If you asked Dr. Ellen Byrne to describe her role in at the School of Dentistry, she would say she sees the school as a construction project, and she is the academic site foreman. Whether tasked with carving out space in a crowded dental school curriculum for a new course, or removing hours that are redundant or less relevant, or finding a unique way to integrate her extensive knowledge of pharmacology into a lecture, she makes it happen.

Since graduating from the School of Dentistry in 1983, Dr. Byrne has taken on numerous teaching and administrative responsibilities at VCU. She served as a teacher, interim department chair, and assistant dean. While Dr. Byrne is gifted teacher, few faculty members give more than she in the way of professional service.

Her service to the school, profession, and the community at the national level is extraordinary. She represented the faculty of the VCU School of Dentistry on the Council of Faculties in the American Dental Education Association (ADEA). She is one three VCU dental faculty members who is leading the school’s efforts to enhance its curriculum in critical thinking, active learning, and self-assessment, in concert with the ADEA’s Commission on Change and Innovation.

Dr. Byrne also has held prominent volunteer positions in the American Dental Association. (ADA). She served on the ADA’s Council on Scientific Affairs and the Pharmacology Test Construction Committee for the ADA Testing Service. She soon will be elected to membership in the Joint Commission on National Dental Exams, the agency that oversees the testing service.

Dr. Byrne is a highly sought after speaker for national, state, and local dental continuing education programs. Practitioners recognize she has great expertise in clinical pharmacology for dental practices, but they also appreciate her energy and enthusiasm. Dr. Byrne's frequently cited motto is, "Better life through drugs."

Her service to the University also is extraordinary. She has served on the MCV Alumni Association Board of Trustees, the MCV Campus Committee on Academic Programs, the Assessment Council, and the Faculty Senate. In the School of Dentistry, Dr. Byrne has served on many committees and was Chair of the Faculty in 2002-03.

Even as a senior administrator she remains actively engaged with pre-doctoral education. Recently, when a group of young VCU dental alumni was asked who they would most like to provide them a continuing education course, they said they wanted Dr. Byrne to teach them again.