

VCIC makes history with Hampton Roads office on Virginia Wesleyan University campus



Scott Miller, Paula Bazemore, Jonathan Zur, and Martin Einhorn at VCIC's new office at Virginia Wesleyan University

For the first time in its 83-year history, Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC) has expanded its physical presence beyond its Richmond home base, establishing an office on the campus of Virginia Wesleyan University in Virginia Beach.

The opening of the VCIC Hampton Roads office at Virginia Wesleyan represents a natural extension of VCIC's commitment to advancing inclusion in the area. VCIC has had chapters in both Tidewater and on the Peninsula since the 1940s, and provides numerous programs for schools, businesses, and community groups in the area each year.

In officially welcoming VCIC to campus, Dr. Scott D. Miller, president of Virginia Wesleyan University, noted "Virginia Wesleyan's ties run deep with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, and we are honored to work so collaboratively with this like-minded organization. Our work of instilling tolerance and acceptance is never finished, and I am confident that our partnership with VCIC will produce important and lasting results."

The relationship between the two organizations dates back to 1998 when VCIC became a sponsor of the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom's (CSRF) Nexus Interfaith Dialogue program at VWU, a partnership that continues today. Over the years, VCIC has led diversity

training for Virginia Wesleyan freshmen, provided facilitation training for students, faculty, and staff, and this May, partnered with the CSRF and Muslim communities of Hampton Roads to host a Ramadan Iftar Dinner. Kelly Jackson, CSRF associate director, has served on the VCIC Tidewater Chapter since 2004 and was chapter chair from 2014–2017. Miller served as chair of VCIC's 2018 Tidewater Humanitarian Awards Dinner, and many members of the Virginia Wesleyan community have received this highly respected award.

Martin A. Einhorn, VCIC Tidewater chapter chair, thanked Miller for hosting VCIC's newest office and staff member. "In just the last few weeks, we have seen examples across the country of the most extreme consequences of anti-Semitism, racism, and other forms of prejudice.... By opening the VCIC Hampton Roads office at Virginia Wesleyan University, the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities demonstrates our commitment to stand up to hatred, both by increasing our capacity to respond when these tragic incidents occur, and by deepening our local work to proactively prevent bias, bullying, and discrimination."

Paula Bazemore, who joined VCIC in October as its first Hampton Roads program manager, will be based in the new office.