

# Wilder School in Action

Fall 2022



## Research Institute for Social Equity:

Transforming research for all



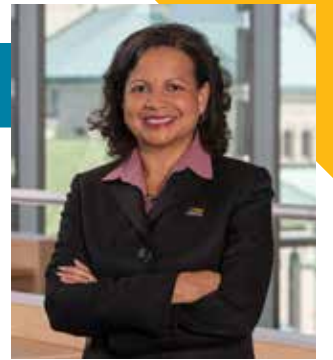
**VCU**

L. Douglas Wilder School of  
Government and Public Affairs

# Table of contents

- ▲ Letter from the dean's office . . . . .1
- ▲ Susan Gooden leads NASPAA . . . 2-3
- ▲ NSF grant will help fight the opioid epidemic . . . . . 4
- ▲ Governor's Voice Q&A . . . . .5
- ▲ Investigating Richmond's history of displaced communities . . . . . 6
- ▲ Housing Justice Atlas . . . . .7
- ▲ Alumni spotlight: Leah Fremouw . . .8
- ▲ Verbatim . . . . .9
- ▲ Faculty, alumni and student achievements . . . . . 10-11
- ▲ Research Institute for Social Equity . . . . .12-14
- ▲ Alumni spotlight: Steven Keener . . . 15
- ▲ Why I give to the Wilder School . . .16

## Letter from the dean's office



Dear Friends,

I'm proud to share with you the Fall 2022 edition of Wilder School in Action magazine. The Wilder School continues to excel in academics, research and experiential learning opportunities to help transform our world.

This includes \$3 million in funding we recently received from the commonwealth of Virginia to enhance the work of our Research Institute for Social Equity (RISE). As a hub to facilitate research to reverse social inequities, RISE is uniquely positioned as a national thought leader and research enterprise focused on equality for all Americans.

Led by inaugural director and Wilder School faculty member Nakeina Douglas-Glenn, RISE will further create new academic opportunities for historically underrepresented students, a lifelong commitment that the 66th Governor of Virginia, L. Douglas Wilder, shares within these pages.

This year, I've also had the honor and privilege to serve as the president of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), which is the world's preeminent organization dedicated to public policy and public affairs education and includes 327 institutional members and universities across the globe.

After a two-year in-person hiatus, the NASPAA annual conference returns in Chicago, Illinois, this fall. Themed "The Time is Now: A Bold and Noble Public Service for All," I'm grateful to lead the efforts of so many talented educators and organizations dedicated to advocating for the vital role of public service education in policy and political spheres. We do this work to improve society as a whole and because we have a responsibility to do our part.

Evidence of the Wilder School's distinctive reputation grows each year. The Wilder School continues to be the top public affairs graduate school in Virginia and is now ranked 35th in the nation according to U.S. News & World Report. We are also recognized nationally as 29th in public management and leadership. These distinctions mark the school's highest rankings yet and place it within the nation's top 15% of schools.

We continue to innovate our program offerings to meet students' ever-evolving needs and schedules, like our award-winning Master of Public Administration program, which can now be completed entirely online, in addition to the traditional in-person format.

So many avenues of transformational change advance the collective work underway at the Wilder School. Never before have we been better equipped to make societal impacts. It's an amazing journey and I invite you to join us.

Best regards,

Susan T. Gooden, Ph.D.

Dean

L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs  
Virginia Commonwealth University



Stay up to date with the Wilder School at our news page at: <http://q-r.to/wildernews>



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**35<sup>th</sup>**  
public affairs  
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schools

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public  
management  
& leadership



# Bold and noble: Susan Gooden leads NASPAA to new heights

**Dean Susan Gooden is the president of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), the world's largest accrediting body for public affairs programs. With 327 institutional members across the globe, the network advances public service through education advocacy in the policy and political spheres. We sat down with Dean Gooden to talk about NASPAA and its 2022 conference to be held on Oct. 18-23 in Chicago.**

**Q** What can you tell us about the changes underway at NASPAA during the past year and how they align to support the future of public affairs education?

**A** It's been a momentous year for NASPAA, which welcomed a new executive director, Dr. Angel Wright-Lanier, in September of 2021. Dr. Wright-Lanier is a pleasure to work with and brings a wealth of leadership experience in local government to our efforts.

One of the things that she immediately brought to the board was the need to update NASPAA's strategic plan. This work is now underway with multiple focus groups capturing perspectives of key constituents. Their informative input will bring critical voices in developing NASPAA's strategic plan.

NASPAA also began implementation of a comprehensive diversity, equity and

inclusion initiative framework and action plan this year. Initiated prior to my presidential term by colleagues Drs. Laura Bloomberg and Brandi Blessett, the new framework informs our strategic plan and emphasizes action areas that we'll be highlighting for member schools throughout our annual conference. Our focus this year has been action-oriented in aggressively implementing the diversity, equity and inclusion framework that was adopted last year.

**Q** NASPAA will resume an in-person format in Chicago this year after nearly two years of virtual programming. What can you tell us about the theme of this year's conference, which you selected, and what that means practically for the agenda?

**A** The theme for this year's conference is "The Time is Now: A Bold and Noble Public Service for All." It's a charge that evokes a broad agenda squarely on confronting big problems in a brave, creative and innovative fashion. I also wanted to underscore the idea that public service is an inherently noble and impactful work. Whether we're talking about education, housing, crime, immigration or water safety, there is a public administrator working diligently to have those services delivered to citizens in an equitable, effective and efficient manner.

We received more than 150 proposals from 500 unique presenters for the 2022 conference — a record-breaking number of entries. That's a strong indication of the excitement and

enthusiasm that exists among our participants to network and compare approaches to pedagogy.

I also want to acknowledge the outstanding work of my conference programming co-chairs, Drs. Brandi Blessett and Sean McCandless, and all of the members of this year's conference committee who had the very challenging work of selecting panels from an inordinately high volume of submissions. Special thanks are also due to our local hosts: the University of Illinois Chicago, Northern Illinois University and the University of Illinois Springfield.

**Q** Are there specific aspects of the programming that you want to highlight?

**A** There are two. The first is our "Institutionalizing Equity and Justice" track, which ties back to implementing the action agenda related to the DEI framework that the task force put together. From our keynote speakers to our conference sessions, attendees will notice broad inclusion and focus on HBCUs and MSIs. The second is a brand-new track, "Uplifting the Infrastructure of Our Programs."

For many years, NASPAA did an excellent job of attracting deans, administrators, faculty and students who are on the job market to the annual conference. Where we were less effective, however, was in attracting our infrastructure support — student services, communications, development and finance professionals, for example. All of these functions are critical in delivering a high-quality public service education.

This year, we intentionally reached out to them and encouraged submission of conference proposals.

I'm delighted that we have been very intentional in trying to broaden our outreach. With this new focus, we're going to be engaging all of the support systems who are integral to our success. Our DEI and infrastructure groups will be able to exchange ideas about best practices while extending their network specifically within public affairs schools.

**Q** NASPAA lost a global ambassador for the network in March, Dr. Nadia Rubaii. What can you tell us about the legacy of Dr. Rubaii and how she will be commemorated at the conference?

**A** We all were deeply saddened by the sudden loss of Dr. Rubaii. Besides having served as a NASPAA past-president and accreditation chair, Nadia was a tremendous colleague who made transformative contributions to the international public service community. We at NASPAA have really taken her death as a challenge to continue the legacy of her work.

To that end, I'm very pleased to announce the establishment of the Nadia Rubaii Distinguished Service Award, which will recognize members who have made outstanding contributions and exhibited leadership to NASPAA and the field through service that spans years and committees.

We'll also present sessions during the 2022 conference that will be specifically devoted to honoring and reflecting upon the legacy of Dr. Rubaii. 🏠

Susan Gooden and Angel Wright-Lanier, executive director of NASPAA



## Welcoming new Wilder School faculty

We are proud to introduce the newest faculty members of the Wilder School family:

- RaJade Berry-James, Ph.D., senior associate dean of faculty and academic affairs
- Robert "Brad" Lehmann, Ph.D., instructor, criminal justice
- Anthony Starke, Ph.D., assistant professor of public administration





# NSF grant will help fight the opioid epidemic across communities

How can machine learning help stop the opioid epidemic? It begins with gathering enough large-scale data to develop predictive treatment policies that can be supported across communities through a targeted approach.

That's the aim of a nearly \$149,000 National Science Foundation grant awarded to Virginia Commonwealth University researchers in the College of Engineering, the Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, and the VCU School of Medicine Department of Family Medicine & Population Health.

The multidisciplinary team's goal is that better analytics will help leaders to make more effective decisions on how to best allocate limited resources to fight opioid addiction.

Data collection will come from multiple sources, some quite unexpected. One unique method will be the deployment of robots in municipal sewage systems to test wastewater for traces of drug metabolites. Researchers will also mine online data to track the geographic concentration of

drug-related keywords used on social media and internet searches. These methods will help serve as macro barometers to indicate overall opioid trends across communities.

"The team expects to develop a methodology to integrate these various data sources to identify geographic hotspots and high-risk zones, understand the characteristics of the target population, identify areas for deploying appropriate community-based services, and also understand the root causes of the increase, or decrease, in drug abuse," said co-principal investigator Sarin Adhikari, Ph.D., an adjunct faculty researcher at the Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs.

By utilizing machine learning to derive predictive models to forecast

opioid-related overdoses, researchers are hopeful that computerized decision-making tools will help leaders make more effective decisions on allocating resources to fight opioid addiction.

"We hope to uncover new insights into opioid abuse in the Richmond region through this study," Adhikari said. "Identifying the socio-economic and demographic determinants of opioid abuse at the neighborhood-level could help local governments and nonprofits to reallocate resources, provide customized services and respond with appropriate policy interventions."

Through innovative, population-level solutions, the team is optimistic that they'll be able to make impacts that save lives and improve health for Virginians. 🏠

## Governor's Voice

Fighting for people of color through education and opportunities



Few in the political landscape have been more outspoken on the subject of the funding gap between Virginia's Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) than our own **Distinguished Professor L. Douglas Wilder**. In June, Gov. Glenn Youngkin signed a Virginia state budget fulfilling a campaign promise to support the state's HBCUs. The budget provides almost \$900 million in funding to Virginia's HBCUs and \$100 million to launch lab schools within community colleges and HBCUs.

We sat down with Governor Wilder to get his thoughts on the new budget and his experiences as the 66th Governor of Virginia in securing resources for HBCUs.

**Q** Governor, you, along with your former Education Secretary Jim Dyke, called on a bipartisan group of legislators to provide federal funding to HBCUs from the American Rescue Plan last year, stating that significant investment was needed to redress the "long-standing denial of education opportunities" of Black Virginians. This call was essentially answered in June with the passage of the new budget. What does this victory mean for you?

**A** To the extent HBCUs have been ignored for decades by those in authority and systemically disadvantaged by underfunding and fewer resources, this is a start, not a conclusion. Leveling the field for HBCUs, which have and continue to play a disproportionate role in educating underserved communities, will require eternal vigilance.

It is not a problem that we can simply throw money at. Lawmakers and the citizens who elect them will need to evaluate the performance of these and other investments to ensure that HBCUs continue to flourish for generations to come.

**Q** As a Virginia governor, you were able to secure support for capital projects and expand the state's tuition assistance grant program to include residents attending private colleges and universities, a significant coup for the state's private HBCUs. What were some of the challenges you faced in meeting the needs of HBCUs during your administration?

**A** I was left with no money in my administration; in fact, I was left with a deficit of \$2.5 billion. Yet, I was able to include two of the HBCUs, Norfolk State and Virginia State, in the largest capital bond referendum in our state's history. I secured agreement with the legislature for new buildings on their campuses. I stressed the need to reevaluate the needs of Virginia Union and Hampton universities. I felt there were no constitutional restraints against state funding for Virginia Union and Hampton universities.

**Q** Beyond the events of 2020, to what do you attribute this groundswell of political support for HBCUs?

**A** The old expression still holds true: The wagon that makes the noise gets the grease. There really is no groundswell. In fact, Virginia is still not in compliance with the Adams case decided in 1977. Some people have looked back at the outcome of our 2020 statewide elections, which were not projected to be a sweep for Republicans, and are perhaps beginning to see the Black electorate as consequential. Democrats cannot win elections without the support of the Black electorate. While I certainly hope that this recognition is not part of a political calculus, it might well be the impetus for change. 🏠

### Wilder School graduate leads HBCU support in the White House

**Dietra Trent ('95 MPA & '07 PPA)** has been appointed by the White House and the U.S. Department of Education as the new executive director of the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities (WHI-HBCUs). In her new role, Trent is continuing her work as an advocate for educational innovation and funding support for students.

Trent, who earned an undergraduate degree in sociology and criminal justice from Hampton University, knows firsthand the positive impacts HBCUs make in the lives of students. Appropriately, she began her role in February on the last day of Black History Month.

She has dedicated her career to promoting equity in public policy and educational reform for minority students, bringing longstanding experience to the position. Trent served as Virginia secretary of

education and deputy secretary of education (twice), director of constituent services and director of the Council on Human Rights. Trent has kept her relationship with the Wilder School close, previously working as senior director for equity research and training.

HBCUs emerged as a response to racist segregation laws that prevented Black students from attending colleges and universities, which were almost exclusively reserved for whites before the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 2020, nearly 280,000 students were enrolled across 101 HBCUs throughout the United States, which conferred approximately 48,200 degrees in the 2019-20 academic year, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.





# Investigating Richmond's history of displaced communities

LaToya Gray-Sparks' 'Planned Destruction' catalogs the voices and experiences of once-vibrant Black communities displaced through a 1946 urban planning project.

Master of Urban and Regional Studies and Planning graduate student **LaToya S. Gray-Sparks (B.A.'04/H&S)** was among 25 scholars across the country selected for the National Endowment for the Humanities' institute called "Toward a People's History of Landscape." She collaborated with scholars to develop online, open-source curriculum modules that teach landscape-oriented social histories.

Gray-Sparks was selected to further her research project, "Planned Destruction," an interactive digital story map that details the efforts of Richmond authorities during the 1930s and '40s to displace residents from the city's Black communities.

The project examines the impact of Harland Bartholomew's 1946 master plan for Richmond, documenting the many victims of displacement whose homes and businesses were obliterated. The piece also visually captures the changing landscape with historic and contemporary maps of the entire city, including Black and white populations, median household incomes, poverty rates and property values.

In digitally reconstructing and repopulating Richmond's lost communities, Gray-Sparks hopes to lead the charge in "centering the experiences of marginalized communities while reclaiming and preserving a part of African American history that has been forgotten."

"Maps are powerful," said Gray-Sparks, who believes that cartography can be an important tool for reversing the negative impact of redlining. "Maps can be used to promote and elevate a space or omit and destroy a space."

Her research began as an "outlet for grief, anger and a feeling of powerlessness" after the 2017 death of her cousin in Richmond's Whitcomb Court neighborhood. Around that time, Gray-Sparks was part of the Richmond 300 advisory council drafting the city's latest comprehensive plan. She learned how Whitcomb Court's development was "rooted in urban planning theories and schemes that were discriminatory and patriarchal."

Gray-Sparks' story map is dedicated to her cousin and other childhood friends who lost their lives to violence in Richmond. They were young Black men "whose lives were cut short due to boundaries and restrictions created and implemented by people who did not value Black lives," she said.

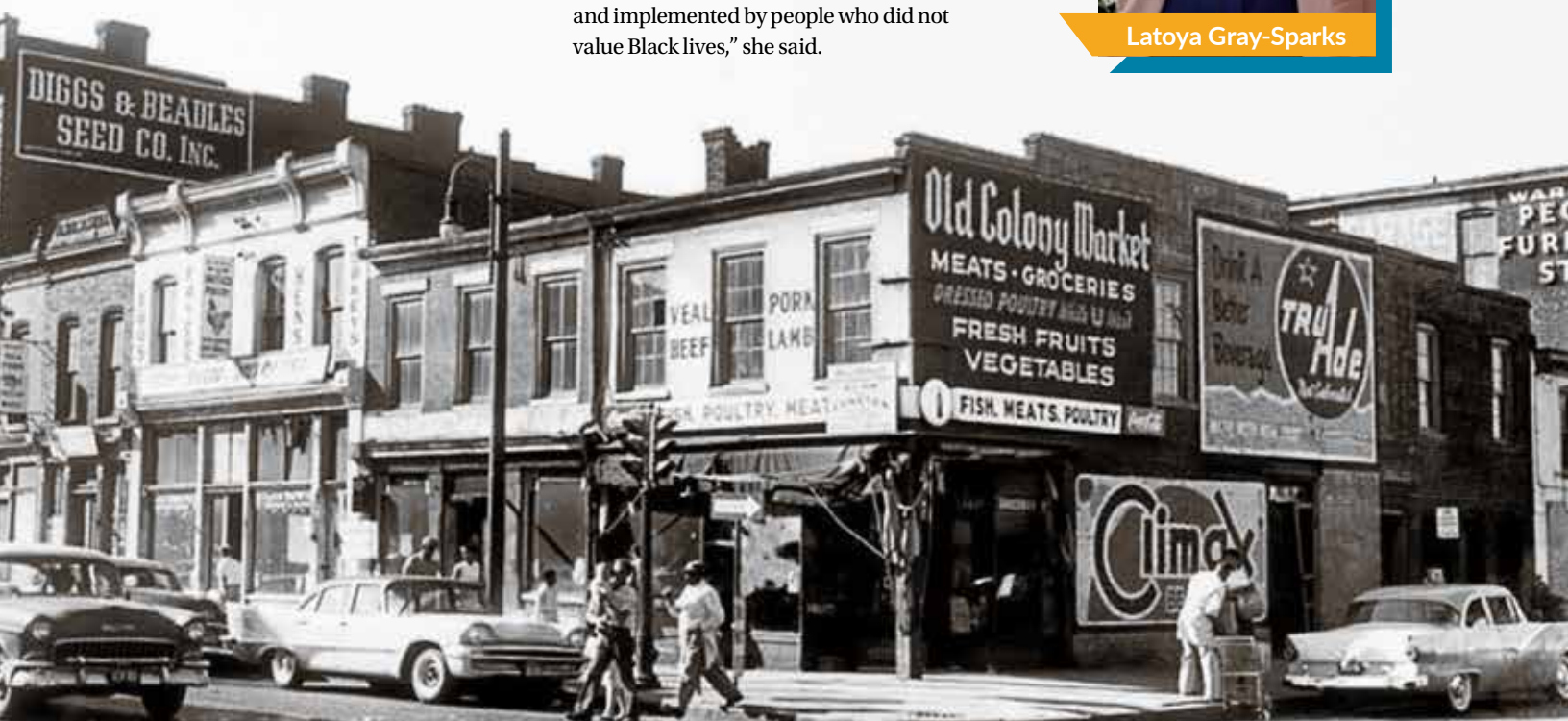
"I feel the spirits of my ancestors cheering me on in this work — my great-grandparents, my grandparents, my cousin and so many others whose lives have influenced my work a great deal because their experiences were circumscribed by urban renewal," Gray-Sparks said.

In helping to center the lives of others, Gray-Sparks acknowledged that she has come to see herself differently.

"Having the support and resources of faculty to complete a project like this has been such a blessing. The Wilder School has given me a platform for discovery and the confidence to launch my research into the world, where it can have the greatest meaning." 🏠



LaToya Gray-Sparks



## Collaborating to combat housing insecurity

The Housing Justice Atlas will facilitate data research, evaluation and community participation to better understand the short- and long-term drivers of eviction.

The Wilder School RVA Eviction Lab is expanding its reach through the creation of the Housing Justice Atlas (HJA). In partnership with the University of Virginia Data Equity Center researchers and an advisory board of local community and advocacy leaders, the collaboration will collect and analyze eviction data across the Richmond and Charlottesville areas. Outcomes from this long-term project will help inform and respond to the structural and systemic causes of housing stability.

"The HJA is meant to serve multiple audiences that work on housing, including service providers, housing advocates and grassroots organizations," said Ben Teresa, associate professor and co-director of the Wilder School RVA Eviction Lab. "Ultimately, the HJA will be a tool that these groups use and develop to meet their needs over the course of their work."

One goal of the Housing Justice Atlas project is to develop a public repository to collect and distribute Virginia courts' eviction data by ZIP code and jurisdiction. To effectively communicate trends, the online tool will populate data visualization tools like charts and graphs. These resources will build metrics for community partners to more effectively

understand, identify and explore trends influencing evictions.

"Currently, much of housing data is privately held and serves property owner and landlord interests," Teresa said. "Sometimes, the most basic level of information is missing or hidden: Who owns your home? It's impossible to address housing stability in that context, let alone empower communities, tenants and practitioners."

The Housing Justice Atlas will help change this lack of data equity to answer research questions about the complex relationships between evictions and other variables, such as landlords' property ownership portfolios, building conditions, documented violations of tenants' rights and neighborhood demographics. Equipping advocacy groups with these resources will assist with both immediate interventions and long-term policymaking.

Wilder School Fellow graduate students will gain experience developing and conducting research, and the project aims to expand participation in research training methods for local youth organizations. The Housing Justice Atlas will further collect "invisible data" — including oral histories and photographs — to develop community



"A good urban planning education emphasizes the importance of community involvement in our work."

— Hannah Woehrle

narratives about the lived experiences of residents impacted by housing insecurity.

"I think the most valuable opportunity lies in the experience gained answering to community stakeholders," said Hannah Woehrle, an urban and regional studies and planning graduate student. "A good urban planning education emphasizes the importance of community involvement in our work, but the skills required to humble yourself and defer to community expertise cannot be taught in a classroom — for that, you need practice." 🏠



# Leah Fremouw from the corner office

Leah Fremouw (B.A.'08/H&S; M.P.A.'10/GPA) has always preferred the view at the ground floor.

Perhaps that's why she's made a career of tackling startup roles and initiatives in organizations like CarLotz, Virginia Community Capital, TEDxRVA and Impact 100 Richmond.

She recently embarked on her boldest move yet as the new CEO of Bridging Virginia.

Bridging Virginia is an emerging community development financial services institution (CDFI) that specializes in providing qualifying small businesses in the metropolitan Richmond area with low-interest, long-dated loans as well as other capital and services.

The organization began in 2020 as an effort to provide financial services to Black-, women- and minority-owned small businesses that had been disproportionately hurt by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Bridging Virginia works to address longstanding disinvestment by investing in people and communities that have been left behind by mainstream finance," said Fremouw. "The national call for economic justice, which has become louder and more pronounced by the

pandemic, has made our work, and the work of all CDFIs, more salient than ever."

Fremouw assumes the helm of Bridging Virginia following a highly successful tenure as the senior vice president and director of innovation at the region's behemoth CDFI, Virginia Community Capital. Established in 2006 with a \$15 million seed investment from then-Gov. Mark R. Warner, VCC managed over \$486 million in assets and drove an estimated \$1.8 billion in economic impact in the commonwealth in 2021.

At VCC, Fremouw's responsibilities included leading a lean but mighty team of experts delivering specialized financial and technical assistance to individuals, organizations and nonprofits in a highly entrepreneurial role.

"Leah is a powerhouse of energy and talent who is driven by an unwavering social consciousness," said Wilder School Dean Susan Gooden. "Whether she is pumping weights or pumping ideas, Leah always hits the mark. I remember her as a student in our MPA program and one of our early Wilder Fellows in 2008. She epitomizes the best of Wilder School alumni and I look forward to following the rise and impact of Bridging Virginia."

Her plans for Bridging Virginia include expanding the organization's services

beyond collateral enhancements to include direct lending of up to \$50,000 to small business owners in the early phases of business development. Fremouw also hopes to add real estate financing to Bridging Virginia's suite of services and to expand its clientele to include burgeoning industries in the region.

Then, of course, there's the prospect of staffing. As Bridging Virginia's first full-time employee, Fremouw will have the opportunity to leave her imprimatur on virtually every aspect of the organization.

It's the perfect opportunity for a self-described "builder" who has fully embraced the CDFI industry and her unique role as a community leader within it.

"Sometimes, the challenge is in adjusting expectations and in helping the partners to understand that in the same way that when an industry like coal leaves a region and the economic forecast worsens gradually, progress is likewise incremental."

She counsels that many factors must align to make a community investment successful, and the most important of these is consistency in focus and action. 🏠



“Facilitating change in this industry is hard work. When we set a goal as bold as transforming a community, the expectations from funders and partners can sometimes be immediate.”

— Leah Fremouw

## VERBATIM

### Identifying cybersecurity threats

Wilder School faculty Christopher Whyte and Benjamin Young have generated extensive media exposure examining international cybersecurity threats across the globe, with respective foci on Russia and North Korea. These assistant professors bring a wealth of real-world experience to Wilder School students studying homeland security and emergency preparedness.



Christopher Whyte

“Russian interest in digital espionage, economic warfare, and political interference is likely to reflect a broad truth about the forthcoming AI revolution: As artificial intelligence rewires how societies function, so too will it determine the attack surface thereof.” — CSO Online

“Education always has been the single most important flagstone for efforts to build robust public safety practices. With national cybersecurity, this is doubly the case.”

— Richmond Times-Dispatch

“The conflicting logics of cyber and nuclear warfare, when considered in the context of the present crisis, suggest real reasons to be concerned about the possibility of a cyber-enabled nuclear escalation.”

— World Politics Review



Benjamin Young

“Iran has long accepted patriotic hackers, a term used by cybersecurity professionals to describe citizens of a country engaged in cyber measures to advance the strategic interests of their homeland, as part of its overall cyber strategy.”

— The National Interest

“North Korean hackers see the developing world as a vulnerable target for increasingly sophisticated cyber attacks.”

— The National Interest

“Cybersecurity training is imperative in order to deter North Korea's increasingly sophisticated and aggressive cyber attacks.”

— The National Interest

“North Korea once fostered supportive relationships with the Global South, but it now uses cyber attacks against developing countries for its own purposes.”

— The National Interest



# Faculty, alumni and student achievements

The Wilder School produces outstanding scholarship, service and leadership — locally and nationally

▲ **Dean Susan T. Gooden, Ph.D.**, offered the keynote address at the 2022 Equity Summit hosted by the Journal of Social Equity and Public Administration (JSEPA) and the University of Virginia's Frank Batten School of Leadership in Montpelier, Virginia, Oct. 6-8. The event featured contributing authors to the inaugural edition of JSEPA, a peer-reviewed, multidisciplinary, open-access journal sponsored by the American Society for Public Administration Section on Democracy and Social Justice, which is dedicated to "all issues related to social equity in the pursuit of public purposes." Published twice a year, the first volume will appear in 2023.

▲ **Benjamin Teresa, Ph.D.**, was promoted to the rank of associate with tenure in July. Teresa, who serves as assistant chair of the urban and regional planning program and co-director of the RVA Eviction Lab, a nationally recognized community-responsive research hub, was recognized by the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association for his dedication to community-engaged research and teaching in 2018.



▲ **Demetrios 'Mitch' Melis (BA'03/GPA; MPA'05; Cert'05/GPA)** has been



appointed the director of the Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR). The agency issues professional credentials — licenses, certificates or registrations — through 18 regulatory boards serving more than 300,000 individuals and businesses. Melis, who served most recently as the director of regulatory compliance for the Virginia State Bar, has worked in the occupational licensing field for over 16 years. He is a 2011 alumnus of the Commonwealth Management Institute.



## Wilder School alumna Sessa Joi Moon heads U.S. House diversity office

Wilder School alumna Sessa Joi Moon, Ph.D. (B.A. '02/H&S, M.S. '08/GPA), has been named the director of the U.S. House of Representatives Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Moon,

who served previously as the chief diversity officer and director of diversity, equity and inclusion at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, will lead the recruitment, retention and development of the House workforce and efforts to increase awareness of diversity issues among House staff. Congress established the nonpartisan, independent office in 2019.

Moon is a native of Richmond, Virginia, and the co-creator of The JXN Project, a nonprofit dedicated to contextualizing the origin story of Jackson Ward, a National Historic Landmark District and early hub of Black entrepreneurship after the Emancipation. The project seeks to leverage historic preservation "through restorative truth-telling and redemptive storytelling in order to excavate, elevate, and educate." (WC:136)

## Wilder School alumni dominate VCU's 10 Under 10 Awards

Three Wilder School alumni are among VCU's 10 Under 10 this year. The awards program honors alumni who earned their first degree — undergraduate, graduate or professional — from the university within the past decade and who have made important contributions to their community and loyally supported the university.

**Dhara Amin (M.S.'14/GPA, Ph.D.'19/GPA & Wilder Fellow)** is a senior research analyst and coordinator of external research at the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, where she designs and evaluates supportive programs for youth and families involved in the juvenile justice system. In her spare time, Amin serves as an appointed member of the Institutional Review Board of the Virginia Department of Social Services helping to safeguard the rights of vulnerable populations who volunteer to participate in research.

**Curtis Brown (Cert.'09/GPA; MA'11/GPA)** is a nationally recognized emergency management professional. His previous roles have included state coordinator for the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, deputy secretary of public safety and homeland security, regional emergency management administrator for the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission and professional staff on the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security. Brown is the co-founder of the Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management (IDIEM), a data-driven nonprofit dedicated to increasing the diversity of emergency managers and the promotion of practices that improve disaster outcomes among vulnerable communities. He is a senior practitioner in residence at the Wilder School.

**Darrin Holloway, Esq. (B.S.'13/GPA)**, is an associate attorney at Shane Smith Law in Charlotte, North Carolina, where he represents clients in actions for personal injury and property damage. While at VCU, he served as president of the Theta Rho chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. Following graduation, Holloway attended North Carolina Central University School of Law and graduated magna cum laude in 2017. He was admitted to the North Carolina Bar and began his legal career in Charlotte as an assistant public defender, representing indigent individuals who faced criminal charges in Mecklenburg County. As a public defender, he tried over 100 criminal trials and became an experienced litigator.

▲ **Shelley Smith (B.S.'04/N; M.S.'05)**, a doctoral candidate in public policy and administration, has been appointed to the Virginia Health Workforce Development Authority (VHWA) by Gov. Glenn Youngkin. Smith, an associate professor of nursing, will contribute her expertise in facilitating the development of a statewide health professions pipeline that educates and retains a diverse, culturally competent and geographically distributed workforce for all Virginians. Smith is an alumna of the Translational Research Fellows program.

▲ **Shajuana Isom-Payne, Ph.D. (B.A.'98/H&S/M.Ed.'03/E, Ph.D.'22/E)**, assistant dean of student success, received the 2022 Outstanding Advocate for Academic Advising Award for Region 2. Presented by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), the award recognizes extraordinary commitment to student success among academic advisors and administrators in the Mid-Atlantic. Isom-Payne, who has served in her current role since 2018, was selected for her leadership in driving significant counseling and structural changes in advising at the Wilder School.



▲ **Keandra Davis**, a doctoral candidate in public policy and administration, received an inaugural Kijakazi Research Fellowship with the National Academy for Social Insurance (NASI) this past summer. NASI is a Policy Think Tank centered around social insurance policy, with a strong focus on race and wealth inequality. The fellowship is named for Kilolo Kijakazi, an acting commissioner for the Social Security Administration.



▲ **Bradley Corallo (MPA'17/GPA)** is the co-author of a recent study that explores how enrollment in Medicaid changed during the pandemic and lays out the stakes for the impact of an expiration requirement that prevented states from disenrolling recipients. The report, "Fiscal and Enrollment Implications of Medicaid Continuous Coverage Requirement During and After the PHE Ends," estimates between 5.3 million and 14.2 million Americans could lose coverage. Corallo is a Senior Policy Analyst at the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation's Program on Medicaid and the Uninsured (KPMU). He conducts quantitative analyses of Medicaid administrative data and assists on projects related to community health centers.

## Plan-Off 2022: Wilder School Master of Urban and Regional Studies and Planning students envision the future of communities

More than a hundred students, faculty, planning professionals, and friends and family gathered for the 2022 Plan-Off annual competition for Master of Urban and Regional Planning students on May 1. A perennial favorite, the event featured second-year students pitching their solution to a real-world planning problem before a panel of professional planners. Finalists were selected in progressive presentation rounds coordinated by associate professors Meghan Gough and Ben Teresa.

Gabrielle Dean won first place with her presentation, "Revitalization Strategies for Downtown Elkton, Virginia." Dean, who hails from Elkton, focused her presentation on analyzing existing conditions and highlighted the need to mitigate business vacancies, adjust zoning codes to increase walkability and use placemaking strategies to create a sense of community.

Other finalists: Charlie Wilson ("Growing Small: Design Overlay District Planning for Highland County and the Town of Monterey, Virginia"), Neal Friedman ("Bowling Green Main Street Revitalization Plan") and Annie Weidhaas ("Northern Neck Economic Development Plan: Improving Regional Connectivity Within the Food Industry"), who received the Overall Best Plan Award. The event was made possible by the generous support of sponsors: HDAdvisors Partnership for Housing Affordability, Richmond Association of REALTORS, Kim Chen and Lory Markham.



Plan-Off finalists (left to right): Annie Weidhaas (Overall Best Plan Award), Charlie Wilson, Gabrielle Dean (Grand Prize) and Neal Friedman



# On the RISE

## Transforming research for all with the Research Institute for Social Equity

The Research Institute for Social Equity (RISE) has received \$3 million from the commonwealth to expand racial and social equity research, academic scholarship and public engagement.

“VCU’s role as a public research university means we take the lead in asking difficult questions and finding answers about the most pressing issues facing our society,” said Michael Rao, president of VCU and VCU Health System.

“The RISE program’s research and engagement work furthers a deeper understanding of social inequities and their impacts and identifies paths to greater social equity. We are grateful to the legislature and the governor for state budget funding that will help expand that vital work, and it was my privilege to advocate for RISE as one of our top five priorities this legislative session.”

The two-year funding enables the Research Institute for Social Equity to expand its research across many

policy issues affecting social justice reform across the United States to promote education, economic security and development on behalf of all Americans.

“Funding for the Research Institute for Social Equity is appreciated, welcome and needed,” said Gov. L. Douglas Wilder. “America is in the throes of social upheaval, with problems emanating from times of disunity and social inequality involving race, status and education. No place is more suited to address these issues than the Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs.”

Funding will support key research areas in Virginia public policy analysis and reporting, public outreach and workforce development, and educational resources to further position VCU as a champion voice for transformation.

“For decades, our researchers have worked to develop policy solutions to

address fundamental issues of equity and access for underrepresented populations,” said Susan Gooden, dean of the Wilder School. “This funding amplifies our focused efforts at the Research Institute for Social Equity as a national thought leader on social justice and racial equity.”

### Leading the way for marginalized voices

The goal of the Research Institute for Social Equity is to become the national leader in advancing and informing public policy, governance and practice to improve conditions for marginalized voices within society, including communities of color, LGBTQIA individuals, people with disabilities, incarcerated populations, survivors of domestic violence and women.

It’s a call to action that the Wilder School and VCU are uniquely positioned to answer, as a top-tier research university

### Meet Nakeina Douglas-Glenn, director of RISE

**Nakeina E. Douglas-Glenn, Ph.D.**, who has served as the interim director of RISE since its founding, has been selected as the permanent director. In her role, she oversees and supports key research areas in Virginia public policy analysis and reporting, public outreach and workforce development, and educational resources to further position VCU as a champion voice for transformation.

Douglas-Glenn’s recent work includes leading a team of researchers to produce the Ensuring Language Equity in Virginia Government Services report and serving as an editor of the Virginia Department of Health’s Vaccine Equity Report, which the Wilder School produced monthly during 2021 under the supervision of the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer and the Equity Leadership

Task Force. She previously served as the director of The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute.

Active in community and professional organizations, Douglas-Glenn is an elected member of the American Council on Education’s Virginia Network executive board. She is also a member of the board of directors for the Health Brigade Charitable Clinic (formerly the Fan Free Clinic) and SOAR365, which supports individuals and families with the real-world challenges of living with a disability.

“I am thrilled to have the opportunity to lead the Institute in this RISE in this era-defining moment,” said Douglas-Glenn. “I believe RISE is positioned to advance its vision through transformational research and a timely suite of services to help decision-makers and public service providers do their best work to increase access, opportunity and equity for all members of our communities.”



From left: Nakeina Douglas-Glenn, Gov. L. Douglas Wilder and Dean Susan Gooden view the work of the Research Institute for Social Equity as key to increasing collaborations and sharing the longstanding efforts of the Wilder School in the realm of equity research.





The new funding will fuel capabilities, collaboration and engagement to help position RISE as a one-of-a-kind national research leader.

located in the heart of Richmond and blocks away from the seat of government at Virginia’s State Capitol.

To set benchmarks for improvement and evaluation, the Research Institute for Social Equity will compile a bi-annual report card of national progress toward social equity and develop criteria for progress by producing case studies to inform and engage practitioners on emerging trends.

These educational tools will demonstrate real-world perspectives and approaches to improve understanding and awareness.

### Connecting communities and facilitating change

Formed in 2019 as a hub for social justice initiatives, the Research Institute for Social Equity was developed to connect community groups, provide advocacy resources and establish professional development experiences to educate and prepare leaders to confront issues of racial justice. In addition to these statewide programs, the Research Institute for Social Equity serves as a conduit for networking by hosting an annual conference to assist thought leaders in understanding the role of social equity research advocacy across their organizations.

“One of the most significant ways to realize social equity in our communities is through essential training for Virginia’s leaders,” said Gooden. “RISE is a beacon of what transformative

outreach holds for our future. The Wilder School’s mission to educate extends well beyond the boundaries of our campus and this funding will significantly amplify our reach.”

### Focused on transformative impacts

Measuring outcomes and providing advocates with data-driven analysis and tools is essential to success. To better understand public perceptions on social equity, the Research Institute for Social Equity, in conjunction with members of the Virginia General Assembly, will conduct three annual public policy polls in areas like public safety, economic development, education, mental health and housing.

The poll results will help provide policymakers and advocacy groups with data to better understand their constituencies through specific racial, socioeconomic and regional demographics.

All of these resources will be publicly shared and available to connect like minds and build an informed and active community.

The Wilder School holds a longstanding dedication to academic rigor, research excellence and public service, and the expanding efforts of the Research Institute for Social Equity will further connect communities and create resources to advance thought leadership and effect measurable, large-scale change. 📖

### Creating opportunities with Virginia Union University

66<sup>th</sup> Governor of Virginia L. Douglas Wilder, the namesake of the Wilder School and the nation’s first elected African American governor, continues to inspire others through his legacy of public service and commitment to education.

In partnership with Virginia Union University, the Wilder School is establishing needs-based undergraduate and graduate scholarships for students to follow in Governor Wilder’s footsteps as public servants. These scholarships will support research and community engagement to develop students’ academic and leadership experiences.

The Research Institute for Social Equity will also digitize Governor Wilder’s extensive document library, which includes key print documents and multimedia from the Wilder gubernatorial administration. The digitalization of these documents will expand access students’ research access to the historical record that defined Governor Wilder’s unprecedented tenure.

“I am proud that support for the Research Institute for Social Equity will create new opportunities to enhance our students’ path to academic success,” said Governor Wilder. “The digitization of the Wilder Collection represents an unrivaled effort to preserve history. It will provide new opportunities for faculty and students alike — to not only analyze, critique, and question — but most importantly, to learn.”

## Changemaker: Steven Keener

### Criminal justice scholar Steven Keener shares his passion for the transformational power of education

Steven Keener (M.S. ’13/GPA, PPAD ’17/GPA) is the co-founder and inaugural director of the Center for Crime, Equity, and Justice Research and Policy at Christopher Newport University, which brings students and faculty together with local and state leaders, as well as community activists, to conduct research projects and produce policy recommendations.

Keener, who launched the center in September 2021, said it sprang from a desire to build upon the expertise of myriad faculty — those within criminology and outside of it — who were engaged in helping nonprofits, policymakers and other organizations in the Hampton Roads community with similar projects.

In the short time since its establishment, the center has attracted considerable visibility.

“We have many excellent researchers who are working with nonprofits, policymakers and others to build research projects,” Keener said. “With the creation of the center, we wanted to send the unequivocal message that this work and its impact on the greater community is valued at CNU,” said Keener.

Keener was raised in the Allegheny Highlands of Clifton Forge, Virginia, a quaint town (population: 3,444) known for its pristine waters, trout streams and breathtaking mountain views of the Virginia-West Virginia border.

Only about 9% of Clifton Forge residents have attended college, but Keener, a talented high school student and star baseball player — a Louisville Slugger pre-season All-American who was twice named Virginian Review Player of the Year — was privileged to grow in the shadow of parents with high expectations.

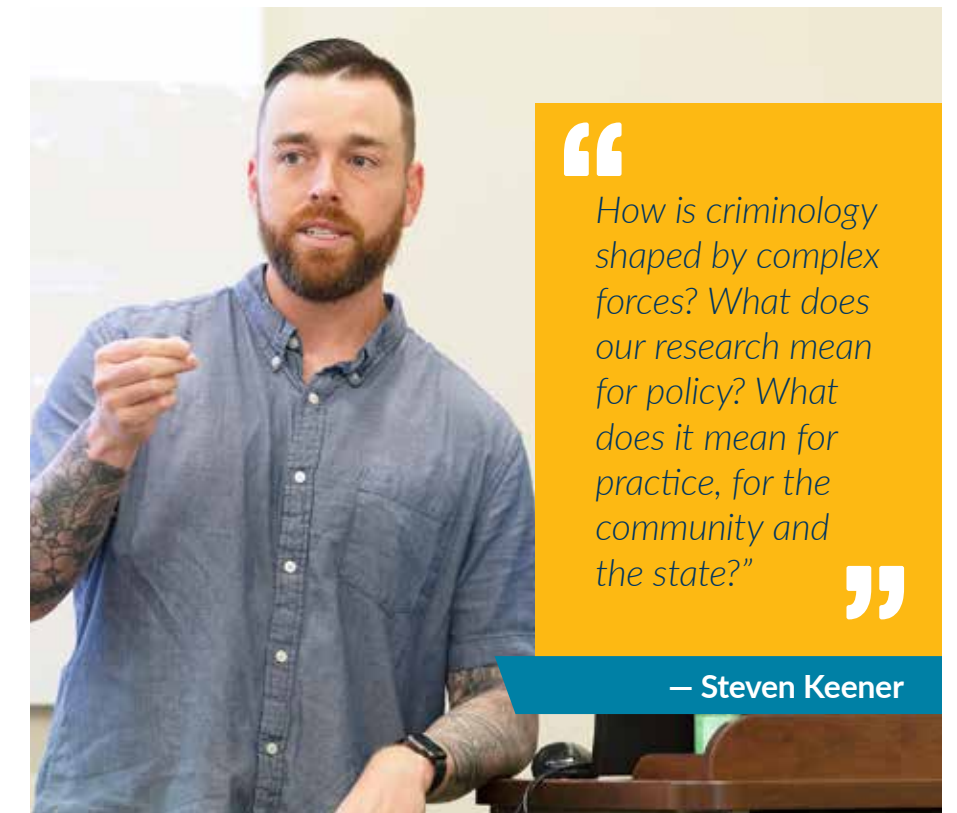
“My father, Gary, is a career higher education administrator, and it was he

who predicted that I might be a professor,” Keener said. “He saw, well before anyone, that the flexibility and autonomy of teaching and controlling my research tracked with my personality.”

After high school, Keener attended Christopher Newport University (CNU), where he majored in political science and played as a starting infielder for the Captains. By happenstance, his political science program at CNU housed criminal justice courses at the time. A mentor suggested he take a few courses in criminology, which ignited a passion that once and for all set the path toward his future as a college professor. Soon thereafter Keener began his graduate studies at VCU, and the rest, as they say, is history. “I fell in love with VCU and Richmond right away,” Keener said.

In recent years, Keener’s own research has focused on the structural barriers to re-entry for previously incarcerated parents and the intersection between mental health and the criminal justice system.

He also teaches an enormously popular immersive course on mental health and criminal justice. Undergraduate students in the course engage with local mental health advocates and shadow a behavioral health docket in Newport News, one of just 13 in the state, to better understand the structural inequities within the penal system. Students even debrief with General District Judge Matthew W. Hoffman, who presides over the docket. 📖



“How is criminology shaped by complex forces? What does our research mean for policy? What does it mean for practice, for the community and the state?”

— Steven Keener



## Larry Bowman creates opportunities for criminal justice students

For Larry Bowman (B.S.'73/GPA; M.S.'82/GPA), advancing the field of criminal justice begins with investments in talented students and transformative ideas. This is the inspiration behind the Lindsey and Larry Bowman Scholarship in Criminal Justice and Innovation in Criminal Justice Fund.

The initiatives work to expand opportunities at the Wilder School and beyond. The scholarship provides financial assistance to undergraduate students in criminal justice, especially those who are first-generation, demonstrate financial need or are pursuing careers in law enforcement.

The Bowman fund promotes community-engaged projects such as internships, courses, research, lecture series and more.

Most recently, the fund has fueled real-world research at the Chesterfield County Jail. Graduate teaching assistant Samantha Wright ('22 M.S.) has teamed up with Amy Cook, Ph.D., and Nancy Morris, Ph.D., associate professors of criminal justice, to examine drug addiction, overdose and recovery.

"The primary goal of our research study is to prevent drug overdose among formerly incarcerated people," said Wright, who also holds a Post-baccalaureate Graduate Certificate in Public Management from the Wilder School. "The opportunity to work with Dr. Cook and Dr. Morris on this research project truly enhanced my education and cultivated my interest in research. I believe this research has the power to transform people's lives, which is so exciting and meaningful. This experience challenged me to step outside my comfort zone and build upon the knowledge and skills I've learned in the classroom. I have developed a passion for helping people struggling with addiction, and I hope to continue this work in my future career."

These life-changing learning experiences define Bowman's

contributions to the Wilder School. Originally from the Richmond area, Bowman earned an undergraduate degree in administration of justice and public safety at VCU while serving as a campus police officer. While completing his graduate degree in the same program, Bowman served with the Virginia State Police and the Virginia Alcohol Safety Action Program. These formative years established his strong personal connection to his alma mater and field of study.

Bowman and his wife, Lindsey, understand the financial barriers that can keep higher education out of reach.

Today, Bowman is the founder, president and CEO of Management Solutions of Virginia, which specializes in quality improvement initiatives and laboratory information management solutions. "Our alma maters were of great benefit to us both professionally and personally. We want to help others who are creating their own personal journeys but need financial assistance to help them achieve their goals," he said.

Bowman is a passionate advocate for progress, and preparing students for dynamic careers is a key motivator for his generosity. Together with the Wilder School, Bowman is ringing in the future of criminal justice leadership.



*As a first-generation college student, I paid the majority of expenses. Lindsey had to self-fund her senior year at Roanoke College. This reinforced our desire to help.*



— Larry Bowman

Lindsey and Larry Bowman.

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66th Governor of Virginia L. Douglas Wilder and Wilder School Dean Susan Gooden (center) pose with the 2022 Excellence in Virginia Governance Award honorees.

Learn more about the 2022 honorees, view their profile videos and submit your nomination for deserving public servants.

