

Going to College on the River

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Footprints on the James

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VCU



Urban campus in scenic downtown Richmond, VA.

Current enrollment: 31,000+, 24,000 undergraduates

86% in-state

~10% from 101 countries

About 2300 faculty



What is Footprints on the James?

- Integrative, collaborative experiential learning opportunity
- 3-5 weeks paddling on the James River, VA
- Exploring the intersection of human and natural history
- Following the raindrop

Themes

- Compare river ecoregions
- terrestrial vs. aquatic ecosystems
- Pre- vs. post- European settlement, antebellum vs. contemporary



Who?

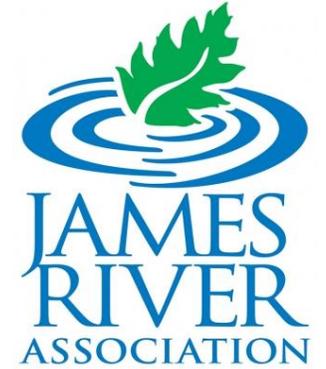
- 1st and 2nd year preferred
- all majors, any school
- by interview
- attempt to complement knowledge and experience

Collaborative Partnerships:

- VCU Biology
- VCU Outdoor Adventure Program
- VCU Life Sciences – Rice Rivers Center
- VCU History
- Guest Speakers:



VCU HISTORY



Why the James River?

- summit to sea
- rich human and natural history
- local, state and national impact
- rich local expertise
- few dams!

James River Watershed

Wildlife & Landscape Conservation Features



- Map Key**
- Conservation land (public & private)
 - Conservation easement
 - Unprotected area of outstanding or very high ecological integrity
 - Unprotected area of high ecological integrity
 - Priority Coastal Conservation Area (DGIF Tiers 7 & 8)
 - Subbasin with strong riparian buffers (70-95% natural vegetation)
 - Birding & wildlife trail loop
 - Important Bird Area (Virginia Audubon)

SOURCES:
 CONSERVATION LANDS & EASEMENTS: Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation (VA DCR) - AREAS OF ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY (VA Natural Landscape Assessment); VA DCR - SUBBASINS WITH STRONG RIPARIAN BUFFERS; Chesapeake Conservancy; USGS - PRIORITY COASTAL CONSERVATION AREAS; Virginia Commonwealth Univ., DGP, & DCR - BIRDING & WILDLIFE TRAILS; Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries (DGIF) - Important Bird Areas; National Audubon Society - BAZE MAP; USGS, ESRI, NGS Maps.

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Other FOTJ stats:

- 4 years
- 31-19 days, 4 to 6 credits
- River mileage 290 to 120 mi,
- Front country (40%) and back country (60%) camping
- 10-12 students, 1-2 Student Trip Leaders and 2-3 faculty per year

Logistical Challenges

Normal stuff: staffing, food, transitions, medical, evacuations, gear

Not so normal stuff:

- Working with a batteau
- Timing professors/speakers in the field
- Permits/Permission for special area camping: private lands, wildlife refuges, county parks, unclaimed islands, state parks, private campgrounds





Academic Goals - Observation

- field methods
- structured journal entries, sketching
- daily map



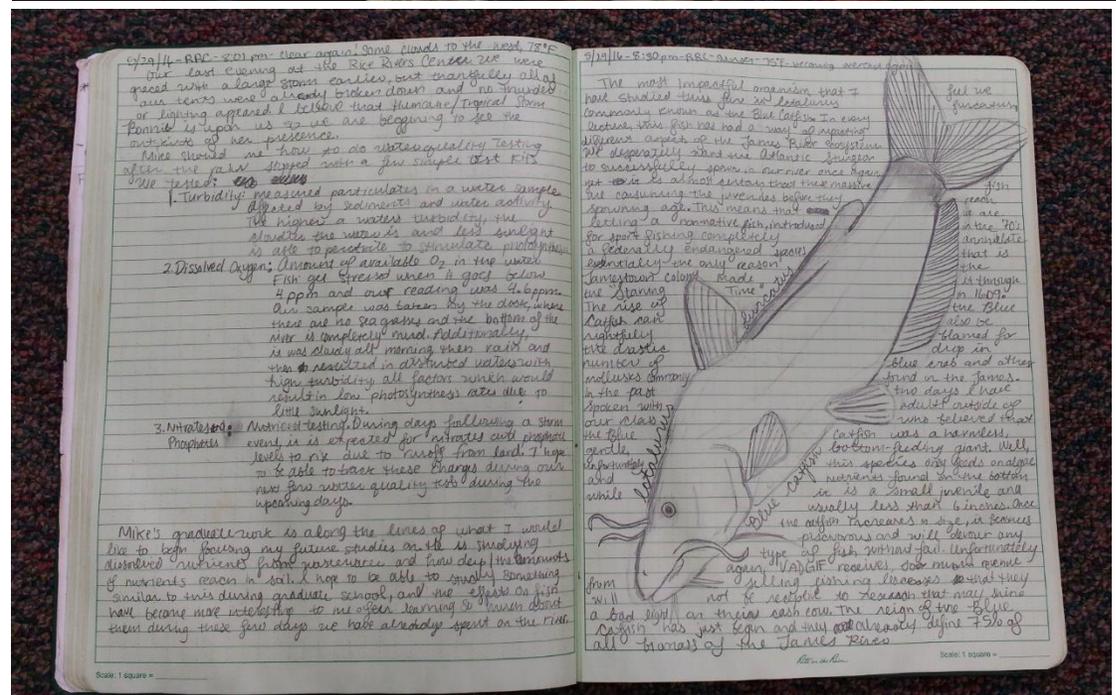


Academic Goals - Assessment

3 parts:

- journal writing
- participation
- practical exam





Goals - Expedition Curriculum

- Student lead program
- Expedition Behavior
- Positive Learning Environment
- LNT (Leave No Trace)
- Introduction to camping and outdoor skills

















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