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Shawn Brixey named dean of the VCU School of the Arts

RICHMOND, Va. (May 18, 2017) – Shawn Brixey has been named dean of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Arts, the premier public graduate school of arts and design in the United States, effective July 1.

Brixey, currently dean of the School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design at York University in Toronto, will provide leadership in education, research, community outreach and fund development activities.

"I am pleased to welcome Shawn Brixey to VCU as the new dean of our School of the Arts," said VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D. "In addition to being an accomplished artist, Shawn's background as an educator, researcher, writer and inventor makes him the perfect fit for our university. We all look forward to working with Shawn and are happy to have him as the leader of the nation's No. 1-ranked public school of the arts."

Under Brixey's leadership the AMPD at York has repositioned its mission and focus toward interdisciplinary, team-driven, technology-centered, creative research and discovery. It is one of the most comprehensive arts, media, performance and design faculty in North America, with more than 250 tenure-line faculty and lecturers, 500 graduate students and 4,000 undergraduates.

"VCUarts is a truly path-breaking research community," Brixey said. "I am honored by and excited about the opportunity to support its wonderful faculty and students. They are uniquely positioned to shape the frontiers of research and discovery at the boundaries of what the arts mean today, and how they will be inspired and lived tomorrow."

James Frazier, Ed.D., previously associate dean for graduate studies and faculty affairs for the VCU School of the Arts, has served as interim dean for the past year.

"I am extremely grateful for the exemplary leadership of Interim Dean James Frazier," Rao said. "In addition to serving as interim dean, James's work as the special assistant to the provost at VCUarts Qatar required him to maintain a balance between both campuses. We are all appreciative of the work he has done to lead two highly visible and respected art schools."

Prior to his appointment at York, Brixey was professor and The Floyd and Delores Jones Endowed Chair in Arts and Sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle, where he co-founded and directed The Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media, UW's pioneering interdisciplinary B.F.A. and Ph.D. program in digital arts and media culture. He has served as professor at the University of California

Berkeley, where he was founder and chair of the Digital Media Program, and founder and director of the Center for Digital Art and New Media Research (now the Berkeley Center for New Media).

"Shawn Brixey's extensive experience in teaching, research and academic leadership, coupled with his innovative artistic portfolio, will undoubtedly take the already outstanding VCU School of the Arts to new heights," said Gail Hackett, provost and vice president of academic affairs. "We are pleased to welcome him to the VCU family."

A graduate of The Media Lab at MIT in design, media science and engineering, Brixey's research focuses on pioneering complex interactive media environments developed with a wide range of custom technologies and intelligent applications. He has received a wide range of digital arts and sciences grants and awards to support his research and educational initiative, including from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Science Foundation. The VCU School of the Arts includes a campus in Qatar, part of Education City, and is ranked by U.S. News & World Report as the No. 1 public university graduate arts program in the nation.

About VCU and the VCU School of the Arts

VCU is a major, urban public research university with national and international rankings in sponsored research. Located in downtown Richmond, VCU enrolls more than 31,000 students in 222 degree and certificate programs in the arts, sciences, and humanities. Currently ranked the No. 1 public school of art and design by U.S. News and World Report, the VCU School of the Arts offers 15 undergraduate and 10 graduate degree programs in fine arts, design, performing arts, historical research and pedagogical practice. Distinguished faculty members are internationally recognized in their respective fields and contribute significantly to the stature of VCU and are committed to mentoring the next generation of artists, entrepreneurs, scientists, scholars and engaged citizens of diverse communities around the world. Its campus in Qatar provides students and faculty with a direct tie to the Middle East, a region of increasing significance in the contemporary art world.

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About VCUarts

VCUarts is a comprehensive art school within a research university. Currently ranked the #1 public school of art and design by U.S. News and World Report, it offers 15 undergraduate and 10 graduate degree programs in fine arts, design, performing arts, historical research and pedagogical practice.

Upon enrollment, students join a community of highly accomplished artists, designers, performers, scholars and mentors who share a steadfast commitment to excellence and exploration.

In their programs of study, undergraduate students master necessary skills for their chosen professions and creative endeavors. They cultivate a habit of critical thinking and inventive problem solving, and they practice articulating how their aesthetic endeavors relate to local and global concerns. Graduate students develop a comprehensive, historical and current understanding of their fields. They effectively explain how their work contributes to current critical and scholarly conversations, and they demonstrate ability to become leaders in the arts.

VCUarts contributes significantly to the pulsating creative energy of Richmond, Virginia.

Students collaborate across disciplines at the VCUarts community design studio, which tackles real-world urban design problems. Cinema students work for movie studios and film festivals in Richmond. The theatre department stages productions on campus at the same time that faculty and students are directing, acting and working back stage at off-campus theater companies. The music department hosts over 200 events on campus and around the city each year. Members of the Richmond Ballet are completing degrees at VCU, and dance students participate in an intergenerational studio program for health professionals and senior adults. Fine arts students show their work in VCUarts and Richmond galleries, while art and music education students are teaching in Richmond schools, and art history students are interning at local and galleries and museums, including the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, which is among the top ten encyclopedic art museums in the U.S., and the VCU Institute for Contemporary Art, designed by Steven Holl Architects and slated to open in fall 2017.

Students engaged in local community endeavors get inspiration from VCUarts faculty members, whose creative accomplishments have been seen in Tony Award winning theater productions, nationally-celebrated dance companies, world-class museums and international design competitions. Their artworks and research projects have been funded through grants from private foundations, public agencies, and scholarly organizations. Their career accomplishments have been recognized with prestigious awards from professional arts organizations and foundations.

Students directly benefit from the national and international success of the VCUarts faculty, who organize field trips and study abroad programs, most recently in Italy, Spain, and Guatemala. The VCUarts branch campus in Doha, Qatar, offers additional international study opportunities, as students are encouraged to study at both campuses. They also are invited to submit proposals for the biennial Tasmeem design conference in Doha, and they may apply to attend the biennial Islamic Art Symposium, which has convened in Richmond, Doha, Córdoba and Palermo in the past decade.

At the same time that VCUarts is a player in local, national, and international arenas, it attracts renowned artists, designers, performers and scholars from across the country and around the globe. They come to teach as visiting artists, present lectures about their work, or curate exhibitions of students' work. As they absorb the energy of our thriving creative community, they are invariably struck by the caliber of the students, the quality of our facilities, and the rigor of engagement in conversations that shape the arts.

and design fields. Public dialogue that explores the roll of art and design in society is facilitated by the VCUarts Arts Research Institute, which also supports faculty research development and interdisciplinary collaboration.

VCU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, and each of the VCUarts degree granting programs is accredited by one or more of the following agencies: National Association of Schools of Art and Design, Council for Interior Design Accreditation, National Association of Schools of Dance, National Association of Schools of Music, National Association of Schools of Theatre, National Council for Accreditation for Teacher Education, Virginia Department of Education.