Hokies helping the world
CAREER launchers | Student researchers
8 | CAREER launchers
Virginia Tech boasts more than 60 winners of National Science Foundation Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Awards to date. These awards provide a kickstart to faculty in the dawn of their careers, helping to launch research-based endeavors in which the sky—and often beyond—is the limit.

12 | Hokies helping the world: Many make Ut Prosim their life’s work
From designing a website that collects donations for nonprofits to founding a home and school for boys in the Dominican Republic, countless Hokies are living the university’s motto, using the skills and spirit they learned at Tech to serve others across the globe.

18 | Kids’ Tech University: Shaping the future of science
Unmasking mysteries such as the impact of pollution on alligators and how computer programs work is all part of a program sponsored by the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute and 4-H to engage youngsters in science and mathematics.

20 | Student researchers: Breaking the mold in pursuit of knowledge
A group of students trek to Ecuador to study agriculture; another student explores the role of ethnicity in punk rock culture. Find out how our students are opening new doors when it comes to undergraduate research.

25 | Recovering the past may shed light on the future
A collaboration between Virginia Tech and Christiansburg Institute Inc. seeks to preserve a piece of regional history at the site of a former New River Valley black institute.

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For alumnus Mark Richardson (architecture ’79), creating the blueprint for business models is as creative a process as developing one for a building.

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Cover: Virginia Tech SANREM CRSP project in Bolivia, photo by Mirco Penaranda, graduate student, University of Missouri
Alumnus recalls cheerleading days


The cheerleading squad photo you posted was the 1952-53 squad. If you will look in the 1952 Blue you will see the first cheerleading squad that had girls on it. I was the head cheerleader and was the one who brought girls on the squad for the first time in the fall of 1951, my senior year. I can only tell you that it took a whole lot of work to get approval for the girls.

We only had four girls approved. One was Meta Ann Chestnut, later married to Glenn Oxley. The four girls did a fantastic job that first year. You can’t imagine the hours of training we had to undergo to make the girls fit in. I will say that I remember Meta as she was so cooperative and worked so hard.

Please send my condolences to Glenn Oxley on Meta’s passing. My wife, Janice, and I met at Tech in the fall of 1952. We have been married 56 years last June. I am so grateful to Tech for her coming to get her master’s.

Bill Letcht (’52)
Jupiter, Fla.

Barry Whyte
Assistant Editor

Correction

Let us think that the tectonic plates have shifted dramatically, depositing Switzerland overtop Sweden, please be assured that the identification of Switzerland on the map on page 40 of the fall 2009 issue of Virginia Tech Magazine is misplaced. We apologize for any problems this error may have caused. —Editor

Director named for Center for the Arts

Ruth Walkers, former di- rector of artistic initiatives at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland, assumed duties in September as the executive director of Virginia Tech’s Center for the Arts.

Walkers has overall responsibility for the programing and the operation of the center, a yet-to-be-built complex of new and renova- ted facilities that will house a 1,300-seat performance hall; a visual arts gallery; and teaching and research spaces that will include a creative technologies lab, a collabora- tive performance lab, and a communications studio.

Inspiriting “inspiring articles” in the works

Virginia Tech Magazine is making plans for a new series of articles that focus on outstanding faculty members, and we want to hear your views on what the selection criteria should be. Please send your ideas to Editor, Virginia Tech Magazine, 105 Media Building (0109), Blacksburg, VA 24061, or via e-mail to emil@vtmag.com. We hope to hear from you soon.

Michael Badawy
Pamplin professor lifetime achievement award

Virginia Tech ranked 46th among 679 universi- ties in 2008, according to the just-released National Science Foundation rankings, which is based on research expen- ditures for the fiscal year (FY) ending June 30, 2008. Rankings lag a year behind reported expenditures. The university reported $373.3 million in expendi- tures for FY 2008, an increase of less than $7 million over FY 2007, when Virginia Tech ranked 42nd with $366.9 mil- lion. Due to budget shortfalls, state research funds were phased back significantly in FY 2008 after helping to launch several research initiatives, such as infectious disease and nanotechnology research.

Engineering ranked No. 1 for industry workforce recruiting

Aviation Week & Space Technology magazine has named the College of En- gineering the No. 1 school in the country for industry workforce recruiting. The top ranking is a first for the col- lege in the magazine’s annual Workforce Study of Aviation and Defense.

In recent years, the college ranked either No. 2 (2007) or No. 3 (2008), behind Pennsylvania State University, and the University of Illinois. This year, however, Virginia Tech outranks Penn State, Purdue, and California Polytechnic University, which tied for second place.
Around the Drillfield

Virginia Tech Magazine

College of Engineering programs, on Virginia Tech’s aerospace and mechanical engineering student engagement. announcing the award to 10 students for its first-ever Noble Prize in Economics, has been named the National College Reporter of the Year by the Associated Collegiate Press.

Collegiate Times reporter named College Reporter of the Year

College Times writer Caleb Fleming, a junior majoring in economics, has been named the National College Reporter of the Year by the Associated Collegiate Press.

The top college reporter in the country award is the highest individual honor for a collegiate journal. It includes $500, courtesy of the McClatchy Tribune Information Services.

Fleming competed against students from Harvard and Yale universities in the four-year college category. The awards were announced Nov. 1 at the National College Media Convention in Austin, Texas. More than 2,200 college journalism students and advisors attended the 2009 convention.

Although the study focuses on Virginia Tech’s aerospace and ocean engineering department, the aviation and defense industries recruit from all College of Engineering programs, says Chris Hall, who heads the aerospace and ocean unit.

Nobel Prize winner has Tech connection

The first woman to win a Nobel Prize in economics is a researcher for a Virginia Tech-managed international program. Eliana Ostrom has won a share of the 2009 prize based on her work on how community institutions can prevent conflict. The 40th Nobel Prize goes to Ostrom, a researcher for the Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program (SANREM CRSP), managed by Virginia Tech’s Office of International Research, Education, and Development.

Ostrom shares the $1.4 million prize with Oliver Williamson, a professor in the graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley. In announcing the award on Oct. 12, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences cited Ostrom “for her analysis of economic governance, especially the commons.”

Ostrom is the principal investigator for SANREM CRSP on how government policy reforms do not automatically translate into new property rights for forest users or show clear benefits to the environment.

VBI receives $27 million for infectious disease research

On Oct. 12, 2009, Ninth District Congressman Rick Boucher joined senior Virginia Tech officials to announce the award of approximately $27 million from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute at Virginia Tech.

The five-year, $27 million contract from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, part of the NIH, is the largest one-time federal award in the history of Virginia Tech. The funding will be used by the CyberInfrastructure Group to support infectious disease research across the globe, namely to integrate vital information on pathogens, provide key resources and tools to scientists, and help researchers to analyze genomic, proteomic, and other data arising from infectious disease research.

Engineering extends partnership with Fujitsu

The College of Engineering and Fujitsu America extended their alliance agreement through the 2012 academic year.

In April 2006, the college announced that it would require its entering freshmen to purchase convertible tablet PCs. This type of PC has all of the functionality of a laptop and the additional capability to act as a notebook for pen-based input.

A month later, the college announced its decision to partner with Fujitsu and Microsoft to support its new PC requirement. At the time, Glenda Scales, associate dean of engineering, said the decision was based on price, weight, service, screen size, and years of experience with tablet PCs. Today, Scales remains in agreement with this original assessment after seeking competitive proposals from a number of vendors for a new three-year alliance.

Grad student wins Outstanding Commitment Award

Sarah Swenson, a Virginia Tech graduate student in urban and regional planning, has received a 2009 Outstanding Commitment Award from the Graduate Student Senate.

Swenson received one of 78 grants bestowed by the organizations to support innovative, high-impact commitments to action designed to strengthen communities and lives around the world.

Swenson plans to develop an ecological sanitation project at a secondary school in Nakuru, Kenya. The sanitation system would create employment, improve the community’s health, lower rates of pollution, and create access to sanitation. It would also teach students about the benefits of recycling their waste into nutrients.

Graduate School enrollment reaches new heights

Virginia Tech’s Graduate School has its largest class, enrolling a total of 6,947 students all campuses. This milestone continues a growth trend, a goal of the university’s strategic plan, that has climbed steadily since 2005.

According to Karen P. DePauw, vice president and dean of graduate education, 4,114 master’s students and 2,833 doctoral students are enrolled. This growth highlights the consistent and steady increase in doctoral students, who now comprise more than 40 percent of the Graduate School community. Overall, graduate students constitute 22.5 percent of the total Virginia Tech student population.

X.J. Meng

Meng named to National Institutes of Health study section

X. J. Meng, a professor in the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, has been appointed as a permanent member of the prestigious virology study section of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

In this role, Meng will review grant proposals made to the NIH virology study section and make recommendations for funding. The NIH is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Visit www.vtmagazine.vt.edu/ to learn more about current happenings at Tech, such as:

Dennis Hong honored among Popular Science’s “Brilliant 10 of 2009”

Professors learn about higher education needs in Iraq

Researchers invent world’s smallest antenna

Green practices and hotels: A gap in consumer attitudes and behavior

Doctoral student reaches out to area refugee girls with after-school program

Pamplin College and Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine launch dual-degree program
The report card gives detailed information for hundreds of college campuses nationwide. It rates individual programs and areas, such as transportation, food and recycling, and student involvement. These ratings determine the institution’s overall sustainability grade.

The programs available at Virginia Tech through the Alternative Transportation unit on campus, such as the carpool program; Bike, Bus, and Walk; fare-free boarding for Blacksburg Transit; discounted Smart Way Bus passes; and, most recently, UCar Share, raise the bar for sustainable transportation in Blacksburg.

Mining engineering to lead ventilation study

Virginia Tech’s Department of Mining and Minerals Engineering has received a $1.24 million, five-year contract from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health to study the effects of roof falls, bumps, or explosions on underground mine ventilation systems.

Kray Luxbacher, an assistant professor in the department, is serving as principal investigator for the study. She will be supported by Saad Ragab, a professor in the Department of Engineering Sciences and Mechanics; Robert Boggess, a research associate; and Harold McNair, professor emeritus in the Department of Chemistry, who brings expertise in gas chromatography and computational fluid mechanics to the interdisciplinary project.

The project, titled “Development of a Method for the Remote Characterization of Underground Mine Ventilation Controls by Multiple Tracer Gases,” will use gas tracers as a means of remotely ascertaining information about ventilation control systems following a mine collapse or explosion.

Architecture programs among nation’s best

Virginia Tech’s undergraduate landscape architecture program, part of the School of Architecture + Design in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies, ranks No. 1 in North America in the 11th annual America’s Best Architecture and Design Schools study by DesignIntelligence on behalf of the Design Futures Council.

The university’s graduate landscape architecture program ranks No. 2 in North America, behind Harvard University. The master of landscape architecture program is offered both in Blacksburg and in the National Capital Region.

Mitchell enrolled at Virginia Tech in 1997 as a member of Echo Company. He earned a ROTC scholarship after his freshman year and rose in the ranks to become the executive officer of Golf Company during his senior year. He was also a member of the German Club and Ring Design Committee and served as the male member-at-large for the Class of 2001.

As a company executive officer, Seth played a key role in the training of the members of the Class of 2004 during their demanding first year in the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets. I vividly remember that he was an enthusiastic cadet and that he always had a big smile on his face,” said Maj. Gen. Jerry Allen, president of the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets. “Seth played a key role in the training of the members of the Class of 2004 during their demanding first year in the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets. I vividly remember that he was an enthusiastic cadet and that he always had a big smile on his face,” said Maj. Gen. Jerry Allen, president of the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets.

Mitchell is survived by his parents, Steve and Connie Mitchell, and his brother, Drew Mitchell, all of Cary, N.C., as well as two grandparents and several aunts, uncles, and cousins. His family has requested that donations be made to the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund in his memory. Col. Rock Roszak is associate director, Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Alumni Relations, and Maj. Carrie Cox is the executive officer, Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets.
CAREER Award winners often secure additional research grants and attract other types of recognition after they receive the prestigious CAREER Award. For example, Marc Edwards, from civil and environmental engineering, has since won the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation fellowship and garnered national headlines for exposing America’s deteriorating water infrastructure. Dennis Hong, from mechanical engineering, recently was named among the Popular Science “Brilliant 10 for 2009” and has been featured in top stories by The Washington Post and CBS News after leading a student team in rigging a dune buggy so that it can be driven by the blind.

However, not every CAREER award winner captures zinger headlines. Most are working on projects that the public doesn’t know about but soon will rely on just the same.

Learning nature, naturally

Taranjit Kaur is breaking new ground in studying the habitat life of chimpanzees. In the 2003 abstract of her $752,320 CAREER grant, Kaur, an assistant professor of biomedical sciences and pathobiology in the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, said that an understanding of natural wild habitats—rhythms, cycles, dangers, and magic—cannot be recreated in a sterile laboratory. Her solution? Take a high-tech lab to the wilds of Tanzania’s Mahale Mountains National Park. Such a successful effort is essential to her Bush-to-Base Bioinformatics program.

Kaur lived in the Tanzanian wild habitat of chimpanzees, along with her fellow researcher/husband and young daughter, for the better part of a year. There, she began studying how humans come in contact with chimpanzees and how viruses—respiratory colds for instance—can spread from human to ape. These animals have no immunity to human illnesses and could die.

The research required high-tech tools and a safe enclosure in which to work,
elementary school students, who in turn teach local which she passes on information to her classroom for a horizontal approach in vertical god-disciple approach of the in her teaching as well, eschewing the rundown.” she says, adding that no call for 911 adjust. You have what you have, and that's negligible. The Pennsylvania native is a first-generation college graduate, having chased bats from trees for fun as a child and worked in large animal research clin chased bats from trees for fun as a child and worked in large animal research clinic before she was old enough to drive. What the second generation of college students will accomplish, one wonders. What the second generation of college students will accomplish, one wonders.

Protecting satellites from the harshness of space

Launching a satellite into space isn’t adone deal. It’s more akin to teasing a featherweight boxer into the ring between Jake LaMotta and Sugar Ray Robinson. Once the satellite is in low Earth orbit (LEO), roughly an altitude of 100 to 400 miles, it spins around our planet at an astonishing 18,000 miles per hour. That amounts to 15 days and nights—vast changes in protection and as environmental monitoring. One of the great advantages of both AUVs and UAVs, Woolsey says, is that they can missions cheaper and with less risk to life and property.” That mission, coupled with scientific endeavors, will keep Woolsey, Stilwell, and other engineering faculty members who build unmanned vehicles busy for years to come.

To see a list of Virginia Tech’s numerous CAREER Award winners, go to www.vt.acm.org/oa. Steven Maysky is the college communications coordinator for the College of Engineering.

Diego Troya (left) calls his CAREER grant “huge” in developing a “robust toolbox.” At right, Troya (center) helps William Alexander (left) and Joshua Layfield set up simulations for their satellite-protection research.

Dan Stilwell (left) supervises the work of graduate student Brian McCarter on autonomous underwater vehicles.
Hokies helping the world:

Those who deck themselves in Hokie hues know that Hokie Spirit runs deep, and perhaps nowhere does one find this fact more pronounced than in the numerous Virginia Tech alumni and students who dedicate themselves to helping the world. For many Hokies, this means taking their service to the professional level, using the skills and spirit they learned on campus to serve others across the globe through careers built around humanitarian efforts. Regardless of what form the service takes, alumni and students are making good on their commitment to serve, instilled throughout their years at Virginia Tech.

Many make UT PROSIM their life’s work

\[\text{BY DENISE YOUNG}\]

Nicobuy.org: Funding philanthropy, one purchase at a time

Though Joe Casola, a triple major in chemistry, math, and biochemistry, and Kevin Eberling, a finance major, are still Virginia Tech seniors, they’ve managed to find the time between classes to establish Nicobuy.org, a nonprofit website funded by affiliate-link commissions with retailers ranging from Walmart to Amazon.

Here’s how the site works, according to Eberling: “Users go to Nicobuy.org and click on a retailer link before shopping online; after clicking on the link, the computer tells the retailer that the user was referred by Nicobuy.org.” When the user makes a purchase, a percentage of the profits go to Nicobuy. It’s the same system used by for-profit websites. The only difference is that the money raised by Nicobuy funds charitable causes.

Currently, proceeds from the site are divided between Green Empowerment, an organization that helps poor villages in developing countries build sustainable infrastructure to enable development and access to health care, education, and economic growth, and AsoFénix, a nongovernmental organization in Nicaragua. There, the money goes to such projects as installing electricity for five schools and five health centers, installing irrigation pumps, and establishing electrical grids to reach 300 homes.

Nicobuy.org didn’t come to fruition overnight. Both Casola and Eberling admit that it took a lot of groundwork to get the site up and running; Eberling says the two often worked 60 hours a week during the development and design phase. And maintaining the site while still attending school has been a challenge, they admit.

“In the beginning of the year, before our launch when we were still working on the website design and the model, it was very difficult to juggle everything. Since the website design was finished, I’ve been able to put more time back into my course work,” says Casola.

“Some weeks I feel like I should have done more school work and other weeks I feel like I should have done more Nicobuy development. On the other hand, all of the help we’ve been getting from our new team members has been amazing,” says Eberling, who stresses a partnership with the Virginia Tech chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America as one form of assistance the organization has received, in addition to two computer science majors who’ve lent their skills to the project.

Though both students intend to pursue other endeavors after graduation—Casola is interested in intellectual-property law, and Eberling leans toward the corporate-finance sector—they all say they intend to continue their work with Nicobuy: “As long as it is continuing to help people, I see myself involved,” says Casola.
I have felt like a mother with a child all over, peranza to a type of motherhood because they really do have hope for their future and a good ethic mindset along with a strong understanding of how to live with others.

Global Goods Partners: Promoting women-led development

Cecilia Foxworthy (clothing and textiles '02) directs operations and marketing for Global Goods Partners (GGP), where she helps create artisan jobs and provides access to a global market for women from more than 22 countries. “My work gives women in developing countries the opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty and provide their families with better options,” she says.

Established in 2006, GGP provides market access to women in developing countries, allowing them to use artisan skills such as sewing, knitting, and jewelry making to help support themselves. It then supplies commercial avenues for selling these goods, including its website, www.globalgoodspartners.org, where customers can purchase anything from yoga bags and children’s toys to beaded jewelry making to help support themselves. The market access and technical assistance GGP provides to them is not only an income-generation opportunity, but is also a means to women’s empowerment and community improvement.

Foxworthy credits her experiences at the university with preparing her to do the work: “The degree program I pursued at Virginia Tech gave me the flexibility to carve my own path.”

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For Casola, Eberling, Foxworthy, McHale, and numerous other Hokies, Virginia Tech has been a great institution of learning for me and, more importantly, a great community for me to learn from.”

The Office of International Research, Education, and Development (OIRED) is an unusual unit at a university. The office leverages the assets of a large, land-grant university, in particular its knowledgeable faculty, to improve life in developing countries.

The arrangement is win-win: the large agencies that provide the funding, such as USAID, get the expertise of Virginia Tech professors in helping them solve development problems, and the professors get opportunities to conduct research and share the results, both here and abroad.

A growing portion of OIRED projects focuses on post-conflict countries, such as Southern Sudan, Nepal, Haiti, and Liberia. “We’re trying to construct anew or re-construct what the conflict has wrought,” says Mike Bertelsen, associate director of OIRED and associate dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. OIRED’s current portfolio of $64 million allows it to carry out an array of projects across the globe.
in the soil destroyed the eggplant crop several years ago, the results were devastating. Through an OIRED-managed project, women throughout the affected area have been learning to graft a high-yielding variety of eggplant onto a variety that is resistant to the soil-borne scourge of bacterial wilt. The grafting provides income for the women, who can now purchase milk for their children and send them to school. Their work allows farmers to continue growing eggplant. This project is one of many under the Integrated Pest Management Collaborative Research Support Program.

Re-creating agriculture in Southern Sudan
Faculty members are working with two regional universities in Southern Sudan to develop new programs in agriculture and natural resource management. Since the region recently emerged from nearly a half century of civil war that killed or displaced millions and destroyed nearly all educational infrastructure, it desperately needs an educational structure in place to train the next generation of agricultural teachers, extensionists, and researchers. “The challenges are enormous, but the natural resources are there. It’s an incredibly rich area, and the people we’ve worked with are highly motivated. They really want to develop their country and put it on the road to prosperity,” says Bertrams, principal investigator on the project.

Saving the eggplant crop in Bangladesh
In rural Bangladesh, eggplant is a dietary staple and an important income-earning crop. When a disease

Developing conservation agriculture in Haiti
Everyday challenges are enormous in Haiti’s central plateau. Severe soil degradation, high erosion rates, and soils with declining water-holding capacity make growing crops difficult, producing the lowest yields in the western hemisphere. Faculty members from Virginia Tech are working with experts at Zanmi Agrikol (affiliated with Partners in Health, the Paul Farmer organization), Caritas Hinche (a Catholic nongovernmental agency), the State University of Haiti, and the Haitian Ministry of Agriculture to develop conservation agriculture in the area. According to Theo Dillaha, director of the Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program (SANREM CRSP), which oversees the managed project, “Conservation agriculture is farming that does three things: it minimizes tillage of the soil, maintains a continuous organic cover year-round, and includes crop rotations.” Such practices restore soil fertility and reduce erosion, and agriculture becomes more resistant to climate change, thereby improving one facet of life in the central plateau.

Creating conservation professionals in Nepal
In Nepal, forests harbor unique biodiversity and play a vital role in the economy of rural communities. OIRED, along with Yale University and Principia College, is creating the Memorial Center of Excellence at the country’s Institute of Forestry that will develop the next generation of conservation professionals in the resource-rich country. The center will serve as a memorial to 24 national and international conservation experts who were killed in a helicopter crash in Nepal in 2006. As the birthplace of community forestry—the practice of organizing the use of forest resources around the needs of a community—Nepal is an appropriate site for this project. “Students are learning to work in community and not only be better stewards of the land, but also be socially inclusive, a critical skill in highly stratified Nepali society,” says Tom Hammett, professor of forestry and partnership director for the project.

Helping hippos in Zambia
Drought, deforestation, and farming are threatening the deep-water habitat of hippos in Zambia. Under a SANREM project, Conrad Heatwole, a Virginia Tech professor of biological systems engineering, is studying how agriculture, commerce, and tourism affect water supply and, in turn, wildlife in Zambia’s South Luangwa National Park. The techniques Heatwole is using are also being applied in the Andean region of Bolivia and Ecuador to combat poor practices in farming, grazing, and forestry. On both continents, the goal is to teach farmers how to make a living without threatening biodiversity and natural resources.

Re-establishing forest communities in Liberia
A 14-year civil war in Liberia threatened to eradicate one of its major resources: the largest contiguous forest block in West Africa. The forest is a critical biodiversity hotspot that is integral to the livelihood of local people. Through a Virginia Tech-led program, Liberian government officials are learning to balance the needs of forest conservation, community forestry, and commercial forestry.

Through these projects and others, OIRED is changing lives in developing countries worldwide.
Many experts agree that children need to be introduced early to the excitement of science, technology, engineering, and math if the United States is to remain competitive in the global scientific community. A new program at Virginia Tech that takes that need to heart, engaging children with science by showing them how exciting and fun it can really be. Kids’ Tech University (KTU) offers youths between the ages of 9 and 12 inspiring lectures, stimulating hands-on activities, and complementary online educational experiences.

Sponsored principally by the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute (VBI) and Virginia Cooperative Extension’s 4-H Youth Development Program, KTU is the first educational program of its type offered in the United States. Reinhard Laubenbacher, VBI professor and deputy director of education and outreach, discovered the original concept in a German newspaper article. Says Laubenbacher, “Hundreds of children have been attending individual lectures on science on the weekend at universities around Germany, which speaks volumes for the program and the enthusiasm of the kids. I wanted to see if we could build something similar in the United States.”

After talking to the German project founders, Laubenbacher and his team put the necessary infrastructure into place, and kids enrolled for a semester of KTU. “We had a huge response from parents and children interested in the program and quickly realized that we were tapping into a significant educational need,” says Laubenbacher.

KTU students attended lectures in a campus lecture hall, had lunch in campus dining facilities, and tackled hands-on activities that built on lecture concepts. A key feature of KTU is that the fun and excitement of the university experience continues through an online lab component, which includes activities that promote a continued interest in the lecture topics and a forum to promote discussion and teamwork.

Says Cathy Surphin, 4-H associate director of youth development, “Through hands-on learning, KTU participants apply the ideas presented during lectures and explore other avenues. By connecting youth to the university, we increase the chances that they will not only choose a STEM [science, technology, engineering, and math] field but that they will also consider attending Virginia Tech.”

KTU students heard scientists relate engaging stories about their research. Keith Devlin, known as “The Math Guy” on National Public Radio and co-founder and executive director of Stanford’s Human and Scien-ces and Technologies Advanced Research Institute, kicked off proceedings in January 2009, answering the question “Why are there animals with spotted bodies and striped tails but no animal with a striped body and a spotted tail?” In subsequent months, Caitlin Kelleher (computer science ’98), assistant profes- sor of computer science and engineering at Washington University in St. Louis, explained why some computer programs can be so frustrating, and Louis Guillette, professor and director of the Howard Hughes Group Advanced Training of Research Program at the University of Florida, described how he wrestles alligators in the Florida swamps to study the effects of environmental contaminants on wildlife. The first semester ended with an up-close look at what it would take to live on Mars, the lecture topic of Phil Christ- tensen, Regents Professor and the Ed and Helen Koerick Professor of Geological Science at Arizona State University.

“The first semester of KTU was made possible due to contributions by many volunteers from the Virginia Tech community and beyond,” says Laubenbacher. “Without their help, we would not have been able to put on an event of this scope, and their assistance going forward will be a key part of our success.”

“We have a huge response from parents and children interested in the program and quickly realized that we were tapping into a significant educational need,” says Reinhard Laubenbacher of VBI.

January 2010. “This semester, KTU has a partnership with Tazewell County Public Schools and Tazewell 4-H to reach and involve economically disadvantaged students and their parents with the KTU program,” says Kristy DiVittorio, VBI’s co-principal investigator on the project. An additional component of the program will encompass training teachers from around Virginia, providing them with opportunities to acquire Continuing Educa-tion Units to advance their professional career development. Kathleen Jamison, Extension specialist for 4-H Youth Development, will spearhead this initiative.

New and returning children will tackle questions like “What is the smallest thing a person can see?” and “Why can’t humans walk on water and climb walls with their fingertips like spiders?” Harvey Mudd College Mathematics Professor Arthur Benjamin, who has appeared on The Today Show, CNN, and National Public Radio, will demonstrate his mixture of mathematics and magic, which he calls “mathemagics,” and explain how to mentally solve complex math problems faster than a calculator. Returning KTU lecturer Louis Guillette will explain why alligators are important to the swamps and what they can tell us about the world in which we live.

“We have something special here,” says Laubenbacher, “which I would like to see take root across the country. We can provide virtual resources that will make it possible for other universities to set up their own KTUs across the United States. In this way, I believe we could take a big step forward for the future of science in this country.”

Barry Whyte is the strategic and research communications officer for the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute.
Whether it’s discovery-based creativity, such as an architecture student designing a solar house, or the hands-on engineering experiences offered by the Ware Lab, students across the university are engaging in research in its many faces and forms.

**Agriculture in the Andes**

In summer 2009, Lindsay Hall and Jess Martin trekked to Ecuador with a group of undergraduates to help rural villagers improve their farming techniques. After two weeks of intensive Spanish language courses, the group set off into the Andes Mountains, where they interviewed local farmers about their participation in workshops given by the Ecuadorian ministry of agriculture, dairy, water, and fisheries.

The students’ role was to determine how farmers were using the methods discussed in the workshops, but it was also an experience in cultural discovery.

Some 46 percent of seniors who graduated in May 2009 had participated in undergraduate research, according to Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education Daniel Wubah.

Part of the reason for such a high percentage is that research is not confined to the sciences but also encompasses other fields, such as the fine arts and architecture. In the non-science fields, research often takes the form of what Wubah calls “discovery-based creativity”: in other words, students learn by creating or designing original works in their field.

In Wubah’s opinion, research of all kinds should be a key component of education. “One of my primary goals is that all undergraduate students will have the opportunity to be engaged in these sorts of experiences,” he says. And his office has taken steps to ensure that undergraduate research will continue to grow as part of the undergraduate experience.

Whether his whole career has focused on finding the connection between social, environmental, and economic issues,” says Hall, an environmental policy and planning senior. “The most important thing the internship taught her, she says, was that people are willing to make changes to help the environment if you give them an economic incentive. “They’re so dependent on the environment that they’re willing to take steps to protect it.”

Martin, a senior majoring in geography, crop and soil environmental sciences, and environmental policy and planning, says the internship was the perfect opportunity to combine her interests in language, agriculture, and travel. “For me, it was like all of the different parts of my life just came together.”

Martin’s long-term career goal is to focus on highland agriculture in Nepal, where Tibetan refugees and the poorest Nepalese compete for land use. “When something happens that’s unfair, especially with respect to people’s livelihoods—the land and markets they...
Understanding autism

When Susan White, a psychology professor in the College of Science, offered Rose Nevill an opportunity as an independent evaluator in a treatment study focused on teenagers with autism, it was the end of a search for Nevill. “I wanted to find some research experience because I am applying to graduate schools,” says Nevill, a senior psychology major.

For Nevill, the position blends her desire for research experience with her interest in treatment options for people with autism and intellectual disabilities. Her role is to evaluate study participants as they begin the 12-week cognitive-behavioral therapy program and then re-evaluate them at the end of the study to determine if the treatment has helped them. All of the participants have high-functioning autism, which means that they attend school and can speak and communicate. Still, because of their autism, they often have high anxiety and struggle in situations ranging from approaching new people to school performance to specific phobias.

Nevill sits down with each participant and tries to identify which issues cause them the most stress. Then, graduate students counsel the teenagers based on her findings. “It made me realize that treatment is specifically an area I want to go into as a profession. Before I was unsure about that path,” says Nevill of the experience. She says having a mentor like White has really helped her navigate the waters between undergraduate studies and pursuing graduate work. “Dr. White’s also been a great mentor to me. She’s given me a lot of help in applying to graduate schools. She really trusted me with the role of independent evaluator, nor something you’d usually give to an undergraduate, so she really gave me some great opportunities.”

From paper to practice

Corey McCalla, a fifth-year architecture student, is a perfect example of how students can put theory into practice and put terminology to use in their research endeavors. McCalla served as a lead student on the Lumenhaus project, in which students from four Virginia Tech colleges designed and built a solar house.

McCalla worked on an interdisciplinary team whose skills encompassed architecture, landscape architecture, industrial design, computer science, engineering, and business. He also worked with professionals in the field, such as those from companies sponsoring the program, architects, and lighting specialists. “The joy of working on the project was that I got to work with and learn from people in so many different fields,” he says.

The house was entered in the Solar Decathlon in Washington, D.C., in fall 2009, where the team was among 20 others from around the world whose houses were judged on various criteria, including architecture, engineering, market viability, and net metering (the amount of power the panels produced in excess of the home’s requirements).

The team was also selected as the only U.S. team to participate in the Solar Decathlon Europe competition in June 2010. After graduating in May, McCalla will follow the solar house to Madrid for the competition. Though he does not know whether he will attend graduate school or seek a job in the architecture field after that, he’s glad for the experiences he’s gained through the project. “I’ve been part of the project from start to finish, which gives me a foot in the door or a jump start. I’ve also met professionals and seen what that world is like. That gives me a significant advantage.”

The Undergraduate Research Institute

Established in 2005, the Undergraduate Research Institute (URI) in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences (CLAHS) reflects a desire to promote and facilitate the research endeavors of undergraduates in the college.

“In every career there are forms of research,” says Diana Ridgwell, URI director. “Learning how to think critically and analytically helps students no matter what field they’re in. It helps them come full circle with their learning.”

The URI facilitates research by offering courses and by helping to match students with faculty mentors, promoting undergraduate involvement in faculty-led studies, and providing grants to aid students in their endeavors.

Rana Fayez, a senior communication major, has benefited from the resources offered by the institute. In addition to an Undergraduate Research Diversity Grant from the Center for Academic Enrichment and Excellence, Fayez received a $500 URI grant to pursue co-cultural research on the role of minorities in punk rock culture. She visited cities such as New York and Washington, D.C., to conduct interviews and eventually presented her findings with her faculty mentor, Edd Sewell, at the Undergraduate Research Conference on campus and at the Popular Culture Association in the South Conference in Wilmington, N.C.

“I was really interested in the ethnography behind the music,” Fayez says, adding that punk rock is a personal interest of hers. “It was a very validating experience to explain my experiences in more academic terms.” Fayez says that a breakthrough moment for her came during a class taught by Ridgwell on research methods. “I learned through the class that it’s OK to do research because you’re trying to learn more about yourself, as long as it will also help others.”

“I was really interested in the ethnography behind the music,” Fayez says, adding that punk rock is a personal interest of hers. “It was a very validating experience to explain my experiences in more academic terms.”

Rana Fayez

Virginia Tech Magazine Winter 2009-10
The Ware Lab: Revolutionizing undergraduate education

Whether it’s designing submarines and racecars or building bridges, the Joseph F. Ware Jr. Advanced Engineering Lab—commonly called the Ware Lab—makes it possible for undergraduate students to apply what they’ve learned in the classroom—and to gain some “real world” experiences along the way.

Established in 1998, the Ware Lab currently houses 14 student-led research projects. The facility is devoted solely to projects led and managed by undergraduates in the College of Engineering. With 10,000 square feet of workspace, the Ware Lab consists of bays and a computer-aided design lab that allow students to complete most of their projects on site instead of sending parts from other students, with juniors often shadowing seniors who worked on the same part of the project the year before.

The Baja SAE team designs a single-seat, off-road buggy to compete in international competitions. "Since everything is built-in house, we really learn a lot about the manufacturing side of things," he says.

The institute’s past

The close of the Civil War left hundreds of former slaves and their children with freedom but little opportunity. Blacks had been denied education, and now, thirsting for it, they crowded into one-room schools established and run by people who knew that education was the key to success.

Christiansburg Institute, founded in 1866, was one of those schools. Initially called the Hill School, it was operated by Charles S. Schaeffer, a white ex-Union officer working with the Friends’ Freedmen’s Association (FFA) of Philadelphia. This one-room school and a sister school in the district served 300 black students. To accommodate so many students, Schaeffer and the FFA, a Quaker organization, raised funds for additional school buildings, giving birth to Christiansburg Institute.

Booker T. Washington, founder and principal of Tuskegee Institute, became CI’s supervisor in 1895. Washington promoted peaceful race relations in addition to black pride, group support, and vocational training. Under his watch, the school evolved into the Christiansburg Industrial Institute. The curriculum was both academic and vocational, offering such courses as English, math, history, and Bible, as well as cooking, sewing, carpentry, and animal husbandry.

Growing tired of seeing their alma mater fade away, a group of Christiansburg Institute (CI) alumni joined forces in 1976 to save the last three buildings standing. The skeleton of the two-story, Georgian brick building, known as the Edgar A. Long Building, is the outstanding remaining physical evidence of CI and the century of education it provided for the region’s African Americans.
By 1924, the industrial institute was a state-accredited high school, but the local public school board did not assume responsibility for its operation until 10 years later. In 1947, “Industrial” was dropped from the name, and Christiansburg Institute joined Virginia’s segregated public school system.

Although the Supreme Court had ruled segregation unconstitutional in 1954, it took the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the threat of withdrawing federal funds to spur Virginia to react. Rather than integrate CI, the school board abandoned it. Much of the campus was auctioned off, the remaining land was set aside for the building of a desegregated Christiansburg High School.

Preserving and promoting a legacy

Preventing the wrecking ball from crashing through the Long Building, now a Virginia Historic Landmark, was the first organized effort to preserve CI. That effort continues to gain momentum, thanks to the work of Christiansburg Institute Inc. (CII), a nonprofit organization founded in 1996 to “preserve and promote the historic Christiansburg Institute through enacting its legacies of education, service, and excellence.” CII is now working with local governments and universities to reopen Christiansburg Institute—as a museum, archive, and community learning center. “The hope for the institute is that it will be integrated into the community in a meaningful way,” says Elaine Carter, CII executive director.

The school board may have closed CI’s doors to avoid integration, but today, integration will reopen those doors. CII is working with Virginia Tech, Radford University, the towns of Christiansburg and Blacksburg, and Montgomery County to become an asset to the present and future community.

The ant and the elephant

The relationship between Virginia Tech and CII began in 1992 and continues to evolve, with CII moving from the university’s peripheral vision into clearer focus during the past two years. “You can only be a partner when there is mutual interest, when there is mutual gain,” says Carter. “If you look at it as the ant and the elephant, what is it that we have to offer?”

Virginia Tech sees an opportunity for engagement, an integral part of its mission as a land-grant university. Early ties to CII involved the university’s Service Learning Center and several professors in the College of Arts and Sciences (now the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences). These ties still exist, but the university is also finding areas of activity that not only meet the needs of that community asset [CI] but also inform the scholarship and advance the strategic interest of the university,” says John Dooley, vice president of Outreach and International Affairs. “From our standpoint, we would like to see ways in which our students can be actively involved in both teaching and learning at CI—for it to become a laboratory for our students. I see loads of opportunity for service learning.”

Associate professors of history Dan Thorp and Tom Ewing, involved in the collaborative efforts, have observed the opportunities CI makes available to students assisting with the research and archiving. “This department is beginning to provide some training for our students who are interested in going into public history for a career,” says Thorp, who chairs the department. “We’d like to provide them with the opportunity for more hands-on experience. That’s one element of our partnership.”

The collaboration provides CI with university resources, contacts, and expertise as Virginia Tech makes available resources that CI would otherwise not have access to. “The weight of Virginia Tech taking an interest in us escalates us,” says Carter. “It’s a breakthrough of university-community relationships. The relationship has to stand up against time. It has to engage enough energy that it will be an appropriate and legitimate thing for the university to do.”

Answers for the future

Christiansburg Institute’s lifelong legacies—intergenerational learning, individual fulfillment, responsible and active citizenship, equality, and justice—are ideals to still aspire to. “Elaine has been very consistent in always wanting to address those larger issues and pursue those larger questions,” Ewing says. “She sees the project not only as preserving the memory of that particular institution, but using it also as an example of these larger processes having to do with race, opportunity, equality, justice.”

“How do you get people who have been enslaved and brutalized to become the kind of citizens the United States has today?” Carter asks. “How do you get that? How do you get people to cope with who they are at the same time that the world is oppressing them because of who they are?”

“These are the kinds of questions Christiansburg Institute has answers to. These are the kinds of questions that we believe can deal with most marginalized people, whether they be in the trailer park, whether they be ex-felons, whether they be immigrants, refugees, or lost. We know how to suffer and somehow not become totally destructive.” Carter pauses. “These are the kinds of things CI can bring to communities.”

“Christiansburg Institute’s second century is dedicated to more than just its past. It may hold some answers to questions of the present—and of the future.”

Kelsey Lequick, is a senior majoring in interdisciplinary studies.
Architecture grad combines flare for design with business leadership

BY DENISE YOUNG

For Mark Richardson (architecture ’79), a zest for the creative and a passion for design aren’t confined solely to the realm of architecture. As a leader in the remodeling industry, Richardson co-chairs Case Design/Remodeling Inc., a local remodeling company in the Washington, D.C., area, and Case Handyman Services, a business with more than 40 franchises nationwide. He works extensively with the Case Institute of Remodeling, an education- and training-based institute focused on the remodeling industry. In addition, Richardson is a regular columnist for two publications, author of a book on business success entitled How Fit is Your Business?, and a frequent guest speaker for organizations across North America.

Though Richardson built his first house at the age of 22 and has an extensive career in design and remodeling, these days he tends to direct his attention mainly to the business aspect of the industry. “I’ve focused more on designing in a business sense than on designing architecture,” he notes. “In architecture, people think of design as extremely creative. The same sort of creative thinking or creative circuits are used in developing a business, product, or service.”

His accolades, both for business and architectural design, are many and diverse, ranging from design awards to awards for leadership in the industry, including a 2006 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year in Real Estate and Construction award for the Maryland Region and a 2000 Harold Hammerman Spirit of Education Award for excellence in remodeling-industry education and training. He was recently inducted into the National Association of Home Builders’ Remodeling Hall of Fame, a significant milestone for someone in the prime of his career.

Among these honors is a Gold Award he received at the 31st Annual Awards Competition of the American Society of Business Publication Editors (ASBPE) in 2009. The ASBPE competition recognizes the outstanding work of business and professional magazine, newsletter, and Web editors and designers. Richardson pens a monthly column for Remodeling magazine that addresses industry-specific business issues, in addition to his writing for Smart Business Ideas.

The subject of Richardson’s columns varies, but it invariably involves business leadership. For example, a recent column focused on the use of analogies and metaphors in organizational communication. Others have focused on lessons in time management and the structuring of business meetings. “Because I’m living and breathing it every day, it’s not about examining the issue as an abstract. I’m talking about topics that are real time and relevant,” he says.

In addition to Richardson’s columns, his book is a detailed exploration of his knowledge of business design and leadership. In How Fit is Your Business? he draws parallels between physical fitness in terms of personal health and fitness in terms of business health. In writing the book, Richardson drew on his own observations about weight loss, exercise, and diets.

“In architecture, people think of design as extremely creative. The same sort of creative thinking or creative circuits are used in developing a business, product, or service.”

MARK RICHARDSON
"I realized that if you followed a certain diet or exercise regimen, you could get fit. Many of us know what it means to be physically fit, but I wondered if business owners knew what it meant for a business to be fit." The book, which fulfills his lifelong passion to write one, contains a 10-point “checkup” for business health, followed by prescriptions to improve a company’s fitness.

Writing and working for Case aren’t the only ways that Richardson serves the remodeling industry. He also was recently appointed to serve as liaison between the Remodeling Futures Board for Harvard University’s Joint Center for Housing Studies and the remodeling industry, serving as a bridge or conduit to the industry.

Though Richardson has served on the board — comprised of 40 industry leaders including people involved in manufacturing, distribution, and industry publications — for 15 years, he was recently appointed to a one-year role as a liaison between the industry and Harvard researchers who are studying it. He acts as a sounding board for the data they are researching and analyzing, providing his real-world experience to help them further understand the implications of their research by aligning their theoretical knowledge with his years of experience in the field.

For Richardson, the journey began with an inspirational high school teacher who taught architectural and mechanical design. When that teacher retired in Richardson’s junior year, his replacement was a shop teacher who felt unprepared to teach architecture. Recognizing Richardson’s passion and skill for the subject, the teacher asked him to student-teach the class, a task Richardson was eager to accept. These first steps into design and teaching paved the way, Richardson says, for his time at Tech.

“I think Virginia Tech gave me an incredibly strong foundation,” he says. “It was about teaching me how to think.” Richardson finds a reward with each new experience, whether designing, teaching, writing, speaking, as each offers the potential for professional growth. “The reality is that the only way to get out of a passage is to get out of your comfort zone. Speaking and teaching help you grow.”

Among Richardson’s many honors is a Gold Award he received at the 32nd Annual Awards Competition of the American Society of Business Publication Editors (ASBPE) in 2009. His book earned the award for a one-day ski trip.

Richardson’s recognition comes at the heels of many others. Of the many unique opportunities available to cadets during their time in the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets, perhaps the most sought after is the chance to represent the university and its corps at leadership conferences hosted by federal service academies and other senior military colleges. These annual conferences offer selected cadets remarkable exposure to guest speakers, conference mentors, and proven leaders in virtually every sector of American life as well as the chance to interact with some of the best and brightest students and faculty members from colleges and universities around the nation. Irrespective, cadets leave each conference with new friends, new perspectives, and memorable insights into the lifestyles of their peers at the host school.

Members of the commandant’s staff select the cadets who attend these events based on proven leadership performance and grade-point average. Consideration is also given to ROTC affiliation and roles in the corps. Normally, selection is limited to sophomores and juniors, and no cadet can attend more than one conference. Upon returning, each cadet gives a brief presentation to the rest of the corps on the basic conference themes; lessons learned; and, perhaps most popularly, reflections on the trials and tribulations of cadets at the host school.

Every conference focuses on some aspect of leadership, the processes for developing leaders of character, and fundamental ethical issues confronting leaders in the military and in public and private sectors. The events include a mix of guest speaker presentations and small group breakout sessions guided by senior faculty or guest mentors. Most of them end with a plenary session, where each seminar group summarizes its discussions and conclusions on the theme of the conference.

Cadets also have the opportunity to socialize and interact with students from their peer military institutions as well as institutions as diverse as small faith-based colleges, such as the College of the Ozarks, to major state schools, such as the University of Nebraska. At West Point conferences, Virginia Tech cadets live in barracks with their cadet hosts and take a Hudson River cruise; at Annapolis, they enjoy an incomparable seafood buffet at Buddy’s Crab House; at the Air Force Academy, they can opt for a one-day ski trip.

The Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets also sponsors its own leadership conference for representatives of federal service academies and senior military colleges. Held annually in early February, the conference highlights issues that run the gamut from minority recruiting to leadership training and from retention to alcohol abuse. The conference is the cornerstone of Military Weekend and culminates with the Senior Banquet and Military Ball.

The corps is committed to developing future leaders of character who are dedicated to service to country, commonwealth, and community. That development is a dynamic process, wherein exposure to contrary thought and the aggregative exchange of viewpoints are critical leavening ingredients. For Virginia Tech’s cadets, conferences that examine leadership and professional ethics are invaluable in understanding the challenges cadets will face after graduation and in meeting the people with whom they will shape solutions.

Lt. Col. Bill Stringer, USMC, is a deputy commandant of the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets.
When recruiting the best students and faculty, it’s important to make a good first impression. Donors are helping the university to do just that by supporting projects that will improve those areas of campus all visitors will likely see. Three recent examples are a new Visitor and Undergraduate Admissions Center, expected to open in 2011; an amphitheatre, which was completed last fall outside the Graduate Life Center; and a renovation to Carol M. Newman Library.

The Visitor and Undergraduate Admissions Center

Currently, a first stop for most visitors is likely to be the small, vinyl-sided welcome center on Southgate Drive, often followed by the Undergraduate Admissions office on the second floor of Burruss Hall. But by May 2011, one stop will do.

Work is scheduled to begin in February 2010 on a new facility that will be more convenient and will make a stronger impression on visitors and guests. The two-story, 18,155-square-foot Visitor and Undergraduate Admissions Center will be constructed on land that was once part of the campus golf course but has not been in use since construction of the nearby Inn at Virginia Tech & Skelton Conference Center. The new building will be constructed of Hokie Stone in the Collegiate Gothic style of many of Virginia Tech’s best-known buildings. Features will include a tower and a two-story, glass-atrium with views of the towers of Burruss Hall and Lane Stadium.

The Virginia Tech Board of Visitors approved plans for the new center in 2006. “We have a world-class university; therefore we need a world-class visitor center,” says Jim Severt, a member of the board who contributed $100,000 toward the project.

Larry Hincker, associate vice president for University Relations, will oversee the installation of interactive displays containing information on the university’s history, the life of its students, and Virginia Tech’s impact on the commonwealth in an exhibit hall of the new building. “We want to create not only a functional area, where people go to get their parking passes and begin to understand how to get to whatever office they need to get to, but also to have a very special Virginia Tech experience,” Hincker says.

Visitors will approach the information desk in an atrium that will occupy several thousand square feet, but Undergraduate Admissions will occupy a larger portion of the building. Hincker says it’s natural for that office to be present in a visitor center. “Many visitors coming to campus are prospective students or their families,” he explains.

The Graduate Life Center Amphitheatre

One of the busiest areas of campus has already been transformed by another project funded by donors. In October, university officials celebrated the opening of the Graduate Life Center Amphitheatre near the College Avenue entrance to Virginia Tech.

The $330,000 project features a small stage and fountain, both built of Hokie Stone. Between them is a seating area that will eventually be shaded by elm trees, a vast improvement over what was there before — a below-ground brick fountain that had not been turned on for a decade. The amphitheatre lies in the shadows of the Graduate Life Center at Donaldson Brown (GLC), Squires Student Centre, and Newman Library.

The Class of ’59 contributed the main gift for the project, which also received money from the Hokie Parents Fund and the Class of ’99. At a ribbon cutting for the amphitheatre, T.O. Williams, Class of ’59 reunion chair, said that he and his classmates also earmarked class-gift money to undergraduate education and the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets, “but we wanted to do some sort of brick-and-mortar project, and we also wanted to do something to honor graduate students.”

Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education Karen DePauw says the amphitheatre will help her school to “create a unique academic and social community centered at the GLC. But she also expects the amphitheatre to be used by undergraduates and the wider community.

Many of Blacksburg’s arts institutions are within a short walk of the amphitheatre. Portions of College Avenue and Draper Road near the GLC are sometimes closed for cultural events, such as the university’s International Street Fair and Blacksburg’s annual street festival, Steppin’ Out.

In theory, the amphitheatre can be used during events like those, as well as Graduate School functions, and it’s expected to be a popular gathering place on ordinary days as well. “I envision that I am going to look out my window and I’m going to be able to see people out here all the time,” DePauw said on the day of the ribbon cutting.

Newman Library improvements

While officials were cutting the ribbon to celebrate completion of the GLC amphitheatre, construction was going on at the university’s main library. What used to be the reference-desk area is being turned into a café that will seat 90 to 100 people.

The project is expected to be completed this spring.

“This is an exciting opportunity to provide students and faculty with a comfortable place to meet, study, and collaborate,” says Eileen Hitchingham, dean of University Libraries.

Tom and Ann Clark of Las Cruces, N.M., parents of Erin Clark Henry (biochemistry ‘01) and Lisa Ann Clark (communication ‘04), made a generous donation that helped get the renovation project off the ground, and money from several class gifts and the Parents Fund will also help, Hitchingham says.

Tom Clark says that he and his wife wanted to support a ‘central academic institution’ at the university. He believes that the café will help the library be even more appealing to students who have grown up in an era where bookstores typically have cafés and cafés routinely offer Internet access.

“If you want them to come to the library instead of sitting in their rooms on their computers, then there ought to be an environment at the library that draws them in,” he says.

The visitor center, the amphitheatre, and the library renovation are just a few examples of how donations can, literally, build a better university. Visit www.cam-paign.vt.edu/building for more examples. Albert Raboteau is a writer for University Development.
Ray Myers is a professor emeritus of statistics. Carol Beasley is a retired member of the U.S. Navy who works for the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets. Like many current and former employees, they have made Virginia Tech a better place through hard work and philanthropy. All together, employees like them have donated more than $45 million since The Campaign for Virginia Tech: Invent the Future began in 2003.

Beasley is an administrative assistant who works on the corps’ scholarship ceremonies every year. But 2007 was different. One of the scholarships honored her father, who had served in the Marines. “My mother knew that there was a different camaraderie there—so I wanted to do something that reflects what he stood for,” she says. “I was going to make a huge difference.”

“My beliefs about the Corps and Virginia Tech have been reinforced,” Beasley says. “I’ve been very impressed with the way they respond to tough economic times.”

“My older brother, Ken Beasley, was a senior enlisted member, says she didn’t know much about the Corps or Virginia Tech when she started working here but has been inspired by what she’s seen. “It gives you hope for the future, that our future is going to be okay, because we have great leaders coming out of here that are going to make a huge difference.”

Myers (chemical engineering ’59, M.S. statistics ’61, Ph.D. ’63) grew up in Charleston, W.Va., where the chemical industry was prominent. It made sense for him to get a degree in chemical engineering from Virginia Tech. But he graduated during tough economic times. “I didn’t know what to do,” he recalls. “I was just taking courses.”

“I liked chemical engineers,” Myers recalls of the founder of Virginia Tech’s statistics department. “I liked to do something that was going to make a difference.”

“Carroll Beasley’s gift provides a scholarship to an entering senior that has potential to be a statistician,” says Alex Milne, an assistant professor in the statistics department. “The Beasley Scholarship is an example of how students from different backgrounds support the Corps.”

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“He thought a lot of the corps and Virginia Tech,” says Myers. “He liked chemical engineers. He’d had some in his class. He said they had a fellowship in statistics, and my reaction was, ‘What is statistics?’

Harshbarger made space for Myers in his graduate program even though the young man had never taken statistics. His belief in Myers proved justified. Myers became a renowned expert in response surface methodology, an area of statistics that is widely used to develop new products, including pharmaceuticals. He has written six books that, combined, have gone through 16 editions and been translated into several languages.

After retiring in 1995, Myers returned to teach from 1997 until 2001 and again in 2006 and 2007. He has been the research advisor to more than 40 Ph.D. students but says he still feels compelled to do more for students entering his field. With that in mind, he recently endowed the Raymond H. Myers Fellowship Award to support graduate students in the area of statistics he helped pioneer. Lianoa Xu is the first recipient.

“By giving back, I have a chance to help give current students a chance like I had,” Myers says. “I think everybody should give back, but I felt like I owed a lot.”

Albert Rabideau is a writer for University Development.
An Interview with Kevin Leclaire

Q How are the members of the Alumni Association Board of Directors engaged in influencing the programs and services of the Alumni Association?

The Alumni Association Board of Directors is composed of alumni who bring diverse experience and insight from leadership roles across many different professions, including the government, military, and industry, as well as investment, legal and consulting firms, and nonprofit organizations. Tom Tillar and his very capable staff are responsible for the planning and day-to-day operations that make Virginia Tech’s alumni programs and services possible. Although the board has oversight and governance responsibilities, our main role is to help guide the long-term direction the Alumni Association takes. We provide advice and best practices from industry to the association staff to help them meet their goals and overcome challenges, and otherwise help as called upon. We also attend various programs on and off campus and take advantage of many of the services provided by the association. In doing so, we can serve as a focus group to evaluate and make suggestions for changes and possible improvements or additions. The staff is always receptive to our input.

Q What is your long-term vision for the Alumni Association will serve and benefit the university?

The Alumni Association is the principal means to keep Hokies connected to their alma mater, their fellow alumni, and the community. The Alumni Association provides crucial services to accomplish this, including maintaining alumni records (keep yours up to date at www.alumni.vt.edu); providing tools to keep Hokies affiliated with Tech, such as lifetime “@vt.edu” e-mail addresses and the Hokie Nation Network online tools to keep Hokies affiliated with Tech, such as lifetime “@vt.edu” e-mail addresses and the Hokie Nation Network online; managing the growth of an international presence and a support chapter network, so they can connect Hokies with each other and their local chapters. In particular, I would like to see many more alumni give back to their alma mater and opt to become career mentors to help our students and fellow alumni.

To read the full interview with Kevin Leclaire, visit www.vtmagazine.vt.edu.

Alumni Association Board of Directors

Alumni Association board ballot
The Alumni Association Board of Directors nominating committee has proposed the following nominees for election to three-year terms from 2010 through 2013. Please vote for up to 12 nominees and return the ballot by April 15, 2010. Results will be announced at the Alumni Association board meeting in late April.

- Lisa Carter Ellison ’86, Inverness, Ill., finance
- A. Jerome Fowlkes ’88, South Riding, Va., finance
- Kathleen Kyger Frazier ’04, Midlothian, Va., political science and agricultural and applied economics
- Hoda Koth ’86, New York, N.Y., communication
- W. Park Lemmond ’84, Petersburg, Va., business administration
- R. Easton Loving ’89, ’91, Fork Union, Va., forestry
- Aaron McClung ’00, Midlothian, Va., political science
- Nicholas J. Moga ’76, Covington, Va., aerospace and ocean engineering
- Brian C. Montgomery ’03, Princeton, N.J., industrial and systems engineering
- James P. O’Connell ’97, Downingtown, Pa., biochemistry
- Lance L. Smith ’68, Pinehurst, N.C., business administration
- Matthew M. Winston Jr. ’90, Athens, Ga., marketing

Write-in nomination

Signature

Return to: Virginia Tech Alumni Association
Holtzman Alumni Center (0102)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
In the fall of 2009, the Class of 2011 celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Virginia Tech ring tradition by premiering the 100th collection of rings in the university’s history. Since 1911, each Virginia Tech class has designed a ring distinctive and unique to the class. Today, Virginia Tech is one of only a few colleges and universities in the nation that designs a new and distinctive ring collection each year.

The redesign renews the tradition each year for a new group of Hokies. Alumni are proud of the elements that appear on each ring as they reflect on their time and experiences at Virginia Tech and preserve traditions. Though unique each year, the design always utilizes treasured symbols of the university. The earliest rings included the American eagle, crossed sabers, cannon, and stars that represent the military heritage of the university’s early years. As the agricultural and mechanical college evolved into a major university, the ring designs changed to reflect this transition. Additions to the designs have included campus landmarks, such as Burruss Hall (1940), the War Memorial Pylons (1958), HokieBird (1992), Torgersen Hall bridge (2002), and the April 16 memorial (2010). As a tribute to the ring’s 100th anniversary, the Class of 2011 was the first class to offer genuine Hokie Stone as a gem choice for the traditional ring.

Since 1991, each class ring collection honors a special person or couple selected by the class. The ring collection is named for the honoree(s), who are recognized at both Ring Premiere and Ring Dance, becoming part of a select few to have such a legacy. For this special 100th anniversary, the Class of 2011 honored Virginia Tech President Charles W. Steger ’69 and his wife, Janet Steger ’70. Premiere was held Oct. 13, 2009, in a packed Burruss Hall Auditorium.

The role of class sponsors has also been an important tradition with the ring program. At Premiere, the Class of 2011 recognized Jack Davis ’74, dean of the College of Architecture and Urban Studies, and Linda Davis ’73, nutrition educator at Schiffert Health Center, as their class sponsors.

For more information on Virginia Tech rings and to view all collections since 1911, visit www.alumni.vt.edu/classrings.

If you think our defense works hard, you’ll really enjoy our workforce.

For more information about expanding or relocating a business to the New River Valley*, visit www.nrva.us.

*The New River Valley is the region around Virginia Tech’s Blacksburg, VA campus.
Advocacy efforts were the key to the founding of the university we know today. The stakes in 1866 were high as Virginians urged members of the General Assembly to create a new separate agricultural and mechanical college to receive resources designated by the 1862 Morrill Land-Grant Act. At the time, the Richmond Dispatch dubbed the fight for the money the “War of the Colleges.” After a six-year legislative battle, the General Assembly passed legislation in March 1872 allocating the land-grant funds to two colleges, one-third to the Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute and two-thirds to the Preston and Olin Institute, which reorganized to create the new Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College.

Today’s advocacy efforts remain focused on elected officials, primarily members of the General Assembly and the governor, to provide sufficient state funds for higher education. In 1997, the Alumni Association, in coordination with the president’s office, began organizing Hokies for Higher Education to advocate for Virginia Tech. A year later, Hokie Day in the General Assembly was initiated, with alumni from across the commonwealth traveling to Richmond during the legislative session for briefings on the university’s top priorities before meeting with legislators in the General Assembly offices. Now, approximately 100 alumni and students participate in this annual event.

As Virginia looks to spur an economic rebound, it must strengthen and grow the commonwealth’s workforce to expand existing opportunities for businesses and create new jobs. Investing in higher education not only allows greater access to college, but also contributes to the state’s budget, as shown by a study released at the Higher Education Summit hosted by the Virginia Business Higher Education Council and the Grow by Degrees campaign (mentioned in the president’s message in the fall 2009 issue). According to one source, spending on public higher education supports 144,000 jobs and generates almost $24 billion in economic activity—nearly 6.2 percent of Virginia’s economy.

The 2010 Hokie Day is set for Feb. 3. E-mail govrel@vt.edu for more information or to sign up. Betty Lee represents the Alumni Association in Richmond and can be reached at bettylee@vt.edu. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Laura Fornash, director of state government relations, at fornasl@vt.edu.
We’ve got your back.

Insurance plans designed to help meet a lifetime of needs are available through the Virginia Tech Alumni Association Insurance Program. It is easy to apply for these affordable plans, which are ideally suited to meet the life and health insurance needs of graduating students, alumni and their families.

All of these plans are backed by prompt, courteous customer service. Call or visit our online to receive a personalized information kit with complete details and rates.

For a complete list of products, visit us online www.AlumniInsuranceProgram.com/vt 1-800-922-1245

VT Fan Ring
Like the coaches wear. Warm wool body with vinyl sleeves and quilted lining. Available in sizes 5 – 4XL $44

VT Fan Jacket
ed-cold weather with vinyl sleeves and quilted lining. Available in sizes 5 – 4XL $44

AlumniTerm®
Alumni group term life insurance. You will be covered all the time, anywhere, for death from illness or accident. Policies up to $250,000 are available to alumni under 60, and renewable to 75. AlumniTerm® is available in most states.

AlumniTerm 10/20®
Group 10- and 20-year level term life insurance. Policies up to $250,000 are available to alumni under 65. AlumniTerm 10/20® is available in most states.

Senior AlumniTerm®
Basic group term life protection available from age 60 to 74, renewable to age 85. Senior AlumniTerm® benefit amounts from $10,000 to $100,000 are available, including a living benefit for terminal illness.

AlumniTC®
Individual long term care insurance is valuable for alumni with assets to protect. It is available to age 84 for both alumni and their parents. You will be contacted by an experienced, knowledgeable representative, who will help you analyze your individual situation and determine whether AlumniTC® is right for you.

GradMed®
Short-term major medical protection, up to $2,000,000. New graduates, job seekers, and early retirees may need this economical, short-term alternative. GradMed® is available to alumni, spouses, children and grandchildren – with immediate enrollment based on fee and all health questions. Pre-existing conditions are excluded. GradMed® provides short-term coverage for 60 to 180 days. Subsequent policies may be available.

Auto & Home®
From other alumni who enjoy a discount on auto insurance. Liberty Mutual, an “A” Excellent rated company, offers auto, home and renter’s insurance.

ABOUT THE BOOKS

Books by alumni

White Vacation by Sarah Bowman
(English ’04) takes a glimpse into the life of Karin Redding, a woman in her late 20s who, while vacationing at a ski resort, falls head over heels for Noah Baker, a man she’s just met, and is faced with the choice of following her dreams or her heart.


In Nothing but Scandal, by Allegra Gray (M.A. English ’03), Elizabeth Medford seeks to avoid marriage to the vile, cruel Harold Wetherby, but her only hope is to secure the assistance of the reluctant Alex Bainbridge, Duke of Beaumont, in plotting her escape.

The publisher is Zebra Books, an imprint of Kensington Publishing Corp. (119 W. 40th St., New York, NY 10018); www.kensingtonbooks.com.

In the novel Gray Baby, by Scott Loring Sanders (English ’94), 16-year-old Chifton relieves his haunting past after he witnesses the kidnapping of a young girl, an event that causes him to seek the guidance of a man named Swamper—and to uncover the truth about his family and himself.

The publisher is Houghton-Mifflin Harcourt (222 Berkeley St., Boston, MA 02116); www.hmco.com.

In the novel Vapor Trails, by R.P. Siegel (mechanical engineering ’81, M.S. ’82) and Roger Saillant, a dark conspiracy haunts a senior executive who attempts to escape the burden of his past, regain self-respect, and open himself up to the potential of a new love.


From the Shenandoah to the Karanuka: the Story of Col. John Smith, His Descendants, and Their Ancestors, by Chris Smith (chemical engineering ’61), chronicles the story of the migration of the author’s ancestors to Virginia in the 18th century, including their struggles during both the French and Indian and the American Revolution wars.


Leaders in Motion, by M.C. Wilson (M.S. psychology ’89, Ph.D. psychology ’93), teaches leaders how to empower the leadership potential of everyone who contributes to collective goals.

80s

1981 Terence L. Conaway (EDSP) earned a PhD in Educational Research and Services at the University of Illinois College of Law (502 S. E. Chicago Ave., Chicago, IL 60611).

1982 Warren P. Adams (EDSP) received a PhD in Special Education from Virginia Tech (2601 Linn Street, Blacksburg, VA 24060).

1983 C. Randolph Wimbish III (MED) was listed in the Virginia Lawyers Directories (4950 Blanding Blvd, Jacksonville, FL 32216).

1984 Kimberly M. McInerney-Shanahan (FIN) is the managing director of FiduciaryXnet (1845 Forest Glen Dr., Leesburg, VA 20176).

1985 Amanda L. Serr (ART) completed her M.A. at Clarion University (3694 Fine Hall, Clarion, PA 16214).

1986 Catherine Beaudin Boszd (MED) received her doctorate from Catholic University, Columbus, Ohio (800 E. Capitol Ave., Washington, DC 20003).

1987 Gregory T. Wolford and Stephanie Renee Olm, 6/26/00 P.O. Box 91, Roanoke, VA 24018.

1988 Russell D. Woodard (MED) was named as an American Chemical Society Fellow (13208 Creek Dr., Amberley, MD 20861).

1989 Lisa McCallan (EDSP) received a PhD in Special Education from Virginia Tech (817 Linn Street, Blacksburg, VA 24060).

1990s

1991 James P. McGrath III (HIST) was listed as a recipient of the Robert H. Montgomery Endowment Award from Virginia Tech (160 Fieldstone Dr., Carlisle, PA 17015).

1992 Daniel H. Cole (BAD) is vice president and portfolio manager for MFC Global Investment Management (4100 Ninth Street, S.E., Washington, DC 20007).

1993 Richard R. Clouton (CNR) was named as an alumnus of the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Program (2050 Chain Bridge Rd., McLean, VA 22102).

1994 Timothy L. (CNR) was named as an unmanned commercial fisherman. (107 B St., Northampton, MA 01060).

1995 Kimberly M. McInerney-Shanahan (FIN) is the managing director of FiduciaryXnet (1845 Forest Glen Dr., Leesburg, VA 20176).

1996 Catherine Beaudin Boszd (MED) received her doctorate from Catholic University, Columbus, Ohio (800 E. Capitol Ave., Washington, DC 20003).

1997 Eric D. App, a son and daughter of Michael Fulkerson, a daughter, 7/8/09 (416 Ocean Dr., Plymouth, MA 02360).

1998 Jonathan H. Magee, a son and daughter of Michael Fulkerson, a daughter, 7/8/09 (416 Ocean Dr., Plymouth, MA 02360).

1999 Catherine C. Finzel (COMM) was named as a Hokie Hero for her public relations work with the Virginia Tech Football Team (12120 Rim Rock Cir., Leesburg, VA 20176).

2000 Nicholas J. Watson (HIST) is a second-year professor of geography at Wayne State University (319 Bostwick Hall, Detroit, MI 48202).


2002 Melissa Johnson, 1/16/10 (10206 Highland Park Rd., McLean, VA 22102).


2004 David O. Nunn, 7/8/09 (416 Ocean Dr., Plymouth, MA 02360).


2006 Amanda L. Serr (ART) completed her M.A. at Clarion University (3694 Fine Hall, Clarion, PA 16214).

2007 Rachel Rhoads Nestor, a daughter, 2/25/09 (3319 W. Pedo St., Tampa, FL 33629).

2008 Steven N. Silke, a daughter, 1/14/10 (21521 Swearingen Bridge Dr., Chesterfield, VA 23832).

2009 Amanda K. Komar, a daughter, 7/8/09 (416 Ocean Dr., Plymouth, MA 02360).


2012 Betty Fairall McCormick, a daughter, 1/14/10 (10206 Highland Park Rd., McLean, VA 22102).


2014 James P. McGrath III (HIST) was listed as a recipient of the Robert H. Montgomery Endowment Award from Virginia Tech (160 Fieldstone Dr., Carlisle, PA 17015).

2015 Barbara A. Phipps, a daughter, 1/14/10 (10206 Highland Park Rd., McLean, VA 22102).

2016 Stephanie Renee Odum, a daughter, 7/8/09 (416 Ocean Dr., Plymouth, MA 02360).
Finding a balance

When Tanya Moore Cumings (English ’94) decided after her first child was born that she could not strike the right balance between motherhood and working at a large corporation, she knew she had to find a new job. But she never quite dreaming that she would eventually balance a successful career and a fulfilling family life.

“I was a Jl corporate America. I started writing my business plan,” Cummings says. “I just needed to work a lot less, and I couldn’t figure out how to do that.”

A few years later, in September 2007, Cummings partnered with former business associate Whitney Forstner in Richmond, Va., to found Momentum Resources, a company that matches professionals who want to work part-time or flexible hours with companies that want the same thing. “We match really smart people with really smart companies,” Cummings says.

While many of the firm’s clients are mothers, some are moms. Most have 10 to 15 years of work experience and are on the fast track but have family life.

“Women are saying, ‘I could not strike the right balance between motherhood and working, and I decided that I just needed to do something different.’”

Cummings and Forstner have opened a Washington, D.C., office, and Cummings and Forstner have opened a

Class Notes

Tanya Moore Cummings with daugh-
ters Kannon (left) and Blakely.

Faculty/staff deaths

Norrine Bailey Spencer, asso-
ciate provost and director emerita of undergraduate admissions, died Feb. 24, 2010. In 1982 Spencer received her Ph.D. from the University of Delaware from the University of Delaware. She joined the Virginia Tech from 1983 until 2008, serving as an associate provost and director of undergraduate admissions. Spencer’s leadership included two terms as chair of the Provost’s Committee on Administrative and Professional Faculty, chair of the Academic Affairs Committee, and secretary of the Planning and Budget Committee. In 2001 she was one of six university administrators named to the American Women’s College of Business through the National Association of Professional Women. The College of Business named her to the Outstanding Achievement Award in 2006. During her time at Virginia Tech, she was named the 2010 Outstanding Achievement Award. In 2006 she was named emeritus professor of the University of Delaware.

Editor’s note: Brown is a brother of Clara B. Cox (M.A. English ’84), interim editor, who also joined the Caldwell March—twice.

J. Morris Brown (right) with members of Band Company.

Senior-citizen alumni keeps in step on Caldwell March

J. Morris Brown (mechanical engineering ’62) called his 13-mile hike with the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets’ great,” but even though he com-

J. Morris Brown (right) with members of Band Company.

ed the Oct. 17 Caldwell March, he was disappointed that he couldn’t tackle an additional 13 miles so he could both fall and spring a large corps under his belt—call all day. Brown strained a muscle and had to rely on his son, J. Kevin Brown of Fort Mill, S.C., to finish the entire 26 miles, although he took a different route than the corps takes.

Long hikes are nothing new to Brown, a 69-year-old nuclear engineer and retired vice president for operations for USEC Inc., a uranium-enrichment company. In May he and his wife, Phyllis, 64, hiked the Grand Canyon rim to rim in a single day—a distance of 24 miles and an alti-
tude change of one mile. And as recently as September, the couple put in a 17-mile round-trip visit—in agonies one day—to Keet Sue, Pueblo Indian ruins inhabited around 700 years ago.

Brown, who was a cornet player in the Highty-Tighties, is also a prolific mountain climber who has reached the tops of Mt. Kilimanjaro (at age 60), 19,340 feet, the highest mountain in Africa; Pico de Orizaba, Mexico’s tallest peak; Mr. Whitney, the highest mountain in the lower 48 states; Mr. Ransier, Washington’s tallest mountain; and Humphreys Peak, Arizona’s highest mountain; among others.

The Caldwell March was a special highlight for him. The Payson, Ariz., resident says that he enjoyed telling some band company’s first-year cadets on the march that he had been a freshman 51 years ago. “I was really impressed with the job. [Jen] Allen and his staff are doing with the corps.”

If Brown can get the nod from Allen, commandant of cadets, he hopes to talk to the first-year students on the spring Caldwell March—by then he will be 70 years old. After that, he notes, he will know both routes so he can tackle the entire 26 miles and complete the route originally planned. Even if he needs to now, he will be the oldest alumni to complete the march.

Editor’s note: Brown is a brother of Clara B. Cox (M.A. English ’84), interim editor, who also joined the Caldwell March—twice.

J. Morris Brown (right) with members of Band Company.
Frank Leigh Robeson: A legacy of achievement

BY CLARA B. COX M.A. ’84

Frank Robeson was born in 1884 in Farmville, Va., where he became a remarkable high school student. His father, George, sent 17-year-old Frank to VPI in 1901 with instructions “to keep healthy whether you learn anything or not.”

He did learn something. Nicknamed “Scribe,” Robeson graduated first in his class in 1904. By then, he had already been drawing plans for campus buildings and faculty houses, most likely using the set of drawing instruments he received for being the best student in mechanical drawing. By one account, he planned 38 different structures on and off campus and around the state.

After graduating, Robeson worked for a short time with his father at a manufacturing plant in Farmville. “I found out that I was in business to please my father, and he was in business to please me. So we both quit,” Robeson later admitted in a Roanoke Times article.

He returned to VPI as an instructor in mathematics and drawing. He was an associate professor in 1913, a full professor in 1917, and head of the physics department in 1936. During that time, he took one leave of absence to earn a master’s degree from Columbia University and a second leave to complete a Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins.

Robeson married Mary Anna Matthews of Blacksburg in 1912, and the couple had five children.

Andrew, the youngest, recalls his father spending ‘long days’ in Davidson Hall: “He was there so much of the time that the picture postcard of Davidson Hall sold at the drugstores in town had one car parked in front—our old 1937 Ford.”

Money was scarce for the physics department, and Robeson’s wife would ask her friends “to save things like shoe horns and corset stays. He needed them for some contraptions in the laboratory,”

Replied Frank Robeson, “We had to make do with what we had.”

He did occasionally escape the confines of physics, serving on the Blacksburg Town Council and in the Virginia Academy of Science; becoming a charter member of the VPI chapter of Phi Kappa Phi, and holding memberships in the American Physical Society and several honorary fraternities. He was elevated to Fellow in the American Academy of Science.

Robeson resigned in 1954, and in 1969, VPI honored his illustrious alumnus by naming the physics building Robeson Hall. “Scribe” died in 1974, but his spirit endures—in a portrait of him that hangs in the Robeson Room, in samples of his meticulous drawings displayed in the building, in a department molded by his leadership, and in a Hokie Stone building that serves as a monument to his achievements.