



# Position Specification

Chair, Department of Computer Science, College of Engineering

## Chair, Department of Computer Science, College of Engineering

Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) College of Engineering invites nominations and applications for the position of Chair of the Department of Computer Science (CS). Reporting to the Dean, [Azim Eskandarian, D.Sc.](#), the Chair serves as a key member of the Dean's leadership team, overseeing one of five academic units in the College. The Chair also works closely with the College and the Department's faculty, staff, and students to promote academic excellence, outstanding teaching, innovative research, diversity and inclusion, and community outreach. The next Chair will have the unique opportunity to collaborate closely with the Dean on increasing the Department's research profile, reputation, and visibility.

## Virginia Commonwealth University

Located in downtown Richmond on 198-acres, VCU serves an integral role in the economic health of the city and the state, educating the current and future workforce, advancing research, and enhancing patient care. Originally founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a medical college, the Virginia General Assembly created VCU in 1968, and the University has grown exponentially over the past half-century. Today, the University has over 28,500 students, almost 2500 faculty, and over 220,000 alumni. Under the leadership of [President Michael Rao](#), VCU is guided by [Quest 2028](#), a strategic plan that outlines four priorities: diversity driving excellence, student success, research and innovation, and thriving communities. As a national urban public research institution dedicated to the success and well-being of students, patients, faculty, staff, and community, VCU strives to promote:

- Real-world learning that furthers civic engagement, inquiry, discovery, and innovation;
- Research that expands the boundaries of new knowledge and creative expression and promotes translational applications to improve the quality of human life;
- Interdisciplinary collaborations and community partnerships that advance innovation, enhance cultural and economic vitality, and solve society's most complex challenges;
- Health sciences that preserve and restore health for all people, seek the cause and cure of diseases through groundbreaking research, and educate those who serve humanity; and
- Deeply ingrained core values of diversity, inclusion, and equity that provide a safe, trusting, and supportive environment to explore, create, learn, and serve.

Recognized as one of the top 20 most innovative public universities in the country according to *U.S. News & World Report*, VCU is a Carnegie Research-1 (R-1) institution and reached its highest level of research expenditures (\$464 million) in 2023. Seven VCU schools rank in the top 20 in terms of funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) among public universities, and the National Science Foundation (NSF) lists VCU as a top 50 public research university. Graduate programs in the Fine Arts, Health Care Management, Homeland Security, and Nuclear Engineering are consistently ranked among the best in the nation.

As the largest employer in Virginia's capital city, VCU has an enormous economic impact on Richmond and the region. VCU and the VCU Health System employ more than 25,000 people and contribute \$6 billion to the regional economy. A five-time winner of the diversity champion recognition from [INSIGHT's Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award](#), 55% of VCU's undergraduates, and nearly half of all students are from minority backgrounds. Students hail from 48 states and 141 countries, and more than one-third are the first in their family to attend college.

## The College of Engineering

VCU's College of Engineering was established in 1996 as a public-private partnership to address the need for engineering innovation in a 21st-century economy. Collaboration with industry, community, and academic partners led to \$35 million in research expenditures in FY2023 and regularly yield breakthroughs in areas as diverse as pharmaceutical engineering, smart cities, sustainability and clean energy, materials development, health care, regenerative medicine, rehabilitation and medical device development, data science, and better security for cyber systems.

The College offers 6 majors, 5 minors, 6 master's programs, and 8 doctoral programs, which include a dual M.D./Ph.D. degree in medicine and biomedical engineering. There are several specialized concentrations for undergraduate and graduate students, as well as certificates and online programs.

The College is comprised of the following five departments:

- [Biomedical Engineering](#)
- [Chemical and Life Science Engineering](#)
- [Computer Science](#)
- [Electrical and Computer Engineering](#)
- [Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering](#)

The College has 84 tenured and tenure track faculty members, 22 non-tenure track faculty, and 3 instructors as well as 6 research centers, 12 NSF CAREER Award Winners, and 20 faculty recognized as fellows in their fields. There are 74 staff members who support the operations and administrative functions of the College. As of Fall 2024, VCU Engineering enrolled over 2000 undergraduate students and over 300 graduate students. The College maintains a healthy budget, which has been growing with enrollments and research, to meet its operational and strategic goals. The college has its own foundation with notable endowments and opportunities for growth with the dean's leadership team and participating department chairs.

On February 3, 2021, the College of Engineering officially opened its new Engineering Research Building (ERB), marking a major milestone in the College's growth in research and workforce development programs. The four-story, 133,000-square-foot facility significantly expanded the College's laboratory capacity for advanced research.

## The Department of Computer Science

The Department of Computer Science (CS) covers core areas of the discipline with a focus on data science, AI, software engineering, and cybersecurity. The CS Department is comprised of 25 faculty of which 17 are tenured or tenure track, and has a budget of approximately \$5.6 million. Research expenditures will exceed \$2.5 million in 2024, a five-fold increase over the past seven years. There are also two full-time administrative staff within the Department as well as additional shared staff within the College of Engineering.

The CS Department has the highest enrollment in the College of Engineering with approximately 900 undergraduates, 89 students in a master's degree program, and 34 in the doctoral program. The B.S. in Computer Science program is accredited by the Computing Accreditation Commission of ABET, under the Commission's General Criteria and Program Criteria for Computer Science and expect to be reaccredited in the next year.

The CS Department offers several opportunities for undergraduate students interested in the study of computer science, including a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science with concentrations in Cybersecurity, Data Science, and Software Engineering, an Accelerated B.S. and M.S. in Computer Science, a M.S. in Data Science, a Ph.D. in Computer Science, a Bachelor of Arts in Computer Science, and minors in the following: Computer Science, Software Engineering, Data Science, and Cybersecurity, a Post-baccalaureate Undergraduate Certificate in Computer Science, and a Fundamentals of Computing with a Technology Specialization for non-tech majors.

The CS Department also leads [the VCU Cybersecurity Center](#), that brings together experts from commercial, government, and academia. VCU's cybersecurity focus areas are constantly evolving and address security related challenges at the local, state, federal level helping to prepare students for cyber-related issues facing businesses and government.

## The Role

The next CS Chair will provide leadership to departmental faculty and champion student success. The Chair will also help manage the Department's fiscal resources and promote inclusive excellence. Along with the Dean, the Chair is responsible for promoting the Department's research profile, faculty recruitment, the mentorship of early and mid-career faculty, the professional development of faculty and staff, and strengthening the academic program. The position is a 12-month appointment, and the Chair is expected to teach one course each semester.

Specifically, the Chair will be responsible for the following:

- Providing departmental leadership, support, and facilitation of faculty affairs;
- Managing departmental enrollment growth;

- Growing the research and scholarship activities of departmental faculty;
- Overseeing Department finances and budgetary decisions;
- Working with the public and private sector to provide opportunities for faculty and students;
- Collaborating and overseeing faculty professional development efforts;
- Facilitating and mentoring faculty through the tenure & promotion process;
- Understanding faculty issues, including conflict resolution processes, that follow College and University policies, procedures, and guidelines;
- Developing faculty recruitment initiatives and collaborating with search committees on recruitment strategies in collaboration with college leadership; and
- Collaborating closely with the Dean and associate deans to further the Department and College's goals and mission.

## Candidate Qualifications

The Chair will be a tenurable faculty member at the rank of full professor, committed to the highest standards of research, service, and teaching. Successful candidates should bring with them a robust research agenda and a history of external funding. The Chair should have excellent communication and people skills and will serve as a strong advocate for the Department. Successful candidates will have a record of engaging in transparent decision-making, respecting shared governance, and nurturing a culture of consensus and collaboration.

Candidates must hold a doctoral degree in an academic discipline related to or encompassed within the CS curriculum. A demonstrated commitment to promoting inclusive excellence throughout their career is essential. Other important qualifications include:

- A strong record of outstanding teaching and junior faculty mentoring experience;
- Demonstrated administrative ability to manage personnel, finances, and strategic growth;
- Good people skills, effective communication, the ability to work cooperatively and congenially within a diverse faculty;
- Outstanding organizational skills and a strong record of interdisciplinary collaboration;
- A strong work ethic, an ability to multi-task, determine and set clear priorities, and meet deadlines;
- Unquestioned, unassailable personal and academic integrity; and
- Recent experience in academic leadership and/or administrative role.

## Richmond, Virginia

Recently ranked [#1 by CNN as America's "Best Town to Visit in 2024."](#) VCU's campus in downtown Richmond is in the middle of what CNN describes as an area loaded with "rich arts, culture and history, plus a great food and beverage scene." The greater Richmond metro area comprises more than 1.2 million people. Home to state government and a mix of Fortune 1000 companies and small businesses, Richmond boasts excellent transportation access via an international airport and daily Amtrak service. The city is just a little more than 100 miles south of Washington, DC, and is a short drive to the ocean and the mountains. Richmond is known as an ideal place for those who enjoy the great outdoors, hiking, biking, exploring Civil War battlefields, wineries, and the spectacular beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

## Nomination and Application Process

Inquiries, nominations, and applications are invited. Interested candidates should submit confidentially, in electronic form (Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF files preferred), a curriculum vitae and (preferably) letter of interest to [vcu.cschair@russellreynolds.com](mailto:vcu.cschair@russellreynolds.com)

**Though all materials received will be reviewed, please submit materials by November 18, 2024, for priority consideration.**

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*Virginia Commonwealth University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution providing access to education and employment without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, political affiliation, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or disability.*