New president named

Timothy D. Sands, introduced in December as the 16th president of Virginia Tech, was drawn to the university’s land-grant heritage, research strengths, forward momentum, and more. See the story on page 2.

MASTERPIECE
The Moss Arts Center comes to life
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Sands named 16th president

**Introdu**

Looking forward to the future:

introducing the new president: Timothy D. Sands and his wife, Proverbs. Sands was already well-versed in the university's strengths. Drawing from notes jotted onto a napkin, Sands spoke eloquently about the fac- 

tors that drew him to Blacksburg. Currently the Purdue University executive vice president for academic affairs and provost, Sands will start on June 1.

### Stagecraft: The versatility of Virginia Tech's newest institute and venue

**Can opera and video game aficionados coexist?** The Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology provides an imaginative foundation that they can. An innovative research project has merged arts education, technology, and storytelling, yielding a one-of-a-kind opera, its virtual set and char- 
acters constructed inside the Microsoft video game complemented by the voices of Virginia Tech music students.

### Masterpiece: The Moss Arts Center comes to life

More than a decade in the making, the Moss Arts Center has opened its doors, dazzling patrons with its works of art and technology. Experience the building's first performances and exhibitions as we take you through the galleries, the Cube, the backstage area, and the intimate theatre, and learn what makes the center fit the spirit of Virginia Tech so well.

### The Balance of Academics and Athletics

**—and the cost to support them**

by CHARLES W. STEGER ’69

Last fall, the Virginia General Assembly’s audit arm, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC), released a report critical of nonacademic student fees. In particular, it highlighted high fees for intercollegiate athletics. However, Virginia Tech fared well in the report, with the lowest athletic fee in the state by a wide margin.

Virginia Tech students paid $267 in the 2011-12 academic year (the fee is now $273) versus an average of $1,185 for all public colleges, the study noted. The highest was $2,044.

Also, last fall Virginia Tech was featured in Gregg Easterbrook’s book, “The King of Sports,” as one of the few well-run football programs nationally—a program in which students graduate and the team wins.

The author declares, “Virginia Tech’s program is in many respects an ideal—run about as well as can be imagined.”

More recently, we were fitted with the news that Virginia Tech had the highest Graduation Success Rate (GSR)—an NCAA measure based on graduation—of any public school in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), for all sports and for football. The men’s basketball team ranked second among all ACC schools with a GSR 20 points above the Division I average.

I believe those factoids all point to a larger message: Your alma mater works hard to keep overall costs low while still reaching for the stars.

Clearly, the cost of higher education has risen in recent years as state support has plummeted. But our administration, and those before, always has kept a lid on nonacademic fees, known as the “comprehensive fee.” Today, the fee of $1,752 remains the lowest in Virginia. Non-education fees comprise only about 15 percent of total mandatory costs here. (The athletic fee is included in the comprehensive fee.)

Only 2 percent of all Virginia Tech tuition and fees goes toward athletics. The state average is 12 percent, and one school devotes 24

percent to athletics. The state average is 12 percent, and one school devotes 24 percent to athletics. Yet, Virginia Tech students are guaranteed 25 percent of total mandatory costs here. (The athletic fee is included in the comprehensive fee.)

The starting salary of graduates from Virginia Tech exceeds the national average by 20 points above the Division 1 average. The class of 2015 is ranked in the top 10 percent nationally when it comes to the number of graduates who go on to further graduate study, earnings, and employment.

Virginia Tech has long been known for of- 
fering a high-value education. Tuition and fees here rank in the middle of the pack as compared to peer universities. Total cost to attend is less at Tech than at 19 of 24 peer schools. We appear on Kiplinger’s value list every year.

As we look forward to the next academic year, we have raised tuition and fees that are necessary to support the overall budget. Your alma mater works hard to keep costs low while still reaching for the stars.

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Only 2 percent of all Virginia Tech tuition and fees goes toward athletics. The state average is 12 percent, and one school devotes 24 percent to athletics. Yet, Virginia Tech students are guaranteed 25 percent of the seats in Lane Stadium and Cassell Coliseum. They find excellence and a seat.

And Frank Beamer is the winningest active coach in Division I Football Bowl Subdivision.
Timothy D. Sands, currently the executive vice president for academic affairs and provost at Purdue University, will be Virginia Tech’s 16th president. Introduced at a Dec. 6 press conference, Sands succeeds President Charles W. Steger, who will step down when Sands takes office on June 1. “Dr. Sands impressed many from the start and garnered even more support after our personal interviews,” said Mike Quillen (civil engineering ’70, M.S. ’71), rector of the Board of Visitors (BOV). “He has stellar academic credentials and administrative experience from some of the nation’s outstanding land-grant and public research universities. We were particularly impressed with Tim’s sense of the modern research university’s role in advancing American society and its economy.”

Sands, 55, the Basil S. Turner Professor of Engineering in Purdue’s School of Materials Engineering and School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, served as Purdue’s acting president in fall 2012. As Purdue’s chief academic officer, Sands led efforts to elevate student success that enhanced retention and graduate rates, initiated a move toward year-round utilization of facilities, led development of the university’s first comprehensive assessment of all degree-granting programs, and launched an online teaching and learning platform that emphasizes interactive, computation- and simulation-rich learning environments. Activities to elevate student success included focusing resources on the university’s core competencies, modernizing the curriculum, increasing vertical integration, and enhancing technology and academic focus areas.

“Td like to thank the Board of Visitors for the trust that they’ve placed in me,” Sands said at the press conference. “I certainly understand the magnitude of the job before me and the great work that’s been done to get us to this point. President Steger and the Board of Visitors have done a wonderful job moving this university forward over the last decade and a half or so. My main goal is to maintain that momentum and build on it.”

Sands said he was drawn to Virginia Tech for its land-grant heritage, the value of its education, the impact of its research, its embodiment of Ut Prosim (That I May Serve), and its forward direction.

First, Sands noted that the 1862 Morrill Act, which established the model for the nation’s land-grant institutions, was designed to prepare citizens to be active, informed participants in democracy and to teach students to perform research and engage the community so as to advance economic prosperity. Considering society’s needs, on the local to the global stage, Sands said, “Virginia Tech is the kind of institution that you would create today for the 21st century. And I say that lightening there’s a little bit of happiness there; there’s a little bit of good luck; there’s a little bit of planning—I’d say a lot of planning—and a lot of careful stewardship over many generations.”

Second, Sands was impressed with the value of a Virginia Tech education—and not just the price or quality. Surveys routinely rank the university highly, particularly when asking if alumni would choose the school again or recommend it to a family member or friend. “Students are treated with respect and they’re cared for and they have a good experience. That’s the kind of place I want to go to,” Sands said.

Third, Sands was attracted to the university’s research, and he has the background to judge it astutely. Holding a bachelor’s degree in engineering physics and a master’s degree and Ph.D. in materials science and engineering, all from the University of California, Berkeley, Sands began his professional career in 1984 at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and then spent nine years as a member of the technical staff and as a research group director with Bell Communications Research, Inc. (Bellcore) in Red Bank, N.J. He returned to Berkeley in 1993 as a professor in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering and joined Purdue in 2002, later becoming director of the university’s Birck Nanotechnology Center, an interdisciplinary center encompassing 12 academic disciplines.

Many universities, Sands said, “do either problem-inspired research or curiosity-driven research. What I see at Virginia Tech is a great blend of the two.” Faculty members and students, even if driven by curiosity, are able to recognize when discoveries can be applied to the problems of society. “I have the sense that at Virginia Tech, that is the spirit.”

Fourth, Ut Prosim rang true for Sands. “It’s not a dusty relic of a motto here,” Sands said. “It’s very clear to me that this is something that’s deeply ingrained in the institution.” Lastly, describing himself as a builder rather than a maintainer, Sands said the university’s momentum, for which he credited the BOV and Steger, was key. “This is a place that is clearly not happy with the status quo, that always wants to do better and always wants to improve—and that’s the kind of institution that I want to be associated with.” Sands began his remarks at the press conference by introducing his family. His wife, Laura Sands, is the Katherine Birck Professor in the School of Nursing at Purdue.

Children—Amanda, KC, and Kathryn, all of whom graduated from Purdue, and Haley, a junior at Purdue. The appointment concluded a rigorous six-month search chaired by former BOV rector George Nolen (marketing management ’78), during which 238 candidates were considered. The 22-person search committee represented a broad cross section of the extended university community including board members, students, staff, alumni, and 12 senior faculty members. Of the 63 people who interviewed, 22 were finalists, and 11 were finalists recommended to the Board of Visitors. The Board of Visitors named Sands as president of the university on Dec. 6, 2013

New President

Timothy D. Sands and Laura Sands will move to Blacksburg from Purdue University, where Laura Sands is the Katherine Birck Professor in the School of Nursing.

Editor’s note: In-depth coverage of incoming President Timothy D. Sands will be available in the spring 2014 edition of Virginia Tech Magazine, published in mid-April. Meanwhile, visit www.vtmag.vt.edu to learn more about the university’s 16th president.
At Virginia Tech, collaboration is at our core. Leveraging 13 consecutive years of research growth and 866 collaborative sponsored research awards last year alone, we partner with business and industry to accelerate entrepreneurialism and impact economies.

Invent cancer treatments. Build resilient communities. Lead the world in cybersecurity, advance the science of sustainability, and create technology.

Join us now.

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Demolition of Rasche Hall under way

Home to cadets for more than a century, Rasche Hall is coming down as the first step in the redevelopment of the Upper Quad. The redevelopment plan includes the replacement of Rasche and Brodie halls with brand new residence halls that will house more than 1,000 cadets.

“This is the first major step in the new era of the corps and the Upper Quad,” said Maj. Gen. Randal Fullhart, commandant of the Corps of Cadets. “While there is always an element of nostalgia, the overwhelming consensus is one of excitement and appreciation that the corps, its history, and its future are being supported by the university.”

The new buildings will offer 21st-century housing concepts to meet the needs of students while intentionally maintaining the heritage of the Upper Quad. The plan also calls for a new corps leadership and military science building that will house the corps and ROTC staffs, the corps museum, the tailor shop, and the Rice Center for Leader Development. Meanwhile, Lane Hall, a symbol of the university’s early history and the corps’ proud traditions, will be preserved and placed on the National Registry of Historic Sites.

Perfect timing

A B-25 from the Tri-State Warbird Museum in Batavia, Ohio, piloted by (at right) Paul Redlich (far) and Phillip Rountree (near), performed a flyover on Oct. 26, preceding the football game versus Duke. Small images at right by Maj. Gen. Randal Fullhart.

PAT ARTIS '71

around the drillfield
Polo club off and running

K

nown as the sport of kings, polo dates as far back as 400 B.C. For the Polo Club at Virginia Tech, the sport dates to 2011, when Jenny Schwartz, a junior with a double major in agribusiness and marketing and management, started working toward creating a team that played regular games.

In 2013-14, about 30 people joined the club. Some are learning and playing polo. Some just come to watch or give the horses their feed or learn to ride. No matter the level of involvement, polo experience isn’t necessary.

“People don’t have to have played polo to be on the team,” said Schwartz, who enjoys not only teaching others about polo but also introducing them to the joy of horses. “Last year, most of the team were beginners. I’m so excited about how far the polo club has come.”

In the fall semester, the team played against the University of Virginia, the University of Kentucky, and the Garrison Forest School.

To see a video on the polo team, visit www.vtmag.vt.edu.

Brian Walsh
New national FFA president from Virginia Tech

In middle school, Brian Walsh was a shy kid with limited experience in the world of agriculture. All that soon changed once Walsh donated the coveted signature Future Farmers of America (FFA) blue jacket that so many of his friends wore.

Now called the National FFA Organization, FFA—which provides leadership, personal growth, and career success training through agricultural education—not only helped pull Walsh out of his shell, but put him on the national stage. Walsh, a sophomore in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences majoring in agribusiness and minoring in leadership and social change, was recently elected president of the national organization, a prestigious role that means he will spend the next year traveling nearly 50,000 miles across more than 40 states as he meets with CEOs of major agricultural businesses, interacts with high-level politicians, advocates for industry, and, perhaps most importantly, inspires the next generation of agricultural leaders.

FFA has helped Walsh come a long way from that shy kid growing up in rural Woodstock, Va. “FFA has a unique way of developing people and bringing them out of their own skin,” said Walsh. “I found a place where I was home and connected with people who cared about me and wanted me to grow.”

In November, Walsh ran against 41 other FFA leaders from around the country. The six-day process of nine interviews is rigorous and demanding. And while Walsh was surprised when the delegates named him the new FFA president, those who know him were not.

“Brian understands who he is, and he knows how to communicate effectively with others,” said Andy Seibel, Virginia FFA state specialist in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at Virginia Tech. “In my opinion, his character is what truly sets him apart from his peers.”

Now Walsh is busy trying to finish up his academic year early so he can start traveling the country to educate thousands about FFA. He will take a year off from school to fulfill his new role and will return to Virginia Tech in 2015. “I hope I can motivate and inspire thousands of FFA members in the coming year,” Walsh said. “But if I can motivate and connect with just one person this year, it will all be worth it.”

Sue Ott Rowlands
College dean steps down

Sue Ott Rowlands, the dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences since 2007, recently announced her departure from Virginia Tech to become vice president for academic affairs and provost at Northern Kentucky University.

“Sue’s leadership for the college has been invaluable over her six years at the helm,” said Senior Vice President and Provost Mark McMaster. “We wish her well as she moves on to her new opportunity at Northern Kentucky University, and we will miss her vibrant leadership.”

As the university undertakes an international search for a new dean, Joan B. Hirt, a professor of educational leadership and policy studies in the School of Education, is serving as interim dean. Hirt has been at Virginia Tech since 1994, beginning with two years as a visiting associate professor before transitioning into a tenure-track position as an associate professor. She earned the rank of professor in 2009.

“While we are fortunate to have Joan step into this role, with almost two decades of experience here at Virginia Tech, as well as almost two decades prior as a university administrator,” McMaster said. “I am confident she will ease this leadership transition in the college.”

In football, the Hokies’ GSR of 78 percent, fifth among ACC schools, is 8 percentage points above the national average. In men’s basketball, the GSR of 90 percent is 20 points above the Division I average. Four other sports finished above 90 percent: men’s swimming and diving (95), men’s track and field (93), cross country (93), baseball (93), and volleyball (92).

Virginia Tech ranked the fittest university in U.S.

Virginia Tech landed the top spot in The Active Times list of 50 Fittest Colleges in America in 2013. The recently published rankings are based on fitness, health, and wellness factors, including athletic facilities, team sports participation, campus dining, and overall quality of student life. “Honestly, what fit list isn’t Virginia Tech on?” the Active Times article asked.

“This school’s got dining halls dedicated to organically grown, sustainable food systems; an exceptionally athletic and active student body; and, according to the Princeton Review, it’s home to some of the happiest students in the entire nation.”

Seven varsity sports notch perfect graduation rates

Virginia Tech women’s basketball, men’s golf, women’s lacrosse, softball, women’s soccer, women’s swimming and diving, and women’s tennis all recorded a Graduation Success Rates (GSR) of 100 percent, according to an NCAA report released in October.

Developed by the NCAA as part of its academic reform initiative, the GSR allows student-athletes six years to earn their degrees. Virginia Tech’s combined GSR for all sports is 90 percent, ranking sixth among ACC schools.

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"I’m about to go airborne"

W

ith a harness, goggles, and a bit of courage, the Weather Channel’s Jim Cantore pitted himself against the hurricane-force power of the Virginia Tech Stability Wind Tunnel at the Department of Aerospace and Ocean Engineering.

“The strongest winds I’ve ever stood in, probably between 85 and about 80 miles per hour.”

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JIM CANTORE, THE WEATHER CHANNEL

To watch the video, visit www.vtmag.vt.edu. To learn more about the tunnel and its global impact in ninetirvene eneray and other areas, visit www.aero.vt.edu/research/facility/stabilitytunnel.

"Windied"

When he passed [the wind tunnel’s reception area] at 133, then that’s a Category 4. We’ve never had anyone go that fast before. I was nervous watching it, in fact. I was egging on the tunnel operator to do it a little quicker so that we would be through faster.”

—William Devosport, professor and director of the wind tunnel facility

Here we are, at strong tropical storm force, at about 71 mph. I can feel my skin starting to vibrate.

Here we are, at minimal hurricane force. Look what happens. I start going for a role.

All right, here we are at 80. I can’t lean into it now. ... Look at my mouth. See what’s happening?

Holt, Hollander receive American Institute of Architects chapter award

Juan Holt, director of the College of Architecture and Urban Studies’ Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center and the Patrick and Nancy Lathrop Professor of Architecture, and Henry Hollander, coordinator of outreach and alumni relations for the center, have received the American Institute of Architects Northern Virginia Chapter Award. The award is presented in recognition of individuals or organizations that have, through their professional activities and body of work, significantly or influenced the architecture profession in Northern Virginia over a sustained period of time. The honor was presented to Holt and Hollander during the annual chapter meeting and honors celebration in October.

Virginia Supreme Court reverses April 16 trial verdict

In October, Virginia’s highest court reversed a Montgomery County Circuit Court jury verdict in a wrongful death lawsuit brought by parents of 2 students killed on April 16, 2007.

“Focusing on the fundamental facts of the case, the high court said, “Based on the limited information available to the Commonwealth prior to the shootings in Norris Hall, it cannot be said that it was known or reasonably foreseeable that students in Norris Hall would fall victim to criminal harm. Thus, as a matter of law, the Commonwealth did not have a duty to protect students against third-party criminal acts.”

Brian Gottstein, spokesman for the Office of the Virginia Attorney General, responded to the ruling, “While words cannot express the tremendous sympathy we have for the families who lost their loved ones in the Virginia Tech shootings of 2007—including the Pyleys and the Petersons—the Virginia Supreme Court has found what we have said all along to be true: The Commonwealth and its officials at Virginia Tech were not negligent on April 16, 2007. Cho was the lone person responsible for this tragedy.”

Larry Hincker, associate vice president for university relations for Virginia Tech, responded on the university’s behalf. “We are pleased that the Supreme Court recognized and corrected the errors of the lower court, which resulted in a faulty jury verdict,” Hincker said. “The court reversed an action based on an incorrect interpretation of Virginia law. These clearly were important legal principles that had to be and were clarified. “While these rulings are fortuitous to the Commonwealth and her employees, they simply clarify the law and, indirectly, shine a light on the underlying cause of the mass tragedy of April 16. The court’s actions can never reverse the loss of lives nor the pain experienced by so many families and friends of victims of one person. In the end, the cause of these heinous acts and continuing heartbreak was a troubled and angry young man with easy access to powerful killing weapons.”

Since this case devolves from state law, there are no further opportunities for appeal.

Nobel laureate talks about innovation in modern research

In October, Nobel laureate and former U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu discussed how to create a research and development environment modeled after the famously successful “Bell Labs.” The remarks came

Athletic Director Jim Weaver steps down

Athletic Director Jim Weaver has stepped down as department head of the university’s intercollegiate athletics unit due to health reasons, announced President Charles W. Steger. “We have been fortunate to have Jim’s strong leadership for more than 16 years at the athletics helm,” said Steger. “He has significantly expanded the program’s size and quality, winning in competition and in the classroom. Financially, we are in very good condition. Jim is highly respected in the profession. I regret to see him leave this role. However, this is a demanding job. Jim’s health precludes him from maintaining the same commitment and devotion he has shown since arriving here in 1997.”

Said Weaver, “I have had the pleasure of serving a great university and working with outstanding staff and coaches. I am very proud of our many accomplishments. We compete and win. We have some of the nation’s best fans, and, most importantly, our students graduate with a first-class education. However, leadership [in this important university role requires active engagement. I am not able to do that at this time. The department is in good shape, but I am not. So, Dr. Steger and I agree that now is the right time to seek my replacement.”

During Weaver’s tenure, the university significantly expanded and improved athletic facilities. The Merryman Center sport medicine and conditioning complex was completed in 1998. The Lane Stadium South End Zone expansion added almost 12,000 seats in 2003 and the West Side expansion in 2006 provided club seats, luxury boxes, and offices and academic spaces for the athletic program. A state-of-the-art baseball practice complex, the Hahn Hurst Practice Facility, was completed in 2009, while improvements for the softball, baseball, soccer, and lacrosse programs, among others, were completed. And in 2003, the university achieved its long-term goal of joining the Atlantic Coast Conference.

The university expects to name a replacement early in 2014. Shannon McCloney, senior associate athletic director, is serving as interim athletic director.

All right, here we are at 80. I can’t lean into it now. ... Look at my mouth. See what’s happening?

“71 mph
80 mph
75–95 mph
130–156 mph
157+ mph

Virginia Tech Magazine winter 2013–14

www.vtmag.vt.edu

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We at George Mason University applaud departing Virginia Tech President Charles W. Steger for his nearly 14 years of leadership to not only Virginia Tech, but to Virginia’s university community. Thank you for being an example of courage, integrity, and action. Congratulations on your many achievements. And thank you for being a leader to follow.

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From a Nepalese orphanage, a common source of inspiration

The course of Conor Grennan’s life changed at an orphanage in war-torn Nepal.

In 2004, before his 30th birthday, Grennan (above) planned a yearlong trip around the world, starting with a three-month obligation to volunteer at the orphanage.

When Grennan discovered that many of the children weren’t orphans, but had been snatched from their homes by child traffickers, he gave up his plans for world travel and tried to reunite the children with their parents. In his book “Little Princes,” the New York Times best-selling author documented those efforts—and now his memoir is Virginia Tech’s Common Book for the academic year.

The Common Book Project began at Virginia Tech in 1998 to enrich the first-year experience and create a sense of community among first-year and transfer students as they discuss and learn from the same book.

“This personal and inspiring memoir has been central to an organic, shared experience on campus with the newest members of the Hokie Nation,” said Rachel Holloway, vice provost for undergraduate academic affairs.

Virginia Tech’s Common Book committee selected “Little Princes” because it challenged students and faculty to think globally and look for ways to make an impact. In various courses across campus, from the STEM fields to the humanities, the book is being used as a platform for dialogue. “[The book] allows students and faculty to transcend disciplines and see how they—academically and personally—fit into the bigger picture,” said Mary Ann Lewis, assistant provost for first-year experiences.

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The Sounds of Science

Why your ears will love the Moss Arts Center

by JESSE TUEL
photo by LOGAN WALLACE

One evening in late July, the daytime clamor of ongoing construction at the Moss Arts Center gave way to some unexpected noisemakers: party balloons, a starter pistol, and a dodecahedron speaker and sub-woofer.

In a process called acoustical commissioning, consultants from Arup, a New York firm, were measuring the sound in the Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre in the Street and Davis Performance Hall. The firm was selected in 2008 to design the center’s acoustic and lighting systems, and Arup’s Matt Mahon and Denis Blount have visited Blacksburg about once a month, testing and retesting the hall’s acoustics as the building took shape.

They’re pursuing a perfect sound. “Acoustic excellence has been the goal for everyone on the project team,” Blount said. “Everything points to A-plus on acoustics. It will be a world-class acoustic music experience.”

1. The consultant measured “impulse” responses. An impulse is a sound emitted into a space, and an impulse response is what is perceived in the space. The reverberation time is how long it takes for an impulse to decay by 60 decibels. If the space is too “dry,” the reduction will occur before approximately two seconds elapse, meaning that the reflection time is how long it takes for an impulse to decay by 60 decibels. If the space is too “wet,” surfaces are reflecting too much sound. Orchestra sound, for instance, is meant to reverb more.

2. A sound simulation, courtesy of Arup, displays the behavior of an impulse over the first 200 milliseconds. Simulations help the consultants visualize the spatial perception of acoustics—where the sound is coming from and how enveloped the listener feels.

3. Blount and Mahon measured the room response of each balloon pop and pistol blank using a variety of microphones positioned around the theatre, returning to the exact same seats from earlier visits. Multiple measurements were taken, as “all balloon pops are not the same, and all starter pistol shots are not the same,” Blount said.

4. Those are specially calibrated acoustical test pistons, right? Nope. The consultants bought them at a party store—and then manually inflated them while standing on the stage. Mahon rhythmically breathed into one balloon, growing light-headed. “And that’s how Matt passed out in front of a video crew,” he said with a laugh.

5. Also resting on the stage was a case holding two .38 Specials—six-shooters modified to be starter pistols. Ear protection was a necessity; the concussion after the pistol’s firing reverberated through the chest cavity of an observer standing nearby.

6. The third noisemaker was the dodecahedron speaker and sub-woofer, which emit what’s known as a frequency sweep. Cascading from low notes to high, the sweep allows the consultants to measure every possible note that audience members will hear—from 30 hertz, near the bottom of the range the human ear can detect, up through 22.5 kilohertz, slightly above what humans can hear.

7. The hall is filled with acoustically designed features, from the shapes of the balconies and the proscenium down to the plenums under the seats that quietly circulate air.

8. A significant variable is the seats—and how many people are in them. Even winter or summer clothing on members of the audience makes a difference.

9. Arup has worked with the center’s production staff to help them learn how to adjust the hall’s sound according to the performance and the audience. Two primary methods are available. Acoustic drapery, horizontally deployed on a chain-driven system, can cover reflective surfaces on all levels. With adjustable angles, the orchestra shell can seal off the proscenium, yielding a concert hall.
While Schmale is in Blacksburg, much of the flying takes place at Virginia Tech’s Kentland Unleashed new and exciting civilian applications for drones, such as scouting for pests and diagnosing dangerous toxins that far exceeded U.S. food safety thresholds. These discoveries have inspired Schmale and colleagues use research drones to track the movement of dangerous microorganisms that sur atmospheric waves. These waves collect, mix, and shufle microorganisms across cities, states, and even countries. This research has deepened our understanding of the flow of life in the atmosphere and has contributed unique tools for scientific exploration in the burgeoning field of aeroecology.

"Important pathogens of plants, domestic animals, and humans can be transported over long distances in the atmosphere. Drones are important tools to study how these pathogens travel from one location to another," said Schmale. "They can be used to help predict potential outbreaks of human and animal diseases and even help farmers time their application of pesticides to thwart crop destruction."

Schmale, his team, and collaborators have gathered a number of high-impact findings since he began exploring high-flying microorganisms with drones. He was the first to develop an autonomous drone to sample microorganisms in the lower atmosphere. His drones collected strains of a fungus that caused a devastating wheat disease and produced important new insights for scientific exploration in the burgeoning field of aeroecology.

"The sky is the limit. It's an exciting time to be an atmospheric explorer," Schmale said. "The sky is the limit." Zehr Barbula is the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences communications manager. Schmale and Boris Vinzant, an associate professor of plant pathology, physiology, and weed science, are part of an international team that is leading a first-ever study to examine and run DNA analyses on millions of microbes that hit the earth with each raindrop. Their work is being sponsored by a $2 million grant from the National Science Foundation’s Dimensions of Biodiversity Program, which asked scientists to examine biodiversity in all corners of the world.

While lots of research has been done to catalog microbes that live in the sea and on land, the study of microbial life in the atmosphere and in rain is largely unexplored. "It's an exciting time to be an atmospheric explorer," Schmale said. "The sky is the limit." Zehr Barbula is the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences communications manager.

 сыng a dual role as veterinarian and scientist, Dr. Kathleen Alexander, an associate professor of wildlife in the College of Natural Resources and Environment and an affiliated researcher in the Fralin Life Science Institute, studies human and animal interactions with a focus on the transmission of diseases between people and wildlife. She co-founded a nongovernmental organization called the Center for African Resources: Animals, Community, and Land Use (CARACAL), which strives to conserve wildlife and improve livelihoods for the people of Botswana. The recipient of Virginia Tech’s 2013 Alumni Award for Excellence in International Outreach, Alexander described her work.

On life in Botswana: Botswana is an amazing place, a stronghold for some of the largest wildlife populations in Africa and the world. In some places like Kasane in Northern Botswana where you might walk past warthogs while you go into the grocery store or if you are not careful, run into elephants while you walk your dog.

On the human-animal interface of disease transmission: As time has gone on, we've dramatically transformed our landscapes and, consequently, interactions between humans, wildlife, and domestic animals have become more complex and more frequent. The threat of zoonotic disease emergence—those diseases that originate in animals—is now widely appreciated by most everyone. From the fear of avian influenza to SARS, we all wonder when the next disease will emerge. What do we understand is how the landscape, animal communities, and human behaviors can contribute to this process. What will open the proverbial Pandora’s box? My interest has been in looking beyond the hunt for the next new virus to focus on understanding how diseases might emerge. What are the connections? For example, how does shared surface water influence transmission pathways? How do landscapes transformed by humans escalate this process? How and where are we connected to animal populations? What attributes of animals and humans might change those connections, either minimizing or increasing risk of transmission?

On what inspires her: I feel deeply committed to making sure that what I do makes a difference … that what I do matters to people and that people will be better off when I finish my work. So I'm very committed to the communities I work with and that's what inspires me—to know that you're helping the doctors and the nurses and community members and chiefs and, ultimately, that they trust you and know you are doing your best to help them.
Daniel Thorp
Passion for the Past
by RACHEL CLINE

White teaching about the events of the past, Daniel Thorp brings excitement to the present for his students. As an associate professor of history in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, Thorp has received a near perfect average teaching evaluation, as well as the university’s 2013 William E. Wine Award. We sat down with Thorp to discuss how he uses his passion to get students interested in the past.

On why he enjoys lecturing—and how it keeps him young:
I have an audience with whom to share my enthusiasm. It not only keeps me intellectually excited about what I’m doing, but also creates a situation where I don’t realize I’m getting any older because year after year after year, I’m dealing with a group that hasn’t changed. They’re 18 and 19 years old, and they’re excited about getting started in history. Well, if they’re not changing, I’m not changing! So, intellectually and emotionally and physically, it’s a really invigorating experience and environment.

On selling his soul to the devil:
Year after year, the thing that I always get the most excited about is the Lewis and Clark expedition. With regard to most events as a historian, I know enough about the past that you couldn’t pay me to live back then. The expedition is the one exception. I would sell my soul to the devil to have been on the Lewis and Clark expedition. I still just can’t even really imagine seeing the West as they saw it.

On another profession he would like to try:
There’s a restaurant and diner in St. Mary, Mont., called The Park Café, and they’re only open from about the middle of May until the end of August or early September. Every summer, they hire dozens of people to work as waiters and cooks and everything else. I keep thinking that one of these summers, I’m going to just apply and spend a summer at The Park Café as a short-order cook. I think that would be fun.

On relating to the smartphone generation from a land-line perspective:
Students are astonished that I’m an actual living person without a cell phone. I’ve never had a cell phone and have no interest in having one, which even most of my colleagues find unusual and I think most of my students find inexplicable. So, in some ways, I can’t relate to them, and I realize that. But I think the way in which I can relate to them is by demonstrating a genuine enthusiasm for the class or for the subject and helping them to feel some of that same excitement.

Rachel Cline, a senior communication and sociology major, was an intern with Virginia Tech Magazine.

With a historical map of Montgomery County, Daniel Thorp is right at home.
Masterpiece

The Moss Arts Center comes to life

by DENISE YOUNG

The Moss Arts Center glistened in the drizzly night, a beacon for visitors keen to step inside and experience the long-awaited venue. More than a decade in the making, the center had at last sprung to life, its works of art and technology eliciting curiosity and enthusiasm from its patrons.

When the center’s galleries opened, community members basked in the vivid hues of digital artist Leo Villareal’s work and Jennifer Steinkamp’s towering virtual garden. Later that week, the Philip Glass Ensemble presented the center’s inaugural performance, an evening that may come to signify a seminal moment in Virginia Tech’s history, that instant when the arts assumed their rightful place alongside other pillars of a comprehensive university.

Positioned at the edge of campus and meant to act as a bridge between the university and surrounding community, the Moss Arts Center was designed by internationally renowned architecture firm Snøhetta. The building, named for Virginia artist and philanthropist Patricia Buckley Moss, houses the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech, a professional presenting program that brings world-class artists and performers to Blacksburg.
Grand and inviting: the theatre and performance hall

The Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre in the Street and Davis Performance Hall manages a rare feat—to be both grand and inviting for those in its 1,260 seats. Every aspect is designed with both acoustics and comfort in mind. “There’s just not a bad seat in the house,” said Jonathan Boulter (communication ’00), associate director of patron services.

The performance hall was designed to provide audiences with an immersion into the performing arts. “It’s a pretty intimate theatre. It’s built for the audience, and I think it will create such a great experience for our audience—and for multiple events. If it’s an orchestra, a spoken-word [event], even a dance troupe, [this space] provides so much versatility,” said Boulter, who most recently managed the front-of-house operations and box office for the Cirque du Soleil show at Downtown Disney.

The view from the stage is just as special. The Blacksburg Children’s Chorale, directed by Patrice Yearwood (music education ’81), performed on stage with the Philip Glass Ensemble during the center’s inaugural performance. “As a director of children, my focus was on them, and they were very excited and nervous. I had told them it was a once-in-a-lifetime event, and it was—for all of us. We were so focused on the music and doing a really fantastic job because it was such a large-scale event,” Yearwood said. “The stage was empty at dress rehearsal on Wednesday night, so when we walked into the theatre on opening night and saw the lights, the tiers, the box seats, heard the sound—I was struck with the grandness of the place. When … we performed with [the ensemble], it was like magic.”

Anticipation: With a world-class facility anchored by the Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre in the Street and Davis Performance Hall, Virginia Tech has staked its claim in the arts. Above right, a sell-out crowd awaited the center’s inaugural performance.
The galleries: Art meets science meets technology

Imagine that you could stroll through famed scientist Marie Curie’s garden, casting your shadow across the daisies, the fuchsia, and the rambler rose. That’s the sort of interactive experience that internationally renowned digital artist Jennifer Steinkamp offers in her video installation, “Madame Curie, 2011.” The work of art, in which the flowers of Curie’s garden are recreated entirely out of computer code and sweep across the wall in a continuous cycle, was displayed in the center’s Ruth C. Horton Gallery—the first installation in that space.

Because Steinkamp’s work interacts with the architecture of a space, choosing a piece that would fit into the gallery’s design was a painstaking process involving nearly a year of discussion. “The best fit for the piece is actually the university itself, being a place where there are many scientists. The piece gets a deeper appreciation in that context. Beyond the architecture is that context of the school,” said Steinkamp.

Margo Crutchfield, curator at large for the center, noted that the center’s first exhibits were selected to reflect the university’s strengths in science and technology. “We are bringing artists of exceptional quality, of national and international renown. They’re top-notch artists. But that’s not all. We’re also going to be showing artists living here and elsewhere in Virginia,” said Crutchfield.

Crutchfield said an exciting moment for her was seeing the diverse attendees at the gallery’s opening exhibitions in October. “I felt really gratified that the art displayed at the center was reaching as many people as it did—and as it will.”

“Immersed: The Moss Arts Center’s galleries are versatile, to say the least. The Ruth C. Horton Gallery hosted Jennifer Steinkamp’s video installation, “Madame Curie, 2011” (above), and also an exhibition of artwork by area elementary students (right).”
The Cube: From black-box theatre to research facility

In the Cube in the Moss Arts Center, onlookers gazed up at the images that surrounded them, completely immersed in Joan Grossman’s “This Edge I Have to Jump,” a digital journey into the creative process. Combining music, sound effects, and abstract imagery with interviews with everyone from a mechanical engineer to a tap dancer, Grossman’s video installation examined the countless and often idiosyncratic approaches people take to creativity. On the exhibit’s opening night, some visitors sat on sleek white stools, spinning to catch a glimpse of the video on each of the four screens. Others simply stood, caught up in an exhibit that was both psychically and visually enveloping.

Grossman, a visiting assistant professor of cinema in the School of Performing Arts who was commissioned to create the piece, said she wanted “people to feel like they can just relax with the work.”

She was also struck by the versatility of the Cube. During the opening week, the space hosted a Halloween-themed, family-friendly event called Tech-or-Treat. “That showed right out of the gate that the space can function in very different ways and that the space can transform really effectively,” Grossman said.

Originally designed as a three-story black-box theatre, the Cube quickly evolved into a research space as well, noted Ben Knapp, director of the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT), a newly created university-level research institute housed in the Moss Arts Center. The Cube allows researchers to create and physically explore 3-D renderings of large objects like Boeing 767 jets or homes for the elderly, or to perform advanced acoustics research. “When we put approximately 150 speakers in the space, you will be able to focus sound. So, all of a sudden, you will hear something in one area of the cube that you couldn’t hear in another area. We will have a realistic acoustic environment as well as a realistic visual environment,” said Knapp. “More abstractly, we can begin to look at and listen to data. We can look at a genome. We can hear models of contagion. ... We can look at any kind of data, whether it’s engineering, whether it’s scientific, whether it’s artistic.”

Whether the Cube is serving as a performance venue, a high-tech art exhibition space, or a state-of-the-art research facility, “this space is the perfect demonstration of the partnership between the Center for the Arts and ICAT,” said Knapp.
“There are very few places that have the combination of facilities that we have here—the Cube, the performance hall, the TV studio, the outdoor spaces.”

—Doug Witney (theatre arts ’86), production services director for the center

Supporting cast: Behind the scenes

“What this facility gives us is the ability to support the vast majority of touring groups of all different genres,” said Doug Witney (theatre arts ’86), production services director for the center, explaining that dance ensembles, theatre companies, and a range of other touring groups need a certain amount of technology and space. “It’s just the right size for Virginia Tech,” Witney said. “There are very few places that have the combination of facilities that we have here—the Cube, the performance hall, the TV studio, the outdoor spaces.”

For a large touring company of performers and technicians, there’s much to worry about when on the road. That’s where people like Sara Bailey (theatre and cinema ’11), program manager for the center, come in. Beyond her role in creating contracts and handling other arrangements in advance of opening nights, Bailey also makes sure that the backstage area meets the needs of visiting performers once they arrive. That might mean stocking the green room with a shopping cart’s worth of goodies—or making sure that one musician had a piano in his dressing room. “Pretty much everyone I take into the green room thinks it’s great,” said Bailey, who recalled being shown early plans for the building as an undergraduate. “I thought, ‘Wow, one day I could work there.’ Working here is a dream come true.”
The role of philanthropy in the completion of Virginia Tech's $100 million Moss Arts Center was overwhelmingly evident at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the facility on Nov. 1.

Speaking to a crowd of 300 seated people and many others standing, Ruth Waalkes, the university’s associate provost for the arts, who also oversees the center, described the building as “a unique combination of facilities made possible by a community of philanthropists.”

She then asked all donors in the audience to stand. Dozens did, including many whose names now grace prominent spaces within the center. But the total community of philanthropists that helped make the building a reality is broader still. In all, more than 350 people donated toward the center project during a fundraising effort that started in 2004. With more than $31 million received or pledged, the university surpassed its $28 million private fundraising goal for the center’s construction.

Motivated by the Arts

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For a series of “One Cool Thing” videos on the center—focused on the hydraulic stage, the pianos, dance floor, lighting, and orchestra shell—visit www.vtmag.vt.edu. 
1. Patricia Buckley Moss, who named the center, said that the educational portion of the center’s mission, along with the impact the facility will make on Southwest Virginia, appealed to her. “All of us have to try to make a difference, to educate kids, and to help them have some self-esteem,” Moss said. “I learned my self-worth through the arts.”

2. Sherwood “Sherry” Payne Quillen (health and physical education ’71), who described the scope of the arts center project as “larger than life,” provided support for the Sherwood Payne Quillen ’71 Reception Gallery.

3. (From left) Roya Gharavi, Floyd W. Merryman III (management ’81), and Pat Merryman posed in the Merryman Family Learning Studio. Pat Merryman said that her personal interest in the arts, along with the potential for area schools to partner with the university on learning programs in the center, “were the real selling points for me.”

4. In the Ann F. Holtzman Conference Room with her husband, Bill Holtzman (horticulture ’59), Ann Holtzman said Virginia Tech “has come to represent so many different parts of the human being and of the mind” and added that developing an arts center was “the last horizon the university had not done.”

5. William C. “Jack” Davis (left), standing with his wife, Sandra (to his left), in the Street and Davis Performance Hall, said the facility would be a “dynamo” that would help advance both the university and its surrounding region. (At right) Nicholas Street (general business ’53), standing with his wife, Fay (finance ’77), was one of several donors motivated by President Charles W. Steger’s championing of the importance of the arts in education. Street said that he “just believed in Dr. Steger’s vision for the university.”

6. Chris and Gail Wollenberg gave a gift toward the Wollenberg Foundation Orchestra Pit. Chris Wollenberg said he and other trustees of his family’s foundation saw the project as a way to help the university become an even more comprehensive institution and to demonstrate in high-profile fashion that “this isn’t just an engineering school; it’s an everything school.”

7. In the William Marshall Hahn ’74 Theatre Foyer, former Virginia Tech President T. Marshall Hahn Jr. gathered with (from left) Betty Hahn (art ’82), Jean Hahn, Doug Chancey (secondary education ’78), and Anne Hahn Hurst (management, housing, and family development ’80, M.A. student personnel services ’83). Hahn said donating toward the arts center appealed to him and his family. “It’s truly an amazing facility, and it will be a source of support and a catalyst for the continuing strengthening of the arts at Virginia Tech,” Hahn said.

8. Similarly, Gene Fife (business administration ’62), with his wife, Anne, in the Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre, said the facility “fits right in with President Steger’s concept of educating the whole student.”

Albert Raboteau is the director of development communications.
Stagecraft

Ariana Wyatt is passionate about opera. As an assistant professor of voice in Virginia Tech’s School of Performing Arts, a Julliard Opera Center graduate, and a soprano who has performed for prestigious opera companies, Wyatt shares her love for music with students every day.

Now, an innovative research project combining arts education, technology, and storytelling has provided a rare opening for Wyatt to cultivate an appreciation for art and music in an unexpected place—the hearts and minds of teenage boys.

Wyatt’s project, OPERAcraft, has given eight local high school students the opportunity to produce a virtual opera from scratch. The students worked together to create the story and libretto (the opera’s text or words). Instead of a traditional set, however, the students built a virtual set for the production using Minecraft, a video game that allows users to create their own world and avatars for the characters that inhabit it.

To help transform OPERAcraft from concept to reality, Wyatt recruited Tracy Cowden, an associate professor of piano and vocal coach in the School of Performing Arts; Kelly Parkes, an assistant professor of teaching and learning in the School of Education; Katie Dredger, a visiting assistant professor in the School of Education; and Ivica Ico Bukvic, an associate professor in the School of Performing Arts. Wyatt also received a grant from Virginia Tech’s Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT). In addition to providing funding for the project, the institute provided other resources, including equipment, technical support, and spaces for collaboration and performance.

OPERAcraft is just one of a long list of projects supported by ICAT. Virginia Tech’s seventh university-level research institute operates at the nexus of the arts, design, engineering, and science to promote learning, discovery, and engagement.

As is evident in Wyatt’s work with the high school students, the institute is committed to preparing students, from kindergarten through high school, to succeed in a world that demands teamwork and collaboration among the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines. ICAT supports teachers and students in the development of critical and creative thinking skills and explores collaborative learning environments that emphasize the importance of the connections between and among disciplines.

The ICAT mission also includes fostering research and the creative process. The institute has developed a collaborative environment where all kinds of people—from faculty and students to industrial partners and community volunteers—can make change happen. One of the unique aspects of the institute is that its faculty reside in other departments and colleges across campus. While they don’t work for the institute specifically, they receive varying levels of support.
entrepreneurs, transforming education, including preparing a new generation of institute’s output goal—innovation. Of That combination of skills exemplifies the challenges. Our students must become comfortable working across disciplines to meet sense but [in] a design sense, and feel com need to think not only in a computational become symbiotic,” Knapp said. “Students our students to thrive in a world where It’s this kind of work that will help prepare art and science. experimentation, and creative practice. These new spaces provide a home base for faculty and students to collaborate, co-create, perform, and explore the intersections of art and science.

“Why is this important for Virginia Tech? It’s this kind of work that will help prepare our students to thrive in a world where design, aesthetic, and technology have become symbiotic,” Knapp said. “Students need to think not only in a computational sense but [in] a design sense, and feel comfortable working across disciplines to meet challenges. Our students must become scientists, engineers, artists, and designers.”

That combination of skills exemplifies the institute’s output goal—innovation. Of course, innovation comes in many forms, including preparing a new generation of entrepreneurs, transforming education, increasing public engagement, and spurring economic development through the creation of jobs and spin-off companies. These results have been showcased nation-ally. Aki Ishida, an ICAT-affiliated faculty member and an assistant professor in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies, led a team of Tech students and faculty to create a digitally interactive audio-visual lantern field installation at the Smithsonian’s Freer Gallery of Art during the National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C., last spring. The work features mul-berry paper lanterns lit with LED lights to create a multisensory space that responds to the presence and behavior of viewers. Inspired by traditional Japanese lantern festivals and cherry blossom viewing, the installation created an ephemeral place of gathering through light. Integrated technol-ogy gave participants an opportunity to interact with their environment and each other, while a public workshop allowed them to also become makers of the work. For Wyatt, one result of the OPERA- craft is performance. On Dec. 4 and 7, OPERACraft became a reality, with two performances in the Cube at the Moss Arts Center. As the interactive world created in Minecraft was projected on a screen, Virginia Tech music students sang the finalized score to “The Surface: A World Above,” while the high school students controlled the character avatars, prompting body gestures and lip-syncing with the live soloist.

“[The students] sang the song and moved around the screen, mimicking the visual elements. I learned a lot about the creation and implementation of an opera,” said Blacksburg High School sophomore and OP- ERAcraft participant Adam Chittenden. “In all honesty, I never really enjoyed opera very much, but OPERAcraft gave me the opportunity to see the work put into creating an opera. I am now able to appreciate opera more. Minecraft was the perfect tool for set design—and I strongly believe that video games such as Minecraft can be used in the arts.”

Said Wyatt, “OPERAcraft was a crazy idea to try something completely outside the box and provide an opportunity for in-depth exposure to the arts. The most gratifying aspect of this project has been the complete engagement by the participants. The boys have shown up week after week for months and created a project, visit www.vtmag.vt.edu.

For a video on the OPERAcraft project, visit www.vtmag.vt.edu.
Celebrating Skipper

by CARRIE COX

Fifty years ago, three cadets from the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Class of 1964, Alton “Butch” Harper (business administration ’64), Homer “Sonny” Hickam (industrial engineering and operations research ’64), and George Fox (mechanical engineering ’64), came together with one goal in mind: to build the biggest game cannon the world had ever seen. Through their perseverance and effort and the support of the entire corps, they made the goal a reality.

On Nov. 22, 1963, while driving back to Blacksburg after picking up the barrel and carriage, the three cadets learned that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated. Kennedy’s legacy and naval background would inspire them to name the cannon Skipper. The cannon was introduced in spectacular fashion on Thanksgiving Day during the annual football game against Virginia Military Institute (VMI).

On Oct. 31, 2013, the three 1964 cadets joined today’s cadets to commemorate the cannon’s 50th anniversary. While sharing his memories of developing Skipper, Harper emphasized that one never knows what might set the course of the rest of one’s life. For him, his course was set by the building of Skipper. He went on to create Thunder over Louisville, the largest annual fireworks show in North America.

According to Hickam, passion, planning, and perseverance are the three P’s of success—qualities instilled in the cadets because of their corps training. “It’s ingrained in all of us, whether you know it or not,” Hickam told the cadets.

Telling the story of trying to devise the charge for Skipper, Fox said they made the mistake of using cherry bombs as part of their propellant. Fox encouraged the cadets to learn from their mistakes. “If we [hadn’t], Skipper wouldn’t have lasted past that first game, let alone 50 years,” he said.

Following the presentation, the corps assembled in front of War Memorial Chapel for a 21-gun salute in honor of President Kennedy. As Harper, Hickam, and Fox approached, the Highty-Tighties played the “The Parade of the Charioteers,” the song played when Skipper was first introduced at the 1963 VMI game. The Gregory Guard, the Corps of Cadets’ precision rifle drill team, executed the first two volleys before the seventh rifleman yielded the honor of the 21st round to Skipper.

After serving proudly for 19 years, the original cannon suffered a blowout in 1982. In 1984, Paul Huffman Jr. (materials engineering ’78), whose father had created the original Skipper in his foundry, volunteered to fabricate a new cannon at no charge. The original cannon is currently on display in the Holtzman Alumni Center, located at 901 Prices Fork Rd., until the new Corps Leadership and Military Science Building has been built.

For the past 50 years, the cannon and the Skipper Crew have become embedded as Virginia Tech traditions. One of the most recognizable icons of the corps and the university, Skipper symbolizes family, tradition, and Hokie pride.

Maj. Carrie Cox, U.S. Air Force Reserve, is the Corps of Cadets’ executive officer.

To watch a video on Skipper and learn more, visit www.vtmag.vt.edu.

Honoring Skipper: Celebrating its 50th anniversary with a bang, Skipper the cannon fired the 21st round during the Oct. 31 event (directly above). (Far above) Cadets Forrest Rush (middle left) and Jordan Dinno (middle right), who are former members of the Skipper Crew, accosted Class of 1964 alumni (from left) Alton “Butch” Harper, Homer “Sonny” Hickam, and George Fox during the celebration.
Virginia Tech places among top schools in alumni rankings—again

You did it again: For the second consecutive year, Hokie alumni have ranked their alma mater among the top schools in a nationwide survey known as the Alumni Factor rankings. As the survey concludes, “it is very difficult to find a group of alumni more enthusiastic about their alma mater than those from Virginia Tech, and for good reason.”

In the overall rankings, Tech is first among 136 national universities. The university ranks first, second, or third in categories such as “financial success,” “immediate job opportunities,” “alumni would personally choose again,” and “would recommend to a student.” The results are a true and deserved tribute to our university by our alumni.

These rankings all reflect the enormous support from and solidarity of the Hokie Nation. Our network of alumni chapters across the country has never been larger or more active. Many chapters support scholarships for first-year students from their regions. Reunions and academic college gatherings are held on campus and throughout the country, and new regional gatherings offer alumni a chance to meet with fellow Hokies who share common career interests.

There are more than 110,000 Virginia Tech alumni registered on LinkedIn, and many of those also are in a career network organized specifically for alumni. Our Alumni Association has a career resources program to encourage networking and to refer alumni to opportunities. (Visit www.alumni.vt.edu for access to the career resources link, as well as alumni chapter contacts and a number of other services and programs.)

We’re offering yet another opportunity for alumni through a partnership between the Alumni Association and Discover card. Access the application site through our website to get your personal card, which offers cash back and special incentives with major retailers and brands. Choose from two distinctive campus scenes to put on your card, and display your Virginia Tech pride every time you use the card. Every application and use of the card benefits the university and its programs.

Take advantage of the many opportunities to connect with fellow alumni through our Alumni Association. There is no group of alumni more enthusiastic about their alma mater anywhere in the world ... and that is documented!

—Tom Tillar ’69
Vice President for Alumni Relations
2014 DRILLFIELD SERIES

The Drillfield Series continues in 2014 with weekends devoted to fine dining, photography, student legacies, and healthy pets, along with special opportunities to connect with fellow alumni for a round of golf, a glass or pint of your favorite adult beverage, and activities at a scenic mountain retreat. Make plans now to attend these events designed for alumni and their families and friends, and take advantage of the specially discounted accommodations available at The Inn at Virginia Tech, and at Mountain Lake Hotel on June 6-7.

Food for Thought

Join us for a fun and elegant weekend. Highlights of this palate-pleasing excursion include a chef demonstration, a mid-Atlantic food and wine-pairing brunch, and high tea in the alumni center—all crowned with a five-course wine-pairing dinner. Experience the fine hospitality of The Inn at Virginia Tech when you stay overnight. • $705 per person; $330 per couple

Focus on Photography

Year No. 4 of this popular program features sessions on sports photography, taking better portraits, an introduction to HDR photography, and more. The weekend starts with a photographer’s boot camp and ends with a critique session in which presenters help you identify ways to improve your images. In addition to instruction and an information packet, participants will have periods of time to take pictures. The registration includes dinner on Friday and breakfast and lunch on Saturday, with the program concluding late that afternoon. Accommodations are available at The Inn at Virginia Tech. • $395 per person

Top of the Mountain at Mountain Lake

Enjoy a getaway adventure to the new Mountain Lake Lodge at Mountain Lake. Registration includes a Friday dinner, Saturday breakfast and lunch, and Sunday breakfast. Learn about the history of one of only two naturally formed lakes in Virginia and about the lake restoration project from the lake naturalist. There is a new aerial adventure course to enjoy, plus guided hikes, mountain biking, archery lessons, treasure hunts, naturalist programs, and other family-friendly activities. • $125 per adult; $99 for children 12 and under

Summer Beer Festival at Virginia Tech

Calling all craft beer lovers: Experience a unique Saturday beer festival at the Holzman Alumni Center with live entertainment, special guest appearances, and more than 40 local, regional, and national breweries pouring their best brews. Join friends in Blacksburg for frosty tastings and food favorites from local restaurants. Those arriving on Friday, June 27, may opt for a beer-pairing dinner provided by The Inn at Virginia Tech for an additional fee and reservation. • $25 per person; VIP tent $50 per person

A Day in the Life of College Admissions

The popular annual Day in the Life of College Admissions is a program designed especially to assist prospective 2015 and 2016 high school graduates and their parents in navigating the college application process. Program highlights include pointers for conducting an effective college search, a behind-the-scenes look at college admissions, and application preparation tips from admissions professionals. • $120 per adult; $95 per student

Happy and Healthy Pet Weekend

Join us for an interactive and informative program focused on companion animals. Learn about pet care, diets, vaccines, toxins, and sight, plus state-of-the-art research in cancer and translational medicine taking place at the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine on campus. Take a tour of the animal hospital and hear from faculty members and the dean in a question-and-answer panel. Registration includes a dean’s reception and dinner on Friday plus lunch and an evening picnic on Saturday. Accommodations are available at The Inn at Virginia Tech. • $125 per adult; $99 children 12 and under

For more information on these events, visit www.alumni.vt.edu/drillfieldseries/.

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 2014 through 2017. Please vote for up to 12 nominees, and return the ballot by April 1. Results will be announced at the Alumni Association board meeting in early April.

Return to Virginia Tech Alumni Association Holtzman Alumni Center (0102) Virginia Tech 901 Prices Fork Road Blacksburg, VA 24061

Write-in nomination ____________________________

Signature ____________________________

___ Morgan E. Blackwood (industrial systems and engineering ’02), Washington, D.C.
___ Marvin J. Boyd (management/management science ’00), Ashburn, Va.
___ Justin A. Yulang (finance ’05), Christiansburg, Va.
___ Thomas H. Hughes (architecture ’93), Winston-Salem, N.C.
___ Michael T. Kendler (chemical engineering ’83), Ridgewood, N.J.
___ Adasol S. Khan (accounting and information systems ’09), Atlanta, Ga.
___ Nathan T. Lavirke (marketing management ’11), Philadelphia, Pa.
___ Jacob A. Lutz III (finance ’78), Middletown, Va.
___ Gordon “Gordy” Bryant (theatre arts ’82), Lansdowne, Pa.
___ Karen E. Torgenson (elementary education ’78, M.B.A. ’89), Blacksburg, Va.
___ Jim L. Wade (accounting ’76), Roanoke, Va.
___ Erich A. Windmuller II (history ’76), Oakton, Va.

2014 DRILLFIELD SERIES

The Drillfield Series continues in 2014 with weekends devoted to fine dining, photography, student legacies, and healthy pets, along with special opportunities to connect with fellow alumni for a round of golf, a glass or pint of your favorite adult beverage, and activities at a scenic mountain retreat. Make plans now to attend these events designed for alumni and their families and friends, and take advantage of the specially discounted accommodations available at The Inn at Virginia Tech, and at Mountain Lake Hotel on June 6-7.

Food for Thought

Join us for a fun and elegant weekend. Highlights of this palate-pleasing excursion include a chef demonstration, a mid-Atlantic food and wine-pairing brunch, and high tea in the alumni center—all crowned with a five-course wine-pairing dinner. Experience the fine hospitality of The Inn at Virginia Tech when you stay overnight. • $705 per person; $330 per couple

Focus on Photography

Year No. 4 of this popular program features sessions on sports photography, taking better portraits, an introduction to HDR photography, and more. The weekend starts with a photographer’s boot camp and ends with a critique session in which presenters help you identify ways to improve your images. In addition to instruction and an information packet, participants will have periods of time to take pictures. The registration includes dinner on Friday and breakfast and lunch on Saturday, with the program concluding late that afternoon. Accommodations are available at The Inn at Virginia Tech. • $395 per person

Top of the Mountain at Mountain Lake

Enjoy a getaway adventure to the new Mountain Lake Lodge at Mountain Lake. Registration includes a Friday dinner, Saturday breakfast and lunch, and Sunday breakfast. Learn about the history of one of only two naturally formed lakes in Virginia and about the lake restoration project from the lake naturalist. There is a new aerial adventure course to enjoy, plus guided hikes, mountain biking, archery lessons, treasure hunts, naturalist programs, and other family-friendly activities. • $125 per adult; $99 for children 12 and under

Summer Beer Festival at Virginia Tech

Calling all craft beer lovers: Experience a unique Saturday beer festival at the Holzman Alumni Center with live entertainment, special guest appearances, and more than 40 local, regional, and national breweries pouring their best brews. Join friends in Blacksburg for frosty tastings and food favorites from local restaurants. Those arriving on Friday, June 27, may opt for a beer-pairing dinner provided by The Inn at Virginia Tech for an additional fee and reservation. • $25 per person; VIP tent $50 per person

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___ Jim L. Wade (accounting ’76), Roanoke, Va.
___ Erich A. Windmuller II (history ’76), Oakton, Va.
When alumni reflect on Blacksburg, they think of the beautiful fall foliage evoking our collegiate colors, picturesque mountain views, and majestic Hokie Stone structures. They might not associate the New River Valley with a growing job market, but in the past two years the area has been ranked among the best places in the country for job growth by CNBC, Forbes, and U.S. News & World Report.

Since 2010, employment in Montgomery County, including Blacksburg and Christiansburg, has jumped 6 percent and wages have risen 5.3 percent. The unemployment rate has fallen to 5.6 percent, retail sales are up 11 percent, and the area’s population continues to climb at a steady pace, according to statistics from various sources compiled by the Montgomery County Economic Development Department. The community is riding a promising wave of growth and success.

With more alumni looking to re-establish roots in the area, the Virginia Tech Alumni Association and the county economic development department have joined forces. The association uses its career resources program to assist alumni in finding quality jobs in the area, and the county works with those who are interested in starting, expanding, or relocating a business in the community.

Virginia Tech's alumni are having a big impact on economic growth in Montgomery County. Since 2010, at least 12 companies founded or led by alumni have announced almost 500 new jobs and $13 million in economic growth, according to the economic development department. Several companies, including Comprehensive Computer Solutions, Harmonia, Modes, and UXB International, have been named to Inc. Magazine's prestigious list of the fastest-growing companies in the nation.

It should be no surprise that alumni are building successful companies in the area. In 2008, CNN Money recognized Blacksburg as one of the best places in the country to live and launch a business. Montgomery County has a supportive entrepreneurial culture that is cultivated by the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council and is home to several successful corporate parks, including the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center and Falling Branch Corporate Park in Christiansburg.

Montgomery County's award-winning quality of life helps businesses attract and retain critical talent. The community has an exceptional public school system, a cost of living that is 6 percent below the national average (according to the Council for Community and Economic Research, a nationwide membership organization), and numerous cultural and outdoor recreation opportunities. Montgomery County's family-friendly reputation received national attention when Bloomberg Businessweek ranked Blacksburg the No. 1 place in the U.S. to raise kids.

With more information on career opportunities and business development, contact the Alumni Association's Nancy Brittle at 540-382-6285 or Montgomery County's Charlie Jewell at 540-382-5732.

For the past year, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion William T. Lewis has partnered with alumni chapters along the East Coast to host Strong Together networking receptions. The Virginia Tech Strong Together initiative is coordinated by the Office for Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) to promote the values set forth in the Virginia Tech Principles of Community. Alumni who attended had the opportunity to meet Lewis, learn about ODI initiatives, and network with fellow alumni, while reaffirming the Principles of Community. Alumni from all backgrounds were inspired by Virginia Tech's commitment to inclusive excellence and its efforts to make their alma mater a welcoming and supportive community.

Future events are planned for 2014, including receptions in Virginia with the Loudoun County, Prince William County, Peninsula, and Williamsburg alumni chapters. ODI will also partner with chapters in Annapolis, Md., Baltimore, and Atlanta for additional events. Alumni in these areas will receive emailed invitations in the coming months.

Read more about Strong Together and the Principles of Community at www.diversity.vt.edu/principles-of-community/strongtogether.html.
2014 travel tours

Bora Bora

College of Engineering Dean Richard Benson (back row, center, in black) and his wife, Leslie (front row, white blouses and orange sweater), recently hosted a Mediterranean cruise.

www.alumni.vt.edu/travel

For more information, visit www.alumni.vt.edu/travel, contact alumnitravel@vt.edu, or call 540-231-6285. Dates and prices are subject to change. Pricing is based per person on double occupancy without air, except as noted. Free air is based from North American gateway cities. The Alumni Association encourages all alumni to consider purchasing travel insurance. Learn more at www.alumni.vt.edu/travel/insurance.

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nonfiction


Donald Grebner (M.A. economics ’96, Ph.D. forest economics ’98), “Introduction to Forestry and Natural Resources,” textbook, Academic Press.


fiction


young adult/children’s
Dana Caldwell Davis (communication ’88), “Hello, Yol(ud),” picture book, University of Delaware mascot, Mascot Books.


Garret Mathews (economics ’71) is a retired metro columnist for the Evansville (Ind.) Courier & Press. During a 39-year career, he wrote more than 6,500 pieces on everything from snakehandlers to a woman who kept bootlegging into her 90s. His books include “Baseball Days,” “Swing, Batta,” “Past Deadlines: Past Lives,” “Can’t Find A Dry Ball,” “Defending My Bunk Against All Comers, Sir!” and “They Came To Play.”

In his two-act play “Jubilee in the Rear View Mirror,” Mathews tackles the subject of race relations in the segregated South of the 1960s. The drama about a young black man from Ohio and a racist Caucasian sharing a Mississippi jail cell is based on dozens of interviews Mathews conducted with men and women who went to Alabama and Mississippi in the early 1960s to register black voters and to help desegregate schools, restaurants, and stores.

For more information on the play, visit www.jubileeplay.com. To learn more about Mathews’ books, visit www.pluggerpublishing.com.

Below is an excerpt from the play, reprinted with the author’s permission.

MINISTER: What about the cops?
KATES: Arrested them for trespassing. Leroy said he didn’t think it was possible to fit that many people in the back seat of a squad car and still be able to shut the door. Took them to a place that was more like a cesspool than a jail. Gives each man an aluminum cup and a toothbrush.

MINISTER: That’s a hard way to go.
KATES: Stormed in like Marines.
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MINISTER: What about the cops?
KATES: Ah, yes, the cops. Stormed in like Marines.

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MINISTER: That’s a hard way to go.
KATES: The students passed the time singing protest songs. When they wouldn’t shut up, the guards took away their mattresses. When the singing continued, the guards removed the screens on the cell windows so the mosquitoes could come in. Leroy said he almost got eaten alive.

MINISTER: But their spirit wasn’t broken.
KATES: No books. No newspapers. They had to provide their own entertainment. One of the guys was a foreign language major. Taught the others French and Spanish. Another kid majored in Russian history. Gave lectures on the Romanovs. It was like exam time at school.

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KATES: No books. No newspapers. They had to provide their own entertainment. One of the guys was a foreign language major. Taught the others French and Spanish. Another kid majored in Russian history. Gave lectures on the Romanovs. It was like exam time at school. All that was missing was the midnight oil.

On the road from New York to the United States Air Force, Matt Pucci is becoming a leader at Virginia Tech.

Pucci was the black-shirt noncommissioned officer during rifle and football. He also plays an important role in the Corps of Cadets’ band for game days. Matt will carry the leadership skills he has developed at Virginia Tech into the Air Force after he graduates.

Generous financial support makes it possible for this New York native to attend Virginia Tech. To learn more about how the contributions of donors benefit students like Matt, or to make your gift, please visit www.givingto.vt.edu.

For more information on the play, visit www.jubileeplay.com. To learn more about Mathews’ books, visit www.pluggerpublishing.com.
I don’t have a single special quality or skill. The only knowledge I have is what others have been kind enough to teach me. When I graduated from Virginia Tech and set out to find a job, my dad told me to “do good work.” He never encouraged me to find a particular career—just to do good work. His words stuck with me. Along the way, two other people—one in the public sector and one in the private sector—had tremendous influences on me. One taught me the value of helping others achieve more than they themselves thought they could. And the other, the first CEO I worked for, showed me that leaders have to stand up and be accountable for everything that happens in an organization. He showed me that leaders have to be 110 percent “in.” Ninety-nine percent won’t do.

A relentless focus on three important qualities is required to make any private business or public agency sustainably successful: simplicity, transparency, and attitude. Whenever an organization or major project is in crisis, you can generally find that at least one, and frequently all three, of those essential qualities is missing.

For some reason—and for the life of me I don’t know why—people like to overcomplicate darn near everything. And when things are more complex than they need to be, communication and understanding fall off fast. But, of course, no one admits it. When things start going wrong, no one wants to talk about them. Worse yet, folks get caught up in hiding the truth. As a result, simplicity and transparency can sometimes be the first two causes—and casualties—of a crisis. That’s not good.

By “attitude,” I mean knowing something as opposed to thinking you know it. There’s a big difference. If you’re running a business or working on a major project, you’d better be sure you know what’s going on. If you don’t really know, it’s best to sit down and not say anything until you do. The great thing about not knowing something is that you can ask. If you say “I don’t know,” there’s always someone around who will help you figure it out.

Admitting you don’t know, searching for truth, and gathering context were all lessons I learned at Virginia Tech. The wisdom of one professor stands out in my mind. Ali Isani, professor emeritus of English, had a way of pulling you into the context of the time. When you read what he had assigned, he put your head into the space and time of the author. Whether it was the literature of the Southern U.S. or Japanese literature, Isani put you right there. You could say that he taught me the meaning of “context.” I guess that goes along with keeping things simple. If you understand the context of a situation, you can usually break it down into simple components. That’s a lesson I try to bring to any leadership situation, and a lesson I try to leave behind for others as well.

If you asked me what experience at Virginia Tech most prepared me to be a leader, my unwavering and immediate answer is the Corps of Cadets. I’m not sure I can put it into words. The corps puts a mark on your soul that never washes off. At least it did for me. The corps teaches the meaning of working together, of pulling for one another. And it teaches you the true meaning of what it is to be a team. A lot of companies talk about teamwork. In the corps, you live it. Whenever I go back to campus, the first thing I do is kneel in front of the Rock [a memorial to Tech alumni lost in WWII] and kiss it, and a familiar tear touches my cheek every time. The corps meant—and still means—that much to me.

Leadership, to me, is not a special quality or skill, but a series of lessons from the teachers and experiences that life offers you—if you’re willing to learn.
university's Alumni Notes, Virginia Tech Alumni Association, Holtzman Alumni Center, 501 Piedmont Rd., Blacksburg, VA 24061; email the news to AlumniNotes@vt.edu, or submit the news online at www.vtmag.vt.edu. Alumni publications are edited for clarity and conciseness, where photos may also be uploaded for consideration. Alumni mailing addresses may be viewed online at www.vtmag.vt.edu or uploaded for consideration.

Alumni accents and abbreviations

Career accomplishments

Weddings

deceased

40

Lloyd H. Burren (ME), Virginia Beach, Va., 9/29/13.

Alford H. Bobbitt (AB), Bristol, Tenn., 9/29/13.

41

Wallace F. Holloway Sr. (ARE '42, ARE '42), Washington, D.C., 9/12/13.

Norman A. Powell (BS, ARE '63), Columbus, Ohio, 9/11/13.

42


C. John Renick (HPE, HPE '63), Broadway, Va., 6/29/13.

43

Donald A. Williams (BC '51), Richmond, Va., 7/30/13.

Fred C. Prince (BC '51, ARE '61), Sioux Falls, S.D., 8/26/13.

44

Robert E. Bryant (HPE), Lebanon, Va., 7/15/13.

James P. Smith (IE '71), Alton, Va., 7/15/13.

45

Jimmie S. Necessary (ME), Blairs, Va., 8/7/13.

J. Thomas Ryan (ENG), High Point, N.C., 7/15/13.

46

Alan H. Hoblitzell (AGED), Edmond, Okla., 1/26/13.

Jefferson J. Oakes (PSCI '71), Franklin, N.C., 12/24/12.

47


Craig S. Eddy (ART), Santa Rosa, Calif., 8/1/13.

48


D. Wolfe Martin (ECON), Blacksburg, Va., 8/22/13.

49


Jefferson P. Scott (ME), Virginia Beach, Va., 8/28/13.

50

Eugene B. Ragone (DIAB), Pittsburgh, Pa., is the trust administrator for the Bank of New York Mellon Foundation.

Craig E. Norris (COMM), Naper- ill, Ill., was appointed director of the board of advisors for chopping and cutting for FoodNet, the foodborne illness sentinel network.

A. Alexander Pearson (HORT '89), Blacksburg, Va., is a mem-

Dolly Serru Balduzzi (EDCIL), 9/12/13, Atlanta, Ga., 9/24/13.

51

C. John Renick (HPE), Altoona, Pa., 9/22/13.


52

Craig E. Nesbit (BIO), Lowville, N.Y., 8/20/13.

Ronald J. Kendall (ETE), Altoona, Pa., 8/28/13.
Barrington Moore Memorial Award in Christiansburg, Va., received the Jamestown Community College. Distinguished Alumnus Award from Old Forge, N.Y., received the 2013 class notes Ernest “Gene” Copenhaver Jr. (FIW), (FOR), (CE, CE systems for the board of governors of Va., is assistant director of the division Woodland Hills, Calif., retired from his received the Paul Minton Distinguished America.

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**Alumni scales language barriers with new app**

by RACHEL CLINE

Not every country can be an eye-opening experience, but one that can quickly turn stressful for those travelers who don’t speak the language of the culture they’re visiting. Enter Kunal Sarda (M.S. industrial and systems engineering ’05), who hopes to remedy this problem with an app called VerbalizeIt. The app allows users to quickly connect with live translators around the world for on-the-spot communications rather than having to rely on machine-generated translations that are often ineffective in conversational contexts. The idea came about when Sarda realized that he had been pick-pocketed in Spain and had no money or a way to explain the situation to his French taxi driver. “What I ended up doing was calling a friend of the phone who spoke French and having him translate on my behalf over the phone,” Sarda said. “And that’s how the light bulb went off.”

While VerbalizeIt is helpful for world travelers, it has also proven useful in the business world. Businesses can sign up for the service in assistance for everything from translating documents to conversations. Whether it be Chinese, Hindi, or Malayalam, the app have a live translator on the other end. Since the company was founded, they’ve been used in more than 170 countries with over 300,000 users. Currently, they’re offering a free service for all active military users and are in the process of expanding their services to include more commonly spoken languages in the business world. Looking back at how far the company has come since its conception only a few years ago, Sarda recognizes an important life lesson. “Fail quickly and learn from your mistakes,” he said. “If you’re not failing enough, that implies that you’re not trying new things.”

Rachile Cline, a senior communication and sociology major, is an intern with Virginia Tech Magazine.
Editor's note: While contemplating how to tell the story of the university's opening of a new center for the arts, those of us who make Virginia Tech Magazine were captivated by the underlying purpose of the university's arts initiative. Enacting a vision long championed by President Charles W. Steger, the university and its educators aim to institutionalize the creativity and sensory learning that is intrinsic to the arts—and to all academic endeavors.

Consider this excerpt from a June 2013 column that Steger wrote for the Roanoke Times:

Since the beginning of humankind, our ancestors learned about the world around them through sensory perception: touching, feeling, seeing, smelling, and hearing. This represents a whole other way of experiencing and perceiving the nature of our being, as opposed to the modern analytical approach. Indeed, it is an alternative way of thinking and analyzing. ... To sustain the arts, we should intentionally foster interplay between science, technology and the arts. The challenges of the 21st century demand creative processes that stem from the realization that design, aesthetics and technological development have become symbiotic.

To tell this story of transformation in students' lives and intellects, we hit upon a universal symbol of transformation: the superhero. And the use of panels, or sequential art—often seen in comic strips and graphic novels—streamlines the presentation of an expansive topic. The panels are the work of Steven White (communication studies '92), a web developer with University Relations.
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Feb. 7-8  Food for Thought
May 30-31  Focus on Photography
June 6-7  Top of the Mountain at Mountain Lake
June 16  Hokie Classic Golf Tournament
June 28  Summer Beer Festival at Virginia Tech
July 10-11  A Day in the Life of College Admissions
Aug. 8-9  Happy and Healthy Pet Weekend

For more information on these events, see page 40 or visit www.alumni.vt.edu/drillfieldseries/.

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$165 per person; $320 per couple