



University of North Carolina  
at Charlotte

University of Dayton

Duquesne University

Fordham University

The George Washington  
University

La Salle University

University of Massachusetts

University of Rhode Island

University of Richmond

St. Bonaventure University

Saint Joseph's University

Saint Louis University

Temple University

Xavier University

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**May 15, 2012**

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## **Atlantic 10 Conference Adds Virginia Commonwealth University as Full Member**

**NEWPORT NEWS, Va.**—The Atlantic 10 Conference Council of Presidents has formally accepted Virginia Commonwealth University for membership, the league announced Tuesday.

VCU, which combines outstanding academics with successful athletic programs, will join the A-10 on July 1, 2012 and begin competition during the 2012-13 academic year. The immediate addition will bring the total number of Atlantic 10 members to 15 for the 2012-13 season. VCU fields 16 of the A-10's 21 championship sports.

"The addition of Virginia Commonwealth University to the Atlantic 10 further strengthens us as the nation's premier basketball-driven conference," said Father Michael J. Graham, Xavier University President and Chair of the Atlantic 10 Council of Presidents. "Accepting VCU's application makes sense on two important levels -- its emphasis on the quality of the student experience of its student-athletes, especially in the classroom, and its commitment to the highest levels of competition. Both ideals square perfectly with the identity of the A-10 and all of its member institutions."

Academically and athletically, VCU has an outstanding profile that is comparable with other Atlantic 10 institutions. A trademark of the Atlantic 10 Conference is its academic excellence; the league ranks third among all Division I conferences in the most recent NCAA graduation rates with an incredible 89 percent of student-athletes graduating. VCU's latest NCAA Graduation Success Rate (GSR) score is in step with all 14 current A-10 institutions.

"It is my privilege to be able to announce the addition of VCU to the Atlantic 10 Conference. It is an institution rich in tradition, academic excellence and broad-based athletic success," said Atlantic 10 Commissioner Bernadette V. McGlade. "One of the driving forces and priorities of the A-10 is to further enhance our national prominence in men's basketball, build our brand and strengthen our current footprint. In addition to bringing in well-rounded sports programs across the board, VCU solidifies the A-10 academically and athletically."

The Atlantic 10 has had 41 at-large NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament selections in the past 20 years, including three in 2012. The A-10 also has boasted 62 postseason appearances in the last decade. For the fifth year in a row, the Atlantic 10 Conference earned at least three bids and multiple at-large bids into the NCAA Tournament. Over the last six years, the Atlantic 10 has had 12 at-large selections – the seventh most among all other Division I conferences. A record eight A-10 institutions received invitations to the 2012 NCAA and NIT postseason tournaments, more than 29 of the 31 Division I conferences. The A-10 had eight institutions rated in the top 100 of the RPI at seasons end last year.

VCU went to the Final Four in 2011. Along with the recent addition of Butler University, it brings the total A-10 programs with at least one appearance in the Final Four to eight. VCU has made 11 total trips to the NCAA Tournament with four of those coming in the last six years. In seven of those 11 trips, the Rams have won at least one game, including their run to the 2011 Final Four. VCU has had eight postseason appearances since 2000.

"VCU believes the A-10 represents the best opportunity to meet our long-term aspirations for national academic and athletic achievement," said VCU President Michael Rao. "As a Division I, nationally competitive athletics program, it is critical that VCU seizes the opportunity to further elevate its athletics as it raises its overall academic profile as a national research university. VCU's *Quest for Distinction* strategic plan calls for excellence in all we do, including athletics. Moving to the Atlantic 10 Conference supports that quest for higher standards of excellence in our athletic programs."

VCU has more than 31,000 students on two Richmond, Va., campuses in addition to a branch in Qatar and international partnerships in 11 other countries. Its graduate programs are ranked in the Top 25 by U.S. News & World Report and VCU boasts 32 top-ranked graduate and first professional programs. In addition, VCU has a strong research component, with more than \$256 million in awards in sponsored research in 2011.

"The Atlantic 10 is a conference that gives us an opportunity to not only build our national brand, but also be associated and compete against great institutions with tremendous profiles, both athletically and academically," said David Benedict, VCU's interim director of athletics. "We believe that the transition to the A-10 allows us to enhance the experience of all of our student-athletes."

During the 2011-12 season, Atlantic 10 men's basketball conference teams appeared on television over 350 times, a record in the 36-year history of the league. One of just five conferences to have its men's basketball championship air on network television (CBS), the A-10 currently has partnerships with CBS and ESPN. VCU enters the league as negotiations for the new media rights agreement are beginning. The Rams will also play their first A-10 Men's Basketball Championship in the state-of-the-art Barclays Center in Brooklyn, N.Y.

The Atlantic 10, one of the premier women's basketball leagues in the country, is celebrating four consecutive years of 50 percent of its membership participating in postseason play. A program on the rise, VCU has won 20 games in three of the last four years with postseason appearances in each of those years.

The A-10 has had Olympic sport success as well, earning multiple NCAA bids in several sports, including a trip to the NCAA Men's Soccer championship game, and at-large bids in men's and women's soccer, volleyball and men's golf. UMass' nationally-ranked women's lacrosse team competed in the NCAA Championship this spring as did GW men's tennis and Richmond's women's tennis.

One of the most successful programs in college athletics, VCU's men's tennis team has made 16 NCAA tournament appearances, and finished in the Top 25 rankings for 17 years. The women's tennis team has 12 NCAA appearances and seven other VCU Olympic Sports have made multiple NCAA Championship appearances in recent years. This includes the Rams' golf, men's soccer and baseball teams, which have combined for 23 NCAA appearances.

VCU, along with current A-10 member the University of Richmond, are the only two Division I institutions in Richmond, Va., the nation's 57th largest media market. The Atlantic 10 holds one of the most impressive media footprints in all of Division I with Atlantic 10 institutions residing in cities that comprise 21 percent of all American television households. There are nine A-10 schools in the top 25 media markets in the country and every institution is located in the top 65 markets.

### **About the A-10**

*The Atlantic 10 Conference was formed in 1976, is currently comprised of 14 member institutions and sponsors 21 championship sports. The mission and goal of the Atlantic 10 is to preserve, protect, and enhance the academic and athletic pursuits of the membership. The conference is committed to integrity, educational excellence and providing quality equitable championship experiences for more than 6,000 student-athletes, coaches, and support staff. The member institutions of the Atlantic 10 are the University of Dayton, Duquesne University, Fordham University, The George Washington University, La Salle University, University of Massachusetts, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, University of Rhode Island, University of Richmond, St. Bonaventure University, Saint Joseph's University, Saint Louis University, Temple University, and Xavier University.*