VCU School of Public Health

SBS on the Move

November, 2026

News & Updates

Welcoming Dr. Nicholas Thomson



Nicholas Thomson, Ph.D., U.K.C.P., C.P.C., joined the department on September 1st. He also serves as associate dean for research for the School of Public Health. Dr. Thomson is a forensic research psychologist and psychotherapist who brings together clinical experience, developmental science, and public health research to understand and prevent violence and improve mental health.

We also welcomed Dr. Thomson's research team, who have set up the lab on the 22nd floor. Welcome to SBS, Tene'sha Crews, Laura Hazlett, Cameron Krainock, Rashema Meekins, Isabella Schneck, and Jessica James, Ph.D.!

Faculty Search Underway

A full-time, tenure-track faculty position for SBS has just been posted! Please share the link with your networks:
Job posting

Thank you to our search committee: Drs. Sunny Kim (chair), Autumn Lanoye, Nicholas Thomson, and Katherine Tossas.

CONNECT 2026
Community Engagement Conference

VCU's Division of Community Engagement is hosting a conference on November 13th and 16th. This event aims to:

- Share innovative approaches to community-based teaching, research, and service
- Strengthen relationships across the university and the broader community
- Explore strategies for collaboration and long-term impact
- Inspire action rooted in mutual respect, shared goals, and community wisdom

For more information and to register visit:
https://community.vcu.edu/events/connect/

Awards & Honors

- Dr. Krista Mincey received the APHA Black Caucus of Health Workers Image Award at the 2026 Hildrus Poindexter Awards Dinner on November 3rd during the APHA Annual Meeting and Expo.

- Dr. Jessica LaRose received the Theresa A. Thomas Memorial Chair in Cancer Prevention and Control from Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center. Read more here.

- Drs. Katherine Tossas (PI) and Sunny Jung Kim (Co-I) were awarded an American Cancer Society RSG as part of the new Cancer Health Engagement and Action Research (CHEAR) Center at Massey. Read more here.

Scholar Spotlight

Announcing Dr. Tolulope Kolawole!



Tolulope successfully defended his dissertation on September 28th. His topic was "Alcohol and nicotine co-use among adolescents and young adult cancer survivors, its association with mental health, health-related quality of life, social drivers of health and its management within oncology care settings." He celebrated his defense at a gathering hosted by fellow scholars. Tolu's dissertation committee included Drs. Alexander Lucas, Morgan Snell, Juan Lu, and Maria Thomson.





VPHA Annual Meeting





Samuel Sijuade and Emiolakan Oyeneyin presented at the Virginia Public Health Association annual meeting on September 24th.

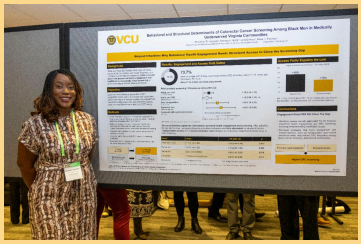
---

3 Minute Thesis Competition

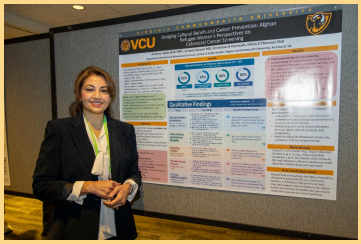


Terry Wilson competed in the finals of the Graduate School's Three Minute Thesis competition on October 9th, and took home the People's Choice Award! Terry's presentation was titled ""Green for Whom? Who Gets Policed and Who Profits after Cannabis Legalization."

AACR Conference







Emiolakan Oyeneyin, Paula Rivera, and Sadia Shah presented posters at the 2026 American Association for Cancer Research Conference on the Science of Cancer Health Disparities, October 18-21st.

Alumni Updates



Aubree Shay, Ph.D. (SBS 2013), is MPI on a new R01 award from NIH/NCI. The project, "Novel linkages and navigation to improve childhood and adolescent cancer survivors' care transitions: A pilot randomized controlled trial across three health care systems," will improve transition of care from pediatric oncology to adult onco-primary care.

Dr. Shay is currently assistant professor in the Department of Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) School of Public Health in San Antonio.

Research Spotlight

VCU Launches Center for Gun Violence Research

Dr. Nicholas Thomson will serve as the inaugural director for the Center. The Center will serve as a research hub for VCU experts across disciplines focused on:

- Understanding the biological, psychological, developmental, social and structural pathways to firearm-related harm.
- Developing and rigorously testing strategies to prevent firearm violence, suicide and related harm.
- Advancing methods, data, technology and innovation in gun violence research.
- Determining how effective approaches can be implemented, scaled and sustained in communities and systems.

Read the story

Voces en Salud Pública

Dra. Dina García, alongside members of the Kalpulli Research Group, launched Voces en Salud Pública in recognition of Latino/a/x/e Heritage Month as a public-facing initiative that recognizes, amplifies, and celebrates the voices, scholarship, and contributions of Latino/a/x/e scholars, practitioners, community leaders, and changemakers shaping the future of public health. The initiative is hosted by the Kalpulli Research Group and can be viewed at https://www.kalpulliresearch.com/voces-en-salud-publica

SBS Events

Seminar with APHA President Dr. Nandi Marshall

The department hosted Nandi Marshall, Dr.P.H., M.P.H., C.H.E.S., C.L.C., C.D.E., current president of the American Public Health Association, for a special lecture on September 17th. Dr. Marshall discussed the current state of public health in the U.S., and how we can continue our work to improve health and wellbeing for all.

Read more









Photos by Aaron Sutten

All Hands Meeting

We held our first full department meeting on September 3rd. Drs. LaRose, García, and Brown shared updates on the department, the education program, and the

strategic planning process, respectively. Thanks to everyone for coming and joining in on our brainstorming and feedback activities!







Halloween Crafting

We enjoyed some chill time for pumpkin painting on October 28th.





SBS in the Media

Dr. Sunny Jung Kim's recent article about medical cannabis use among cancer survivors was featured by Healio and VCU News. Other authors on this study include doctoral scholar Farnese Motto, SBS alumni Drs. Hannah Ming and Viktor Clark, and affiliate faculty Dr. Vanessa Sheppard.

Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center's Worta McCaskill-Stevens K12 grant from NIH was featured by VCU News, Massey News Center, and the Commonwealth Times. Dr. Jessica LaRose co-leads the K12 along with Drs. Patrick Nana-Sinkam and Oxana Palesh.

Dr. Nicholas Thomson's Arche XR was featured in Forbes. Arche XR is an initiative offering virtual reality interventions for youth mental health treatment.

Dra. Dina García joined the VCU Graduate School's "GradPod" podcast to talk about the power of mentorship.

Upcoming Events

November 12th-13th
Walter Lawrence, Jr., M.D. Research Retreat
Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center
More info and register here.

Submit your news and updates for the newsletter!

Click here



Social and Behavioral Sciences
804-628-3443
sophsbs@vcu.edu
sbs.vcu.edu

Connect with us

Constant Contact

Try email marketing for free today!