some of the smartest people you’ll ever meet: they were cool, smart, and relaxed. The thing I took away from Oxford was the experience of a lifetime and some great friends.

The Virginia Commonwealth University Office of International Studies can find you a place anywhere in the world to visit. If you are interested in traveling abroad visit the office of international studies at VCU: http://www.vcu.edu/oie/.
Religious Sensibilities Destroyed by Wayward Fundamentalists

BY MARCUS JOHNSON

Traversing through the corridors of the commons and emptying myself into the plaza, I am stopped in my tracks by an all too familiar sight on our campus. A banner with the semblance of a monolith drapes a shadow over people who gathered around in angry protest yelling expletives and utterances of disappointment to the man parading the marker with pride. Emblazoned upon this obscene advertisement was a list promulgating those who would endure an afterlife in hell fire. Among those where Muslims, Roman Catholics, homosexuals and the more extreme choices of disobedient children and wives that are not submissive. Their etiquette was clear; rile up the masses with inflammatory rhetoric and their poise was decisive; hope that their dialectic would somehow convince the masses to convert into their particular brand of Christianity. The first amendment allowed such things but the forefathers hoped that it would be exercised with a discriminating intellect. It became all to clear to me on that day that intellect, and the lack of it, was the problem. Not that I don’t mind getting molested on my way to class, on the contrary, I am constantly approached by vendors of all sorts either promoting a party or advocating a cause. However, when people delve themselves into religiosity, they cross a threshold from the enlightened to the pretentious and crude. When engaging them I questioned what their purpose was or why they were here. But rather than reciprocating the polite conjectures I proposed, they returned with more shouting and determination. The Christian Fundamentalists, although invited by students of religious persuasion on campus, can never understand the breadth of what they’re doing consciously. They, through their poorly planned brutish spectacles, managed to ostracize and degrade almost every single person on campus. As I withdrew myself from the demonstration, I began to digress and think about how this situation can be considered dichromatic.

There was a duality there where if any other religious group decided to present the same ideas with the same demeanor and fervor the backlash would be horrendous and tragic. The one group I thought of in particular were the Muslims on campus. If one could imagine a man with a drawn out beard and kufi placed atop his head screaming on the top of his lungs that Christians and the like are going to hell if they didn’t convert into Islam, it is dubious that sentiments would be returned with simple jeering and diminutive protest but rather would incite violence and a potential social divide. A rift that would result in the alienation of hundreds if not thousands of VCU students and abroad. But there was something in my hypothetical thought where the Muslims, Jews, homosexuals, Roman Catholics have done without precedent; dictatorship of silence. freedom of speech from campus but rather freedom of speech with reservations. To be blunt the reality of the world is cruel, diverse, and dynamic, and it is filled with variables beyond the discernment of the college mind. I can say for certain that my opinions do not reflect the majorities within society nor will they ever, however it is safe to say that beliefs or opinions cannot be left abridged and sequestered to banners of hatred or pictures of perpetrated abortions, but should be thoroughly explained in a setting which befits it’s sensitivity; behind closed doors. Until individuals do gain a discriminating intellect and are able to decipher what is an appropriate way to explicate their opinions they will continue to stress the social fabrics of our microcosmic society and make it uneasy for us, on sporadic and auspiciously sunny day, to make a sojourn to class. To be frank, seeing a list of those who are going to hell only convinces me that world is in a pitiful condition bankrupt of the sovereignty in which it possessed prior to our roaming of its surface and that would the sovereignty of peace.
Scholarship Opportunities

By Priyum Vyas
There are a plethora of scholarships at the hands of the gifted individuals in the Honors College. Yet, most students have not tapped into the ocean of opportunities available. Seize the moment and apply to as many scholarships that interest you.

Competitive Scholarships at VCU

Rhoads Scholarship- One of the most prestigious scholarships in the Commonwealth of Virginia. For Graduating Seniors. Requires a GPA of 3.75 or higher with record of significant volunteer experiences, club participation, honors, and awards. www.rhodesscholar.org

Harry S Truman Scholarship- Juniors with exceptional leadership potential who are committed in careers in government, the nonprofit or advocacy sectors, education or elsewhere in the public service. GPA 3.7 or higher. Website: www.truman.gov

Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship- Sophomores or juniors pursing careers in mathematics, natural sciences, or engineering. GPA of 3.7 or higher. Website: www.act.org/goldwater/

Fulbright Scholarship- For graduating seniors or graduate students intended for personal development and international experience. www.iie.org/fulbright

NSEP/Boren Scholarship- Provides undergraduates with an intensive language learning experience abroad. Cannot study in Western Europe or a Western European language. www.iie.org/nsep

The Gates Cambridge Scholarship- Awarded on the basis of a person’s intellectual ability, leadership capacity and desire to use their knowledge to contribute to society throughout the world by providing service to their communities and applying their talents and knowledge to improve the lives of others. Study at the University of Cambridge. Website: http://trust.gatesscholar.org/

If you are in search for any of these scholarships or any scholarship in general, please contact Mr. Jeff Wing in the Honors College. Let us emphasize once again that the scholarships listed above are a small portion of the numerous scholarships available.

Check the box with the picture that represents the most Spirited Honors representatives and turn in your vote to Ms. Connolly. The winner gets a VCU Spirit Pack!