

In Erica's Words: Adjusting to College Life

As part of a series, the UC Buzz continues to check in on Erica Osei-Asibey, a first-year student majoring in pre-nursing. This month, Erica gives us a glimpse at settling into life at VCU.

Describe your new life here at VCU in one word: Exciting

What is a typical day's schedule? My daily schedule here, as compared to high school, is more relaxed. I have time in between my classes, so I usually study quietly to prepare for my next class or I run errands on campus.

How have you liked living on campus?

At first, my expectations regarding living on campus were skeptical, but now I find living on campus interesting. I feel safe and I'm enjoying it.

How have you and your roommate adjusted to living with one another?

My roommate and I adjusted very well to living together, and part of it is due to the fact that we graduated from the same high school and also lived in the same community in



Erica Osei-Asibey

Woodbridge, Va

Were your classes what you expected?

Yes, most of my classes met my expectations, with the exception of my Focused Inquiry class. The class seems to be more discussion-based, compared to my high school English classes.

What is your favorite class? My favorite class is my Biology 101 class.

What is your most challenging class?

Focused Inquiry because I'm not much of a public speaker, and I'm required to speak to a crowd, which takes me out of my comfort zone.

Have you received any graded papers or tests back? How did you do? I have received a couple of graded papers and a quiz back. I performed well on them so far. I plan to keep it up by attending SI sessions offered through the University College.

What else have you done at the University College? I've been to the UC for my placement test, to meet with my advisor and to seek answers to some general questions.

What do you think of Richmond so far? I think Richmond is a great city – the heart of Virginia.

What are you most looking forward to about the rest of the semester? My greatest concern is my grades. I'm looking forward to coming through this semester with flying colors.

Supporting Student Athletes

Formerly called Student Athlete Advising, Student Athlete Support Services (SASS) broadened its name to incorporate all the services the office offers to student athletes at VCU. Part of the University College, SASS helps student athletes enhance opportunities for academic and personal success.

"We provide student athletes with tools for success throughout their educational stay at VCU," said Sofia Hiort-Wright, director of SASS. "We offer many different types of programs and services in addition to academic advising."

Programs include tutoring and mentoring, a summer program for incoming freshman athletes, special sections of UNIV 101 "Introduction to the University" and UNIV 103

"Education and Career Planning," pre-registration services, study hall and computer labs and laptops.



Jamal Shuler

Academic advisors also assist students to develop educational plans and ensure they successfully complete the requirements to earn bachelor's degrees. Advising staff guide students through university policies, as well as NCAA academic rules and regulations

Jamal Shuler, a senior majoring in sociology who is a shooting guard for the men's basketball team, takes advantage of the computer lab, tutoring and advising services.

"Guidance from Mrs. Sofia [Hiort-Wright] during my four years here has been the most helpful," said Shuler. "She's always on top of everything, and we talk about life in general and what I plan on doing after college and after basketball. She keeps me on track for graduation in May."

For more information, contact the Student Athlete Support Services office at 828-2183 or visit www.vcu.edu/uc.

Supplemental Instruction Leader Profile

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s quote, "Intelligence plus character- that's the goal of true education," is one of Shirrell Smith's favorites. The VCU junior majoring in forensic science with a concentration in biology is a Supplemental Instruction (SI) leader for the University College Campus Learning Center. As an SI leader, Smith guides sessions for Chemistry 101, and her educational perspective blends perfectly with the program.



Shirrell Smith

"SI is not one person re-lecturing material that was previously covered in class," she said. "As a leader, I use the session to actually facilitate, helping 10 to 12 other students network to build their knowledge and ultimately reach the point of mastering the material."

The opportunity to gather with classmates and communicate in a group setting also makes SI an efficient use of time. According

to Smith, one hour of SI is as beneficial as three hours of studying alone, trying to make sense of material by yourself.

Smith, whose career goals include working as a forensic pathologist or medical examiner, developed a great appreciation of SI sessions after attending them early in her college education. After seeing an improvement in her own grades, she realized the program not only

boosts understanding in specific subjects, but it also improves study habits and helps students find different ways to approach material.

"The best part about becoming an SI leader is being able to help someone else succeed," said Smith. "If I can help someone along the way, then my life will not be in vain."

The University College Campus Learning Center has 50 SI leaders who lead 130 sections of courses, including biology, chemistry, history, physics, political science, international studies and psychology. The SI program provides learning assistance opportunities for more than 9,000 students enrolled in these sections.

For more information, visit www.vcu.edu/uc or call 827-8108.

Inside UNIV 101 "Introduction to the University"

"I think it's a big jump in logic to think that a young person who graduates from high school in the middle of June can be ready to be a college student by the middle of August with no discussion or guidance," said Art Esposito, a University College academic advisor who teaches several sections of UNIV 101, "Introduction to the University." "This course allows us to help students transition to their new reality."

UNIV 101, a one-credit course offered through the University College to students in their first semester, addresses first-year student issues such as time management, study skills, progress toward graduation and deciding on a major. Representatives from many university offices also visit the classes to discuss campus resources.



Classmates Elizabeth Berg, Britni Puccio & Charlene Mayor

According to Esposito, the course also fosters connections between students by enrolling them in "learning communities," which allow students in the same UNIV 101 section to also take one or two other courses together.

"I've been able to get to know other students by having the same group of people in two of my classes – Introduction to the University and

Focused Inquiry," said Elizabeth Berg, a first-year student who wants to pursue a major in vocal/theatrical performance.

In addition to serving as their instructor for UNIV 101, Esposito is also the academic advisor for more than 80 percent of the students in his UNIV course sections.

"In the UNIV 101 course, I can help students begin to work out those transitional issues, supplementing the connection I make with them in one-on-one advising appointments," he said. "My ultimate goal is to reach halfway across the table to students, letting them know what the university expects and encouraging them to come the rest of the way to meet those expectations."

University College Tutors



Did You Know? The University College Campus Learning Center offers free individual and drop-in tutoring in a variety of subjects. For more information, visit www.vcu.edu/uc or call 827-8108.

The UC Buzz is published monthly by VCU's University College. The UC enhances student engagement and success by providing a central home for academic support services and the core education program.



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