



# VCU

## Nurse Anesthesia

College of Health Professions



*Advance your career  
as a CRNA*

[chp.vcu.edu/nrsa](http://chp.vcu.edu/nrsa)  
(804) 828-9808



**Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNAP)  
Post-Master's Program**





**Jodi Cinder Carlsen, DNAP, CRNA**  
(read her story on page 8)



**Gabriel Restrepo, DNAP, CRNA**  
(read his story on page 5)



**Marleah Rivers, DNAP, CRNA**  
(read her story on page 9)

## Welcome to Doctoral Education for the Working CRNA

Our post-master's DNAP program is designed for the full-time working CRNA, with one to three-year completion options. This practice-oriented doctoral program focuses specifically on issues related to nurse anesthesia practice and builds upon applicants' previous education and experiences as CRNAs.

The DNAP prepares CRNAs to assume leadership positions in education and management through a curriculum concentration focused on patient safety. Studies in human factors, quality assessment and improvement, health care systems and organizations, leadership, policy making, best-evidence practice, and adult education round out this unique and dynamic program of study. Structured as either a one, two, or three-year course of study, the program is designed to meet the critical need for doctoral-prepared CRNAs.

## Instructional Goals

The goal of the DNAP is to provide nurse anesthetists with advanced knowledge and skills so they may assume leadership positions in teaching, professional practice, research and health care policy upon graduation. The program emphasizes both an interdisciplinary and multimedia focus, drawing from resources across the College of Health Professions and Virginia Commonwealth University.

## Off-site, on your own terms

Off-site work is completed by a combination of assignments (clinical practice, readings, written work) and web-based activities using Canvas. You'll need an Internet connection and a computer.

## The objective of the program is to produce scholars and healthcare leaders who, by the completion of the program, will:

- Apply physiological, safety, and organizational theories to promote patient safety, enhance quality care, and improve nurse anesthesia practice.
- Analyze and synthesize relevant scientific literature and apply results to improve nurse anesthesia practice and patient care outcomes in a culturally sensitive manner.
- Communicate effectively with patients, families, the public, and other health professionals.
- Demonstrate leadership skills to meet the challenges of increasingly complex health care and educational environments impacting nurse anesthetists.
- Develop effective strategies for managing ethical dilemmas inherent in anesthesia patient care and the workplace.
- Employ teaching and learning principles for the nurse anesthetist in educating and counseling individuals, families, students in training, and groups.
- Demonstrate nurse anesthesia scholarship through presentations, publications, leadership activities, and collaboration with other disciplines.
- Utilize technology and information systems to analyze, manage, and present data.



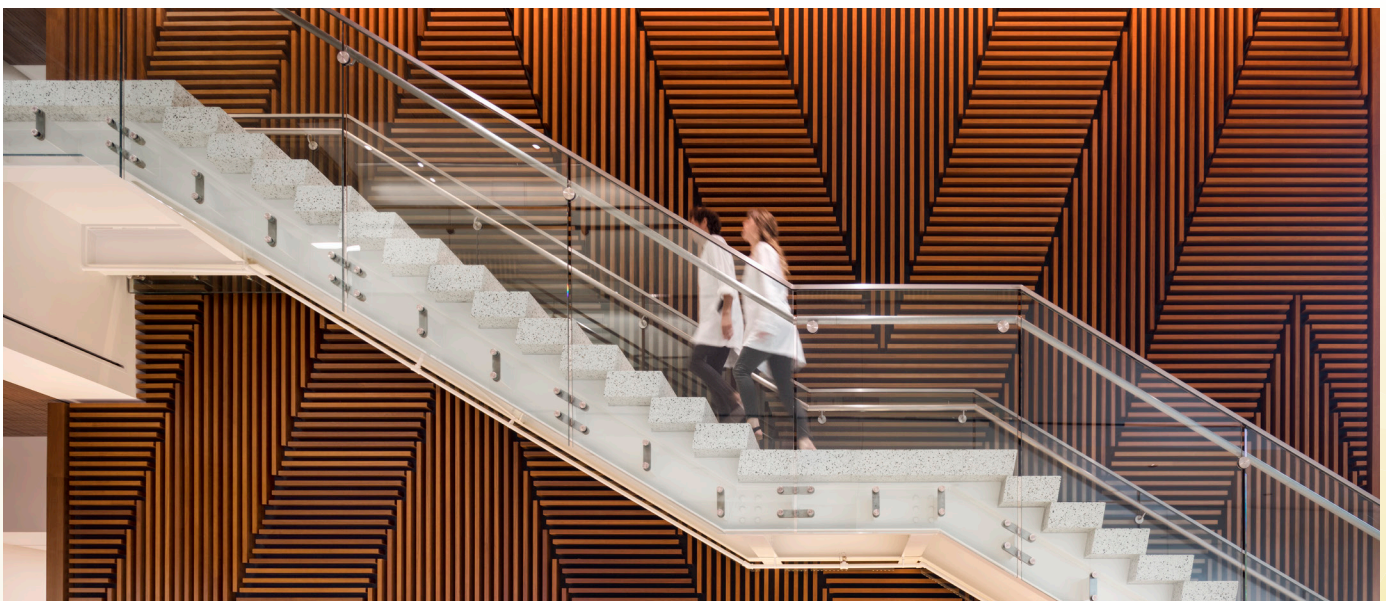
**Nicole Damico, PhD, CRNA, CHSE**

Associate Professor, Chair  
Department of Nurse Anesthesia



**Brenda Wands, PhD, CRNA**

Assistant Professor,  
Director of IPE/Post-Masters DNAP  
Department of Nurse Anesthesia







## Admission Requirements

VCU's self-managed graduate application process requires the applicant to collect and submit all supporting materials.

- Online application and \$70 nonrefundable application fee
- A graduate degree from a nurse anesthesia educational program accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs
- A cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale
- Official transcripts for all degrees received from an accredited college or university. Unofficial transcripts should be uploaded in the online application.
- Official Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores taken within the last five years
- Official NBCRNA transcript
- Certification and Recertification (if applicable) by the National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists
- Current licensure as a registered nurse and advanced practice nurse
- Three letters of professional recommendation
- Resume or curriculum vitae
- A written essay that describes reasons for seeking the DNAP degree and how the degree will contribute to the achievement of career goals, prior life and work experience that will contribute to success in the program, and potential areas of interest for the doctoral project.



**Apply Online: [www.vcu.edu/admissions/apply/graduate](http://www.vcu.edu/admissions/apply/graduate)**

# Curriculum Structure

See the most updated curriculum for the post-master's DNAP at [bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate](http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate).

Once there, click "College of Health Professions" at the left, then scroll down to "Nurse Anesthesia."

The Nurse Anesthesia curriculum is designed to take one, two, or three years to complete. Students are eligible to begin work on their doctoral projects after successful completion of the first semester.

The program curriculum consists of a total of 33 credit hours.

*Make it real.* It's never too late to pursue your dream.



**Gabriel Restrepo, DNAP, CRNA**  
VCU Health  
South Hill, Va.

As a practicing CRNA for nearly eight years, **Gabriel Restrepo** loves his work, but hasn't been satisfied with only focusing on the clinical or pharmacological aspects of anesthesia.

"I knew I always wanted to learn more about the policymaking process, novel anesthesia educational teaching techniques, how to improve patient safety, and how to get more involved with standards of care, protocols, procedures and regulations," he says. "I want to make anesthesia better for everybody. I have a passion to get involved. My dream was to complete my doctoral degree in nurse anesthesia at VCU."

"I'm going to be 52 this year. And everyone keeps asking me, 'What are you doing going back to school? You get no monetary compensation or rewards, and it will take a lot of your time.' But for me, there are multiple levels as to why: At the professional level, the theories and concepts offered in the doctoral curriculum path will enable me to become a more proficient clinician. The knowledge I gain will help me advance the nurse anesthesia profession and improve the health of our communities. And at the personal level, through the motivation and instruction of VCU's talented faculty, I want to become the best professional and person I can be."

"I know that path requires the next step, which is to obtain a doctoral degree in nurse anesthesia."

That step has been more than two decades in the making. Growing up, Gabriel saw no future for himself in his home country of Colombia, South America. So in 1997, at age 27, he moved to the U.S.

He applied to and was accepted to the University of Maryland's Nurse Anesthesia program in 2011, graduated with honors in 2013, and has practiced as a CRNA since 2014.

VCU Nurse Anesthesia's post-master's Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNAP) program is designed for full-time working CRNAs like Gabriel, and has the flexibility of one- to three-year completion options.

"When I started my education in 1999, I had to work to sustain my family. I couldn't just say, 'Oh, I'm going to college.' So I've been forced to take so many online classes over the last 20 years," says Gabriel, who graduated with his DNAP in May 2021.

His advice to those considering the DNAP? "Never forget that in the future, you may want to take your career farther. And if you don't get involved now, you're going to have to fight those battles," Gabriel explains. "One of the ways to get involved is to move to the next level of your education with the doctoral program."





## *The Department of Nurse Anesthesia:* A Tradition of Excellence in Patient Safety

Become a leader in nurse anesthesia and rise to the challenges of the ever-changing healthcare industry. Earn your Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNAP) at VCU.

The mission of the Department of Nurse Anesthesia is to provide learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to work as part of an interprofessional team serving the public through the delivery of safe, cost-efficient, quality anesthesia services, as well as develop leaders and scholars who will advance the specialty of nurse anesthesia through research, scholarship, and public service. The Department achieves its mission by establishing an environment that values excellence, stimulates creativity, and recognizes achievement.

The Department of Nurse Anesthesia is one of nine departments in the College of Health Professions. The College is located on the VCU Medical Center and VCU School of Medicine campus in downtown Richmond, Va.

# Course Descriptions

## **DNAP 701 Human Factors and Patient Safety for Nurse Anesthetists**

Explores the theoretical basis of human error, patient safety, and quality assurance in health care. Introduces a systems approach to error investigation and analysis. Integrates concepts of teamwork, crisis management, simulation, and monitoring systems in anesthesia practice.

## **DNAP 702 Nurse Anesthesia Patient Safety Seminar**

Focuses on analysis of adverse events from a systems perspective, use of multidisciplinary teams to solve management problems, and constructive techniques for communicating with patients, families, and health care providers who are involved in medical errors.

## **DNAP 703 Health Services Delivery Systems**

Examines the structure and function of the U.S. health care delivery system, the concepts and processes of health and illness, the institutional and individual providers of health services and related theory. Focuses on interdisciplinary care. Emphasizes meeting the unique needs of ethnically and culturally diverse populations.

## **DNAP 711 Policy and Practice for Nurse Anesthetists**

Examines governmental and non-governmental issues that influence nurse anesthesia practice. Focus is on development of skills that contribute to leadership and personal effectiveness in implementing change in nurse anesthesia and health care. Emphasizes interdisciplinary relationships between CRNAs, nurses, physicians, administrators, policy makers, and other key stakeholders.

## **DNAP 712 Leadership in Nurse Anesthesia Education**

Examines principles of teaching and learning applicable to the anesthesia didactic and clinical environment. Presents strategies in teacher/learner communication, presentation development and strategies, curriculum design, and methods of evaluation pertinent to nurse anesthesia education.

## **DNAP 789 Nurse Anesthesia Professional Practice**

Emphasizes analysis and evaluation of experiential learning through the use of critical thinking skills and reflection. Explores concepts of competency and expertise. Focuses on methods of determining best clinical practices through identification of problems, review and systematic evaluation of current research, and consideration of economic and other factors that may impact patient outcomes.

## **DNAP 799 Nurse Anesthesia Doctoral Project**

Focuses on identification of relevant clinical issues, formulation of answerable questions, and examination of the research evidence that can answer the question. Students implement and evaluate a clinical project and disseminate the results through a presentation or manuscript.

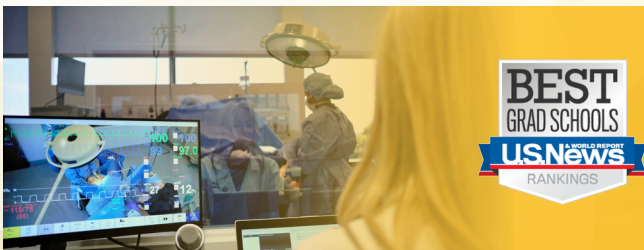
## **DNAP 708 Ethics and Health Care**

Applies the principles of biomedical and health care ethics to develop a more informed understanding of ethical decision-making in the formulation of health care policy, as well as within the clinical environment. Focuses on utilizing and searching biomedical ethics literature; current issues in biomedical ethics; the discipline and process of ethical reflection; and case consultation.

## **DNAP 734 Research Methods and Statistical Measures in Nurse Anesthesia Practice**

Examines relationships among theory, research and causal inference; quantitative and qualitative methodologies will be considered. Surveys issues relevant to research design, measurement, data collection, statistical analysis, interpretation and ethical issues in conducting research — and grounded in work in the domain of anesthesia and critical care. Prepares graduate students to access, critically evaluate and utilize research-based literature and independently initiate a systematic approach to addressing a research hypothesis or research question.

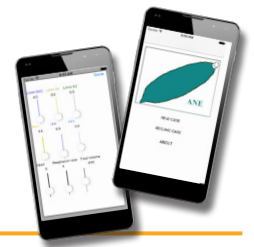
The DNAP program has been approved by the State Commission on Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and Virginia Commonwealth University.



For over a decade, the VCU Department of Nurse Anesthesia has consistently been recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as the No. 1 “Best in the Nation” for the nurse anesthesia specialty.

# Doctoral Project

Screenshots of the DNAP student doctoral project, a crisis simulation smartphone app.



The DNAP Program culminates in the successful completion of a doctoral project, which is intended to demonstrate integration and synthesis of concepts and experiences learned throughout the program.

With the guidance of a two-person faculty advisory committee, students develop a project on a topic of interest relevant to clinical or professional practice, education, or leadership. The focus of the doctoral project is the application of best evidence to improve patient safety through practice. Students are encouraged to be creative in identifying problems and suggesting solutions.

The doctoral project differs from a thesis or research dissertation in that it does not contribute new knowledge to a field, but applies existing knowledge to real-life situations with a purpose to improve outcomes. Research in the context of a doctoral project typically involves examining and applying the scientific literature rather than designing a study based on

qualitative or quantitative methodology. Some projects, however, may involve traditional research and will require IRB approval.

## Doctoral Case Study: An Anesthesia Simulation App

Simulation using web-based applications is used by both novice and expert learners in many health related fields, allowing students to experience real-world scenarios and crisis in a safe environment, outside of the high-stakes operating room. These are screenshots of a DNAP student's doctoral project, a crisis simulation smartphone app. It provides SRNAs a safe place to make mistakes and encounter situations they may only see once or twice in a lifetime of practice.

*Make it real.* Achieve your goals, expand career opportunities.



**Jodi Cinder Carlsen, DNAP, CRNA**  
Anesthesia and Pain Consultants  
Johnson City, Tenn.

"I personally feel it is very important to have a doctoral degree if I am educating SRNAs obtaining their DNAP degree. As a 30-year veteran in nurse anesthesia, hospital administrators look to experience, but they require a doctorate-prepared professional to sit on hospital committees.

It is wonderful to have completed this long-term goal of mine!

I have blossomed as a nurse anesthesia professional over these last two years. There is not one day that goes by that I have not applied every aspect of my post-masters DNAP course work professionally. With the pandemic hitting during my time at VCU and the unique pressures placed on CRNAs with COVID — and with hospitals looking to CRNAs to help in this crisis, and some hospitals attempting to degrade CRNAs to RN roles — I was able to successfully apply concepts that we studied in Policy and Practice to guide meaningful discussions with policy makers in the CRNAs favor.

After graduation, I plan to continue my teaching efforts with VCU SRNAs. I plan to continue to volunteer as a speaker and hands-on educator with ETSU Quillen College of Medicine Continuing Medical Education program at East Tennessee State University. The post-masters DNAP has taught me many valuable qualities to have as an educator for the adult student."



*Make it real.* Bring your passion and your career together.

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"I am a first-generation college graduate and this degree made a difference not only in my life but in my community, my place of employment, and my family. It says there is no race, age, sex, nor gender limit to the things you can achieve in your life with God and commitment.

Now that I have achieved this degree, I know it will set the bar for generations to come. Also, it places me in a position to pursue, encourage and assist others from underserved populations to do the same.

As an African-American CRNA practicing for over 14 years, the struggles, lack of encouragement, and difficulties encountered by myself and many other minorities — not only in getting accepted into CRNA programs, but the isolation encountered once accepted and during practice — showed me that we need more minority CRNAs to be part of the solution to create a program where they understand the special needs of minorities. I have never had a Black educator. I would like to see this changed and to become part of that solution.

This degree will help me not only in applying research to my practice, but it will help me get into education as in my career as a CRNA, MSA, BSN, ADN, LPN. I would recommend to anyone pursuing the post-masters degree that Doctoral is our new entry into practice. To keep current, it is essential that we keep ourselves in the position to educate our future SRNAs."



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**Marleah Rivers, DNAP, CRNA**  
Veterans Affairs Medical Center  
Durham, N.C.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **Is this program accredited?**

Yes. Our programs received a 10-year accreditation award from the Council on Accreditation in May 2011. Similarly, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredits the University.

### **Since this is a distance learning program, why am I required to attend on-campus sessions?**

Students are required to attend 3 on-campus sessions per year since the program is accredited as 'hybrid.' Graduate students come onto campus in August, January, and May of each year; the on-campus schedules are made available to students nearly one year in advance for planning purposes.

### **Do you provide on-campus housing?**

We do not provide housing for students while they are here for the on-campus session, however we will provide suggestions for accommodations.

### **Do you offer financial aid?**

To inquire about financial aid, contact Virginia Commonwealth University's Financial Aid Office. If scholarship money is available, applicants must have a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on file in our Financial Aid Office. Scholarships will be awarded based on need and availability of scholarship funds.

### **May I attend part-time?**

Yes. Students can enroll in the program on either a one-, two-, or three-year plan. We encourage students to pursue the program on one of these predetermined plans due to the structure and sequence of courses.

### **Will I have to return to campus to conduct my Doctoral project?**

After graduate students complete their first semester, they are eligible to begin work on the doctoral project. At that point, students may conduct their doctoral project largely from home. We encourage students to stay in close contact with their committee members and to follow the published doctoral project guidelines available on Canvas to eligible students.



*The VCU College of Health Professions building, home to the Department of Nurse Anesthesia, opened in 2019.*

## Financial Information

Tuition and fees are established by the University's Board of Visitors and are commonly made public in May of each year. The current tuition and fee schedule for the MCV Campus is available on the VCU Student Accounting website ([www.enrollment.vcu.edu/accounting](http://www.enrollment.vcu.edu/accounting)). In addition to the University tuition and standard fees, students should budget for the following expenses:

**DNAP Program Fee:** A per semester fee of \$200 per credit or \$1750/semester (full-time) will be assessed.

**Personal Computer:** Each student should have access to a personal computer and reliable internet service.

**Textbooks and Computer Software:** The cost of textbooks, readers, and software varies by semester.

### **Travel, subsistence and lodging during on-campus sessions:**

The average cost of nightly lodging for a single room in the downtown Richmond area varies. DNAP Program administrators can provide suggestions for accommodations.

A limited amount of financial aid is available through the program. Students interested in receiving information on financial aid should contact:

#### **Harris Hall**

1015 Floyd Ave., 1st Floor  
P.O. Box 843026  
Richmond, VA 23284  
Phone: (804) 828-6669

For more information on funding opportunities for graduate students, visit: [graduate.vcu.edu/student/financing](http://graduate.vcu.edu/student/financing)

## Program Completion Requirements

After admission to the DNAP Program, the student must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 in all course work completed at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice degree is awarded after

- (1) the minimum 33 credit hours of coursework are satisfactorily completed;
- (2) the graduate student possesses certification as a registered nurse anesthetist, and
- (3) a doctoral project is completed and evaluated.

## Course Transfer or Waiver

**Course Transfer:** A maximum of 50 percent of the didactic hours required for a graduate degree or any graduate certificate program may be transferred from another institution and, if not applied previously toward another degree, may be applied toward a degree. Courses taken as requirements for a previously earned degree are not transferable (see graduate school policy).

**Course Waiver:** Students may also request waiver of a required course if an equivalent course was previously taken and successfully completed. If approved, another course of equal or greater credit must be substituted for the waived course in order to fulfill the requisite credit hours needed for degree completion (see graduate school policy). Transfer and/or waiver credit is given at the discretion of the Director of Doctoral Education after review of the course syllabus and consultation with appropriate course instructors and is subject to University approval.



# Academic Environment

## About Virginia Commonwealth University

VCU is a premier urban public research university located in downtown Richmond, Virginia focused on academic success. The university enrolls more than 31,000 students in 222 degree and certificate programs in the arts, sciences and humanities. We take pride in our nationally ranked academic programs and academic medical center, research and scholarly productivity, and engagement with the communities we serve and change. In addition to the nation's top school for art and design, VCU is also home to the No. 1 hospital in the state, named by U.S. News & World Report, with three programs — nephrology, orthopedics, and cardiology and heart surgery — ranking in the top 50 nationally. The health sciences schools of Virginia Commonwealth University compose the VCU Medical Center. VCU is an extraordinary institution, and we invite you to become a part of our exciting student body.

## About Richmond

Set on the banks of the majestic James River and incorporated three decades before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Richmond is home to large enterprise and small business, a creative and arts scene that rivals cities many times our size, and nationally recognized dining and entertainment options. Richmond is regularly listed as one of the nation's must-see, up-and-coming cities. Explore the halls of the world-renowned Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, or go on a shopping spree in the boutiques of Carytown. Live in an old tobacco warehouse in Shockoe Bottom or a row home in the historic Fan District. Enjoy a variety of cultural and sporting events, from the Richmond Ballet to NASCAR and the Richmond Symphony. Sample the breweries of Scott's Addition, the restaurants of Grace Street, or the Thomas Jefferson-designed State Capitol in the heart of the city (and only a short walk from VCU). Only 90 miles from the nation's capital and day-trip to the Blue Ridge or Atlantic, there's something for everyone to love in Richmond.

## NAFA: Nurse Anesthesiology Faculty Associates

Nurse Anesthesiology Faculty Associates offers the highest quality CRNA seminars and continuing education opportunities available for anesthesia providers.



More information is available at [www.nafa-va.org](http://www.nafa-va.org) or by calling (804) 828-6734.



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