Skilled surgeon, gifted teacher, engaged mentor, dedicated wife and mother, inspiring leader. A true force. All of these are phrases used to describe our 2012 WISDM Professional Achievement Awardee, Dr. Therèse Duane, M.D. Dr. Duane is Vice Chair for Quality and Safety and Associate Professor, Department of Surgery, and Associate Director of the Surgical Critical Care Fellowship and Assistant Medical Director of the Surgical Trauma Intensive Care Unit (STICU).

Dr. Duane came to VCU in 2003 and was promoted to Associate Professor after only five years. "She has excelled in every category in academic surgery," says L.D. Britt, M.D., M.P.H., Brickhouse Professor and Surgery Chairman, at Eastern Virginia Medical School. Rao Ivatury, M.D., Professor of Surgery and Chief, Division of Trauma, Critical Care and Emergency Surgery at VCU agrees. "She emphasizes constantly the roles of self discipline, self determination and self application to be a better physician and a better academic surgeon and to achieve professional excellence."

Since her arrival at VCU, Dr. Duane has been recognized for her exceptional clinical skills, compassionate patient care, and commitment to the highest standards of patient safety. As Vice Chair of Surgery for Quality and Safety, she has created multiple practice guidelines for infection control with multi-disciplinary involvement of STICU staff. "With her leadership the (STICU) unit not only dramatically reduced infection rates, but has become the leader in our institution in terms of ongoing low rates of hospital acquired infection" declares Ron Clark, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, VCU Health System. Dr. Duane is Chair of the VCU Medical Center Infection Control Committee and received the 2010 Shining Knight Award for Excellence in Trauma Care.

Surgery Resident Dr. Hadley Katharine Herbert describes Dr. Duane's clinical presence: "She commands the trauma bay, and through her leadership, exemplifies an understanding and commitment for medicine that my fellow residents and I hope to embrace as future surgeons. Through her example, she has inspired me to strive for excellence in all areas of my life."

Colleagues marvel at Dr. Duane's organizational skills, her ability to respond to emails almost immediately, and work ahead of deadlines for publications and grants. She sets the bar high for surgical residents and attendings with her own punctuality and attendance at conferences.

A prolific researcher and writer, Dr. Duane has over 50 peer-reviewed publications, including numerous publications in the highly regarded Journal of Trauma, and in publications in all of the disciplines she practices - trauma, critical care, and emergency general surgery. Her ability to collaborate with others in her research is represented by dozens of oral paper and poster presentations developed with numerous colleagues in a wide range of disciplines.

Dr. Duane dedicates herself to helping all of her students develop productive research careers. She has formally mentored 11 graduate students and five postdoctoral scholars in addition to her clinical trainees.
Former VCU resident Tracey Dechert, M.D., now Assistant Professor of Surgery at Boston University School of Medicine, describes her experience:

*She teaches the intricacies of clinical research - how to plan a research project, how to write an IRB proposal, and how to write a manuscript. Because of her mentorship, I have many presentations and publications to show for our work, and I have no doubt that this enabled me to obtain a fellowship spot in one of the best trauma/critical care fellowships in the country. The sign of a good mentor, I believe, is someone who is your mentor for life . . . Dr. Duane continues to be a wonderful mentor, and a good friend.*

Recognized as a gifted teacher, Dr. Duane has received numerous teaching awards, including multiple Outstanding Teacher for the Surgical Clerkship and the Faculty Medical Student Teaching Awards. Dynamic, articulate and entertaining, she has the ability to connect to her audiences. To improve teaching in the STICU, she created a weekly conference called "Breakfast and Bullets," where each member of the STICU team is assigned a topic or questions that came up on rounds that week to research and present to the rest of the group at the end of the week.

"With the precious free time she has, she speaks to first- and second-year medical students during lunch, has an endless stream of high school and medical students shadowing her, and counsels residents about career choices and work-life balance," colleagues Stephanie R. Goldberg, M.D., and Julie Mayglothling, M.D., recall.

A sample of surgery clerkship student comments affirm Dr. Duane's commitment to teaching.

*Dr. Duane has demonstrated on countless occasions an unparalleled adherence to furthering the medical knowledge of students. She has personally sacrificed significant portions of her clinical and personal time to explain, teach, and provide me with a better medical school experience.*

*She expects a lot of us but also gives us responsibility and opportunity to match the expectations.*

Dr. Duane has served as President of the Virginia Chapter of Association of Women Surgeons and the L.D. Britt Surgical Society, and as a member of the WISDM Executive Council. She currently serves on eleven Health System and School of Medicine committees. Continuously striving to improve her skills, she participated in the VCU Medical Center Physician Leadership Executive Fellowship program in 2008. Dr. Duane played a pivotal role in establishing a national Mentorship Program for Early Career Women in Surgery through the Association of Women Surgeons.

In fact, among all of her exceptional skills and achievements, Dr. Duane is perhaps best known for her mentoring. Colleagues and students relate stories of Dr. Duane contacting them after the briefest of introductions, asking if they would like to meet. During these discussions, Dr. Duane asked questions about career planning, research interests, balancing work and personal time, and offered assistance and advice in all of these areas that have been, in many cases, life changing.
Holly M. Brown, MS, now a first year medical student, recalls,

I had the distinct pleasure of meeting Dr. Duane eight years ago during my enrollment as a student at the Governor's School for Medicine and Life Sciences - little did I know what a significant impact meeting her would have on my future. She motivated me to pursue, first an undergraduate degree in Spanish so that I could better serve my patients . . . then to continue with my education and obtain a Masters in Biomedical Sciences. I hope to be able to pursue my own career in surgery, and I too will take high school, college and medical students under my wing to guide and educate them as she did for me. Why, you may ask? Because I have experienced the lasting impression that being an extraordinary physician can make.

As a surgeon, wife and mother, Dr. Duane brings valuable insights and experiences to her discussions with her students and trainees that help them to keep sight on the parts of life beyond the hospital and to learn the planning and organizational skills that make work-life balance successful. Dr. Duane is a role model for young physicians, especially women, endeavoring to balance career, academics, teaching, research and family. We are honored to have Dr. Therèse Duane in our midst, and to recognize her with the 2012 WISDM Professional Achievement Award.