Thus, I am pleased that the recently released report from the Virginia Governor’s Commission on Higher Education Reform, Innovation, and Investment features three major themes: economic opportunity, affordable access, and reform-based investments. Most importantly, the governor has called for an additional $100,000 college degrees in Virginia over the next 15 years. This concept, first proposed by the Virginia Business Higher Education Council’s Grow By Degrees program, seeks to improve economic development and quality of life across Virginia.

The commission’s major recommendations, which dovetail with Virginia Tech’s traditional strengths, call for investing in high-demand STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) degrees, funding academic research, and linking state economic development goals to higher education incentives. Virginia Tech’s land-grant heritage is predicated on just such goals. Our institutional DNA and track record are well suited to help the Commonwealth expand job growth and strengthen communities.

During the early part of this decade, Virginia Tech worked with sister universities to develop direct state investments in academic research. The resulting $22 million investment in Virginia Tech helped us expand R&D expenditures more quickly than all but four universities in the nation during the past five years. Academic research and track record are well suited to help the Commonwealth expand job growth and strengthen communities.

The third leg of the commission’s plan, ensuring affordable access to higher education, is essential in creating those gateways of economic and personal opportunity and therefore is given high priority. We strongly believe that the state must increase financial aid, even when it is reducing appropriations for its colleges and universities. At Virginia Tech, we know that tuition has risen as state support has dropped, which is why we have committed to increasing university-supported financial aid by at least $1 million per year. We’ve increased university aid from about $1 million in 2000 to more than $12 million this year. Grants, scholarships, and waivers have grown from $119 million to $159 million in just the last three years. Overall, financial aid at Virginia Tech now exceeds $359 million.

This plan suggests a major reworking of the funding model and policies affecting Virginia higher education. Gno Bob McDonnell informed the commission that a “new compact between the state and our leaders in higher education” will refocus efforts to boost economic development. Del. Kirk Cox, vice chairman of the commission, said, “It’s clear that the model won’t be fully funded initially, but incrementally as the economy recovers.” After the release of preliminary recommendations, commission member Sen. William Wampler suggested that McDonnell make higher education funding a top priority; otherwise, the system would be “a high-performing vehicle that doesn’t have any fuel.”

We have been arguing exactly that position for many years. “Reform-based investments” include institutional incentive funding for increasing STEM degrees, graduation rates, or facility utilization. The commission also proposes “portable,” direct student funding, in which each Virginia student is guaranteed a certain amount of state funding added to the state’s share of the cost of education. Other incremental state funding will be provided for addressing selected state priorities, such as STEM education or economic development goals.

The president of a large university regularly juggling myriad projects, issues, constituency and faculty concerns, funding problems, legislative requests, student and donor meetings, and an array of similar activities. During these hectic days, I am driven by and comforted by a core outcome of higher education—the personal and economic opportunities afforded to our students.

Charting Virginia’s higher education future

BY CHARLES W. STEGER ’69
Winter 2010-11, Vol. 33, No. 2

Virginia Tech Magazine

Letters to the Editor

The Bauhaus heritage of Tech

I read with some dismay the letter entitled “The Center for the Arts” (fall 2010 Virginia Tech Magazine). Certainly all individuals are entitled to express opinions about the design of this important university building. However, the brief history and characterisation of the Bauhaus is historically incorrect and misleading. The phrase “form follows function” is a paraphrase from the American architect Louis Sullivan’s famous essay “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered,” first published in 1896. The phrase is actually “form ever follows function” and is part of a more nuanced thought about architecture. The assertion that the Bauhaus “led to plain, box-like structures” is a gross oversimplification of the complex educational program and influence of the Bauhaus upon later generations of architects. It should not come as a surprise that the highly ranked programs in the School of Architecture + Design at Virginia Tech are in fact influenced by many medical, educational, and cultural traditions.

Virginia Tech Magazine.

The process differed very little from that used by the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Health Sciences (VTcM). In fact, Mike Pelzer, VTcM director of admissions and student services, and Jennifer Hodgson, VTcM associate dean for professional programs, met with VTC in early 2009 to consider using MMPI and were included in VTC’s training session. VTC had rolling admissions, so the interviews took place at different times. VTcM preselected a total of 875 applicants, and the 275 applicants selected were interviewed on campus in two-and-a-half days in January 2010. I believe this process helped ensure accuracy, uniformity, and consistency and thus fairness for all the interviews. The interviews necessitated a huge one-time effort of planning and execution and a larger number of interviewers. Half of the interviewers were comprised of faculty, staff, and administrators. The other half of the interviewers were veterinarians in private practice with the doctors of tomorrow, pub

Recognizing osteopathic medicine

This letter is in response to an article entitled “Diagnosing the doctors of tomorrow,” published in the fall 2010 edition of Virginia Tech Magazine. I am currently a third-year internal medicine resident finishing this lovely training in an American Osteopathic Association-approved residency program on the campus of Virginia Tech and my postgraduate training in the Common Virginia, I definitely have many blessings to be thankful for when considering the private educational system in finishing this lovely training. I think that it is important to point out a small error of the above-mentioned quotation.

VCOM was established in 2001 and accepted its first class of approximately 150 students for the 2003-04 matriculation year. VCOM is one of four osteopathic medical schools; thus, D.O.s and M.D.s are considered equivalent in the eyes of the American Medical Association as well as the U.S. government, in addition to at least one allopathic medical school (Florida Atlantic University School of Medicine), to be established in the last nine years, a far cry from the nearly two decades quoted. Since its inception, VCOM has grown by leaps and bounds, extending its physical presence into South Carolina with an additional campus (currently accepting applications); graduating its innovators and recognition as VTcM; has received. We are the first and only veterinary school with this distinction.


Letters to the Editor

Virginia Tech Magazine

Letters to the Editor

The Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) is an independent, private college residing in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. Virginia Tech is a public entity of which VCOM is not a part. Tech and VCOM do maintain an affiliation agreement that offers VCOM students access to Tech facilities and student services although VCOM graduates are not considered Tech alumni.

Use of Hokie Stone formalized by board of visitors

At its Nov. 8, 2010, meeting, the board of visitors passed a resolution to make Hokie Stone the official building material and the collegiate Gothic style official for all academic core and life sciences precincts on the Blacksburg campus. The board’s resolution noted, “This attractive and distinctive stone more recently assumed the moniker ‘Hokie Stone,’ reflecting its status as a Virginia Tech architectural tradition,” adding that “the physical campus is one of the most tangible features that everyone who is touched by Virginia Tech remembers.”

Clariﬁcation: The story cited the Association of American Medical Colleges, which tracks the accreditation of more than 150 allopathic medical schools and noed all allopathic schools from 1982 to 2002. The association does not monitor the accreditation of osteopathic medical schools; thus, the story’s statement should have been qualiﬁed with the word “allopathic.”

Editor’s note: The Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) is an independent, private college residing in the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. Virginia Tech is a public entity of which VCOM is not a part. Tech and VCOM do maintain an affiliation agreement that offers VCOM students access to Tech facilities and student services although VCOM graduates are not considered Tech alumni.
 begun work on the grant application within days of the explosion that caused the oil spill. When completed, the research will provide data litigators can use to base settlements for damage lawsuits.

Plagiarism sleuths tackle full-text biomedical articles

Researchers at the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute and collaborators have shown that a computer-based text-searching tool is capable of unearthing potential plagiarism from among thousands of full-text papers in biomedical literature. Using a computer program called eTBLAST, researchers examined 72 full-text articles to find that the introduction and methods sections of papers tend to be the most similar. Now ethicists will be able to analyze the findings to develop publishing guidelines.

Five students selected as ACC Undergraduate Research Scholars

Five undergraduate students have been selected as 2010-11 Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) Undergraduate Research Scholars. The scholars receive a $2,000 award for research expenses such as supplies, travel, and the use of specialized research services. Charles Baker, Ritzel K.C., Bryan Muestra, Ryan Prest, and Sarah Webster were selected based on their ambitious research projects.

College launches Leadership Institute

The College of Natural Resources and Environment launched a new program to develop leadership abilities in top students and help prepare them for a future in managing natural resources for sustainability and biodiversity. The Leadership Institute is a two-semester, special-study sequence in which students with demonstrated leadership skills and academic ability will strengthen their talents through in-class discussion and hands-on leadership projects. The students will also travel to Richmond, Va., and Washington, D.C., to meet with leaders and policymakers in the field of natural resources.

Farrier participates in World Equestrian Games

Travis Burns, farrier at the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, was selected as an official farrier at the 2010 World Equestrian Games in Lexington, Ky. Held every four years, the games are comprised of eight equestrian sports. Burns was chosen to participate after being selected by the American Farriers Association. The selection process included a rigorous application to ensure that the farriers were qualified for and capable of maintaining the hooves of the world-class horses participating in the international event.

Engineering Expo draws 240 companies to campus

Hosted by the Student Engineers’ Council, the annual Engineering Expo in September drew more than 240 companies and government agencies to campus to meet students seeking jobs, internships, or face-time with representatives. The same week, The Wall Street Journal released a survey ranking Virginia Tech 13th in the nation among colleges favored by recruiting employers and sixth in the nation by engineering recruiters.

Researcher contributes to turkey-genome sequencing

An international consortium of researchers has completed sequencing and assembling 90 percent of the domesticated turkey genome, thanks in part to the efforts of Virginia Tech faculty members. The majority of data is derived from the 10 largest chromosomes (macrochromosomes); researchers are still searching for the best route to sequence the remaining microchromosomes. The genome sequence will provide new data to help scientists identify specific genes that influence meat yield and quality, health and disease resistance, fertility and reproduction, and, ultimately, higher-quality turkeys for producers and consumers.

Scholarship initiative supports 97 students

The number of low-income Virginia residents able to attend Virginia Tech at no cost under the university’s Presidential Scholarship Initiative has grown to 97 in the program’s second year. The recipients are top performers, boasting an average high school GPA of 3.97 and an average SAT score of 1205. A 2.75 GPA is required of students in the program. All but two students who received scholarships under the initiative in 2009-10 were still in the program at the start of the fall 2010 term.

Professor discovers new tuberculosis pathogen

Kathleen Alexander, associate professor of wildlife in the College of Natural Resources and Environment, discovered a novel tuberculosis species in the Mycobacterium tuberculosis complex, pathogens that have adapted by using mammals as hosts. Alexander discovered that bacteria, whose species common in central and eastern Africa—living closely with humans in northern Botswana were dying from a mysterious, tuberculosis-like disease. Currently, Alexander and student researchers are intensively studying the behavior and ecology of the mongoose population and this new pathogen across both urban and protected area environments in Botswana.
Corps commandant announces retirement
In July, Maj. Gen. Jerrold P. Allen, U.S. Air Force (retired), will retire as commandant for the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets. During Allen’s 12 years as commandant, and the corps has experienced significant enrollment growth. Allen also played a key role the corps’ leadership program while fostering an environment focused on academic success, resulting in a corps GPA of 3.03 for spring 2010. He also experienced significant commandant, and the corps -

Poultry Science Association honors two faculty members
Paul Ruszler, Extension poultry specialist emeritus, and Rami Dalloul, assistant professor, both of the Department of Animal and Poultry Sciences in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, were honored by the Poultry Science Association (PSA) during its annual meeting. Ruszler was elected a PSA Fellow, the association’s highest honor, recognizing members for professional distinction and contributions to the field. Dalloul received the PSA Early Achievement Award for Research. The award recognizes PSA members in the early stages of their poultry research careers. Army grant seeks to develop more scientists and engineers
By way of a $17.2 million U.S. Army grant, Virginia Tech and its partners will determine programs that best train teachers and prepare children in fifth grade and up. Competitions, internships, mentoring, and science fairs are among the high-profile Army-sponsored activities. The Army Educational Outreach Program piques student interest early, encouraging more college students to choose science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines. Virginia Tech will guide the program through three important milestones: marketing, data collection, and measurement.

Virginia Tech rises in research rankings
With nearly $400 million in research expenditures in fiscal year 2009, Virginia Tech is now ranked 44th in the annual National Science Foundation report documenting research expenditures in all disciplines. Virginia Tech ranked 46th in 2008.

Veterinary students study food systems, agricultural production in Italy
Jacque Peizer of the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine led a group of students to Italy for a 16-day course. The purpose of the summer 2010 trip was to expose students to sustainable agriculture methods used in Italy and to evaluate differences between the American and Italian approaches to veterinary education and agricultural systems. Additionally, the students explored Renaissance art and the remains of the Roman Empire while learning about economic and political systems in modern Italy.

For these stories and more, check out VT News at www.vtnews.vt.edu. For a regular dose of news, sign up for the Virginia Tech Daily E-mail at the site.

Study shows cats defy gravity when drinking water
Students design drone for unmanned missions
Tech police lieutenant graduates from FBI academy
Tech study helps increase aid in Wounded Warrior Program
Tech’s Arlington research center to open in summer 2011
Computer scientist wins award for software to combat hacking
Tech awarded $3.8 million grant to stimulate eastern U.S. wine industry

Around the Drillfield

Virginia Cooperative Extension announces plan to restructure

Alan Grant, dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, announced a plan to restructure Virginia Cooperative Extension to better meet the needs of its clientele and to address a cumulative budget reduction of $10.3 million since 2007 for Extension and the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station. The restructuring plan provides an infrastructure that will enable Extension to fulfill its land-grant mission and preserve delivery of critical programs related to agriculture and natural resources, youth development, and families and communities.

"This plan allows Virginia Cooperative Extension to reduce costs, maintain a local presence across the commonwealth, and continue to provide high-quality, science-based educational programming for Virginia. This will allow us to shift resources to the highest-priority needs of the state and localities," Grant said.

The design and delivery of educational programs will be determined by issue-based program teams. Area program leaders will train, supervise, and mentor the Extension educators (formerly known as Extension agents). The plan also consolidates Extension’s administrative field staff into a regional structure.

With the new Hokie Mobile app
Virginia Tech released its first application for use on the iPhone and iPod Touch. The free app, called Hokie Mobile, provides users with campus news, events, maps, and a directory search. Setting Hokie Mobile apart from other university applications is the ability for students, alumni, staff, and faculty to use their Virginia Tech PID to log in and access personalized information, such as their current courses or university account balances.

Human brain research begins at new institute
Leading brain researcher P. Read Montague joined the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute as a senior professor and will lead programs in neuroimaging and the new field of computational psychiatry. Montague is organizing and heading the Roanoke Brain Study, a cradle-to-grave effort to understand the neural basis of human decision-making and its impact on health. Brain scanners around the world will be linked to the institute’s informational hub in Roanoke. Montague will develop human neuroimaging studies of decision-making and social cognition throughout the lifespan under normal conditions and in a wide variety of neuropsychiatric disorders in children and adults. Significant research equipment, including two magnetic resonance imaging machines, has been moved into the facility for the brain study and other research programs.
Check out some of the most unusual classroom supplies—far beyond pencils and paper—at Virginia Tech.

**WHAT:** Dagger  
**WHERE:** Stage Combat class; Department of Theatre and Cinema  
**WHY:** Through the use of stage weaponry such as daggers, actors learn to engage their characters emotionally amid dynamic movements that demand full-body coordination and amid the challenging vernacular of Shakespeare, said Cara Rawlings, assistant professor of movement and acting. The weapons are made by Neil Massey (theatre arts ’88), the owner of Rogue Steel in Illinois, who is considered by Rawlings to be one of the best makers of stage weaponry in the world.

**WHAT:** Nintendo Entertainment System and Atari 2600 video-game consoles  
**WHERE:** The Virginia Tech Gaming and Media Effects Research Laboratory (VT G.A.M.E.R. Lab); Department of Communication  
**WHY:** An array of video-game systems, from vintage to brand-new, enables studies by faculty and students that investigate players’ physiological and psychological responses to video games, as well as studies that involve recording and analyzing game content, said Assistant Professor James D. Ivory. Responses are measured with electrodes and more traditional methods, such as pencil-and-paper questionnaires.

**WHAT:** Snorkel, goggles, mussels  
**WHERE:** Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Center; Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Science  
**WHY:** To find mussels in rivers, streams, and pools, students and researchers wear diving gear to get close and personal, said Dan Hua, laboratory manager at the center. Participants monitor mussel populations and collect gravid mussels for propagation, with a goal of augmenting endangered populations. Fifteen endangered species of mussels are raised at the center, which also conducts outreach programs for the public and for students.

**WHAT:** Lego  
**WHERE:** Engineering Exploration class; College of Engineering  
**WHY:** Each fall, first-year engineering majors enroll in this required course. Students conduct 14 hands-on activities over the course of 14 weeks, each exposing students to various engineering disciplines. In one lab, students exercise visual communication skills by building objects with Legos. Once constructed, the creations are the subject of schematic drawings, which must be accurate enough for other students to rebuild the structure from scratch, said Vinod Lohani, professor of engineering education.

**WHAT:** Toy car  
**WHERE:** House Planning class; Department of Apparel, Housing, and Resource Management  
**WHY:** Housing Professor Kathleen Parrott sprinkles her lectures with the unexpected. When she wants her students to visualize a home’s outdoor space—such as the room a driver needs to park, turn around, or access the garage—she’ll interrupt the series of overhead slides with a toy car complete with the “vroom” noises, Parrott explained. “We can’t design the space until we can understand how the user will be behaving in the space.”

**WHAT:** Turkey Tail (Trametes versicolor, left), Witch’s Butter (Tremella mesenterica, lower right), Ice Man’s Fungus (Fomes fomentarius, upper right)  
**WHERE:** Mysterious Mushrooms, Malicious Molds course; Department of Plant Pathology, Physiology, and Weed Science  
**WHY:** Assistant Professor David G. Schmale III begins each lecture with a “Fungus of the Day” and then takes students on an online adventure. Viewing the Red Sea in Google Earth, for example, illustrates how spores of fungal pathogens are transported over long distances by air. Hands-on learning includes growing edible mushroom varieties at home. At the course’s completion, students are better prepared for employment in agriculture, human health, and food safety. To see Schmale’s students’ mushrooms-and-molds projects, search Facebook for “PPWS 2004” or go to www.vtmagazine.vt.edu.

**WHAT:** Horse teeth  
**WHERE:** Anatomy classes; Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine  
**WHY:** Two dozen upper and lower sets of preserved teeth from horses young and old allow first-year students to practice estimating the age of a horse, said Associate Professor Larry Freeman. Students gauge the wear on the teeth and the degree of eruption (how far a tooth has pushed out of the gum tissue), as both are reliable measures of age. Go to www.vtmagazine.vt.edu to see video of canine MRIs taken at the college.
There was one drop-out in Patricia Amateis’ General Chemistry class on Nov. 1, 2010—a pumpkin.

Run down after a hard night of trick-or-treating, the pumpkin bid its farewells during a classroom experiment using hydrogen peroxide and dish detergent.

It was an odd juxtaposition: an ugly creature emitting steam from its top and dripping foam from its smile, alongside an articulate and professional faculty member at the front of the classroom.

The pumpkin’s demise is just one example of Amateis’ engaging, no-nonsense style and quiet sense of humor, traits that make her class one of the first to fill during registration each semester and keep nonmajors engaged in topics such as valence shell electron pair repulsion theory.

Amateis (Ph.D. chemistry ’84), a 26-year teaching veteran, was recognized last year with a William E. Wine Achievement Award for excellence in teaching, one of the highest teaching honors bestowed by the university. She was cited for developing the department’s general chemistry curriculum and her long record of consistently superior course evaluations from students.

“Working with students is the best part of teaching,” Amateis said. “My favorite thing is when they appreciate chemistry even when they aren’t particularly good at it.”

More than 2,000 students enroll in the general chemistry program each semester. As well as teaching general chemistry, Amateis coordinates graduate teaching assistants for the large General Chemistry class that numbers several hundred students. Along with Associate Professor Emeritus Jim Viers, she developed a unique recitation program that enables upperclassmen to oversee smaller groups of students once a week to help keep chemistry from being what she calls a “spectator sport.”

“Graduating seniors invariably mention her as one of the best teachers they encountered.”

JOHN MCCORMICK

Patricia Amateis
• Associate professor and director of general chemistry in the College of Science
• Coordinates more than 100 freshman chemistry labs
• Oversees more than 30 graduate teaching assistants as lab instructors
• Overall student-evaluation scores: 3.86 out of a possible 4.0
• Bachelor’s degree in education from Concord College; Ph.D. in chemistry from Virginia Tech

Recognition
• William E. Wine Achievement Award, 2010
• Sporn Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, 1994
• Alumni Teaching Award, 2002
• Member of Virginia Tech Academy of Teaching Excellence
• Office of Residence Life Student Programs Division Favorite Faculty Award, 2006, 2007, and 2009
• Student Alumni Associates Students’ Choice Award, 2004 and 2005
• Wrote comprehensive laboratory manual published by Hayden-McNeil
• Routinely speaks and gives chemistry demonstrations to schools and civic groups
One hundred and fifty years ago, a nation reeled by war weighed heavily on soldiers like these re-enactors from the 24th Va. and 83rd Pa. Civil War Living History Organization. Here, they warmed themselves outside the Major Graham Mansion in southwestern Virginia.

Historians and people with an interest in Civil War history commonly agree the Civil War is the most significant event in the history of the United States. From the structure of American government to race relations to the way mail is delivered, the events that unfolded during and following the war in large part molded the country—and the unique American identity—into what it is today.

As the sesquicentennial of the beginning of the war approaches, the conflict’s relevance hasn’t diminished. Even now, the events of the 1860s maintain a strong grip on the nation’s collective fascination.
“The Civil War lives every day in the American soul and in the fabric of our lives,” said Dennis Frye, chief historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, a site that changed hands eight times during the war.

Pointing out that attitudes about certain regions of the country are still influenced by perceptions formed during the Civil War, William C. “Jack” Davis, director of programs at the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies (VCCWS) at Virginia Tech, notes that “the Civil War is still with us today.” Moreover, as a war that didn’t target an external enemy, “It’s all ours. It wasn’t us against somebody.”

“There’s just very, very little in our life that doesn’t have its roots somewhere in the Civil War,” said James L. “Bud” Robertson Jr., Virginia Tech Alumni Distinguished Professor in History and executive director of the VCCWS. Robertson, who is helping lead Virginia’s sesquicentennial commemoration, believes that “one can never understand what the United States is until one understands what the Civil War was.”

Forging a nation

The outcome of the war “settled” two major issues that nonetheless retain a place in the national conversation today. First and foremost, the war ended slavery; Secondly, the war decided the federal-power-versus-state’s-rights debate in favor of federal powers, thereby forming a United States that until that time had existed in name only, Robertson said.

Decisively, the war put an end to slavery, which eventually led to the civil rights movement that happened in part, appropriately enough, during the Civil War centennial. Slavery, Robertson teaches his students, was unquestionably the primary cause of the war, even if the original goal of the war wasn’t to end it. “For 15 years [before the war], every issue to come before Congress [had] something to do directly or indirectly with slavery,” he said.

Despite the passage of 150 years, racial relations in America remain tinged by the war, Davis said, in part because “we’re still dealing with those who are trying to fight the war. There’s a current-day agenda that’s trying to change history.”

The contention over states rights, meanwhile, continues unabated 150 years later, Davis said, with arguments addressing issues such as the health care reform bill and environmental regulations. In Virginia, for instance, some voters are lobbying the General Assembly to support a “repeal amendment” that would allow states to veto federal laws and regulations.

“The debate is still pretty trenchant,” said Davis, who compared today’s atmosphere to the 1850s, when extremists on both sides claimed their opinions represented the majority of citizens. “One of the major causes of the war was emotion. We were so young. Half the population back then was under the age of 21... and we fought with our mouths,” Robertson said. “Now, I’m concerned because we live in an age of negativism. Everything is polarized, or it’s politicized.”

Frye agreed. “We just couldn’t settle our differences through conversation and compromise [before the war]. With today’s issues, we still struggle to use conversation and compromise to solve our problems.”

The Civil War also precipitated a number of customs and practices so common now that Americans give them little thought: standard time to allow railroads to meet shipping schedules; clothing sizes in small, medium, and large; separate shoes to fit left and right feet; the modern image of Santa Claus; dehydrated vegetables and canned food; women in the fields of teaching and nursing; and the Medal of Honor. Each one’s origin can be traced back to the Civil War. Militarily, modern soldiers still learn from engagements such as the Battle of Gettysburg, said Lt. Col. William Stringer, deputy commandant of cadets for the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets and a speaker at Tech’s annual Civil War Weekend. For instance, soldiers in Afghanistan involved in asymmetrical combat—unbalanced forces fighting each other using different tactics—can take lessons from the opening battle at Gettysburg, where an outnumbered cavalry successfully delayed infantry, Stringer said. Experienced commanders also study how a leader 150 years ago made decisions and then apply the lessons to current doctrine.

“Something I learned in Gettysburg in 1863 is very relevant today,” Stringer said. “The fundamentals… are timeless.”

Education and research

In light of the historical and cultural significance of the period leading up to the war, the war itself, and the ensuing emancipation and reconstruction, Virginia Tech and Robertson established the VCCWS in 1999 to facilitate Civil War scholarship and study. Likewise, the expansive Civil War holdings owned by Tech’s Special Collections attract researchers and genealogists from all over the country.

Produced for the state sesquicentennial commission, an educational two-disc DVD about the war is just one example of the outreach mission of the VCCWS. The contents are geared toward pre-college ages in hopes that young viewers will discover that while “history isn’t necessarily going to make life better,” it should help people “understand why life is what it is,” Davis said.

Along with a manuscript collection regarded as one of the best outside the Library of Congress, Virginia Tech Special Collections holds a variety of Civil War memorabilia (left), including this daguerreotype of an unidentified soldier (above).
The sesquicentennial comes to Virginia Tech on May 21, 2011, for a conference on military strategy in the war. So many years after the states became fully united, differences still remain, and Robertson and Davis are keeping their fingers crossed.

“The 150th should be a time when all Americans, all races, all ages, come together,” Robertson said. “We’ll do the best we can, and we’ll make an impression.”

The center’s staff, which consists of Davis and Robertson, also has produced an acclaimed guide for educators teaching the Civil War to secondary school students, several books, and a soon-to-be-launched wiki-style website. Graduate students are digitally indexing Civil War newspaper articles by concepts and thoughts, which should improve search results currently confined to keyword-based queries.

Digitalization has become another crucial research tool for historians. Digital lists of a library’s holdings, for instance, or digital images of actual documents help researchers spend their time more efficiently. “It’s revolutionized my research,” Davis said. “I’ve found things that I had missed in every book I wrote.” The books in Special Collections number between 7,000 and 8,000, making Tech’s Civil War collection among the largest outside of the Library of Congress. The majority of the books were acquired in 1995 when Robertson’s friend, Elden E. Josh Billings, ended a 12-year-search for a place to donate his books and several hundred manuscripts by giving them to Tech.

Robert Freis (geography ’93), of Roanoke, Va., is one of the beneficiaries of the collection. He has taken friends to battlefields since the 1980s and now operates a battlefield-tour business, for which he researches first-person accounts to enrich his narratives. Frequently, he’s been “astonished and gratified” to find rare, out-of-print sources at Tech. “I feel as fortunate as any prospector who strikes the mother lode and consistently finds something of great value,” Freis said.

As the past continues to shape the present and future, Virginia Tech will continue to play its part in defining precisely why the Civil War holds such a singular grip on the American consciousness.

The past, the present, and the future are connected, Freis said. “I don’t know how much pleasure it affords you to go over these days of the past, but to me they will always be remembered as days of felicity. And how happy the thought that years increase the affection and esteem we have for each other to love and be loved. May it ever be so, and may I ever be a husband worthy of your warmest affections. May I make you happy and in so doing be made happy in return. A sweet kiss and embrace to your greeting.”

“An unknown Union soldier writes, ‘Hurray’ after he responded to an advertisement in a ‘lively-hearts’ magazine:

“Before proceeding further I wish to candidly beg the kind attention of those who are desirous of procuring letters from the Waverly.

E. Josh Billings, descended from the founding family of Blacksburg, Va., was a surgeon to the Army of Northern Virginia. He wrote to his wife:

‘The past, the present, and the future are connected, Freis said. ‘I don’t know how much pleasure it affords you to go over these days of the past, but to me they will always be remembered as days of felicity. And how happy the thought that years increase the affection and esteem we have for each other to love and be loved. May it ever be so, and may I ever be a husband worthy of your warmest affections. May I make you happy and in so doing be made happy in return. A sweet kiss and embrace to your greeting.’

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Virginia Tech will continue to play its part in defining precisely why the Civil War holds such a singular grip on the American consciousness.

Among the nuggets in Special Collections:

• A book of finely detailed sketches of officers and soldiers while prisoners of war—with photos of emancipated Union soldiers held at Belle Island in the James River at Richmond.
• A Manual of Military Surgery, picked up off the floor of Chalmers’ Hospital in Richmond, Va., the day after the city’s surrender. The manual for Confederate doctors includes detailed drawings (above) of how to perform various amputations.
• Narrative of privations and sufferings of officers and soldiers while prisoners of war—with photos of emancipated Union soldiers held at Belle Island in the James River at Richmond.
• A Rebel Scout, by Capt. Thomas Nelson Conrad, third president of Virginia Tech, recounts Conrad’s experiences in the war. The title was later changed to A Confederate Spy.
• Three ledgers from Richmond’s Meade & Byker apothecary detailing its business from before the war through 1871. A toothbrush that could be purchased for 25 cents in 1861 sold for $25 in 1865.
• More than 100 diaries from both sides, including one owned by Tech’s first president, Charles Minor.
• Four hundred collections of letters, some of which are available digitally. Students are transcribing others.
• A book of finely detailed sketches by Charles Gulager of the 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry.

In other words my true description differs materially from the one therein set forth, and may not please you as well as the one ‘fancy painted,’ but I thought it was all for fun, therefore funningly gave a fictitious description:”

To see the full versions of these letters and more, go to http://spec.lib.vt.edu/cw/love/index.html.

Special Collections

Memories of the Civil War

Sunday, March 20, 2011 • 3 pm
Burruss Auditorium

Back by popular demand, the Department of Music will present a concert of Music and Memories of the Civil War featuring the Symphonic Wind Ensemble, choirs, and faculty soloists. James I. Robertson Jr. will serve as narrator for this special event. For more information and to reserve tickets, visit www.music.vt.edu.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Among the nuggets in Special Collections:

• A Manual of Military Surgery, picked up off the floor of Chalmers’ Hospital in Richmond, Va., the day after the city’s surrender. The manual for Confederate doctors includes detailed drawings of how to perform various amputations.
• Narrative of privations and sufferings of officers and soldiers while prisoners of war—with photos of emancipated Union soldiers held at Belle Island in the James River at Richmond.
• A Rebel Scout, by Capt. Thomas Nelson Conrad, third president of Virginia Tech, recounts Conrad’s experiences in the war. The title was later changed to A Confederate Spy.
• Three ledgers from Richmond’s Meade & Byker apothecary detailing its business from before the war through 1871. A toothbrush that could be purchased for 25 cents in 1861 sold for $25 in 1865.
• More than 100 diaries from both sides, including one owned by Tech’s first president, Charles Minor.
• Four hundred collections of letters, some of which are available digitally. Students are transcribing others.
• A book of finely detailed sketches by Charles Gulager of the 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry.

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CIVIL WAR NEWS

LETTERS OF LOVE AMID WAR

Hauery Black, descended from the founding family of Blacksburg, Va., was a surgeon to the Army of Northern Virginia. He wrote to his wife:

‘The past, the present, and the future are connected, Freis said. ‘I don’t know how much pleasure it affords you to go over these days of the past, but to me they will always be remembered as days of felicity. And how happy the thought that years increase the affection and esteem we have for each other to love and be loved. May it ever be so, and may I ever be a husband worthy of your warmest affections. May I make you happy and in so doing be made happy in return. A sweet kiss and embrace to your greeting.’

An unknown Union soldier writes, ‘Hurray’ after he responded to an advertisement in a ‘lively-hearts’ magazine:

‘Before proceeding further I wish to candidly beg the kind attention of those who are desirous of procuring letters from the Waverly.’

To see the full versions of these letters and more, go to http://spec.lib.vt.edu/cw/love/index.html.

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In other words my true description differs materially from the one therein set forth, and may not please you as well as the one ‘fancy painted,’ but I thought it was all for fun, therefore funningly gave a fictitious description:”

To see the full versions of these letters and more, go to http://spec.lib.vt.edu/cw/love/index.html.
In October 2010, James I. “Bud” Robertson Jr. was at home when the director of the Virginia State Board of Education called with a warning: controversy had erupted in response to a fourth-grade history textbook passage asserting that thousands of slaves fought for the Confederacy during the U.S. Civil War.

Robertson, Virginia Tech Alumni Distinguished Professor in History and executive director of the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies (VCCWS) at Tech, knew what was coming. As soon as he hung up the phone, a reporter from The Washington Post called—a then local television station and then Fox Radio. After a while, Robertson let his answering machine take the calls.

“It was almost hilarious,” Robertson told students in his Civil War and Reconstruction class two days later. “Anyone could figure out it’s not true [that slaves fought for the Confederacy]. Patently false.

“Anyway, here we are back in reality,” Robertson concluded and launched into his lesson for the day. The native Southerner notes that Southerners are first-person stories, curious facts, and insight into the psyches of the people who started and fought the war that cost the United States up to 700,000 lives and in large part shaped the nation as we know it today.

Robertson’s teaching style and enthusiasm for history have inspired and enthralled students in packed lecture halls since the 1960s. But that facet of his illustrious career will come to an end when he retires in spring 2011. “I’ve known Bud for more than 40 years, and he was one of my heroes when I was a youngster just getting into the business,” said William C. “Jack” Davis, VCCWS’s director of programs and a professor of history at Tech. “In the state, he’s known as Mr. Virginia Tech and Mr. Civil War. Nothing in the state concerning the Civil War happens without consulting him. He’s cast a big shadow over Civil War studies.”

Most importantly to Robertson, he has left an indelible impression on countless students.

“The first Civil War book I ever owned was the textbook for [Robertson’s class]. Thirty-three years later, I still have that textbook and more than 1,500 other Civil War books,” said Albert Mackey (political science ’79), who went on to a military career and now lives close to Gettysburg, Pa. “Professor Robertson ignited a lifelong interest in me for the Civil War. … He’s such an engaging lecturer that you want to just sit and listen, and you forget to take notes.”

“By far, his class was my favorite class at Virginia Tech,” said Kris Berg Ruesand (communication ’79). “He is the most outstanding teacher I have ever known.”

“That’s what you spend a lifetime working for,” Robertson said of his students’ reactions. “I take them by the hand, and we walk down the road to war. I make history human. It’s full of emotion. It’s not memorization of dates and places.”

The Civil War was never far away during Robertson’s childhood. He was raised in Danville, Va., the last capital of the Confederacy. As a child, he listened to his grandmother talk about her father’s exploits, including surviving Pickens’ Charge at Gettysburg. Pursuing a master’s degree and doctorate at Emory University, he studied under Bell Wiley, who taught the war through the experiences of the common soldier rather than the generals.

Robertson was just 31 when he was suddenly thrust into national prominence in 1961. President John F. Kennedy was disturbed by regional fractures in the national Civil War centennial observation and was upset that it had become a celebration of war and battles rather than a commemoration. So he purged the commission and tapped Robertson as executive director.

“The feeling was they wanted to bring in a young historian with the energy to go all around the nation and try to bring everybody back together again. We were seemingly on the verge of another civil war in 1961,” said Robertson, who worked with 34 state and 100 local centennial commissions during his tenure as director.

In 1967, Robertson interviewed at Virginia Tech and then accepted the job offer, but not because of the university’s reputation in Civil War academic circles. It had almost none; the reputation was to be built.

Robertson’s friendship with J. Ambler “Uncle Ambler” Johnston, a 1904 and 1905 graduate and primary architect of the university’s neo-Gothic look, prompted Johnston to purchase 1,100 rolls of microfilm containing the compiled service records of all Virginia Confederate soldiers, a donation that suddenly bought researchers and genealogists to Blacksburg in droves. The collection now houses 7,000 to 8,000 books and is considered one of the world’s top Civil War monograph collections outside of the Library of Congress, according to Davis and Robertson.

Robertson added his own classic to the collection with the 1997 release of Stonewall Jackson: The Man, the Soldier, the Legend, which took seven years to research and write. “[Robertson’s] biography on Stonewall Jackson is the definitive work on Jackson; we understand him as a human being and not as a caricature,” said Steven E. Woodworth, professor of history at Texas Christian University.

The book was used as the foundation for the portrayal of Jackson in the movie Gods and Generals,” and Robertson served as the chief historical consultant for the film.

Fifty years after his leadership role with the centennial commission, Robertson is serving on Virginia’s sesquicentennial commission and will chair a conference, American Military Strategy in the Civil War, at Tech. In preparation for the 150-year milestone, he served as executive producer of the Emmy-nominated DVD set, “Virginia in the Civil War: A Sesquicentennial Remembrance,” which was distributed free to every school in Virginia. “I’m very proud of [the DVD set],” Robertson said. “It’s one of my greatest achievements.”

Robertson also enjoyed what amounts to a second career in athletics—enough, in fact, to earn him a place in Virginia Tech’s Sports Hall of Fame. He officiated Atlantic Coast Conference football for 16 years, served as secretary-treasurer of the College Football Association and president of the former Metro Conference, and was faculty chair of athletics and president of the Virginia Tech Athletic Association, helping guide the Hokies into the Big East and chairing the search committee that selected Frank Beamer as head football coach.

For his most recent project, Robertson is reworking the 350 radio pieces he recorded over the years for the university’s radio station, WVTI, into 151 written pieces for a National Geographic Society book. Moreover, in November, he married Betty Lee, who Hokies might know from her work with Alumni Association chapters. The couple plans to travel the country by train after retiring.

“He is a national treasure,” said Richard J. Sommers, senior historian of the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center at the U.S. Army War College. “One of his hallmarks is his willingness to share knowledge and understanding with such a broad range of people and not just to a clique of Civil War historians or academics… Students at Virginia Tech have a great privilege to learn from such a giant in the profession.”

Although thousands of Tech students agree, they’re not the only ones who will feel a void. “I’m going to miss the classroom,” Robertson said. “A professor is as young as his students if he has the right attitude.”

Chad O’Kane, M.A. ’11 contributed to this story.

Go to www.vtmagazine.vt.edu to see a video of Robertson’s half-century in Civil War studies. The renowned Civil War expert in his office
Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission

2011 Signature Conference
Military Strategy in the American Civil War

James I. Robertson, Jr.
Virginia Tech Alumni Distinguished Professor
Conference Chair

Saturday, May 21, 2011
Cassell Coliseum
8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Lunchtime concert by the Stonewall Brigade Band

The Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission’s third annual Signature Conference will feature noted historians discussing Civil War military strategy in both the eastern and western theaters. You won’t want to miss this outstanding program!

Scheduled Speakers:

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Registration
$25/person conference and lunch
$15/person conference only

Register online at VirginiaCivilWar.org or call (804) 786-3591

A cadet’s first priority

BY DAVE MILLER PH.D. ’10

Young men and women come to Virginia Tech and join the corps of cadets for a multitude of reasons. Some want to start their own business or rise to executive level in government or the corporate world. Many want to fulfill a lifelong dream of serving as a commissioned officer in one of the uniformed services. Regardless of where they want to go in life, cadets know their first priority is to earn a degree in their chosen field—which is not an easy task.

The commandant and staff demonstrate their commitment to helping cadets achieve their goals through a robust academic success program that consists of many initiatives tailored to a cadet’s specific academic needs.

The program begins the first week of classes for freshmen cadets, when they receive a daily planner and training on how to use it. Freshmen also attend specialized classes addressing time management, detailed planning of the semester, improving study skills, test-taking strategies, rest and recreation management, a mid-semester “reality check,” and preparing for final exams. All cadets have an opportunity to study in a quiet environment in the barracks during evening call-to-quarters and can take advantage of on-site tutoring in math, chemistry, and physics.

Cadets who are having difficulty with their academics are counseled and helped with designing a “get-well” program, which includes specialized tutoring. Academic officers—cadets who are academically successful—are assigned at company and battalion levels and are supervised by the regimental academics officer. These cadets are responsible for identifying cadets in academic need and ensuring that they receive help.

These and other support initiatives comprise the academic success program designed to help cadets reach their academic potential. The goal for the program is an overall corps average GPA of 3.0 or higher. In the spring 2010 semester, the cadets reached that goal, with a corps average GPA of 3.03, a significant achievement for almost 800 students with demanding schedules.

Academic achievement is recognized each semester at a regimental awards ceremony. Each company’s average GPA is a key criterion for the Gold Cord, awarded annually to the top company. In addition, individual cadets are recognized with the award of a ribbon designating a semester GPA of 3.75-4.0, 3.4-3.75, or 3.0-3.4.

The Virginia Tech community can take great pride in the accomplishments of the cadets in the corps. They have a bright future and, by keeping academics as their first priority, they will undoubtedly realize their goals.

Col. Dave Miller (Ph.D. instructional design and technology ’10) is the corps’ deputy commandant for leader development.
Students lead world’s top collegiate cancer fundraiser

BY HILLARY MAY ’12

Edward Spencer, vice president for student affairs and a cancer survivor, delivered the opening remarks at the 2010 relay events in April. After leading the crowd in cheering, “We’re beating cancer!” he thanked the event’s participants for their spirit of service and for caring about others’ survival. His speech’s conclusion with the beloved “Go Hokies!” chant spoke to the enthusiasm for helping others that has long driven the student body at Virginia Tech.

The ACS’s biggest fundraising event, RFL is also one of the biggest service events on Tech’s campus, drawing more than 6,000 students and raising $578,000 in 2010 and $507,000 in 2009. RFL stands alongside other projects, such as Fall Day of Service, The Big Event, and VT-ENGAGE, as a tribute to Ut Prosim (That I May Serve), the university’s motto—and a way of life for many students and alumni.

In 2001, when Virginia Tech first became involved with RFL, the event was run by the Student Government Association and was held on the Johnson-Miller Track; the fundraising total was $25,000. Now, RFL blankets the Drillfield each April, and the planning organization operates year-round as its own registered student organization. In 2009 and 2010, Tech students raised more money for cancer research than any other university relay.

Josh Burnheimer (financial planning ’08), assistant director of alumni relations and 2008 RFL director, points to an interesting philanthropic challenge on campus: “It is funny to think that one of the problems we have on this campus is convincing people to donate to your service project … because there are so many other great causes to support. That is a great problem to have, considering the impact Hokies are having on the world through numerous service projects.”

Having adopted its motto in 1896, Virginia Tech has long placed service at the core of its mission. In fact, wearing Chicago maroon and orange, identifying as Hokies, and serving others can easily be termed the “Tech triumvirate.” Spencer attributes this commitment to service to Virginia Tech’s legacy as a land-grant university. “We are the people’s school, committed to serving and providing for all the people,” he said.
In the university’s darkest days after April 16, 2007, the spirit of Ut Prosim held Tech together, serving as both a heart and a backbone for students. Instead of turning inward to mourn, many students reached out. They held the already planned RFL just three days later, celebrating life and hope in honor of those lost, including Caitlin Hammaren, who was the event’s top fundraiser that year.

“Our response to tragedy is service and giving back,” Feeney said. “UT-ENGAGE, a service organization created to honor the victims through volunteerism, challenges students, faculty, and alumni to achieve 600,000 total hours of service a year. April has been designated Ut Prosim Month, featuring both RFL and The Big Event, which collectively involve more than 12,000 students.

RFL participants tout “the relay mindset” as a perfect companion to Ut Prosim; service is never far from their minds. On Wednesdays throughout the year, students wear shirts to show their support for the cause, with many displaying a bold slogan: “Fight like a Hokie.”

Two Hokies who have fought hard for RFL, Kristin Canavera (Ph.D. child clinical psychology ’11) and Alice Wagner (psychology ’09), have witnessed cancer up close and have personally learned what it means to serve.

As a first-year graduate student, Canavera received shocking news right before Christmas 2008 that her father, David, had been diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer. She moved back home to be his primary caregiver, managing his pain medications and sleeping in hospitals. “We felt like there was nothing we could do other than try to comfort him because there are currently no effective treatments for pancreatic cancer … but I couldn’t sit back and do nothing,” she said. Her father’s battle with cancer lasted only four-and-a-half months.

Canavera’s response to a dismal situation was to find hope by helping others. She joined RFL and in her first year raised nearly $12,000 as a tribute to her father. Now, she is serving a third and final year as a member of the RFL executive committee, as well as organizing the First Cancer Research Symposium, which will take place on campus the week after the 2011 relay to highlight cancer research at Tech. She is also a nationally ranked RFL fundraiser, a designation bestowed upon the top fundraisers across the country.

Canavera sees her service work not only as deeply personal but also as an important part of what she learned at Tech. “My education here has trained me well in research and clinical skills within the clinical psychology Ph.D. program, but perhaps the most valuable lesson I have learned and will also take with me has been my experience of [following] through on Ut Prosim,” she said.

Wagner also has seen firsthand what it means to “fight like a Hokie.” She began her involvement in RFL as a freshman with her Alpha Phi sorority sisters, but the cause hit home when her mother was diagnosed with stage IV nonsmall-cell lung cancer just seven days before Wagner began her sophomore year. Over the next three years, Wagner’s involvement with RFL intensified, from a participant to a committee member and finally to co-director her senior year. Because of the students’ efforts along with Spencer’s, the event was moved to the Drillfield, reminding people that service is at the heart of campus.

Wagner, whose mother walked in the Survivor’s Lap each year and inspired her daughter to keep serving, described the importance of RFL and its emotional impact on her family.

“Other universities don’t encourage their students to be selfless and want to do something more with their college career than just take classes,” Feeney said. “Tech does.”
Hokies entrepreneurs thrive in trying times

BY CHAD O’KANE M.A ’11

The Great Recession has sent ripples of economic woe across the globe. With national unemployment figures hovering near 10 percent, sustained unemployment and underemployment have affected people from all walks of life. Even the long-held belief that more education makes one more marketable has been called into question.

In response to times of prolonged unemployment, a renaissance of new small-business development often occurs. Not surprisingly, innovative Hokie alumni, sensing opportunity where others see only bleak economic forecasts, are harnessing the unique spirit of the entrepreneur.

Opportunity knocks

Aaron Herrington (finance ’00), co-founder and director of client services for Modea Inc., a digital services agency in Blacksburg, Va., is proof that entrepreneurial success can be achieved in a down economy. Modea provides strategic, marketing, creative, and technology services to a diverse group of recognizable consumer brands, including watchmaker Seiko and Sharp Electronics. Founded in 2006, the company has grown by more than 1,300 percent in just three years and was ranked by www.Inc.com as the 221st fastest-growing private company in America in the website’s “2010 Inc. 500|5000” ranking.

Seizing opportunity, according to Herrington, makes all the difference in the world, for opportunities don’t arise every day. “Starting this business 15 years ago would not have been possible because digital [media] had not yet become so entrenched in consumers’ daily lives the way it is today,” Herrington said. “This was a once-in-a-generation type of opportunity, and we jumped all over it.”

Attention to even the most minute details is one key to success for a small business, Herrington said. “We realize that decisions that might seem small can actually grow and evolve into much bigger opportunities.”

Big-picture thinking is also paramount in achieving success in the long run, Herrington added. “We are always thinking from a long-term perspective. If something looks good in the short term, but not necessarily in the long term, it’s probably not a good business decision, despite how enticing it might be,” he said. Herrington said that Modea is showing no signs of slowing down, with plans to double in size in the next year.

Conventional wisdom debunked

Starting a business in an economic climate like today’s might seem more preposterous than logical. David Lohr (chemical engineering ’76), executive director of the Virginia Biosciences Development Center, claimed, however, that new ventures actually make a great deal of sense in trying times. “Without question, in an environment like this, we’re seeing a resurgence of entrepreneurship,” Lohr said. “All of these displaced executives are finally taking the opportunity to pursue their dreams and run their own businesses.”

The risk for these budding entrepreneurs, Lohr explained, is greatly reduced, as they’ve often already lost their jobs. Furthermore, the resources necessary for a start-up, such as payroll services and legal fees, can be successfully negotiated to help new businesses run more efficiently. “Buildings are empty, lawyers
are hungry, and people just want a job," Lohr said. While working for a large engineering firm in California, Sharon Lu (industrial and systems engineering '03) kept her entrepreneurial spirit subdued, hesitant to venture out on her own without job security. After being laid off in the spring of 2009, she finally decided to act upon her dream and started ecoVegan, which provides affordable and natural vegan food.

"I was considering quitting my job to start this company," Lu said. "But once I lost my job, I decided the timing was perfect to fulfill my dream of serving the public and promoting a compassionate and sustainable lifestyle."

Lu said the purpose behind ecoVegan is to educate the public about how diets impact health and the environment. "Every sale makes a difference for health, animals, and the environment," she said.

By combining passion and commitment with a unique idea, Lu was able to attract a financial partner, making the start-up feasible. "The initial investment, she said, can often be the toughest hurdle."

While attracting start-up capital can be a challenge, Lohr said, the potential business endeavors through grants and small-business loans, particularly by pumping federal stimulus money into entrepreneurial concessions, the government is helping to mitigate this difficulty. "We are firm believers in the motto, 'Do what you love, and you'll never work another day in your life,'" said Boudreaux. The entrepreneurs recovered their initial investment within months and have already expanded into outdoor clothing.

Shaping entrepreneurs

These Hokies credit the various lessons learned at Virginia Tech with the success they've achieved as small-business owners. Not surprisingly, faculty members in the Pamplin College of Business are doing what they can to cultivate the next crop of successful entrepreneurs. For its part, the Department of Management places a strong emphasis on a practical, hands-on approach in a variety of courses in the entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology-management option. Management Professor Devi Gnyawali teaches a course on entrepreneurial leadership and innovation in which groups of students identify business ideas, conduct feasibility studies, and create and present comprehensive business plans. "Learning by doing is the focus of this course," said Gnyawali.

The key, he said, is for the students to first find an idea that will fill a need in society and then determine the feasibility of such an endeavor. More importantly, the students must possess enthusiasm for their idea. "If they don't choose an idea that they're passionate about, it won't make for a very good project," Gnyawali said.

Having owned a business and consulted for small businesses before teaching at Virginia Tech, Reed Kennedy, instructor of management and director of international programs for Pamplin, brings a unique perspective to his small-business consulting classes. He knows the myriad skills one must possess in order to be a successful entrepreneur. "We look at marketing, accounting, finance, writing, operations, and anything else you need to run a successful business," Kennedy said. "You've got to know how to do it all."

Kennedy believes that the U.S. educational system does not place enough emphasis on entrepreneurship. An entrepreneurial spirit and a willingness to take risks and start something new, he said, are very important, whether establishing a firm or working for a big company. "Through culture and education, we've done a disservice, preaching that you go to school and then go get a job with a big company that provides good benefits," Kennedy said. "Part of our job as educators is to cultivate the entrepreneurial spirit." That spirit, after all, is a significant thread in the fabric of this country and will ultimately help us climb out of the Great Recession, he said.

Chad O'Kane (M.A. communication '11) is a graduate assistant with Virginia Tech Magazine. To learn about the Alumni Association's new alumni career resources program, see page 45. If you had $1 million, what sort of business would you start? Hear answers from campus in a student-narrated video at www.vtmagazine.vt.edu, where you can also find a link to the Online Business Guidebook, a publication by Pamplin students that is reaching entrepreneurs around the world.
Bringing Science to Life

For the Bringing Science to Life colloquium, Virginia Tech harnessed the energy of its Honors students as the architects of new, revolutionary exhibit designs for the Science Museum of Western Virginia in Roanoke, Va.

Originally taught in spring 2009 by Alumni Distinguished Professor Arthur L. Buikema Jr. and Virginia Tech Provost Mark McNamee, the colloquium offers insights for museums struggling to move forward in the era of Google and Twitter. It’s also a testament to the synergy created by pairing top administrators and faculty with high-performing students.

“When the suggestion was made that we pair administrators with distinguished faculty members, I thought it was a great idea, and I volunteered to be part of the experiment,” said McNamee, who had previously helped start a science museum at the University of California, Davis. “I thought, ‘What a great way for us to combine forces and work with a group of students to see how they could get involved.’”

“Let’s let them design an exhibit,” Buikema recalled thinking, “and now they’ve got to think about age, ethnicity, educational background—all the things that are real [considerations] for scientists in communicating what they do.”

During its first semester, the colloquium pulled in about a dozen first-year students to invigorate the image of the Roanoke museum. The museum is now in the final planning stages of a comprehensive $27 million renovation that will start in summer 2011, with a projected re-opening in spring 2013. The plans incorporate many of the students’ concepts.

The students started by visiting the science museum to survey visitors. Some exhibits involved parents but alienated the kids, or vice versa. Children were especially attracted to hands-on pieces, such as a tornado funnel, or a river exhibit with horseshoe crabs, which included an employee on hand to answer questions. By the time visitors arrived at the crystal or fossil room, though, nobody seemed too excited.

During their investigation, students discovered that museum visitors want clear, visual answers, not rows of text-filled plaques. Scientists, however, are loath to oversimplify their work, according to McNamee, a trained biochemist. “I thought there were too many words, and when the students mentioned it, I even noticed it more. I realized that I wasn’t reading [plaques]; I just started [interacting with the exhibits].”

Larry Bell, senior vice president for strategic initiatives at the Boston Museum of Science, said that the role of the science

Talent shows

When Charles “Jack” Dudley took the reins of the University Honors Program in 1990, one of his most significant initiatives was to establish what would later become the colloquium series.

The series is taught by distinguished faculty and brings together a diverse group of students to study topics from Chinese medicine to the philosophy of food. These courses often become a hallmark of Honors students’ undergraduate studies. Further development of the colloquia has prompted university administrators to return to the classroom to teach, while some students have also decided to instruct their own courses.

From designing innovative science museum exhibits to leading service-learning expeditions to Honduras, students exemplify the program’s role as a creative hub that enriches the academic experience at Virginia Tech.

Talent was on full display when Alumni Distinguished Professor Arthur L. Buikema Jr. (far left) and Virginia Tech Provost Mark McNamee (far right) asked Honors students (left to right) Carly Stephens, Darius Emrani, Philipp Kotlaba, and Arielle Kehr, among others, to redesign exhibits for the soon-to-be-renovated Science Museum of Western Virginia.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY  JOHN MCCORMICK
students have taken the initiative to establish their own course, whether it be ralying their peers to explore a common interest or fulfilling the spirit of the university motto Ut Prosim (That I May Serve).

Rosa McFarland, now a junior architecture major, was a freshman when he enrolled in a colloquium examining the history of the city, taught by President Charles W. Steger and Paul Knox, senior fellow for international advancement. The next year, McFarland attended a colloquium on suburbia taught by a fellow architecture major, then decided to lead his own course on American transportation.

His spring 2010 Colloquium Americanum helped engineering and philosophy majors alike examine how transportation has influenced American communities.

"Honors trusts the students to really pursue academic goals or interest areas with vigor," McFarland said. "This [freedom] gives you the opportunity to pursue what you're interested in, with other people, gaining other viewpoints and other perspectives.

McFarland's work has been influenced by that first city colloquium, and he hopes to expand the course in future years to such themes as education and national security.

Commonly in the Honors Program, a singular experience will propel a student toward a career. Papillon noted. Colloquia— and awards such as the sophomore scholarships, which provide $10,000 for a study-abroad trip—strive for that very goal.

Ut Prosim El Porvenir

It was the water in El Porvenir, Honduras, that caught the attention of Emily Barry. After participating in a spring 2008 colloquium taught by accounting professor Brian Cloyd, that involved creating a service-learning project, Barry, now a graduate student in international studies with a minor in German, participated in the program's unofficial motto: "Make yourself interesting." The Honors Program's official motto, "Excellence is in the journey," suggests that asking the right questions is what really matters. As laboratories for new ideas, these colloquia and awards such as the sophomore scholarships, which provide $10,000 for a study-abroad trip—strive for that very goal.

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It was the water in El Porvenir, Honduras, that caught the attention of Emily Barry. After participating in a spring 2008 colloquium taught by accounting professor Brian Cloyd, that involved creating a service-learning project, Barry, now a graduate student in international studies with a minor in German, participated in the program's unofficial motto: "Make yourself interesting." The Honors Program's official motto, "Excellence is in the journey," suggests that asking the right questions is what really matters. As laboratories for new ideas, these colloquia and awards such as the sophomore scholarships, which provide $10,000 for a study-abroad trip—strive for that very goal.

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Do you love your school? Show your school spirit with new collegiate footwear by Cuce Shoes

cool weather hokie gear

unisex jansport long-sleeve t-shirt. s-2xx
unisex champion long-sleeve t-shirt. s-2xx
unisex jansport open bottom sweatpants. s-2xl
unisex one-fourth zip fleece sweatshirts by vantage. s-3xl
women's one-fourth zip sweatshirts by vantage. s-3xl
women's tartan and houndstooth hats
women's sweatpants by champion. s-2xl
women's long-sleeve t-shirt by champion. s-2xl
ladies boots available in adult sizes 5-11, youth sizes 4-11, and kids sizes 10-13, 1-3

polished and organized, amateis overcomes the often-daunting challenge of maintaining student motivation and attention in a large lecture class. and she does so without compromising content.

“patricia is the heart and soul of this program,” said joe merola, professor of chemistry and former department chair. “in exit interviews, graduating seniors invariably mention her as one of the best teachers they encountered during their time at virginia tech.”

“i’m not sure what makes me a good teacher,” amateis said. “i really like the subject, and i really like the students. they pick up on my enthusiasm.” she noted that her philosophy is to explain things the way she would want them explained to her.

chemistry is a hard subject, amateis admits readily. she is also quick to add that students who devote time to the class do well in it. “i tell my students that luck doesn’t get you through this class or most anything else in life,” she said. “it’s about getting out there and doing the work.”

on course evaluations, her students consistently agree. “dr. amateis is a professor who wants everyone to succeed,” wrote chris wolberg, a junior biochemistry major from alexandria, va. “her patience with students who are having trouble makes her an excellent teacher.”

colleagues also consider her as one of the best. “i was struck immediately by patricia’s control over such a large class,” said chemistry professor t. daniel crawford. “it was clear that she had gained the students’ respect early in the semester, and they responded immediately to her lead to quiet the room for the start of class. this is no small achievement.”

amateis also advises her students to have a passion outside of academics. her own interests include playing music in a steel-drum band, a hobby she took up two years ago when her youngest child left for college. a far cry from what some might call the torture of chemical equations, the steel drum gives her another activity in which to excel.

“i’ve always been a hard worker, and whatever i do, i want to do well, or at least to the best of my ability.”

catherine doss is the communications manager for the college of science. go to www.vtmagazine.vt.edu to read the amateis interview.

professor profile, continued from page 11
In 1976, when he created the first professorship endowment in his alma mater’s College of Engineering, Charles O. Gordon Sr. (industrial engineering ‘42) appreciated that the benefits of his generosity would last beyond his lifetime.

That fact was driven home in August 2004, when G. Don Taylor became the latest Charles O. Gordon Professor of Industrial Engineering just eight days after Gordon had passed away.

Taylor never got to meet his benefactor in person, but the Gordon professorship was an important factor in Taylor’s decision to leave the University of Louisville to become the head of Virginia Tech’s Grado Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering. Under his leadership, the department has received the highest rankings in its history: U.S. News & World Report ranked the department fourth in the nation in 2010 for both undergraduate and graduate education. Taylor said this success reflects the quality of students and faculty but also was fueled by the generosity of people like Gordon.

Taylor is one of many renowned professors in his department, which has five other faculty members with named professorships or fellowships created by donors. Named professorships typically provide faculty members with discretionary money, which gives them the flexibility to explore new initiatives that otherwise would need to be paid for from their department’s budget or with conditional funding from an outside agency.

“As a department head, having a named position is particularly useful,” said Taylor, whose research expertise is in using computer simulations and advanced math to plot optimum trucking routes. “I have a lot of travel demands in order to represent the department and do my job effectively. If I didn’t have funding from the professorship, I wouldn’t be able to do my job as efficiently.”

Along with his academic duties, Taylor has helped improve trucking plans used by major transportation companies. He is president-elect of the Institute of Industrial Engineers, the world’s leading professional society in that field.

Donors who want to ensure that a sizable gift will benefit the university for many decades to come can stipulate that only income from the gift, not the principal, be spent. The Virginia Tech Foundation, which manages money donated to the university, oversees roughly 3,000 endowments created in this manner.

According to the foundation’s records, the oldest endowments are two scholarships created in the late 1940s, and the first named professorships were endowed in the 1970s.

Former Virginia Tech President Paul Torgersen was dean of the College of Engineering in the 1970s and developed a relationship with Gordon, a successful alumnus who would later serve on the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors. Torgersen said he sought Gordon’s advice on fundraising for what would become the college’s first endowed professorships and wound up with a donation to create one.

“Once we got started, there was an incredible momentum,” Torgersen said. “But we had to get the first one, and Charles Gordon gave us the first one.”

Today, a majority of endowments still support scholarships, but many funds have also been set up to benefit particular programs, provide research opportunities for students, bring speakers to campus, or establish professorships like the one used to recruit Taylor. Across the university, plenty of other department heads can cite endowments that help their programs.

As Taylor explained, he wanted to come to Blacksburg for many reasons, but the availability of a named position certainly helped cement his decision.

“I had a named position at Louisville,” Taylor said, “and once you’ve had the freedom that comes with that, it’s hard to give it up.”

Albert Raboteau is a writer for University Development.

Two-thirds of the roughly 3,000 endowed funds at Virginia Tech pay for scholarships. Christian Hendrix (biochemistry ’12) is one of many students helped by one of the oldest endowments on campus, the William B. Downey Memorial Scholarship, created in 1949. Visit www.campaign.vt.edu/downey for her story.
Elaine Tyrrell stood before a crowd and discussed why she had willed her estate to her alma mater, Virginia Tech. She encouraged the group, more than 30 alumni and friends, not only to give generously, but to urge others to do the same.

That September 2010 meeting in a hotel conference room in Greenbelt, Md., was a milestone in the Campaign for Virginia Tech: Invent the Future. With the initial gathering of members of the Washington, D.C.-Maryland Regional Committee—the last of 16 assembled over the past four years to help the university reach its $1 billion campaign goal—a nationwide effort to mobilize the university’s supporters was fully under way.

“It’s Hokies talking to Hokies,” said Tyrrell (clothing and textiles ’65, M.S. home economics ’67), the committee’s chairwoman, a few weeks after the meeting. “Regardless of class year, we’re bonded. We get reacquainted, we reminisce, and synergy is created. We draw on this synergy to create a piece of Virginia Tech’s future.”

The university’s regional committees are based in Florida, California, Texas, New York, and population centers closer to Blacksburg. Regional work is complemented by the efforts of the National Campaign Steering Committee, which has helped drive the campaign since its public launch in October 2007. Prior to that, the Quiet Phase Campaign Steering Committee had helped secure more than $550 million in gifts and commitments between July 2003 (when the fundraising initiative began) and the public launch.

By spending countless hours promoting the university and making significant gifts themselves, committee members have fueled much of the campaign’s success to date. Combined, the campus’s 907 volunteers donated or pledged more than $265 million between the start of the campaign and mid-October 2010. As a group, they’ve dedicated more than 10,000 hours to committee events, and that figure doesn’t even include time spent contacting friends, colleagues, and fellow alumni.

Steve Parker (accounting ’83) is a member of the committee focused on the Charlotte, N.C., region. He helped organize and provide seed funding for an endowed fund that Wells Fargo employees are using to pool support for the university. He’s also made numerous phone calls and set up meetings with fellow alumni.

“A lot of these folks I don’t know personally,” Parker said. “But once people understand that I went to Tech and realize what I’m doing by reaching out to them, they’re certainly willing to talk.”

Albert Raboteau is a writer for University Development.

Visit www.campaign.vt.edu/volunteers for a list of campaign committee members and to read why they chose to become involved.

Meet Emily Barry, a 2009 graduate of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, who now is working toward a master’s in international government and international affairs in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies.

Emily organized a service-learning project that took her and several fellow students to rural Honduras, where they partnered with residents on much-needed community programs. Emily says the experience helped cement her desire for a public service career in which she can continue to help others.

A donor’s generosity made it possible for Emily to turn her project from idea to reality. By giving to Virginia Tech, you help fuel the accomplishments of extraordinary students like her—talented, ambitious young adults who are certain to make a positive impact on the world. Visit www.givingto.vt.edu to make a gift or learn more.
Cultural kaleidoscope

Alumna serves as ambassador to two island nations

BY DENISE YOUNG

Many Americans may not be familiar with the Republic of Mauritius, an island nation of 1.2 million, east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean, or the neighboring Republic of Seychelles, a scattered archipelago of more than 115 islands.

Tourists to Mauritius can ride giant tortoises or bask in the sun. The republic’s rainbow-hued flag is stretching to Africa, India, China, France, and Great Britain. Many Americans may not be familiar with the Republic of Mauritius, an island nation of 1.2 million, east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean, or the neighboring Republic of Seychelles, a scattered archipelago of more than 115 islands.

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But Mary Jo Wills (M.B.A. ’94) isn’t on a vacation or reality show. As the U.S. ambassador to Mauritius and Seychelles, Wills spends most of her time in Port Louis, Mauritius’ capital city, representing U.S. interests and helping to shape relations with these two island nations. “The opportunity to serve as ambassador is the pinnacle of any professional diplomat’s career. And it is an honor and privilege to serve the government and people of the United States,” said Wills, who has held the post since February 2010.

The nations have a history as colorful as their tropical landscapes. Uninhabited for much of human history, both countries were French and British colonies. Citizens have ancestries stretching to Africa, India, China, France, and Great Britain. It’s typical for citizens to speak as many as three languages, but most speak similar versions of Creole. Religious beliefs vary from Hinduism to Roman Catholicism to Buddhism.

Wills’ job is varied as well. “Every day is different, every day is challenging, and every day is very interesting,” she said. Because of the eight-hour time difference, her mornings are often spent catching up on what transpired in Washington overnight. Staff meetings, speeches at conferences and cultural events, or sessions with policymakers, business leaders, colleagues, or the prime or foreign minister of either country ensure that she stays busy.

While she enjoys meeting new people, learning about other cultures, and telling others about the United States and shared values and goals between nations, Wills never forgets the importance of any ambassador’s mission. “When we’re overseas, what we’re really doing is being a bridge between the people of the United States and the people of other countries,” Wills said.

The presence of a U.S. representative allows for substantial conversations that wouldn’t be possible otherwise. “It is easy to simply put out a message or make a statement—that can be done from Washington,” said Wills. “Real communication involves dialogue face-to-face. The only way to communicate effectively is to know those circumstances, the history, and the people involved and to listen to them, as well as talk. [This commitment requires] people on the ground who know how to communicate with our friends abroad and who know how to communicate with Washington.”

A graduate of Tech’s M.B.A. program, Wills is also pursuing her doctorate in public affairs and public administration at Virginia Tech’s Center for Public Affairs and Policy (CPAP) in Alexandria, Va. “The doctoral program has given me a whole different perspective on my work,” Wills said.

Jim Wolf, a CPAP professor who has known Wills for more than seven years, said she is most impressed by her curiosity and tenacity. “She stays with something and keeps pushing. She’s very adaptable to different situations. She is a very competent scholar and practitioner.”

Wills doesn’t worry about culture shock. In fact, one might say she thrives on it. “It is always an adventure to move to a new country. You pack up a lot of what you own and then live without it for some time as it is shipped to you. But there is the compensation of living in a new country that you get to discover—and [you] make new friendships that often last a lifetime.”

For Wills, that sense of discovery goes hand in hand with a mission to serve as a bridge between cultures, fostering cross-cultural understanding and anticipating a new adventure—and challenge—every day.

“Real communication involves dialogue face-to-face. The only way to communicate effectively is to know those circumstances, the history, and the people involved and to listen to them.”
Much is happening in our Alumni Association this academic year, including the recent celebration of our 135th birthday. At one occasion, we inducted former alumni board members into a new recognition society, the Gateway Society. Since the founding of the Alumni Association in 1875, several hundred loyal alumni have served on our governing board. We are grateful for their service in the true spirit of Ut Prosim (That I May Serve).

New among our offerings this year is a career resources program for alumni. Nancy Brittle (mathematics ’72), an alumna who spent her career with IBM, has accepted the role of organizing and facilitating online resources designed to help alumni searching for employment. Information regarding résumés, interview tips, networking, and even job listings are part of the service. At no cost, employers may post job listings seeking applicants online at Hokie Nation Network. Webinars are planned on topics such as entrepreneurship and business trends. These resources, we hope, will be helpful to alumni at any stage of their careers. (See page 45 for more information and the Web address.)

Also new in 2011 is a Drillfield Series of five “seminar” weekends for alumni showcasing the expertise of faculty and alumni. For example, in February, we’ll offer tips on preparing fine cuisine and pairing it with the appropriate wine. Another weekend is for photography aficionados or beginners, featuring professional and award-winning photographers. Still another embraces sustainability by presenting topics and tours associated with livestock, crops, food production, and safety. The arts, particularly theater, will be center stage for a midsummer performance. The popular Summer Around the Drillfield concludes the series with a four-day program that includes Blacksburg’s annual Steppin’ Out festival and a visit to historic Mountain Lake. The Inn at Virginia Tech offers discounted rates to those seeking accommodations for the Drillfield Series. Learn more about the series and the activities planned for specific dates on page 44.

Finally, a wide selection of group tours is being offered by the Alumni Association in 2011. Several will be hosted by distinguished deans and faculty members, such as Jack Davis in architecture, Richard Sorensen in business, and James I. Robertson Jr. in history. The value-priced tours are led by professional tour planners. Review the list in the following pages, and don’t miss an opportunity to travel with fellow Hokies.
Drillfield Series for alumni

Drillfield Series

For 2011, we’re rolling out a series of weekend programs exclusively for alumni and their families. The series will feature fun and interesting topics—fine dining, photography, environmental sustainability, the arts, science exploration, and Blacksburg’s annual Steppin’ Out summer festival—paired with specially discounted accommodations at the Inn at Virginia Tech.

Food for thought: Entertaining with fine wine and creative cuisine Feb. 18–20, 2011

Join us for an elegant and informative weekend of wine and fine cuisine. Learn about the wine industry, tourism, and production. Stroll through our food stations, where hospitality and tourism management students prepare foods matched with wines produced by traditional flash! If you are looking for the answers to any of these questions, this seminar is for you. Learn everything you need to know about photography from our master photographers.

Sustainability in gardening, crops, urban forestry, livestock, and food safety June 16–19, 2011

Join faculty as they share their expertise in sustainability efforts on campus and around the commonwealth. The weekend will feature faculty from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the College of Natural Resources and Environment, and the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine (VMRCVM). Faculty presentations and tours of Kentland Farm, the Hahn Horticulture Garden, and the Catawba Sustainability Center will allow participants to witness sustainability efforts in action.


Come back to campus this summer and experience the arts at Virginia Tech. This family-friendly experience will give participants the opportunity to meet talented faculty and students and learn about the new and exciting things happening in the School of Performing Arts and Cinema. Experience theater design firsthand by attending a theatrical production and taking a backstage tour. Live, learn, and love the arts at Virginia Tech!

Steppin’ Out at Summer Around the Drillfield Aug. 4–7, 2011

The always-popular Summer Around the Drillfield is a chance for alumni, family, and friends to visit Virginia Tech for a closer look at research and student life and to experience some of the New River Valley’s outdoor attractions, including Blacksburg’s Steppin’ Out festival. Enjoy the offerings from more than 185 artists and crafts people, featuring handcrafted items, artisan foods, and three stages of live performances.

Finding a job or changing jobs

Many alumni are experiencing new challenges in their careers. Some are losing their jobs due to the economy, some are venturing into new careers by choice, and others are dealing with downsizing within their own companies. Whether you’re tweaking a résumé, searching for interview tips, or reviewing a job board exclusively for Hokies, the alumni career resources site can be a valuable tool.

Career advice

Assessing personal skills, talents, and interests in order to determine potential career options is a strategic step toward making a change. Webinars will be available on the site to help alumni review and evaluate possibilities. Discussions and seminars on topics ranging from entrepreneurship to business trends will be included.

Resource library

Additional resources on the website will address every aspect of a career change. Virginia Tech Career Services offers assistance to students and recent graduates and provides links to resources for experienced alumni.

Alumni program tailored to enhance careers

Program offers guidance for work-life changes and opportunities

The Virginia Tech Alumni Association recently unveiled a program to assist Hokies seeking employment or considering a job change. The program identifies resources that offer assistance, ideas, advice, or facts for alumni. Visit the website at www.alumni.vt.edu/career.
Serving more than 200,000 alumni, the Virginia Tech Alumni Association supports more than 120 active alumni chapters throughout the United States and abroad. Chapters sponsor a variety of programs, including socials, academic speaker events, career networking opportunities, and community service projects. This past year, chapters provided $185,000 in scholarships to students from their regions attending Virginia Tech. The following are but a few examples of the outstanding programming offered to the Hokie Nation.

Hokies Helping Hokies Richmond Chapter
Now in its third year, Hokies Helping Hokies is a networking forum that brings together employment-seeking alumni and business representatives in the Richmond area. The chapter hosts monthly meetings at the Richmond Graduate Center over coffee and pastries, with time set aside for participants to share résumé information and discuss their companies and career goals. Business representatives have occasion to advertise their businesses and job openings within their companies.

Wine Tasting and Silent Auction Denver Chapter
Annually, the Denver Chapter holds its Wine Tasting and Silent Auction event. A different wine theme is selected each year, ranging from wines around the world to specialty themes such as wines from Italy or Colorado’s Western Slope. Donated by chapter alumni, silent auction items raise money for scholarships to benefit incoming freshmen from the Denver area. The chapter awards an average of $5,000 each year in scholarships.

Columbarium completed on campus
Many campuses have a columbarium where alumni and others from an extended university family may choose to be interred. An attractive columbarium has been constructed on the grounds adjacent to Virginia Tech’s Holtzman Alumni Center, on a grassy knoll with a picturesque view of the Duck Pond. The Hokie Stone structure houses 60 niches that may be purchased for individual or dual interments. Each niche is covered with a maroon granite face, on which names will be engraved and filled with gold lettering. Behind the columbarium, there is a walking path leading to a terrace area. Beyond its current capacity, the area is designed to accommodate expansion, with future walls bordering the terrace. For more information on the Virginia Tech columbarium, contact Josh Burnheimer at 540-231-6285 or jburnheim@vt.edu. The first interment was held on Veterans Day and honored Brett Blackwell (business administration ‘69), a member of the corps of cadets and Highty-Tighties who served in the U.S. Army Signal Corps following graduation and wished to be buried at his alma mater.

Chapter highlights

Saratoga Races
New York Capital District Chapter
Alumni and friends gathered at the Saratoga Race Course in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., for a day of racing. Tom (business administration ’63) and Bon- ner Young, thoroughbred breeders and owners, joined the group to discuss the day’s racing. Jack Hutcheson, director of Capital Region alumni programs, obtained paddock passes for participants to see the horses up close.

Feast on the 50
Central Florida Chapter
The Central Florida Chapter participated in Feast on the 50, a contest sponsored by Florida Citrus Sports to determine the best local alumni chapter. The event is regularly held in the fall to encourage local alumni chapters to tailorgate at the Citrus Bowl. Alumni from Big Ten, SEC, ACC, and Big East schools participated.

2010-11 Board of Directors
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Lance L. Smith ‘88, past president
Matthew M. Winston Jr. ’80, vice president
Tomm Tillar ’89, secretary/treasurer
Kevin W. Lesar ‘95, past president

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Thomas W. Moss Jr. ’50*
Jay S. Poole ’78
Oakton, Va., accounting

Write-in nomination

Signature

Return to:
Virginia Tech Alumni Association
Holtzman Alumni Center (0102)
Blacksburg, VA 24061

William A. Aden ’67, ’72
Blacksburg, Va., civil engineering and sanitary engineering
Morgan E. Blackwood ’02
Midlothian, Va., industrial systems and engineering
Marvin J. Boyd ’00
Ashburn, Va., management science
Todd F. Hearp ’89
Salem, Va., finance
Pamela A. McConnell ’72
Hixson, Tenn., horticulture
Kylene Barker McNeill ’78
Naples, Fla., clothing and textiles
Gregory D. Merritt ’93
Sterling, Va., marketing management
Glenn P. Reynolds ’76
Blacksburg, Va., architecture
Karen E. Torgersen ’78, ’86
Raleigh, N.C., elementary education and M.B.A.
Jim L. Wade ’76
Roanoke, Va., accounting
Eric A. Windmuller II ’76
Oakton, Va., history

*Lifetime honorary member

Alumni Association Board of Directors ballot
The Alumni Association Board of Directors nominating committee has proposed the following nominees for election to three-year terms from 2011 through 2014. Please vote for up to 11 nominees and return the ballot by April 15. Results will be announced at the Alumni Association board meeting in late April.

William A. Aden ’67, ’72
Blacksburg, Va., civil engineering and sanitary engineering
Morgan E. Blackwood ’02
Midlothian, Va., industrial systems and engineering
Marvin J. Boyd ’00
Ashburn, Va., management science
Todd F. Hearp ’89
Salem, Va., finance
Pamela A. McConnell ’72
Hixson, Tenn., horticulture
Kylene Barker McNeill ’78
Naples, Fla., clothing and textiles
Gregory D. Merritt ’93
Sterling, Va., marketing management
Glenn P. Reynolds ’76
Blacksburg, Va., architecture
Karen E. Torgersen ’78, ’86
Raleigh, N.C., elementary education and M.B.A.
Jim L. Wade ’76
Roanoke, Va., accounting
Eric A. Windmuller II ’76
Oakton, Va., history

*Lifetime honorary member

Write-in nomination

Signature

Return to: Virginia Tech Alumni Association
Holtzman Alumni Center (0102)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
Wanting to honor their 50th anniversary reunion and create a lasting legacy, Jess Fowler (general science ‘64), along with other Class of 1964 M Company members of the corps of cadets, proposed a special program that is designed to pass on the spirit of Virginia Tech through the university’s cherished class ring tradition.

The program enables alumni and families to donate their class rings to be melted down to create Hokie Gold, which would then be included in the gold for the class rings of the next junior class. Other universities, including the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, have such programs in place.

The Class of 1964 will launch the inaugural Hokie Gold program in spring 2012. The rings will be melted at the new Virginia Tech Foundry Institute for Research and Education (VT FIRE) on campus. The resulting ingot, or “billet,” will then be refined at the Balfour manufacturing plant in Austin, Texas, and processed into tiny pellets so that a small amount can be included in all Class of 2014 gold rings.

In addition, a portion of the gold will be saved for inclusion in the ring of the next senior class. For each year of Hokie Gold, biographical information about the donated rings’ owners will be compiled.

Six members of the Class of 1964 have already committed to donate their class rings to Hokie Gold. It is Fowler’s wish that the program continue in perpetuity to extend the heritage of Hokie Gold into the rings worn by future Hokies.

For more information, visit www.alumni.vt.edu/hokiegold/.
Virginia Tech alumni travel the world

Vikings, Kings, and Castles: England, Scotland, Norway, Ireland, the Isle of Man, and Wales
July 14-29 | $5,299*
(air included)

France – Paris and the Villages and Vineyards
Oct. 6-16 | $3,295*

Treasuries of East Africa
Oct. 21-Nov. 3 | $5,495*

Baltic Treasures –
Essential Europe Grad Trip
Century Sky
May 5-16 | $3,495*

Sketches of Spain
May 5-8 | $1,859*
(air included)

Jewels of the Mediterranean
and Greek Isles
April 12-23 | $3,499*
and Vineyards
May 5-8 | starting at $3,795*
(air included)

Wildlife Excursions
May 5-16 | $5,495*
(air included)

Alaskan Adventures
Aug. 4-14 | starting at $2,999*
(air included)

Grand Journey Around the World
Grand Danube Passage Cruise –
Hosted by Jack Davis, dean of the College
Sept. 6-11 | $1,995*
Chicago – An Insider’s Perspective
Aug. 4-14 | starting at $2,999*
(air included)

Grand Danube Passage Cruise – Amadeus Elegant
Sept. 13-27 | starting at $3,895*

Almeida I. Robertson Jr. and Betty Lee
Vikings, Kings, and Castles: England, Scotland, Norway, Ireland, the Isle of Man, and Wales
June 15-23 | $2,795*
Hosted by Richard Sorensen, dean of the Pamphlet College of Business

“Prices may vary per person and are based on double occupancy. Airfare and VAT taxes are not included, unless otherwise noted. Special airfare is available from most major cities. Dates and prices are subject to change.”

To learn more about alumni travel tours or to request a brochure, visit www.alumni.vt.edu/travel. If you have any questions, please contact Gwen Harrington, alumni travel coordinator, at 540/231-6285 or alumnitravel@vt.edu.

Alumni travel insurance
The Virginia Tech Alumni Association strongly recommends that travelers purchase insurance when traveling internationally. An alumni tour is a major investment. Travel insurance will protect that investment. To learn more or to purchase insurance, go to www.alumni.vt.edu/travel/insurance.

Virginia Tech Magazine is pleased to note books by alumni, faculty, and staff or books about Virginia Tech. To submit a book, please mail it to Book Notes, Virginia Tech Magazine, 105 Media Building, Blacksburg, VA 24061. You can also e-mail a high-resolution image of the book cover, along with your name, the name of the publisher, and a brief description of the book, to vtmag@vt.edu. For more information about Book Notes policies, please go to www.vtmagazine.vt.edu/bookreview.html.

Books by alumni

The Last Jew of Rotterdam, by Ernst Cassutto (D.V.M. ’89), is a true story of triumph in World War II. The author tells the story of his parents’ struggle to survive the Holocaust and find faith in the most trying of times. The publisher is Purple Pomegranate Productions (60 Haight St., San Francisco, CA 94102); www.anne.profera.us.org.

High-Tech Terror: Recognition, Management, and Prevention of Biological, Chemical, and Nuclear Injuries Secondary to Acts of Terrorism, by Robert Samuel Cromartie III and Richard Joseph Dana (general science ’55), educates health care professionals about the issues in the title. The publisher is Longman Publishing (1101 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036); www.pearsongroup.com. In An Illustrated Guide to Relativity, Tatsu Takeuchi, associate professor in the Department of Physics, explains Einstein’s theory of relativity by using “space-time diagrams,” instead of equations, progressing from basic to advanced topics in a manner that is informative to scientists and accessible to non-scientists. The publisher is Cambridge University Press (32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013); www.cambridge.org.

Books by faculty

In Empirical Political Analysis, by Associate Professor and Associate Chair in the Department of Political Science Craig Leonard Brians and Professor Richard C. Rich, director of the Center of Environment and Energy Studies, et al., the authors provide a comprehensive survey of designing experiments, conducting research, evaluating results, and presenting findings. The publisher is Longman Publishing (1101 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036); www.pearsongroup.com.

Designing Online Learning with Flash, by David Richard Moore (agriculture and applied economics ’91, curriculum and instruction M.A.Ed. ’93, Ph.D. ’95), is a step-by-step guide to developing Flash tutorials for instructional purposes. The publisher is Pfeiffer (389 Market St., San Francisco, CA 94103); www.pfeiffer.com.

Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates who Joined the Army after 1861, by Kenneth W. Noe (history M.A. ’81), contextualizes the stories of individual soldiers who experience optimism and then defeat in the Confederate war effort. The publisher is University of North Carolina Press (116 S. Boundary St., Chapel Hill, NC 27514); http://www.uncpress.unc.edu.

The Italian Spectre, by Ralph Riffenburgh (biochemistry ’43), is a novel about a brilliant, attractive serial killer, her background, and the police department’s search for her. The book is self-published through Publish America (Box 151, Frederick, MD 21705); www.PublishAmerica.com.

Virginia Tech alumni travel the world

Belize Jungle Lodge Tour with Wildlife Excursions
April 2-9 | $2,999*

To learn more about alumni travel tours or to request a brochure, visit www.alumni.vt.edu/travel. If you have any questions, please contact Gwen Harrington, alumni travel coordinator, at 540/231-6285 or alumnitravel@vt.edu.

Baltic Treasures – Copenhagen to Stockholm
June 10-21 | $3,699*
(air included)

Amalfi – The Divine Coast of Italy
June 15-23 | $2,795*
Hosted by Richard Sorensen, dean of the Pamphlet College of Business

Life is meant to be experienced and explored. … What better way to broaden your horizons and breathe in new adventures than with other Hokies!
Alumni, we want to hear what you’ve been doing. Although we cannot print stories or obituaries, we can post online photographs of weddings, births, and anniversaries. Mail photos to Virginia Tech Magazine, 505 Media Building, Blacksburg, VA 24061, or e-mail them to vitmag@vt.edu. Please include career, wedding, birth, and death notices to Alumni Notes, Virginia Tech Alumni Association, Alumni Hall, 100 Alumni Mall, Blacksburg, VA 24061, and send them via e-mail to clubhouse@vt.edu or submit them online at www.vitmag/alumniclub'submit村村民Notes.html.

Editor’s note: For privacy reasons, mailing addresses for alumni appearing in this issue are not listed. New Weddings, Births, and Adoptions may be viewed online only at www.alumni.vt.edu/directory by logging in with your Virginia Tech PID and password.

Alumni receives governor’s award for service

BY CHAD O'KANE M.A. ’11

Helen He (M.S., natural resources ’04) is undeniably committed to the Virginia Tech motto, Ut Prosim (That I May Serve), involved in community service for more than 16 years. She was the MacArthur Foundation’s 2006 Governor’s Volunteer Service Award in April 2010 for her tireless dedication to volunteer work with the Chinese community.

After completing an undergraduate program in civil engineering in China, He moved with her husband to the United States and spent the next 10 years raising two sons. She also began to devote herself to volunteer work, supporting and promoting a variety of projects and events, including Community Service Day and Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month, as well as clothing and food drives for low-income families.

During her time as a Virginia Tech student, He began to expand her service portfolio beyond the Asian-American community. “As I went through the program at Virginia Tech, I started to realize that there is so important, not just to one country or one community of people, but to the entire world,” she said. “For teaching me that lesson, I love Virginia Tech—and I love going back to the community.”

She brings that same spirit and energy to her current position as a program assistant with the College of Natural Resources and Environmental Science at the Virginia Tech Northern Virginia Center in Falls Church, Va., where she has helped to expand the already robust young graduate program.

In addition to her role with Tech, He remains committed to community service as president of the Coordinating Council of Chinese-American Associations in Washington, D.C. She was an advocate for the 2010 Census, connecting census staff with Chinese communities to encourage stronger participation. From 2003-07, she served on the board of directors for the International Fund for China’s Environment. In short, he has left a trail of service, from China to Tech to D.C. 

Clod O’Kane (M.A. communication ’11) is a graduate assistant with Virginia Tech Magazine.

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Jennifer Leiser, Butterfield, Spring Garden, Va., 6/12/10.

Jessica Whipple, Columbus, Ohio, 7/5/10.


Katherine M. Cha, Western Michigan University, 8/3/10.

Stuart MacDonald, Skandia, 8/9/10.

Aaron Price, Los Angeles, Calif., 8/10/10.

Jennifer Lindner, Anderson University, 8/11/10.

Doug Mogen, Springfield, Va., 8/13/10.

Llana F. Price, Springfield, Va., 11/12/10.

Ralph A. O’ Shaughnessy, Alexandria, Va., 1/28/11.

Rosemary E. Perry, 200 S. Main St.,型号, 2/15/11.

Zachary J. Shaffer, New York, N.Y., 2/18/11.

Kathleen A. Smith, Chantilly, Va., 2/19/11.

Michael L. Wilson, Leesburg, Va., 2/19/11.

Jeffrey B. John, Inova Loudoun Hospital, Lorton, Va., 2/20/11.


Diana M. Shoolery, Alexandria, Va., 3/9/11.

Sarah E. Smith, Alexandria, Va., 3/12/11.

Teresa M. Glen, Arlington, Va., 3/15/11.

Diane L. Klement, Alexandria, Va., 3/16/11.
BY CHAD O’KANE M.A. ‘11

Alumnus changes the way we “Google”

The Internet just became a little more instantaneous. To bring users the live results of Google Instant, Manas Tungare [Ph.D. computer science ’09] worked for more than a year developing prototypes and performing experiments. Not only was he a member of the Search User Interfaces team, but he was also the first engineer on the Google Instant project.

The Google Blog describes Google Instant as a search that “takes what you have typed accurately, predicts the most likely completion, and streams results in real time for those predictions.”

“Being able to take an idea and build a prototype is one of the key skills that the real world finds valuable, and my experience at Virginia Tech helped me with that goal,” Tungare said. He explained that working with his advisor, computer science Associate Professor Manuel Pérez-Quiñones, helped reinforce his decision to work in industry because of the combination of real-world scenarios and research angles.

Tungare interned at Google for several years while at Tech before joining the company professionally. He praised his coworkers’ creativity and the sense of teamwork, “It’s fun getting up in the morning and looking forward to cooking up new user-interface ideas,” he said.

His personal website, http://manas.tungare.name, represents the creativity he brings to his field. It showcases a variety of software projects he has developed on the side from a handy script that allows users to add discussion forums on their websites to a program that indicates if a phone number spells a recognizable word.

The before-you-type search completion may seem like the fastest a search can be, but Tungare and his team are still developing new ideas after Instant’s Sept. 8, 2010, launch. Although he cannot discuss what they are working on, he notes that the team regularly comes up with new ideas to benefit users. “I look forward to being part of the next big thing,” he said.

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Alumnus changes the way we “Google”

BY HILLARY MAY ’12

50 years of space exploration

BY EDWARD M. “Mack” Henderson ’65

Looking at Edward M. “Mack” Henderson’s lifelong career in space exploration, it’s natural to wonder if there’s any aspect of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) history in which he hasn’t played an engineering role. Henderson, who graduated with a degree in aerospace engineering ’65, recently received the U.S. government’s 50-year service award, was involved in many of the latest NASA projects. Originally from Salem, Va., Henderson received a naval scholarship but was unhappy with the lack of aeronautical engineering courses at the school he chose to attend. He reached out to his uncle, a math professor at Virginia Tech, who recommended the university’s co-op program in aeronautical engineering. Henderson eagerly joined.

Henderson’s first co-op position with the space program was in Alabama, where he worked on rocket-guided missiles for the U.S. Army. Following graduation, he joined the newly developed Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston, Tex., where he centered on his work in a variety of capacities for the Gemini, Apollo, and space shuttle programs.

Henderson credits much of his personal success to the cooperative education he received at Virginia Tech. “I can’t say enough about the preparation I received at Virginia Tech,” he said. He also pointed out that Tech graduates have been instrumental in the growth of the nation’s No. 1 space program. The “Hokie Nation is very well represented,” he said. [Go to www.technotes.vt.edu to see a summer 2003 story on NASA/Hokies.]

Recently, Henderson helped set up the transition team charged with safely retiring the space shuttle. While he believes the commercialization of spaceflight has great potential, he is sad to see the shuttle program end. He fears that a gap in viable U.S. spacecraft could have dire consequences for the nation’s educational system.

“The space program inspires young people to get interested in technology,” Henderson said, “and inspires them to go to universities such as Virginia Tech that are committed to harnessing that enthusiasm and educating the brightest and the brightest minds to lead us into the future.”

Chad O’Kane (M.A. ‘communication ‘11) is a graduate assistant with Virginia Tech Magazine.

Hillandale, Richmond, Va., 8/26/10.

10 Rockefeller Concourse, Box 820959, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27593.

Pérez-Quiñones, helped reinforce his decision to work in industry because of the combination of real-world scenarios and research angles.

“This being able to take an idea and build a prototype is one of the key skills that the real world finds valuable, and my experience at Virginia Tech directly helped me with that goal,” Tungare said. He explained that working with his advisor, computer science Associate Professor Manuel Pérez-Quiñones, helped reinforce his decision to work in industry because of the combination of real-world scenarios and research angles.

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At Virginia Tech, a leading academic and research university, we are committed to helping the commonwealth maintain economic strength and stability. By serving as a statewide resource for the advancement of industry, we use our expertise and contacts to build a workforce equipped to face the challenges of the future. Take for example the Virginia forest industries, a $27 billion sector in the commonwealth. Together with the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center, Danville Community College, Halifax County Public Schools, and WoodLINKS USA, we’re motivating and preparing high school students to study advanced wood manufacturing upon graduation. The result is a win-win situation. Students become proficient in a high-demand field and manufacturers have an exceptional talent pool from which to hire and therefore remain competitive.

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