

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****CONTACT:** [Mike Porter](#)

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Center for Clinical and Translational Research**

Richmond, Va. (December 11, 2015) – Virginia Commonwealth University announced today that longtime benefactor C. Kenneth Wright has made a \$16 million gift to name the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research at VCU.

The gift, from Wright and the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Foundation, is the fifth-largest single gift in the history of the university. The gift will establish six C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Distinguished Chairs in Clinical and Translational Research as well as the C. Kenneth and Dianne Wright Physician-Scientist Scholars program.

“The Center for Translational Research is improving the lives of patients at VCU Health,” Wright says. “I am excited about helping to put the very best faculty and students in the laboratories and clinics so new discoveries can be made and new treatments can be developed. I know that Dianne would be very pleased about this gift and the impact it will have across VCU.”

The endowed chairs, established with \$12 million of the gift, will enable the university to recruit distinguished clinical and translational researchers from around the country. Initially, faculty whose research is focused in the Pauley Heart Center and the Massey Cancer Center will be awarded the chairs, which will be held for five years. The chairs can then be renewed or shifted to other areas of excellence in the health sciences.

The additional \$4 million will launch the physician-scientist scholars program, which will help VCU prepare the best and brightest students for careers in clinical and translational research, providing tuition and stipends for M.D.-Ph.D. candidates in the VCU School of Medicine.

“The generosity of the Wright family signals to the world how lives are better as a result of research and the next generation of physician-scientists,” says Marsha Rappley, M.D., VCU vice president for health sciences and CEO of the VCU Health System. “By highlighting cancer and heart disease, the Wright family touches millions of people with their gift. By focusing on our M.D.-Ph.D. students, the Wright family tells those students how important they are to the next discovery that will save lives. But even the tremendous nature of this gift is overshadowed by the generous heart and kind soul that is Ken Wright. We are ever grateful to the Wright family, and to Ken, for their graciousness and, now, everlasting support of VCU Health and the wonderful work that we do together.”

The VCU Center for Clinical and Translational Research encourages, engages and supports collaborative participation of VCU investigators and students, regional community partners and volunteers and government organizations to accelerate translational research for the betterment of human health.

“The VCU CCTR has enjoyed competitive support from the National Institutes of Health, which has placed it on the national stage,” says Francis L. Macrina, Ph.D., vice president for research and innovation. “Institutional support has been important in sustaining it. Ken Wright’s wonderful gift provides a powerful new resource for the CCTR that will support clinical and translational scientists and scientists-in-training in our M.D.-Ph.D. program.”

The Wrights have had a philanthropic relationship with the university that reaches back to 1999. The couple have created scholarships and professorships, donated property that became the home of the VCU Brandcenter, helped fund an expansion of the School of Engineering and bolstered cancer research and pulmonary care. In 2011, Wright was awarded an honorary doctorate of humane letters.

“I am grateful for the longtime generosity of Ken and his late wife, Dianne. Their combined philanthropy has helped shape many critical projects at VCU,” says Jerry Strauss III, M.D., Ph.D., dean of the School of Medicine and executive vice president for medical affairs at the VCU Health System.

“The Wrights came to VCU with a big vision, a strong resolve to accomplish that vision and a deep commitment to using their talents and resources to change the world,” says VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D. “Dianne and Ken have forever changed our great university. This gift is poised to do the same for the CCTR. It will be thrilling to see what discoveries and breakthroughs will be made as a result of the extra emphasis on translational research this gift will allow.”

About VCU and VCU Health

Virginia Commonwealth University 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 226 degree and certificate programs in the arts, sciences and humanities. Sixty-seven of the programs are unique in Virginia, many of them crossing the disciplines of VCU’s 13 schools and one college. The only academic medical center and Level I trauma center in the region, VCU Health is comprised of five health sciences schools (Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy), VCU Medical Center, Community Memorial Hospital, Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU, VCU Massey Cancer Center and Virginia Premier. For more, please visit www.vcu.edu and vcuhealth.org.