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UR & VCU Form Partnership to Improve K-12 Education in Richmond Area
Genworth Financial to Provide Funding

RICHMOND, Va., (Aug. 17, 2007) – The University of Richmond and Virginia Commonwealth University have established a partnership to improve K-12 school leadership, instruction and student achievement in greater Richmond.

The partnership, called EDULEAD, will offer an expanded number of leadership programs to four groups of public school leaders, aspiring principals, principals of academically struggling schools, first-year principals and principals of highly successful schools. The partnership also will follow up with impact studies.

A pioneer grant by the Genworth Foundation, the charitable giving arm of Richmond-based Genworth Financial, Inc. will enable EDULEAD to begin research on the impact of its programs and the development of outcomes for programs that are being designed. Other local corporations have expressed interest in providing funding.

“Working together, UR and VCU can become partners with the people most responsible for the success of education in our region, those who lead our schools. This shows what schools, universities and business can accomplish when they collaborate,” said UR President Edward L. Ayers.

“By combining the resources of our two universities in EDULEAD, the partnership will provide the region’s school systems with the best practices and latest theories in school leadership,” said VCU President Eugene P. Trani. “Such regional partnerships can be beneficial in the ever-changing world of public school leadership.”

EDULEAD was created in response to requests for more programs on school leadership from the superintendents and staff development specialists of the public school systems in Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico counties and in the City of Richmond. Its co-directors are Thomas J. Shields, director of the Center for Leadership in Education – a joint project of UR’s Jepson School of Leadership

Studies and School of Continuing Studies – and Jo Lynne DeMary, director of the VCU School of Education’s Center for School Improvement and former Virginia superintendent of public instruction.

“First and foremost, the universities and the divisions acknowledge the influence of leadership on student learning,” said Dr. Shields. “Research provides evidence that leadership is second only to teaching among the school-related factors impacting student achievement, especially in schools where the needs of the students are the greatest.”

“The school divisions have documented leadership needs at all points of the continuum—recruitment, induction, and retention,” said Dr. DeMary. “They realize that we can leverage human and financial resources by working together to secure funding and to study and apply best practices.”

EDULEAD’s goals are to:

- Establish professional development opportunities that are conducive to the development of aspiring, new and current school leaders.
- Offer training and support to new principals through education and mentorship.
- Help struggling schools and principals become successful in a standards-based environment.
- Promote the growth of exceptional principals and use their success as an example to help others.
- Promote regional cooperation and create an opportunity to combine resources in order to impact school leadership on a greater scale.

In addition to its regional focus, EDULEAD will conduct education leadership workshops for Fairfax County Public Schools, the nation’s 13th-largest school system. The partnership has also secured a contract to develop the Louisiana School Turnaround Specialist Program for the Louisiana Department of Education.

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About the Center for Leadership in Education at UR

Directed by Thomas J. Shields, Ph.D., a faculty member in the Jepson School of Leadership Studies and the School of Continuing Studies, the Center for Leadership in Education seeks to infuse leadership studies in the K-12 field of education. In 2005, Dr. Shields launched the Next Generation Leadership Academy, a regional program for aspiring school principals. EDULEAD was established in partnership with VCU in 2007 to conduct educational leadership programs. For more information, visit <http://leadershipk12.richmond.edu>.

About the Center for School Improvement at VCU

Directed by Jo Lynne DeMary, Ed.D., former Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction, the VCU School of Education’s Center for School Improvement was

launched in 2006 to improve school leadership, instruction and student achievement through research and best practices.

About Genworth Financial

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