



Invest in a New VCU School of Dentistry Building: Support Planning Authorization Included in the Introduced Budget

> Support Budget Item C-14, Part 2

VCU is again seeking authorization from the state to plan for the construction of new facilities for the School of Dentistry (SOD).

Planning authorization was included in the introduced budget, and we respectfully ask that the General Assembly approve this authorization in the final budget for several important reasons:

- VCU SOD is the only dental school in Virginia, training dentists, dental hygienists and oral health scientists. The majority of students are Virginia residents.
- VCU SOD is the largest provider of dental care to patients with Medicaid and increasingly serves as a safety net for Virginians' oral healthcare.
- Despite renovations, partnerships and enhanced clinical efficiencies, the school cannot grow to meet workforce challenges or its commitment to increasing access to care for all, especially at-risk populations including those in rural communities, impoverished urban communities and pediatric and adult patients with special needs.
- The education at the SOD is excellent, but current facilities are almost 70 years old and include approximately \$75M in deferred maintenance costs that severely limit its ability to compete with newer schools for high-caliber students and faculty.
- VCU and the Commonwealth need a new SOD building and facilities to leverage or enhance:
 - Cutting-edge technology and emerging dental education trends,
 - Physical space flexibility and environment safety, and
 - The unique connection to VCU Health's academic medical center, recognizing oral health as integral to overall health.

Please support planning authorization for a new VCU School of Dentistry in the final budget.