The VCU Difference
Making learning REAL

A critical part of VCU’s undergraduate curriculum is for all students to have opportunities to engage in Relevant Experiential and Applied Learning (REAL) activities that connect the real world to what they’re learning in the classroom. These REAL activities are academically anchored and center on four themes: Career, Create, Discover and Serve.

Career
We know that you want your academic experiences to be relevant and connected to the real world. Your REAL Career experiences will present you with:

- opportunities that unite academic goals to authentic, real-world work that advances your career development
- exposure to the work environment in your field through practica, field research and work study
- inside and outside of the classroom hands-on activities
- collaborative, interdisciplinary coursework

When you engage in a REAL Career experience, you’ll work with at least one mentor from the field who will guide your learning.

Create
When you take part in REAL activities encompassed within the Create theme, you’ll collaborate with students from other disciplines and approach experiences and challenges in ways you hadn’t thought of before. As a participant in a REAL Create experience, you’ll:

- share information with your team about your different academic backgrounds and exposure to the work environment in your field through practica, field research and work study
- discover innovative ways to implement and reflect on the application of your academic foundation to the real world
- evaluate assumptions and bias as part of the process for generating solutions to challenges and problems

In your Create experience, you’ll explore how multiple points of view can lead to divergent solutions of a problem. REAL Create activities will open doors to new ideas and allow you to see the world from multiple perspectives.

Discover
REAL activities in the Discover theme are driven by the concepts of inquiry, exploration and investigation. As part of your engagement with a REAL Discover activity, you’ll:

- explore ideas, experiences and information through a critical lens
- engage with new knowledge through investigation
- apply academic goals to real experiences including volunteering, internships and directed travel
- reflect on and share your learning outcomes with members of your learning community and beyond

When you pursue a REAL Discover experience, you’ll be compelled by a sense of inquiry to engage with new knowledge and to develop living/learning skills, through a study abroad experience, an undergraduate research activity, or both.

Serve
Action creates leaders, equipped to make a positive difference in the world by creating mutually beneficial and ethical relationships that address social issues and envision social justice. REAL activities in the Serve theme include community engagement and service opportunities that can help you to identify what you are most passionate about and translate that passion into action. REAL activities within the Serve theme will:

- deepen your connection to academic work in your major
- broaden your connections to knowledge and skills beyond your major
- create opportunities to practice and improve your communication, management and leadership skills

REAL Serve experiences allow you to apply, test, develop and even transform the knowledge and skills you gain in the classroom. Through active engagement in academic service learning, you’ll discover how passion can become avocation.

You Make it REAL

As a VCU student, you can be confident that what you’re learning will help you to succeed as a scholar in the classroom and as a problem-solver in an ever-changing world. At VCU, “Make it real” means you’re not just dreaming about big things, it means you’re doing big things: Applying what you learn, transforming creativity and knowledge into action and service — ultimately, changing the world.