Graduation | Fall 2023
Saturday, December 9, 2023 | 1:30 p.m.
Greater Richmond Convention Center
403 N. 3rd Street, Richmond, VA 23219
Message from the Dean

Dear Fall 2023 Graduates of the VCU School of Education,

Congratulations on your accomplishment! As graduates of the fall class of 2023, you have prepared yourselves to meet the challenges of today’s world. You have the tenacity, the creativity, and commitment to be successful. We’re most proud of what you will accomplish and the impact that you will have.

At the VCU School of Education, we are committed to meeting the needs of the communities that we serve in a way that is meaningful and engaging to our students. That commitment is reflected in part by maintaining our reputation as one of the nation’s top schools of education; we were recently ranked #18 Best Public School of Education in the country by U.S. News & World Report. We are proud that the School of Education is so highly ranked, as it speaks to the quality of education our students experience.

The VCU School of Education aspires to be the nation’s leader in urban education, preparing professionals in schools and communities to be successful and make an impact in areas with the most need, particularly those affected by poverty. Starting right here in the city of Richmond and expanding to our surrounding communities, we have made a commitment to do innovative and effective work that puts our communities, schools, children, and families first.

The challenges facing our schools and communities are not average, so we strive to meet these challenges with cutting edge research and teaching. Our strategic plan, launched four years ago, demonstrates our focus on research, student success, and culture and climate.

I’d like to extend a special thank you to parents, grandparents, spouses, partners, children, significant others, and friends who have supported you along your journey. I would also like to recognize our outstanding faculty and staff here in the School of Education who have mentored and supported you during your tenure in the school. Thanks again, and congratulations to you.

Warmest Regards,

Kathleen M. Rudasill, Ph.D.
Interim Dean, VCU School of Education
Program

**Processional**
“Pomp and Circumstance”
Sir Edward Elgar

**The National Anthem**
“The Star Spangled Banner”
Key/Smith

**Greetings**
Dr. Kathleen M. Rudasill
*Interim Dean*

**Presentation of the Charles P. Ruch Award for Excellence in Teaching**
Dr. Kathleen M. Rudasill
*Interim Dean*

**Recipient:**
Dr. David Saavedra

**Reflections**
Dr. David Saavedra
*Department of Foundations of Education*

**Presentation of Posthumous Degree**
Dr. Tomika Ferguson
*Assistant Dean for Student Affairs and Inclusive Excellence*

**Presentation of Diplomas**
Dr. Lisa Abrams
*Interim Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development*

Dr. Luciana de Oliveira
*Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Graduate Studies*

Dr. Tomika Ferguson
*Assistant Dean for Student Affairs and Inclusive Excellence*

**Recognition of Recipients of Doctoral Degrees**
Dr. Luciana de Oliveira
*Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Graduate Studies*

**Congratulatory Remarks**
Dr. Kathleen M. Rudasill
*Interim Dean*

**Recessional**
“Te Deum”
by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, arranged by Mark J. La Fratta
School of Education Leadership

Kathleen M. Rudasill, Ph.D., Interim Dean

Luciana C. de Oliveira, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Graduate Studies

Tomika L. Ferguson, Ph.D., Assistant Dean for Student Affairs and Inclusive Excellence

Lisa Abrams, Ph.D., Interim Associate Dean for Research & Faculty Development

Whitney Newcomb, Ph.D., Department Chair, Educational Leadership

Patrick Mullen, Ph.D., Department Chair, Counseling and Special Education

Thomas Farmer, Ph.D., Department Chair, Foundations of Education; Interim Department Chair, Teaching and Learning

Kamden Strunk, Ph.D., Chair, Faculty Organization

Chardeasia Hartridge, Staff Council Chair

Danielle Cosby, Executive Assistant to the Dean

Sean Carlin, Administrative Coordinator and Building Manager
The Charles P. Ruch Award for Excellence in Teaching

The Charles P. Ruch Award for Excellence in Teaching honors Dr. Charles P. Ruch, a former provost and dean of the School of Education. When Dr. Ruch left VCU in 1992 to become the president of Boise State University, the School of Education chose to honor him by creating a faculty award in his honor. Dr. Ruch valued the traditional university faculty roles in the triad mission of teaching, scholarship and service. He emphasized that scholarship and service are important in a modern metropolitan research university. He mirrored these values in his work at VCU by teaching throughout his tenure as dean and provost.

The Spring 2023 recipient of the Charles P. Ruch Award for Excellence in Teaching is Dr. David Saavedra. Dr. Saavedra is an assistant professor in the Department of Foundations of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Saavedra uses an ethnographic lens to study how cross-cultural educational relationships are formed, maintained, broken, and repaired and the importance of such relationships in the learning process. He aims to understand how teachers and students from different cultural backgrounds form relationships with one another, how these relationships function in schools to either aid or hinder learning, and the various ways in which an ethic of care can be applied and understood by those in a culturally diverse setting.

Dr. Saavedra’s research interests include cross-cultural educational relationships, relational pedagogy, the impact of cultural difference on care and caring, and critical pedagogy.

Prior to earning his doctorate, Dr. Saavedra had nearly 17 years of experience in education, which sparked his interest in the intersection of culture and educational experience. Most of this time was spent as a high school teacher of English for Speakers of Other Languages and Sheltered English Immersion History in the greater Boston area. He also taught secondary English in Mozambique with the Peace Corps, worked as a program manager for an educational nonprofit in Boston, and served as an instructional coach in Puerto Rico.

In nominating Dr. Saavedra for this award, a student wrote, “All the semesters I’ve been at VCU, he is the best professor I’ve ever had. So nice, so supportive, and an amazing teacher. Education is my minor and because of
him, I want to double major. He embodies all the characteristics listed above and more. He is one of the few teachers that truly go above and beyond for his students. I don’t know anyone who deserves this award more than him. CHOOSE HIM!”

Another nomination noted, “Professor Saavedra’s lessons are extremely engaging, even to those who didn’t do the readings. He helps us to thoroughly understand what we’re learning by tying the lessons into what we’ve experienced during our education and by showing us real life examples of different pedagogical approaches. Not only do we build a grasp on what the different pedagogical approaches consist of, but he starts conversations surrounding the possible benefits and disadvantages of each one.

Professor Saavedra is amazing at answering emails promptly, and consistently posts Canvas announcements to clear up confusions about anything we are learning or any of the assignments we are working on. As soon as he sees a problem in accessing technology needed, he quickly addresses it and fixes it almost immediately.

Professor Saavedra always makes sure to make lessons incredibly diverse and opens our eyes to histories that are usually unspoken of. He, very recently, actually had us watch a documentary on the struggles Chicano students have to face in the education system, resulting in a movement to incorporate their history into the classrooms. Professor Saavedra then explained to us and started a discussion surrounding the ways in which we, as future educators, can help disenfranchised students build a sense of agency for themselves. Not only have I learned so much in this class already, but I actually feel the material we’ve learned so far has been able to stick in my brain, when that is the opposite for a lot of classes I’ve had.”
Previous Recipients of the Charles P. Ruch Award

1993  Dr. James Hodges
       Dr. John Seyfarth
1994  Dr. Judy Richardson
1995  Dr. Jennifer Kilgo
1996  Dr. Deborah Getty
       Dr. Jon Wergin
1997  Dr. Richard Gayle
1998  Dr. Andrew Beale
1999  Dr. Patricia Duncan
2000  Dr. John Van DeWalle
2001  Dr. Jack Schiltz
2002  Dr. Jill Fox
2003  Dr. Douglas Fiore
2004  Dr. Samuel Craver
       Dr. Jon Wergin
2005  Dr. Joann Richardson
2006  Dr. John Rossi
2007  Dr. Loraine Stewart
2008  Dr. Mary Hermann
2009  Dr. Terry Carter
2010  Dr. William Muth
2011  Dr. Ronald Evans
2012  Dr. William Muth
       Dr. Yaoying Xu
2013  Dr. Valerie J. Robnolt
       Dr. James H. McMillan
2014  Dr. Katherine C. Mansfield
       Dr. Carrie W. LeCrom
2015  Dr. Evelyn Reed
       Dr. Abigail Conley
2016  Dr. Michael D. Broda
       Dr. Robin R. Hurst
2017  Ms. Laura S. Domalik
       Dr. LaRon Scott
2018  Dr. Yaoying Xu
       Dr. Naomi Wheeler
2019  Dr. Ross Collin
       Dr. Hillary Parkhouse
2020  Dr. Monty Jones
       Dr. LaRon Scott
2021  Dr. Kevin Clay
       Dr. Genevieve Siegel-Hawley
2022  Dr. Rachel F. Gómez
       Dr. Kaitlin J. Hinchey
2023  Dr. Chi-Ning Chang
       Dr. David Saavedra
Bachelor of Science in Education (B.S.Ed.) Graduates
Baccalaureate Degree Honors

Magna Cum Laude

Hollins, Carly  Elementary Education and Teaching
Morris, Zoe  Elementary Education and Teaching
Ambrose, Charles  Health and Physical Education
Escobar, Nathan  Special Education and Teaching

Cum Laude

Bell, Jayda  Elementary Education and Teaching
Eisenhardt, Sina  Elementary Education and Teaching
Gilliam, Amanda  Elementary Education and Teaching
Hadnott, Kaia  Elementary Education and Teaching
O’Keeffe, Elizabeth  Elementary Education and Teaching
Scalia, Samantha  Elementary Education and Teaching
Viernes, Ariana  Elementary Education and Teaching
Alexander, Gracias  Special Education and Teaching
Fischer, Cameron  Special Education and Teaching
Lacy, Caitlin  Special Education and Teaching
Smith-Nolker, Spencer  Special Education and Teaching

Barnes, Kate  Elementary Education and Teaching
Brice, Kiera  Elementary Education and Teaching
Clugston, Becca  Elementary Education and Teaching
Hudson, SJ  Elementary Education and Teaching
Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Education Graduates

Nabil, Sara   Human and Organizational Development
Packett, Emily  Human and Organizational Development
Whittington, Kemia  Human and Organizational Development
Master of Teaching (M.T.) Graduates
Baccalaureate Degree Honors (B.A., B.S., B.I.S.)

**Summa Cum Laude**

Ageeb, Marlin  
Early and Elementary Education, B.I.S, Liberal Studies for Early and Elementary Education

Silva, Juliana  
Early and Elementary Education, B.I.S, Liberal Studies for Early and Elementary Education

**Magna Cum Laude**

Doell, Chloe  
Early and Elementary Education, B.I.S, Liberal Studies for Early and Elementary Education

Lopez, Vanessa  
History/Social Studies Education, Bachelor of Arts, History

Morris, Eleanor  
Early and Elementary Education, B.I.S, Liberal Studies for Early and Elementary Education

Pezo, Andrea  
Early and Elementary Education, B.I.S, Liberal Studies for Early and Elementary Education

**Cum Laude**

Flynn, Kerry  
History/Social Studies Education, B.I.S, Liberal Studies for Early and Elementary Education

Jenkins, Cara  
Early and Elementary Education, B.I.S, Liberal Studies for Early and Elementary Education

Manuel, Evan  
Early and Elementary Education, B.I.S, Liberal Studies for Early and Elementary Education
# Master of Teaching (M.T.) Graduates

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<tr>
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<th>Field of Study</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aguilar, Cristina</td>
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<td>Noori, Shakeela</td>
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<td>Bentley, Allison</td>
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<td>Paul, Chandler</td>
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<td>Curriculum and Instruction – Teaching</td>
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<td>Brianna</td>
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<td>Carlyle, Kellie</td>
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<td>Mauro, Nicole</td>
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<td>Wysong, Brian</td>
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Undergraduate Certificates

Chidester, Janus  Disability Studies
Colon, Lianna  Disability Studies
Green, Nijah  Disability Studies
Lewin, Syd  Disability Studies
Scalia, Samantha  Disability Studies

Post-Baccalaureate Certificates

Carter, Kristin  Special Education K-12 Teaching
Norwood, Katie  Special Education K-12 Teaching
Tyagi, Meenakshi  Special Education K-12 Teaching
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<td>Broccoli, Lisa</td>
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<td>Davis, Lakazia</td>
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<td>Farlow, Jacqueline</td>
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Recipient of the Doctor of Education - Posthumous (Ed.D.) Degree in Education

Moore, Ingrid, Ed.D.
Kimberly Bridges

Recipients of the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Degree in Education

Koth, Laurie
Seeing Themselves: White Preservice Teachers as Raced Individuals and as Members of Their Future School Communities
William Muth

Malone, Catherine
Who am I to be: Artistic Identity Through Graduate School for Historically Underserved MFA Students
Sara Wilson McKay

Powell, Christine
The Impact of Mentorship and Professional Development on Special Educators’ Intent
Colleen Thoma

Severson-Irby, Elizabeth
Using Action Research to Support In-service Teachers to Work with Diverse Learners: A Multi-study Investigation
Hillary Parkhouse

Padhye, Ira
Impact of Training Programs on Interveners’ Communicative Interactions with Students with Deaf-Blindness
Yaoying Xu
Recipients of the Doctor of Philosophy - cont.
(Ph.D.) Degree in Education

Parthemos, Chris
Sense of Belonging as Behaviorist Construct: Doing Belonging and its Application for College Students with Disabilities
Michael Broda

Braxton, Destini
How Teacher-Student Relationships Shape Student Engagement and Interest in Science
Sharon Zumbrunn

Sealy, Martinique
Integrating Historically Marginalized Students’ Funds of Knowledge for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning
Christine Bae

Southerland, Sherol
The Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Rural Virginia Secondary Teachers’ Self-Efficacy
Sharon Zumbrunn

Wallace, Margaret
Grounded in Teacher’s Reality: A Collective Case Study on Middle School Teacher Self-efficacy for Equity-Centered Trauma-Informed Educational Practices
Sharon Zumbrunn
Marshals
Dr. Jose Alcaine
Dr. Lacey Seaton
Dr. Christine Spence
Dr. Carol Schall
Dr. Serra de Arment
Dr. Elizabeth Edmondson

Music led by:
Dr. Ross Walter

Musicians
Ross Walter, trombone
Rolla Durham, trumpet
Steven Cunningham, trumpet
Amanda Winger, horn
Mark J. La Fratta, tuba