



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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December 12, 2023

L. Douglas Wilder School
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**The Grace E. Harris
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The VCU L. Douglas Wilder School Centers and Institutes Join Forces

Summary: The [VCU Wilder School](#) Centers and Institutes have merged for enhanced collaboration and improved structure to expand expert research and project management consulting. Each of the school's professional development programs will be under the **Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute (GEHLI)** including PMG's institutes. All of the consulting and applied research services led by PMG, CURA, and SERL will be under the **Center for Public Policy (CPP)**. All social equity research and analysis services will be under the **Research Institute for Social Equity (RISE)**. Clients will continue to receive the same excellent services enjoyed previously, just under a new name!

Richmond, VA – December 12th, 2023

The nationally ranked [L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs](#) at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) is deeply rooted in public policy and community affairs. The [Wilder School Office Of Research and Outreach](#) is home to multiple, specialized [Centers and Institutes](#). These Centers and Institutes include the [Center for Public Policy](#), the [Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute](#), and the [Research Institute for Social Equity](#), where leading-edge research, consulting, and training for policymakers and the public are provided.

While these Centers and Institutes are nothing new, the Wilder School was originally home to five Centers and Institutes, including:

- **The Performance Management Group (PMG)**
- **The Center for Urban and Regional Analysis (CURA)**
- **The Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory (SERL)**
- **The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute (GEHLI)**
- **The Research Institute for Social Equity (RISE)**

To further improve efficiency and collaboration, these Centers and Institutes have been consolidated and merged into three to include a focus in consulting and applied research services, professional development/training, and social equity research and analysis:

The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute

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- Consulting and Applied Research Services: **The Center for Public Policy (CPP)**
- Professional Development/Training: **The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute (GEHLI)**
- Social Equity Research and Analysis: **The Research Institute for Social Equity (RISE)**

All existing services and programs are still being offered, along with support from a myriad of staff and facilitators with whom many have built strong, long-term relationships.

The [Performance Management Group \(PMG\)](#) consulting arm, the [Center for Urban and Regional Analysis \(CURA\)](#), and the [Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory \(SERL\)](#) joined forces to provide consulting services under the Center for Public Policy (CPP). The CPP will continue to offer assistance with strategic plans, 360° feedback, surveys, business process analysis, performance measurement, customer engagement, focus groups, coaching, and organizational assessments. The capabilities of the staff our clients know and trust have been combined as well.

The entire professional development and training portfolio of the VCU Wilder School, formerly under the [Performance Management Group \(PMG\)](#) training arm, the [Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute \(GEHLI\)](#), and the [Land Use Education Program \(LUEP\)](#) has been consolidated into the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute (GEHLI). This has advanced the GEHLI profile of promoting the development of current and emerging leaders in Virginia state and local government, academic institutions, public, private, and nonprofit organizations, and communities of the Commonwealth. GEHLI offers an integrated series of professional development programs that develop critical skills at the supervisory, management, senior leadership, and local levels.

The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute serves as a tribute to [Dr. Grace E. Harris](#)'s lifelong commitment to leadership, education, and public service. The institute continues her work by empowering and developing leaders to make positive impacts on their communities and society. The 10 programs offered under the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute, including a one-day conference, consist of:

- [FFS: Fundamentals for Supervisors](#)
- [ESI: Experienced Supervisors Institute](#)
- [SMB: Supervisors and Managers Bootcamp](#)
- [CMI: Commonwealth Management Institute](#)
- [VEI: Virginia Executive Institute](#)
- [HIGHER Ground Women's Leadership Development Program](#)
- [MPLI: Minority Political Leadership Institute](#)
- [VCUL: VCU Leadership Development Program](#)
- [LUEP: Land Use Education Program](#)
 - Certified Planning Commissioner Program (CPC)
 - Certified Board of Zoning Appeals Program (BZA)
- [Annual HIGHER Ground Women's Leadership Conference](#)
- [Custom development programs](#) are available to all agencies and organizations for short- and long-term training for all levels of staff — executive, management, and supervisory. GEHLI uses existing models, tailored program development, and assessments to create customized training specifically shaped to meet the client's needs.



This organizational realignment will ensure that the Wilder School is offering the best amenities for clients, partners, professional development attendees, and research consumers.

New websites are being developed for the new Centers and Institutes. The Center for Public Policy (CPP) and the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute (GEHLI) new websites will launch in 2024. The [Research Institute for Social Equity \(RISE\)](#) launched this past year. All existing websites for the previous five Centers and Institutes will remain active until the new websites are launched.

The Wilder School is committed and determined to be the premier resource for public policy expertise and social justice in public safety, governance, and economic and community development. Working with all levels of government, as well as foundations and nonprofit organizations, our research and consulting practices create a global impact and reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.

For more information, please visit the new [Office of Research and Outreach](#)'s website at the Wilder School at <https://research.wilder.vcu.edu/> or the previous Office of Research and Outreach's website for the past five Centers and Institutes at <https://wilder.vcu.edu/research-and-outreach/>.