

## Vision paper for the National Workshop on Future Technology to Preserve College Student Health and Foster Wellbeing

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At VCU, we aspire to develop a culture where wellness is viewed as the foundation for student success and central to the university mission. We believe that accomplishing this will require a collaborative cross-disciplinary, university-wide effort that integrates research, coursework, and programming, to create a whole-person educational experience. Importantly, we believe that the innovative use of technologies will be critical to this effort.

Higher education is at a watershed moment. Facing increased pressure due to the accessibility of cost-efficient educational content delivered via massively open on-line courses, coupled with vast increases in college tuition, universities are uniquely challenged at this point in history to explain their value and to justify their existence. We believe the answer to this challenge is that universities must offer transformational experiences that go beyond content delivery to educate the whole person. This proposal is rooted in the belief that making wellbeing a central part of the university experience is necessary for universities to achieve their mission of preparing individuals for engaged professional and personal lives that advance the common good. We believe that health and wellness should not simply be relegated to a student affairs division or health center, but rather, should be a core component of the university experience. We propose to achieve this through the integration and collaboration of constituencies across the university, that have too often operated in isolation. By integrating research, teaching, policy and programming we are working to create a culture focused on behavioral and emotional health and wellbeing as the foundation for student success.

Our vision grows out of two on-going initiatives at the university. The first is a unique university-wide longitudinal research project focused on understanding substance use and emotional health among college students (Spit for Science; spit4science.vcu.edu), which has enrolled ~70% of the incoming freshman class for the past four years (N=9890), inviting students to complete on-line surveys in the fall of their freshman year and then every spring thereafter. Through this highly visible, university-wide effort, we have created a community of faculty from multiple departments across the university who conduct research in the area of behavioral and emotional health and wellness, and developed connections between faculty researchers and faculty/staff/administrators involved in health and wellness programming and policy at the university. The second is our Academic Learning Transformation Lab (ALTLab), the brainchild of our new Vice Provost of Learning Innovation and Student Success, which consists of a team of >15 learning and digital media specialists dedicated to cultivating distinctive learning experiences through the creative use of technology. We aspire to use this expertise to creatively make use of technology to promote health and wellness.

By developing collaborations between the health researchers across the campus, the faculty and staff involved in health service delivery and programming at the university, and the faculty and staff involved in the creative use of technologies to advance the university mission, we aspire to create a cross-disciplinary effort that focuses on the promotion of behavioral and emotional health as a core component of the university. Our vision is that this will unfold by using technology in multiple ways that change the current system: (1) to create campaigns to raise awareness about health, (2) to offer flexible prevention and intervention (e.g., through on-line mobile health applications), (3) to monitor health in ways that allow for more individualized and tailored prevention and intervention health services, and (4) to conduct research to track the

effectiveness of implemented programming on improving desired outcomes related to health, wellbeing and academic success in our students. We believe this has the potential to transform the way that universities view college student health and to move the focus on wellbeing to the center of the university's culture. I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the workshop on Future Technology to Preserve College Student Health and Foster Wellbeing.

Danielle M. Dick, Ph.D. is a Professor in the Departments of Psychology, African American Studies, and Human and Molecular Genetics at Virginia Commonwealth University. She received her Ph.D. in Psychology in 2001 from Indiana University and subsequently completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Medical and Molecular Genetics. She was on the faculty at Washington University, St. Louis from 2003 – 2007 before joining VCU. Her research interests involve studying how genetic predispositions interact with environmental factors to contribute to patterns of substance use/dependence and related behavioral disorders across development. She has served as the Principal Investigator (PI) or site PI on 10 NIH grants, and Co-Investigator on another 6 NIH grants, with grant funding totaling >20 million dollars. She is the previous recipient of a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship, a National Institutes of Health NRSA Postdoctoral Fellowship, a NARSAD Young Investigator Award, and an NIAAA K02 mid-career award. She has >180 peer-reviewed publications, and has won numerous awards, including the Behavior Genetics Association Fuller & Scott Award for Outstanding Young Investigator in 2006, the Fulker Award for best paper published in the journal *Behavior Genetics* in 2007, the Research Society on Alcoholism Young Investigator Award in 2010, the World Congress on Psychiatric Genetics Richard Todd Award in Child Psychiatry in 2011, the World Congress on Psychiatric Genetics Theodore Reich Young Investigator Award in 2012, and the inaugural Indiana University Department of Psychology Young Alumni award in 2013. Dr. Dick co-directs the Quality Enhancement Plan at VCU, focused on reimagining general education at the university to promote integrative thinking by use of digital fluency. She directs Spit for Science, a university-wide research project focused on behavioral and emotional health outcomes in the VCU student population and is launching a cross-campus, interdisciplinary initiative focused on the role of behavioral health and wellness in college student success, that unites faculty and staff from academic and student affairs, university administration, and students. She is leading an effort to use digital technologies to effectively convey science to the broader public.