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BRANDY FAULKNER

## COMMUNITY CHANGE-MAKER

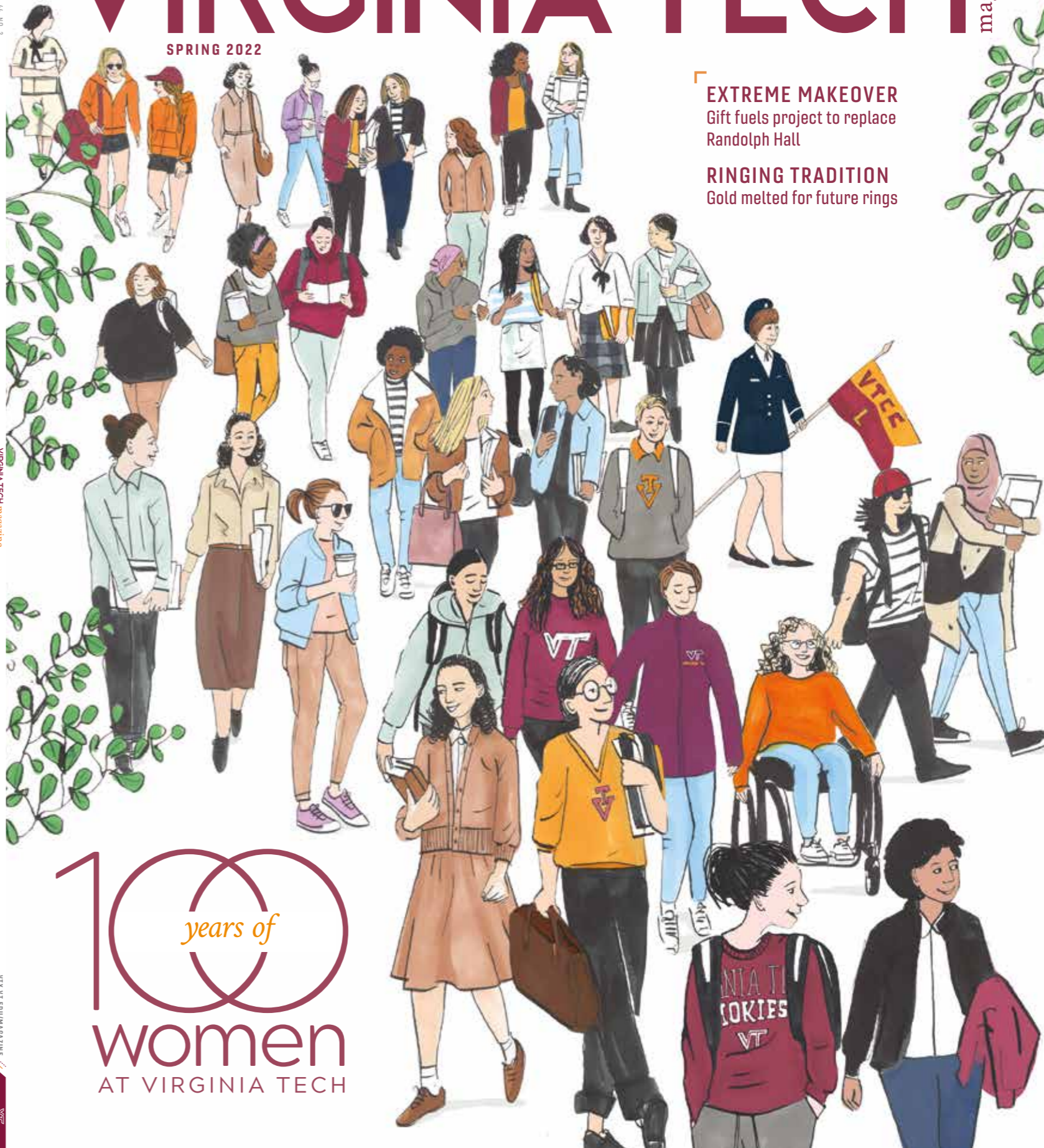


Virginia Tech Collegiate Assistant Professor and Gloria D. Smith Professor of Black Studies Brandy Faulkner created a video game that she uses in her community activism trainings and workshops and in the classroom. Besides her role within the Department of Political Science, Faulkner's passion is helping grassroots and social change-based organizations. Her video game—Team Yellow—teaches community activists and organizers who are working to create social, political, and economic change how to understand and build power by understanding the decision-making process.

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# VIRGINIA TECH magazine

SPRING 2022



**EXTREME MAKEOVER**  
Gift fuels project to replace Randolph Hall

**RINGING TRADITION**  
Gold melted for future rings

100 years of  
women  
AT VIRGINIA TECH

"Her gifts are at a level so removed from the rest of us that all we can do is feel the appropriate awe and then wonder on the mysteries of nature."

—*The New York Times* on Sarah Chang

**Tuesday, April 19, 7:30 PM**

**SARAH CHANG**, violin

**SONYA OVRUTSKY FENSOME**, piano

One of the most sought-after violinists playing today, Sarah Chang performs violin sonatas by Brahms and Franck, as well as Bartók's *Romanian Folk Dances* for her Moss debut.

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# CONTENTS

## CHANGING STANDARDS

When Virginia Tech began admitting women in 1921, male and female students were held to different rules and standards, a practice that persisted for decades. The L Squadron, which was formed in the 1973-74 academic year, was the first unit of women in the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets. Women were in a separate squadron from male cadets until 1979. Learn more about these female trailblazers on page 34.



## FEATURES

### 18 GIFT FUELS BUILDING PROJECT

Randolph Hall houses multiple College of Engineering departments that serve more than 2,300 undergraduates and 500 graduate students, and award more than 650 degrees each year. The largest-ever gift by a Virginia Tech alumnus will advance a long-awaited project to replace the aging engineering building with what will be the largest building on the university's Blacksburg campus.

### 34 100 YEARS OF WOMEN AT VIRGINIA TECH

In a span of 100 years, the influence of women at Virginia Tech has grown remarkably. Meet several women whose experiences as students and faculty marked significant milestones in the progress of women at the university. Their voices span decades, and their personal accounts demonstrate how individual experiences collectively lay a path for future generations.

## DEPARTMENTS

### 4 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### 6 AROUND THE DRILLFIELD

- 22 Corps
- 24 Moment
- 25 Athletics
- 26 What's In It?
- 30 How Tech Ticks

### 46 AROUND THE HOKIE NATION

- 46 Alumna Profile: Anisya Fritz
- 59 Class Notes
- 62 Family
- 68 Retro

### 70 STILL LIFE

### 72 END NOTE



**TURN OF THE CENTURY:** (on the cover) Female students were first admitted to Virginia Tech in 1921. Since then, women have helped shape the trajectory of the university. Cover illustration by Clare Mallison. (at right) In December 2021, a participant demonstrates a virtual reality experience during the Calhoun Honors Discovery Program Junior Design Studio Showcase Expo.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

PHOTO OP: The Clark and Stamps Scholars meet with President Tim Sands and Laura Sands at the Sesquicentennial Celebration Alumni Tailgate.

# SPRING FORWARD

Over the next few weeks, our campuses in Blacksburg, Roanoke, and the greater Washington, D.C., metro area will shake off the remnants of winter in anticipation of the return to warmer weather. The longer days of spring will also herald the return of many special campus activities.

We look forward to seeing alumni, friends, and families at events like the Run in Remembrance, the Big Event, and Family Weekend. This spring, there will be numerous opportunities to celebrate milestones in the university's 150-year history as we recognize Virginia Tech's sesquicentennial.

This edition of Virginia Tech Magazine highlights 100 years of female students. The first five women enrolled in 1921. Today, we have more than 111,000 living alumnae. From the classroom to the research lab to our administration, women have shaped and will continue to shape the trajectory of our university.

Throughout its history, Virginia Tech has grown and changed, striving to provide academic opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds. Although we've come a long way, we still have work to do.

Nearly seven years ago, we began a thought exercise to consider the future beyond our preconceived boundaries. One of our aspirations is a university that reflects the diversity of the commonwealth we serve.

As I walk across our Blacksburg campus, I can imagine what it might have been like 150 years ago, especially when the Corps of Cadets is marching on the Drillfield. Despite all the history around us, though, Virginia Tech doesn't feel old.

In 2022, as we reflect on the past and celebrate the present, we also anticipate a dynamic future. We are positioned as a leading global research university, an institution respected for our inclusive, service-oriented community and recognized as a top destination for the world's best talent.

Your investment in our present and future is central to our success. Your support helps advance every aspect of Virginia Tech, from access and affordability to faculty recruitment, athletics, facilities, and academic programs.

Last year, your contributions eclipsed \$200 million. And Giving Day 2022 not only broke records for amounts raised and the number of donors but also briefly overwhelmed our website. That's what I call Hokie Spirit.

In a few months, we will gather in Lane Stadium to confer degrees on the Class of 2022, and a new generation of alumni will make its mark on the world. I'm convinced that's exactly what the world needs: More *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve). More sense of community. More Hokies. ■

*Tim Sands is Virginia Tech's 16th president.*

THOMAS MILLER

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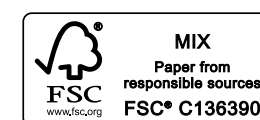
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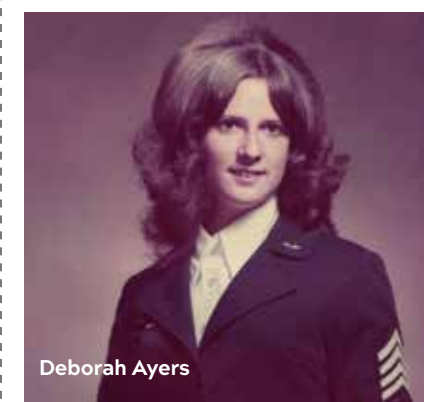
# LETTERS



## TO THE EDITOR

### BLAZING A TRAIL

In answer to your question about which Hokie female has most influenced me, and in fact has influenced so many others, I humbly submit the name of Deborah "Debbie" Jane Noss Ayers.



Deborah Ayers

During fall 1973, Debbie was the first female squadron commander in the history of the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets. In spring 1975, she became the first woman commissioned as a serving line officer from any senior military college in the United States, to include all the service academies.

During the 1972-73 school year, Air Force ROTC was opened to women. While some military colleges pushed back, Virginia Tech took a leading role and announced that, starting in the fall, membership in the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets would be open to women.

Debbie, one of the first upperclass females to join the corps, was selected to serve as the first commanding officer of the all-female L Squadron.

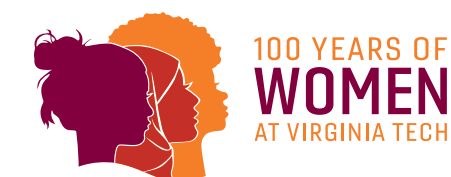
Debbie, along with ROTC Capt. Sonya Shipman and the commandant's staff, helped develop the first women's uniforms. Additionally, corps customs

and traditions needed to be adapted or developed for the women. As one might imagine, this was not an easy year, and the nearly 50 years of women in the corps owe much to this wonderful group of pathfinders.

Debbie participated in the spring 1974 Corps of Cadets commissioning ceremony. She was recognized as the outstanding senior from what is now the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. Debbie served on active duty for five years as a squadron executive officer then as the commander of the 416th Bombardment Wing Headquarters Squadron at Griffiss Air Force Base in New York.

Debbie and I were married in 1974. We served together on active duty and have shared a variety of adventures. Debbie has been a small business owner, supported numerous faith-based activities, and, together, we have raised a wonderful family. Debbie is a leader, and her thoughtful and caring approach produces outstanding results. She credits her supportive parents, four wonderful siblings, her growing family, and the Virginia Tech motto, *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve).

*Frank Ayers '74, Daytona Beach, Florida*



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** A recent edition of the Virginia Tech Monthly invited readers to share their stories about Virginia Tech women who influenced their lives.



# AROUND THE DRILLFIELD

- 22 Corps
- 24 Moment
- 25 Athletics
- 26 What's In It?
- 30 How Tech Ticks

## NEWS

### BIT BY BIT

THE VIRGINIA TECH INNOVATION CAMPUS, THROUGH ITS partnership with Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), provided micro:bits, tiny, pocket-size computers for every fifth-grader at Polk Elementary, as part of a pilot program to engage students in technology fields early on.

According to Lance Collins, vice president and executive director of the Innovation Campus, "This kind of programming really allows students to get focused, to get exposure, to get excited, but also to be prepared because eventually that's what's required if they're to enter the STEM fields."

Jim Egenrieder, professor and director of the Virginia Tech Thinkabit Lab in the greater Washington, D.C., metro area, helped Polk teachers integrate the devices into their curriculum.

"This device has a number of sensors: temperature, humidity, motion detection, light detection, sound detection," said Egenrieder. "All these great things that give students this tangible way to study the world around them."

Teachers say giving these students the chance to build software and to see themselves working in STEM fields will have a tremendous impact on laying the foundation for their futures. "Our students are now going to be able to have opportunities that they may not have had if we didn't have this partnership with Virginia Tech," said Gregory Hutchins Jr., ACPS superintendent.

ACPS and Virginia Tech expect to expand the program to other schools in the near future. ■

COURTESY OF SUSAN HALE THOMAS, ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



TESTING, TESTING, 1, 2, 3: Caitlyn Jung, a sophomore majoring in biomedical engineering and mechanics, sets up an impact test for a snow sports helmet in the Virginia Tech Helmet Lab. The lab's new safety ratings are the first to evaluate the helmets worn by skiers and snowboarders.

### VIRGINIA TECH HELMET LAB TAKES ON SNOW SPORTS

**MOGULS. AERIALS. HALF-PIPE. BIG AIR.** Skiing and snowboarding events send athletes soaring through the air and racing downhill at speeds of 80 mph.

These high-energy sports attract a rapt audience at the Winter Olympics every four years, but they're also wildly popular among recreational athletes—the National Ski Areas Association reported 59 million visits to skiing or snowboarding areas in the U.S. during the 2020-21 season. But like any activity that combines high speeds and hard surfaces, snow sports come with a risk of getting hurt, and hundreds of thousands of skiing and snowboarding injuries occur annually. Head injuries account for 28 percent of those and are the No. 1 cause of fatalities in these sports.

That makes it critical to know which helmet provides the most effective buffer between the head and the ground for

skiers who lose their balance or snowboarders who don't stick a landing. Now, the Virginia Tech Helmet Lab has added snow sports to the list covered by its nationally regarded five-star helmet rating system.

Out of 35 helmets the lab tested, two helmets merited all five stars, and eight earned four. The remainder earned three or fewer.

The ratings are made possible by the lab's rigorous analysis of what happens during a head impact in a particular sport, and which impacts are likely result in injuries.

Snow sports are the lab's seventh major ratings release, which started with football helmets in 2011. In the decade since, hockey, soccer, cycling, and youth football helmets have all been added to the portfolio. The lab is now working on developing ratings for equestrian helmets, baseball, softball, sensors, and other sports. ■

### A STAR IN THE WORLD OF CERAMICS ENGINEERING



COMPARED TO METAL AND POLYMER-based materials, ceramics can better withstand high temperatures and corrosive environments, but their brittle nature often makes them susceptible to breakage. This behavior potentially causes problems for innovators trying to create lightweight porous versions of these materials, explaining why ceramic foams are not typically used as structural components.

Facing the challenging task of developing lightweight, high-strength ceramic materials, Mechanical Engineering Assistant Professor Ling Li has turned to an unexpected collaborator for design inspiration: the knobby starfish from the tropical Indo-Pacific. By investigating the complex and highly ordered mineralized skeletal system of this unusual marine species, Li and his research team discovered an unexpected combination of characteristics that may lead to developing an entirely new class of high-performance, lightweight ceramic composites. Science Magazine featured their findings in a recent cover story. ■

### WILL PLAY FOR FOOD DONATIONS

BRANDON TEAGUE, A MEMBER OF the Marching Virginians, typically plays his trumpet for the crowd in Lane Stadium.

However, on Nov. 13, he played some familiar Virginia Tech tunes, such as "HandClap" by Fitz and the Tantrums and "Uptown Funk" by Bruno Mars, for tailgaters. Teague and fellow band members performed in exchange for canned food or monetary donations during the band's annual Hokies for the Hungry food drive.

Hokies for the Hungry has been a tradition for more than 25 years. The Marching Virginians partner with organizations throughout the New River Valley, including New Life Christian Fellowship and the Montgomery County Christmas Store, to provide a variety of donations for those in need.

This year, the band topped its previous collection efforts, raising approximately \$20,000 and gathering more than 20,000 food items, the highest totals in the initiative's history. ■

THOMAS MILLER



VIRGINIA TECH, ALEX PARISH



FULL CIRCLE: Brent Pry started his Division I coaching career as a graduate assistant at Virginia Tech under former coach Frank Beamer in the mid-1990s, and after stops at six different schools, he returned to Blacksburg as the Hokies' new football head coach.

### BRENT PRY NAMED VIRGINIA TECH FOOTBALL HEAD COACH

ON NOV. 30 VIRGINIA TECH PRESIDENT Tim Sands and Director of Athletics Whit Babcock announced that Brent Pry had accepted the Virginia Tech football head coaching position. The Altoona, Pennsylvania, native joined the Hokies after serving the past eight seasons as defensive coordinator/linebackers coach at Penn State.

"We are pleased to welcome him back to Blacksburg," said Sands. "Coach Pry understands what it means to be a Hokie, and now he will have the opportunity to lead our team into Lane Stadium while Hokie Nation jumps to 'Enter Sandman.' Coach Pry owns an exemplary record during his previous coaching stops, and we expect that he and his family will call Blacksburg home for many seasons. We wish them the very best as we embark on this journey together."

A 30-year coaching veteran, Pry has coached teams that have qualified for 15 bowl appearances and have finished in the Football Bowl Subdivision top 25 in total defense eight times.

"Virginia Tech is getting a great coach and a wonderful fit for our football program in Brent Pry," Hall of Fame coach Frank Beamer said. "Not only is Brent exceptionally intelligent, he also possesses a great deal of football knowledge. Growing up as the son of a coach, he's been around the game all of his life. I'm confident that he'll do a tremendous job as head coach of the Hokies." ■

EXTRA, EXTRA!  
READ ALL ABOUT IT.  
For additional details, images, and videos related to the stories featured in Drillfield, go to [vtx.vt.edu/magazine](http://vtx.vt.edu/magazine).



**QUANTUM LEAPS:** Physics Professor Sophia Economou (center) will direct the new Virginia Tech Center for Quantum Information Science and Engineering. Nick Mayhall (left), an associate professor of chemistry, and Ed Barnes (right), an associate professor of physics, will serve on the center's executive committee along with four other quantum researchers from the College of Science and the College of Engineering.

### QUANTUM CENTER UNITES VIRGINIA TECH'S BROAD EXPERTISE IN A VITAL FIELD

AS VIRGINIA TECH'S RESEARCH programs continue to expand, one source of momentum driving new discoveries and forging ingenious solutions to stubborn problems will be a new center dedicated to quantum research. Virginia Tech President Tim Sands announced the creation of the Virginia Tech Center for Quantum Information Science and Engineering at the 2022 State of the University address.

"The remarkable talent and expertise on this campus gives Virginia Tech the potential—and the responsibility—to address the most significant research questions unfolding in an increasingly interconnected and interdisciplinary world," Sands said. "Quantum science and engineering will shape our interactions with technology for decades. By investing in this center, providing support and resources and lowering barriers to discovery and collaboration, we will enable our researchers to tackle these formidable challenges from a collaborative, transdisciplinary perspective and have a meaningful impact on quality of life in the U.S. and around the world."

Sophia Economou, a professor of physics and Hassinger Senior Fellow of Physics in the College of Science, will direct the center. Economou is an expert on quantum information science and a member of the Co-design Center for Quantum Advantage, a U.S. Department of Energy center led by Brookhaven National Lab.

The new center creates an official umbrella for work that has flourished at Virginia Tech for many years. The university has been at the forefront of the emergence and evolution of quantum information science, producing research in key areas including quantum computing, networking, materials, and cryptography, and helping set research agendas through National Science Foundation-sponsored workshops and faculty collaborations with national laboratories.

In November, Northrop Grumman, a longstanding strategic partner of Virginia Tech, committed \$12.5 million to found the Center for Quantum Architecture and Software Development at the Innovation Campus in Alexandria, Virginia. That center will comple-

ment the broad range of ongoing work in Blacksburg by building substantial research capabilities with targeted investments in coding and software.

In this rapidly expanding and increasingly crucial research landscape, the Virginia Tech Center for Quantum Information Science and Engineering in Blacksburg solidifies Virginia Tech's role.

"Quantum is one of our four research frontiers because it has potential to maximize the impact Virginia Tech research can have at regional, national, and global scales," said Dan Sui, senior vice president for research and innovation. "With the establishment of this center, Virginia Tech is well positioned to better organize its interdisciplinary expertise to advance the quantum frontier."

The center will be administratively housed under the Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science, a research investment institute headed by Stefan Duma, the Harry Wyatt Professor of Engineering. ■

### NEW SOFT ROBOT MORPHS FROM A GROUND-TO-AIR VEHICLE USING LIQUID METAL

IMAGINE A SMALL AUTONOMOUS vehicle that could drive over land, stop, and flatten itself into a quadcopter. The rotors start spinning, and the vehicle flies away.

A team at Virginia Tech led by Michael Bartlett, assistant professor in mechanical engineering, is working on a new approach for shape-changing at the material level. These researchers use rubber, metal, and temperature to morph materials and fix them into place with no motors or pulleys. The team's work has been published in *Science Robotics*. Co-authors of the paper include graduate students Dohgyu Hwang and Edward J. Barron III and postdoctoral researcher A. B. M. Tahidul Haque.

"When we started the project, we wanted a material that could do three things: change shape, hold that shape, and then return to the original configuration, and to do this over many cycles," said Bartlett. "One of the challenges was to create a material that was soft enough to dramatically change shape, yet rigid enough to create adaptable machines that can perform different functions."

This project was funded through Bartlett's DARPA Young Faculty Award and Director's Fellowship. ■

ALEX PARRISH, CF



VIRGINIA TECH



**UNDER CONSTRUCTION:** University leaders and supporters of the Myers-Lawson School of Construction at the groundbreaking of the school's future home, Hitt Hall.

### GROUND BROKEN ON HITT HALL

ALTHOUGH FEB. 2 MAY HAVE BEEN A day with gray skies in Blacksburg, an extraordinarily bright moment took place for Virginia Tech as leaders and donors broke ground on Hitt Hall, a 100,000-gross-square-foot facility that will house the Myers-Lawson School of Construction, add critical dining capacity, and provide general assignment academic classroom and collaboration space.

"This building is a tribute to what is possible when academia and industry collaborate to address the workforce needs of the 21st century, supported by generous friends and alumni," Virginia Tech President Tim Sands said. "Hitt Hall will be an appropriate home for a nationally ranked and respected school that is developing the leaders and innovators who will define the industry's future."

The Board of Visitors approved design and funding for the Hitt Hall project in August 2021. Located in the North Academic District and close to a new transit hub, Hitt Hall will serve thousands of students, whether for classes or meals, each day. Spring 2024 is the target for completion of construction. The building is named in recognition of a lead gift by the Hitt family, which founded one of the nation's largest construction firms, HITT Contracting. Prior to the event Brett Hitt, co-chairman of HITT's board of directors, reflected on the passion for education and innovation in construction felt by his father, Russell Hitt, who died in 2020.

"This is an exciting and inspiring moment," Brett Hitt said. "We appreciate Virginia Tech's leading role preparing today's students to become tomorrow's decision-makers in our industry." ■





**MEDICAL SCHOOL  
RECOGNIZED BY  
INSIGHT INTO DIVERSITY  
MAGAZINE FOR FOURTH  
STRAIGHT YEAR**



**STITCHED UP:** Second-year medical student Andrew Strohm (right) assists students from the Achievable Dream Academy with practicing their suturing skills.

**FOR THE FOURTH CONSECUTIVE** year, *INSIGHT* into Diversity Magazine has recognized the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine with its Health Professions Higher Education Excellence in Diversity award. The award is a national honor given to health professions schools that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion.

The school is featured, along with other recipients, in the December 2021 issue of the magazine. Over the past nine years, the school has made deliberate strides in increasing its diversity among students. ■

**CATCH OF THE DAY:** The first-place team in the Health Sciences and Technology Hokie Pitch competition developed an idea for a biomedical innovation to increase detection of colorectal cancer. Team members included students (left to right) Mary Frazier, Mona Safari, Seun Imani, Mikel Cawley, and Collin Gregg.

**BIOMEDICAL INNOVATIONS TAKE CENTER STAGE DURING “SHARK TANK”-STYLE PITCH COMPETITION ON HS&T CAMPUS**

**VIRGINIA TECH STUDENTS** pitched commercialization ideas for biomedical innovations to a “Shark Tank”-style panel of judges during the annual Health Sciences and Technology (HS&T) Hokie Pitch at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC in Roanoke in December 2021.

The competition involved students from the Translational Biology, Medicine, and Health graduate program, who selected intellectual property, worked with real-world business mentors, and created an entrepreneurial plan to develop and commercialize biomedical discoveries as new companies.

“Hokie Pitch is always exciting,” said competition organizer Rob Gourdie, the Commonwealth Research Commercialization Fund Eminent Scholar in Heart Reporative

Medicine Research at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute, and director of the institute’s Center for Vascular and Heart Research. “It really shows how far they have come professionally.”

“The talent to bring a discovery forward and provide a solution to help people in Virginia and the world is essential to keeping the promise of the biomedical science enterprise and is an example of the Virginia Tech *Ut Prosim* [That I May Serve] ethos,” said Michael Friedlander, Virginia Tech’s vice president for health sciences and technology and executive director of the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute, who served as one of the judges of the competition.

The winning teams split \$4,500 in cash prizes. ■

**EXTENSION PROGRAM  
RECOGNIZED FOR  
INNOVATION IN  
CONNECTING GROWERS  
WITH MARKETERS**

**VIRGINIA SUPPORTS THOUSANDS** of farms that supply local businesses and sustain the commonwealth as a national leader in the agricultural industry. With so many farmers producing so many products in so many places, it’s often difficult to funnel food to the table, to the farmers markets, and to the front door.

Virginia Cooperative Extension, with additional support from a U.S. Department of Agriculture Local Food Promotion Program grant, has been working on food value chain coordination and the promotion of local food systems for several years to address this disconnect.

Last year, Virginia Cooperative Extension received the 2021 Farm Credit MarketMaker Innovation award for its “Equitable Food Oriented Development powered by MarketMaker” program. The program is a partnership between Extension and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Each year, Farm Credit recognizes one organization with the award for its ingenuity. ■

**CREAM OF THE CROP:** French Price (right), value chain coordinator for Virginia Cooperative Extension, accepts the Innovation Award on behalf of the Virginia MarketMaker Team.



**BACK AT IT:** Avril Arendse, clinical instructor of neurology/neurosurgery, holds the 3D-printed spine.

**VIRAL TIKTOK SHOWS HOW PARALYZED DOG IS  
ABLE TO WALK AGAIN THANKS TO A VETERINARIAN  
AND 3D-PRINTING TECHNOLOGY**

**AVRIL ARENDSE, CLINICAL INSTRUCTOR** of neurology and neurosurgery at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, and her neurosurgery team were able to combine technology and surgical teamwork to help a paralyzed dog.

After an accident left Lily, a 2-year-old dachshund, paralyzed, her owners consulted several veterinarians for help. Lily wasn’t expected to walk again, at least not pain-free.

The surgery Arendse performed on Lily has a mortality rate of 25 percent, with a 50/50 chance she would walk pain-free again. Arendse would need the capabilities and confidence of her team and the resources and support of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital to succeed.

The availability of a 3D printer was crucial for success. Using the printer to create a model of Lily’s spine, Arendse and the team

practiced the surgery they would perform to help Lily walk again. Being able to physically hold, manipulate, and view the spine from all angles was a benefit in knowing what they needed to do and where.

Arendse was pleased with the results. “Postoperatively, Lily was doing just as well as preoperatively, and that’s what we want to see.”

Typically, that would be the end of the story: a few follow-up visits to check on progress as Lily healed and some rehab at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital or with a local veterinarian. But Lily’s owners had other ideas. They were so grateful for the life-changing successful outcome they made a TikTok sharing Lily’s remarkable journey. Her story tugged on the heartstrings of many viewers, helping the surgical prowess of the team of veterinarians go viral. Visit [vtx.vt.edu/magazine](http://vtx.vt.edu/magazine) to see the video. ■



Kevin Pitts

### KEVIN PITTS NAMED DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AT VIRGINIA TECH

**KEVIN PITTS, CHIEF RESEARCH OFFICER** at Fermilab National Accelerator Laboratory and a professor of physics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, has been named the next dean of the Virginia Tech College of Science.

Pitts will officially step into his new role June 13, taking over from Ron Fricker, who has served as interim dean since January 2021. Pitts will also be a professor in the Department of Physics.

“Kevin’s recent experience as chief research officer at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory and his leadership of undergraduate instruction at the departmental, college, and university levels position him exceptionally well to lead the College of Science to even greater accomplishments in its research and educational missions,” said Cyril Clarke, executive vice president and provost.

Before joining Fermilab, Pitts was vice provost for undergraduate education at the University of Illinois.

Pitts received a bachelor’s degree in physics and mathematics from Anderson University in Indiana, and his M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Oregon. His career achievements and honors are significant, including: a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a Fellow of the American Physical Society, U.S. Department of Energy Outstanding Junior Investigator, and a recipient of a National Science Foundation (NSF) CAREER award.

Parallel to his research, Pitts’ teaching and administrative work is notable for the connections he established with undergraduate and graduate students. He was among University of Illinois teachers listed as “outstanding” by students for 12 consecutive years, and he received the University of Illinois Engineering Council Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Advisor multiple times.

He led the university’s NSF-funded Red-shirt Consortium, a program aimed at improving the ability of academically talented students who are PELL-eligible, underrepresented minority, or women to enroll and graduate in STEM fields. He also served in the national chair-line of the American Physics Society’s Conferences for Undergraduate Women in Physics.

“I am honored to join the College of Science at Virginia Tech, a college with a track record of transforming lives through education and groundbreaking research,” said Pitts.

Fricker, will transition into a new role, vice provost for faculty affairs, a position to which he was named in December 2021. ■

### TEAM SELECTED AS FINALIST IN ALEXA PRIZE SIMBOT CHALLENGE



**TEAMWORK:** One of 10 finalists in the Alexa Prize SimBot Challenge, Virginia Tech’s team meets regularly for updates and overall progress on their project.

**A VIRGINIA TECH TEAM FROM THE** Sanghani Center for Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics is one of 10 finalists chosen to compete in the Alexa Prize SimBot Challenge. The challenge focuses on advancing the development of next-generation virtual assistants that learn and gain the ability to perform common sense reasoning to help humans complete real-world tasks.

“The SimBot should be able to understand the intention of a task as well as any instructions or feedback it receives from a user and interpret the environment to correctly predict what action is needed to complete it,” said Lifu Huang, assistant professor of computer science and faculty at the Sanghani Center.

Huang will advise a team of four Ph.D. students on how to tackle the research and navigate technical challenges.

University teams selected for the challenge participate in public benchmark and live interaction phases. Teams receive a research grant, as well as other resources, and Alexa team support. ■

VIRGINIA TECH, ANDREW CYBAK

### CRIMINOLOGISTS TO STUDY THE IMPACT OF CYBERCRIME ON VIRGINIANS

**WHEN MOST PEOPLE DISCUSS** ways to stop cybercrime, they focus on the technological realm.

But James Hawdon’s work in combating cybercrime doesn’t involve designing programs or firewalls. As director of the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention and a professor of sociology at Virginia Tech, he believes researchers must also look at the human side of the problem.

“If you don’t take that social element into consideration, we’re always one step behind,” he said. “We’re chasing the next way that people find to hack into your system, rather than trying to design environments that are safer.”

To understand the social factors at play in cybercrime, researchers first need a clear picture of where and how cybercrime is occurring. That’s what Hawdon and his team of criminologists in the Department of Sociology are hoping to find with their new project, “Cybercrime in Virginia: Impacts on Industry and Citizens (CIVIIC).”

Working with Hawdon on the project are Katalin Parti and Thomas Dearden, both assistant professors who specialize in criminology. The team will conduct a survey of individuals and 400 businesses to determine how cybercrime has affected residents of Virginia.

A grant from the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative, a Virginia-funded collaborative effort that supports cybersecurity research at universities across the Virginia, is funding the project. ■

LIZ TAYLOR FOR VIRGINIA TECH



**THE FUTURE IS NOW:** Prospective students prepare to take a campus tour during Virginia Tech’s fall 2021 Open House.

### A RECORD HIGH FOR FIRST-YEAR ADMISSION

**FOR THE SECOND STRAIGHT YEAR,** Virginia Tech has charted a historic high in first-year applications for admission. A school record 45,214 first-year applications poured in for fall 2022 admission—an increase of 7 percent over the previous record of 42,084 set a year ago.

Noteworthy gains include a 19 percent increase in applicants identified as first-generation college students. Gains were also achieved across every underrepresented and underserved group. Black or African American applications surpassed the 2021 mark by 6 percent. Applications from Hispanic/Latino students increased by 9 percent while Native American applications rose 8 percent.

“When you remove barriers to admission, more students can clearly picture them-

selves as members of the student body,” said Juan Espinoza, associate vice provost for enrollment management and director of undergraduate admissions. “Accessibility is at the heart of being a land-grant university, and we are pleased that more students are targeting Virginia Tech as a possible destination.”

In 2018, Virginia Tech implemented changes in its admissions process, which have helped deepen the pool of applicants vying for a spot in Virginia Tech’s entering class.

“This diverse pool of talented students is evidence that our admissions process is working and we are very excited to see how this entering class takes shape,” said Espinoza. ■



**VIRGINIA TECH AWARDED ACCREDITATION FROM THE SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS**

**THE SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF** Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), the primary regional accrediting agency for 11 southern U.S. states, recently awarded Virginia Tech a reaffirmation of accreditation.

The announcement came at the end of an intensive multi-year process that included an off-site peer review, an on-site peer review, and a final review by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. More than 130 faculty members, administrators, and staff contributed to building a comprehensive picture of Virginia Tech’s commitment to its students, faculty, and staff; the public that it serves; and its mission.

At its most fundamental, SACSCOC accreditation allows the university to continue to grant high-quality, nationally recognized degrees and to receive federal funding. It’s also an acknowledgment of Virginia Tech’s compliance with key SACSCOC principles, including integrity, institutional planning and effectiveness, student achievement, and financial and physical resources.

Accreditation takes place every decade, with periodic evaluations to authorize new programs or instructional sites. The process can be arduous, yet it’s valuable for the university. “Accreditation provides an opportunity to do a deep dive into all aspects of our university, to reveal both areas of strength and opportunities for improvement,” said Executive Vice Provost Don Taylor. ■

VIRGINIA TECH VIDEOGRAPHERS HAVE BEEN HARD AT WORK CAPTURING THE UNIVERSITY’S NEWS AND EVENTS. CHECK OUT THIS SAMPLING AND MANY OTHERS AT [VTX.VT.EDU/VIDEOS](http://VTX.VT.EDU/VIDEOS).



**Helmet Lab puts snow sport helmets to the test**

The Virginia Tech Helmet Lab has released ratings for snow sports helmets, the first to evaluate how effectively headgear worn by skiers and snowboarders protects against head injuries like concussion.



**Windows into traditional world dress**

Students studying fashion merchandising and design created a window display showcasing vintage kimonos and other traditional clothing from Japan, China, and Korea, for a Clothing and People class project.



**Using technology to make visible the invisible past**

HistoryLab: Creative Technologies, Hidden Histories, Informal Learning is a new course that bridges STEM fields, the humanities, education, and the creative arts.



**Senior merges art, engineering, and activism in exhibit**

Mariam Hasan is an Honors College senior studying biomedical engineering. She’s also an artist, a designer, a scientist, and an activist fighting for social justice through her art and her engineering projects.



# We Remember

## APRIL 16 MEMORIAL

April 16 marks 15 years since the tragic events that took the lives of 32 members of the Virginia Tech community in 2007.

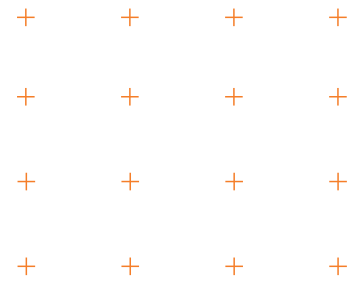
The students and faculty members lost that day will be remembered through a variety of ceremonies and activities, including the annual 3.2 Run in Remembrance and a candlelight vigil on the Drillfield. The run, held in-person on the Blacksburg campus for the first time since 2019, begins at 9:43 a.m. Remote alumni chapter runs and virtual participation opportunities on social media will also be available. The candlelight vigil convenes at the April 16 Memorial at 7:30 p.m.

“The Words of Children,” an exhibit featuring items sent to the university by children from all over the world following the tragedy will be on display at Newman Library, April 11-22. The items have been selected from the April 16, 2007, Condolence Archives, held by Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives. A digital exhibit launching April 11 will include many items from the display, as well as audio recordings from the April 16, 2007, Oral History Collection.

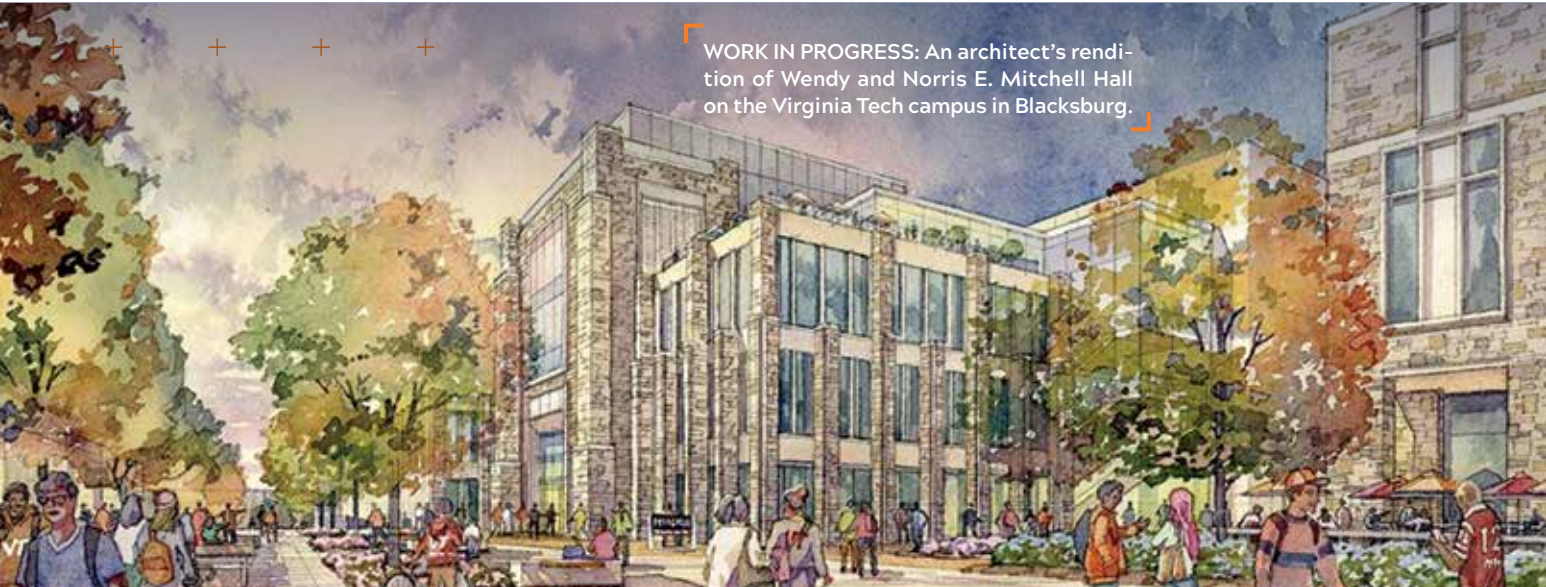
Visit [weremember.vt.edu](http://weremember.vt.edu) to learn more about these and other events.

In Blacksburg, across the country, and around the world, as we gather together this spring, we reaffirm our sense of community and our commitment to one another.

**WE ARE VIRGINIA TECH. WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER.**



# MITCHELL GIFT FUELS PROJECT TO REPLACE RANDOLPH HALL



WORK IN PROGRESS: An architect's rendition of Wendy and Norris E. Mitchell Hall on the Virginia Tech campus in Blacksburg.

**THE LARGEST-EVER GIFT BY A VIRGINIA** Tech alumnus will advance a long-awaited project to replace an aging engineering building with what will be the largest building on the university's Blacksburg campus.

Norris Mitchell '58 and his wife, Wendy, have committed \$35 million to the Virginia Tech College of Engineering (COE). The gift will go toward construction as well as activities and programming for a showcase building for the college, which will replace the more than 60-year-old Randolph Hall. Randolph Hall was built between 1952 and 1959 in the university's North Academic District. After more than a half-century of use, there is a recognized need to replace the building.

Per approval of the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors, the new building will be known as Wendy and Norris E. Mitchell '58 Hall.

Mitchell Hall is projected to be more than 70 percent larger than Randolph Hall, providing needed space to accommodate growth in the university's engineering programs and account for shifts in how research and teaching take place today.

The building will include 284,000 square feet of space for classrooms, instructional labs, student team projects, research labs, and offices for faculty, staff, and students. Also, the space will support a variety of collaborative uses for students and faculty, as well as student advising.

Total project costs are projected at \$248 million, most of which would come from

state funding. The gift from the Mitchells satisfies the university's obligation to provide funding to the project. Depending on the timing of approvals from the General Assembly, the project could be ready for construction funding by summer 2023, according to the university's capital budget request to the state.

Randolph Hall is connected to one of the largest university-owned stability wind tunnels in the U.S. Plans call for Mitchell Hall to accommodate the wind tunnel and potentially enclose it. The wind tunnel is expected to remain open for research and teaching throughout much of construction.

The Mitchell gift comes at a pivotal moment for COE, which is growing as part of the Commonwealth of Virginia's

Tech Talent Initiative, a statewide push to increase graduates in key computing fields. As the university's largest college, with programs spanning 12 departments and two schools, engineering's total enrollment grew to more than 12,000 in 2020.

Expanding—and improving—COE's physical infrastructure is a key component of the college's strategic priorities. Other notable projects include a renovated and expanded Holden Hall, home of the materials science and engineering and mining and minerals engineering programs, which is set to open to students in fall 2022. Space in the new Data and Decision Sciences Building, as well as several other facilities, will welcome computer science programs and faculty.

"This record gift is a historic moment for our college, as well as the entire university," said Julia M. Ross, the Paul and Dorothea Torgersen Dean of Engineering. "It comes at an exciting time of growth in our student programming, research enterprise, and new statewide initiatives. It supports an absolutely crucial project that will enable our students and faculty to remain on the leading edge of engineering education and research for decades to come. And it also endows permanent, flexible support that makes it easier to act quickly to address needs and pursue new opportunities as it relates to academic programming within the building. We are incredibly grateful to the Mitchells for their long-standing and game-changing generosity."

COURTESY OF PERKINS&WILL

PETER MEANS

## Building a tradition of giving

Norris Mitchell's personal story began in Virginia's Carroll County, where he grew up without running water or electricity in his home. He entered college on scholarship and worked his way through Virginia Tech in a co-op program. He earned a bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering in 1958.

"My mother was a schoolteacher and principal, and the value of education has been clear to me ever since I was a boy," said Norris Mitchell, who worked as an aerospace executive before transitioning to real estate and banking. "Virginia Tech equipped me with the knowledge and skillset to have an extremely fulfilling career across several industries.

I appreciate the university's key role in my life. Wendy and I are happy to be able to make this gift to help Virginia Tech prepare tomorrow's engineers."

Wendy Mitchell attended Virginia Tech for a brief period before leaving to help address a family emergency, then embarked on a career in banking that saw her rise to senior leadership positions at several institutions.

"Out of all the ways that we could give money to Virginia Tech, we thought this building project was the right choice," she said. "You can have as many bright students as possible, but if you don't have places for them to get together and work on projects, they're not going to get as far."



Wendy and Norris Mitchell



**DREAM MACHINES:** The Wendy and Norris E. Mitchell '58 Robotics Laboratory supports the work of numerous engineering students and teams.

“The Mitchells’ inspiring story illustrates the power of education to create new opportunities for service and achievement,” Virginia Tech President Tim Sands said. “Their extraordinary gift will make this important project a reality, and I look forward to seeing Mitchell Hall become a nexus of ideas, innovation, and learning experiences that support the success of our students, our university, and the commonwealth.”

For many years, Norris Mitchell has generously supported his alma mater. He and his wife are members of Virginia Tech’s Ut Prosim Society. There is an endowed Mitchell Professor of Aerospace and Ocean Engineering position, now held by Rakesh Kapania, and a Mitchell scholarship in the Kevin T. Crofton Department of Aerospace and Ocean Engineering. A robotics lab in the College of Engineering’s Goodwin Hall also is named for the couple.

Eric Paterson, the Rolls-Royce Commonwealth Professor of Marine Propulsion, recalls a 2012 meeting with Mitchell and other notable graduates from the Class of 1958 just after he became head of the Crofton Department of Aerospace and Ocean Engineering.

“They wanted to welcome me to the department and stress the importance of our programs and impact,” Paterson said. “That meeting left an impression on me,

and it’s a reminder that Norris has been a longtime advocate for the department and university. ... Norris has invested in engineering faculty, students, and programs in a number of impactful ways. His support of our faculty through an endowed professorship helps us retain world-class talent, and the robotics lab in Goodwin Hall ensures that our students can engage with hands-on work at different levels. He realizes that what we do is a team effort—and that alumni are a part of that.”

The Mitchells live in Great Falls, Virginia, and regularly visit the Blacksburg campus. During a 2019 visit, they met with students from the Crofton Department of Aerospace and Ocean Engineering, including Kevin D’Souza ’19, M.S. ’20, who now works for Northrop Grumman.

“It was very inspiring and encouraging that so many years later Norris and Wendy still care so much about the university and the program,” D’Souza said. “I remember coming out of that meeting hoping to be where they are one day and feeling eager to give back to the department later on in my career. I maybe wouldn’t have had that inspiration as much if I had not had the opportunity to meet them.”

Wendy Mitchell said the meeting helped cement the couple’s decision to give toward the project to replace Randolph Hall.

“We enjoy meeting with students and listening to all their great ideas,” she said. “They’re so enthusiastic and can’t wait to tell you what they are working on and their ideas for the future.”

Today, the Mitchells stay busy managing their investment properties. Norris Mitchell also serves on the board of directors of Meridian Energy Group, a company that is trying to establish a more environmentally friendly oil refinery in North Dakota.

“I tell him we need to retire, and he says that word is not in his vocabulary,” Wendy Mitchell joked.

Although Norris Mitchell worked as an engineer for only the first 16 years of his career, he said he has continued to draw on skills from that field throughout his life.

“Engineering teaches you to think,” he said. “It teaches you how to determine what’s important and what’s not important, how to determine what makes sense and what doesn’t. That, to me, is engineering, and it can be broken down and applied in a lot of fields.” ■ AR/ER



### THINK BIG

To learn more about Norris and Wendy Mitchell and Virginia Tech’s College of Engineering, go to [vtx.vt.edu/magazine](http://vtx.vt.edu/magazine).

ALEX PARISH

COURTESY OF THE BLACKWOOD FAMILY



**FAMILY VALUES:** The Blackwood family. (left to right) Morgan Blackwood Patel, Willis Blackwood, Mary Nolen Blackwood, and Nolen Blackwood.

**VIRGINIA TECH’S PROGRAM IN REAL ESTATE**, an innovative degree that has grown from four students to more than 350 in seven years, has been named for the Blackwood family.

The naming recognizes \$10 million in giving to the real estate program by one of the university’s most generous and involved families, which includes alumni couple Willis Blackwood ’72 and Mary Nolen Blackwood ’73 and their children, Morgan Blackwood Patel ’02 and Nolen Blackwood ’10.

“We are deeply grateful to Willis, Mary, Morgan, and Nolen for supporting the university in so many ways over the years, and we’re proud to name the Blackwood Program in Real Estate in recognition of their extraordinary generosity and engagement,” said Virginia

## PROGRAM IN REAL ESTATE NAMED IN RECOGNITION OF THE BLACKWOOD FAMILY

Tech President Tim Sands. “The program, which has been rising rapidly in reputation and rankings, will continue advancing as a national leader, thanks to the support of this great Hokie family.”

The program that now bears the Blackwood family’s name recently ranked third among the nation’s top 25 real estate programs, according to Great Business Schools. College Factual ranked the program fourth among the most popular real estate schools.

The Blackwood family has a long and powerful history of engagement and philanthropy at Virginia Tech, spanning several colleges and programs, as well as two generations. Willis Blackwood said the family’s recent gift to the real estate program is in keeping with an emphasis on philanthropy that he and his wife have shared with their children, who are both now leaders alongside him at the Blackwood Development Company.

“Both our children are now with the company and bring new blood with fresh ideas,” he said. “Making this significant pledge represents our philosophy of helping others. We have addressed what we consider the reasonable future needs of our children and their children. Every family’s situation is different in terms of what you feel about how much to donate. In our case, we all agree it is important

to support organizations and individual efforts in which we believe. Our parents instilled the concept of giving back, as did Virginia Tech’s motto of *Ut Prosim*. Our children have fully embraced the idea.

The Blackwood family’s generosity will help generations of students launch fulfilling careers in real estate, said Kevin Boyle, who directs the program. Based in the Pamplin College of Business, the program is an interdisciplinary curriculum that draws courses for students from multiple Virginia Tech colleges.

“Willis has worked with us from the very start of the program,” Boyle said. “He has provided financial and personal support from when it was just a start-up idea. He participates in classes, chairs the industry advisory board, and supports student scholarships. He’s been as active as an alumnus could be in enhancing student successes and advancing recognition of the program. Quite simply, we would not be where we are today without his support.” ■ AR

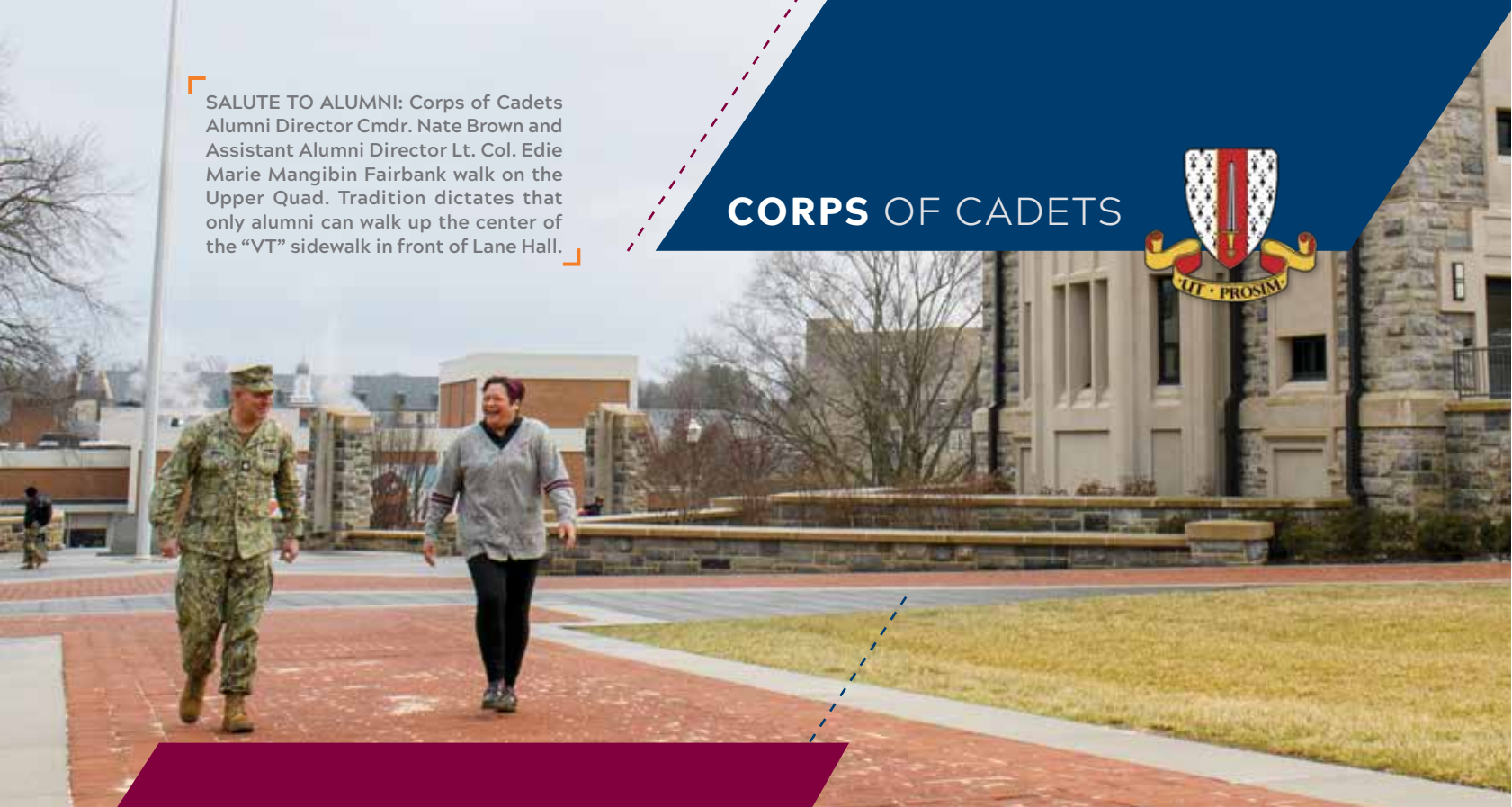


### REAL INSPIRATION

Learn more about the Blackwood family and Virginia Tech’s Program in Real Estate at [vtx.vt.edu/magazine](http://vtx.vt.edu/magazine).

**SALUTE TO ALUMNI:** Corps of Cadets Alumni Director Cmdr. Nate Brown and Assistant Alumni Director Lt. Col. Edie Marie Mangibin Fairbank walk on the Upper Quad. Tradition dictates that only alumni can walk up the center of the “VT” sidewalk in front of Lane Hall.

## CORPS OF CADETS



# BACK HOME ON UPPER QUAD

**FOR LT. COL. EDIE MANGIBIN FAIRBANK '95,** joining the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets staff felt a lot like coming home.

“The Upper Quad is where I learned so much about myself, personal and professional relationships, leadership, and followership,” said Fairbank, a Corps of Cadets graduate who retired from the U.S. Army in October 2020 after 24 years of service.

Fairbank is now the alumni director assistant, working alongside Cmdr. Nate Brown '98, also a corps graduate. Brown retired from the U.S. Navy this fall after 23 years and now serves as the corps' new alumni director.

“I always thought I would enjoy a leisurely retirement from the Army, playing golf and riding my Harley,” Fairbank said. “But when I attended Corps

Reunion 2021, I knew the Upper Quad was where my heart belonged.”

Nearly a quarter of the corps' staff are alumni, bringing diverse career experiences to the cadets they mentor.

“Having faculty and staff members from all different experiences, not just Virginia Tech, provides our students and cadets the best possible resources as they develop into the young adults who will venture out and make our nation a better place,” Brown said. “Having said that, the opportunity to have Corps of Cadets alumni in such plentiful numbers provides people whom cadets can instantly relate to and receive mentorship from.”

Brown and Fairbank are hard at work looking to strengthen the bond between corps alumni and Virginia Tech.

In addition to Brown and Fairbank, alumni on staff include:

- Katie Mallory '04, executive officer
- Ken Mallory '06, assistant director of the Citizen-Leader Track program
- Capt. Jamie McGrath '90, U.S. Navy (retired), director of the Maj. Gen. W. Thomas Rice Center for Leader Development
- Lt. Col. Travis Sheets '05, U.S. Air Force (retired), deputy commandant
- Col. Robert Shelton '95, U.S. Air Force (retired), deputy commandant

“Many consider their Hokie experience to be the years that they spent as a student,” Brown said. “Our firm belief is that those undergraduate years were only the cost of admission to a lifelong Hokie experience.” ■ SB



# WHY IS EVERYONE SO ANGRY?

IT IS LIKELY AN UNANSWERABLE QUESTION.



E. Scott Geller

**GAUGING WHETHER PEOPLE ARE** collectively angrier today than in the past may be impossible, but E. Scott Geller, professor of psychology, says shared circumstances play a role in the current prevalence of that feeling.

“We’ve been very frustrated,” said Geller, an Alumni Distinguished Professor and director of the Center for Applied Behavior Systems who is in his 52nd year at Virginia Tech. “When we get into routines, we can predict what is happening. It’s the perception of control. When you change the context in which we live, that can get frustrating, and frustration leads to aggression.”

Everyday routines have been altered by COVID-19, and Geller believes the need for face coverings also has had an impact.

“A face mask certainly decreases a sense of social or interpersonal connection, and social support is key to subjective well-being,” he said.

This combined frustration can lead to aggression and then to negative actions. Social media has offered a somewhat consequence-free way to negatively use that aggression, while also fueling more of it.

“In the good old days, if you had something negative to say, you had to say it to others to their face. And that prevented us from saying certain things,” Geller said. “We don’t have to be held accountable [on social media] for our negative comments, and that promotes more negative comments. People who join us and say, ‘Yeah, I felt the same thing,’ and all of the sudden, we feel a sense of solidarity with the negativity.”

Geller also believes circumstances are compounded by a lack of trust.

“How many phone calls do we get, ridiculous calls, about someone using your credit card or this or that? What does that do to our consciousness and our idea of interpersonal trust?” he said.

“All of this helps create a lack of empathy and ultimately, has led us to become very self-serving and independent.”

What can individuals do to curb angry feelings? Geller said a good place to start is to reestablish a sense of empowerment. He suggests asking three questions about potentially stressful tasks:

1. Do I believe I can do this? If not, what training do I need to be able to do this?
2. Do I believe this will help make a difference and reach some goal or vision?
3. Do I believe the outcome is worth the effort?

During any task, project, or goal, Geller suggests reflecting on each bit of progress.

“Don’t just celebrate the achievement, celebrate the steps, the small victories,” Geller said.

When dealing with others, as well as behaviors that might cause friction, he suggests exploring motivations and intentions and focusing on connectivity and community.

“The best you can ever be is not to be self-actualized, but self-transcendent in that you go beyond yourself for someone else,” Geller said. “If we can move from valuing independence to interdependence—if we develop the mindset that nobody can do it alone—we’re going to be nicer, kinder.” ■ TW



## A DOGGED COMMITMENT TO DOG SLEDDING

“WE WERE ADOPTING DOGS FROM THE SHELTER AND JUST HAVING A BUNCH OF FUN WITH THEM AND GOING ON TRIPS AND DOING A BUNCH OF WINTER EXPLORATION. THEN, SOMEONE WAS LIKE, ‘OH, YOU SHOULD TRY RACING WITH THEM AS A WAY TO SEE NEW PLACES AND EXPLORE NEW TRAILS.’”

Paige Drobny '97

IN 2004, PAIGE DROBNY '97 MOVED to Alaska for a job as a fisheries biologist, but her love of dogs and exploring the beautiful Alaskan landscape led to an unexpected passion project.

Though she and her husband, Cody Strathe, have several “real” jobs, they spend much of their time, energy, and investment participating in dog sledding events. The couple originally adopted a few dogs as companions for their explorations throughout Alaska. Now, they’re mushers on a national scale.

“We were adopting dogs from the shelter and just having a bunch of fun with them and going on trips and doing a bunch of winter exploration,” Drobny said. “Then, someone was like, ‘Oh, you should try racing with them as a way to see new places and explore new trails.’”

“So, I signed up for the Yukon Quest 300. I was told that was the hardest 300-mile race in the state, so I thought, ‘OK, I’ll do this one, and I’ll hate it, and we can go back to our normal life of traveling with dogs.’”

Drobny finished sixth. But something happened at the finish line.

“The dogs were having so much fun that I was addicted and hooked,” she said.

On March 5, Drobny and her team of barking canines took off on the Iditarod—the nation’s premier dog sled-

ding event. The Iditarod is a 1,000-mile gauntlet that forces mushers to survive a snow-packed, treacherous route and occasionally brave temperatures that dip to 40 below zero.

This year’s Iditarod marked the ninth of Drobny’s career. She has pocketed more than \$75,000 in prize money, with a career-best finish of seventh, but the prize money barely covers the costs of caring for the 49 dogs in their kennel.

Drobny, who graduated from Virginia Tech with a degree in biology, and Strathe supplement their income in different ways. She runs a fisheries consulting business, writing grants and proposals for research projects, and he builds skin-frame kayaks, wooden paddles, and dogsleds. They also give tours of the Alaskan wilderness, and this summer, they’re opening a lodge.

Their home sits in a remote area near tiny Cantwell, Alaska. They drive a dogsled 54 miles to town and then make an additional three-hour drive in a truck just to get groceries.

But they love being out in nature, and their land offers the perfect location to train their dogs.

“It’s definitely a passion project,” Drobny said. “It’s something that we love to do. It’s a lifestyle that we live and love.” ■ JR

## MORE THAN BASKETBALL

ON A RANDOM FEBRUARY AFTERNOON, shortly after a visit to the sports medicine area to secure treatment for midseason aches and pains, Elizabeth Kitley looked at her phone assessing her missed calls.

The superstar center on the Virginia Tech women’s basketball team smiled and shook her head. One number, with the corresponding person designated by a purple heart, showed up multiple times.

Her biggest fan was trying to reach her. “She calls me all the time,” Kitley said.

The person on the other end means the world to Kitley—her older half-sister, Raven. Though separated by nine years in age, the two share an undeniable bond.

They are each other’s best friend. They share a love for sports and an affinity for competition.

Yet, they differ in one respect. Elizabeth Kitley is one of the nation’s best basketball players. Raven Kitley has autism.

“She was diagnosed around middle school, but I don’t know if I ever really understood it honestly until eighth or ninth grade,” Elizabeth said. “We’ve never really talked about her as being autistic. She’s my sister. She’s Raven.”

Raven found a close friend when Virginia Tech coach Kenny Brooks started recruiting Elizabeth. Brooks and Raven bonded when Brooks visited the Kitleys’ home in Summerfield, North Carolina—so much so that Brooks gave her his phone number.

Brooks’ willingness to embrace Raven’s differences made an impression on the family.

“It just emphasized the family environment here,” Elizabeth said. “They actually cared about me on a deeper level than just basketball.”

Brooks and Virginia Tech showed that love for the Kitleys this past fall when the women’s basketball team designated its Dec. 12 nonconference game against Radford as an “Autism Awareness Game.” The team partnered with VT SAFE (Supporting Autism Friendly Environments) and the Virginia Tech Autism Clinic & Center for Autism Research.

Before tipoff, Brooks brought Raven to halfcourt for a special presentation.

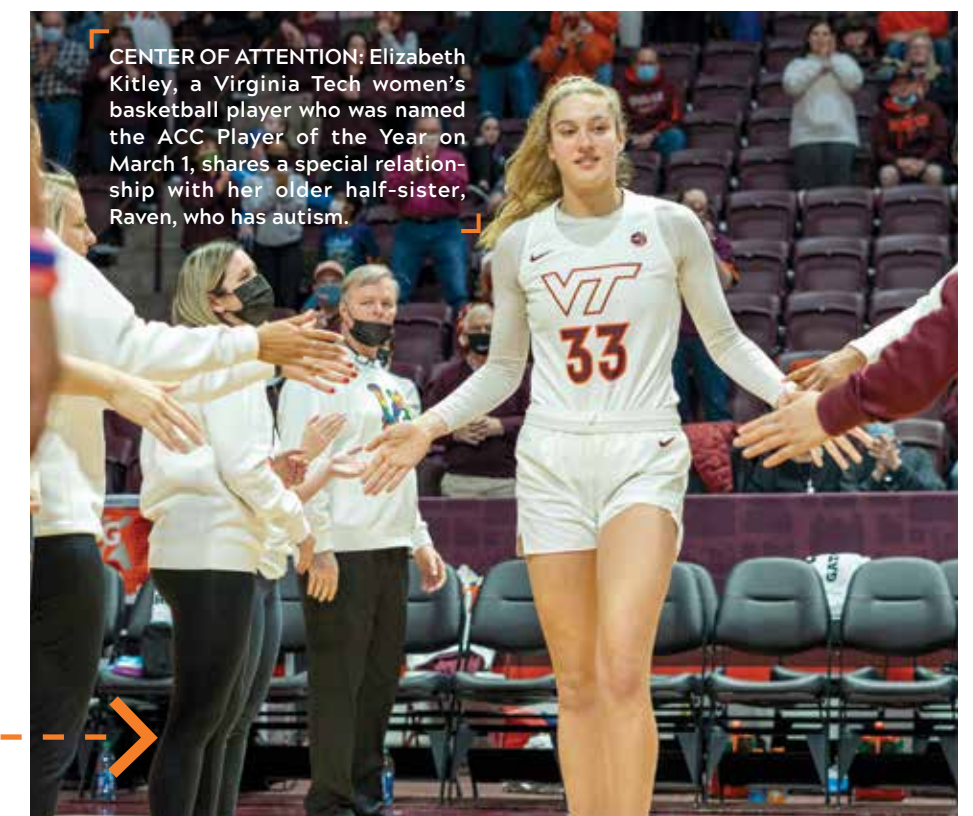
“You can imagine that she’s overshadowed a lot because baby sister gets a lot of attention, but this was her day,” Brooks told Evan Hughes, Virginia Tech’s radio play-by-play announcer, following the game.

“She’s taught me what it’s like to be around people that are living with autism.”

Elizabeth is majoring in human nutrition, foods, and exercise within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. She plans to go to medical school, but she hasn’t chosen a specific role. Perhaps she will work with people with autism.

Elizabeth has one more year before that decision needs to be made. Another year of studying, playing basketball, and hopefully winning. Another year with her sister, encouraging her every step of the way.

“When I’m thinking about challenging myself, she’s definitely in the back of my mind,” Elizabeth said. “She’s just so positive about life, and she wants to take advantage of everything she can, so it makes me want to do the same, even though the opportunities are different.” ■ JR



CENTER OF ATTENTION: Elizabeth Kitley, a Virginia Tech women’s basketball player who was named the ACC Player of the Year on March 1, shares a special relationship with her older half-sister, Raven, who has autism.

📧 **A HOWLING SUCCESS**  
To read more about Paige Drobny and to view her final results in the 2022 Iditarod, visit [vtx.vt.edu](http://vtx.vt.edu).



# CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

FROM ITS INCEPTION, THE BUILDING that houses the Creativity and Innovation District Living Learning Communities (CID LLC) was created to serve a special purpose.

“The driving philosophy behind the CID LLC was that students live just one life, and where they live and learn should reflect that integration,” said Frances Keene, assistant vice president and chief of staff for Student Affairs at Virginia Tech. “When I visit this building, I see our students’ academic and co-curricular lives integrating in a new and exciting way.”

A collaboration between Student Affairs, the Provost’s Office, academic units, and Virginia Tech Athletics, the 232,000-gross-square-foot residence hall opened in fall 2021. It is currently home to nearly 600 Hokies, including 176 Virginia Tech student-athletes and more than 400 students who are a part of one of the building’s three living-learning communities—Studio 72, Rhizome, and Innovate.

Residents are able to interact closely with Tim Baird, the live-in faculty principal and an associate professor of geography, as well as his family and their dog, Winnie.

The building also features a visiting scholar apartment that regularly hosts influential scholars, professionals, and

leaders who, as part of their stay, offer special engagement opportunities for building residents.

In addition, 33 combined School of Visual Arts or School of Performing Arts courses call the building home, taking advantage of the creative lounges, performance studios, auditorium, and outdoor learning hubs, which each include larger-than-life whiteboards. Classes frequently use the building’s makerspace lab, wood shop, and metal shop.

With so much going on, the spaces were designed to allow students, staff, and visitors to observe each other’s work, offering a high level of visibility and openness to generate curiosity and stimulate conversations.

“The whole building was built around transparency,” said Lauren Oliver, associate director of the LLCs. “The building naturally cultivates community because we felt that gathering, when our culture has felt so much loneliness recently, was really important.”

Founded on the key values of hope, creativity, friendship, artistry, learning, and service, the building’s ability to showcase student work has been appreciated by many residents, including Alexander Ismael.

“I see a lot more of the work coming out of the School of Visual Arts because [this year] it’s right in front of me rather than being tucked away somewhere,” said Ismael, a third-year architecture student and resident assistant in the building. “The fact that the building switches between being a residence hall and a space with actual classes is super unique and brings a diverse level of ages and interest levels and majors into the building.” ■ TW

MARY DESMOND, RM



GLASSWORKS: The Creativity and Innovation District Living Learning Communities feature 534 windows that offer visibility and openness to generate curiosity and stimulate conversations.

## LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES



INNOVATE — A community for students interested in becoming entrepreneurs, visionaries, and business leaders.



RHIZOME — A community that explores the roles of art, design, construction, planning, and analytical interventions in shaping environments and bringing about change.



STUDIO 72 — A community that encourages creativity and artistic development, with an emphasis on collaborative art-making outside of the classroom.

## MAKERSPACES

MAKERSPACE LAB — Ultimaker 3D printer, WASP 3D printer, benchtop CNC mill, two laser cutters, vinyl cutter, soldering irons

WOOD SHOP — Large format CNC, table saw, drill press, band saw, wood lathe, panel saw, miter saw, scroll saw, planer, jointer, spindle, and belt disk sanders

METAL SHOP — HAAS CNC Mini Mill, welders, plasma cutter, plasma water table, cold saw, grinder, drill press, metal bench lathe, vertical mill, 60-ton iron worker, vertical band saw, horizontal band saw, belt, disk sander, box brake and slip roller, roll bender and hand bender, sandblaster

## BY THE NUMBERS

- 52 miles of IT cables
- 534 windows totaling 27,740 square feet of glass
- 30,240,000 pounds of building concrete
- 704 shrubs
- 2,543 perennials/ground cover
- 72 trees





# LOGY

a subject of study

ol·o·gy  
äləjē

## THE MIRACULOUS, IMPERFECT MECHANICS OF PREGNANCY

IN THE SPRING OF 2011, RAFFAELLA DE Vita crossed the Virginia Tech campus every day. She was eight months pregnant. As the professor and associate department head of the Department of Biomedical Engineering and Mechanics navigated the distance between her office and her classroom, she felt a taut pressure, like something was pulling within the lower sides of her abdomen.

“I remember coming back from class and Googling it,” De Vita said. “What’s going on? Why do I feel this kind of stretch?”

Her searches gave her a general sense of what the pulling could’ve been.

“What happens is, the uterus is getting bigger, and there are ligaments attached to it that are holding it in place,” De Vita said. “But as the baby gets bigger and bigger, these ligaments get overstretched. At that point, I remember thinking, ‘I wonder what happens if these ligaments are overstretched to the point that they can get damaged.’”

De Vita would learn that the stretching of supportive tissue and other natural—and at times, staggering—mechanical changes to a pregnant woman’s reproductive system can result in injuries and disorders that affect millions of women in the U.S.

This knowledge led De Vita to widen her research focus, first to the ligaments that interested her and then to the pelvic organs. Now, as head of the Soft Tissue Research: Experiments, Theory, and Computations by Hokies (STRETCH) Lab, she’s among a small but growing number of researchers studying women’s reproductive biomechanics and their changes during pregnancy, delivery, and the postpartum period.

Nearly a decade has passed since De Vita began asking questions about women’s reproductive biomechanics, and with this growing focus on the mother’s experience and the toll on her body, De Vita believes they are better positioned to try to understand fully the inner mechanics. “I don’t think I’ll solve any problems yet,” she said. “But I think if I can start looking at the problems, and if I can invite other people to look at them ... it’s going to take time to find solutions, but at least we can start.” ■

*Suzanne Irby is the assistant director of communications for the College of Engineering.*



### OH BABY

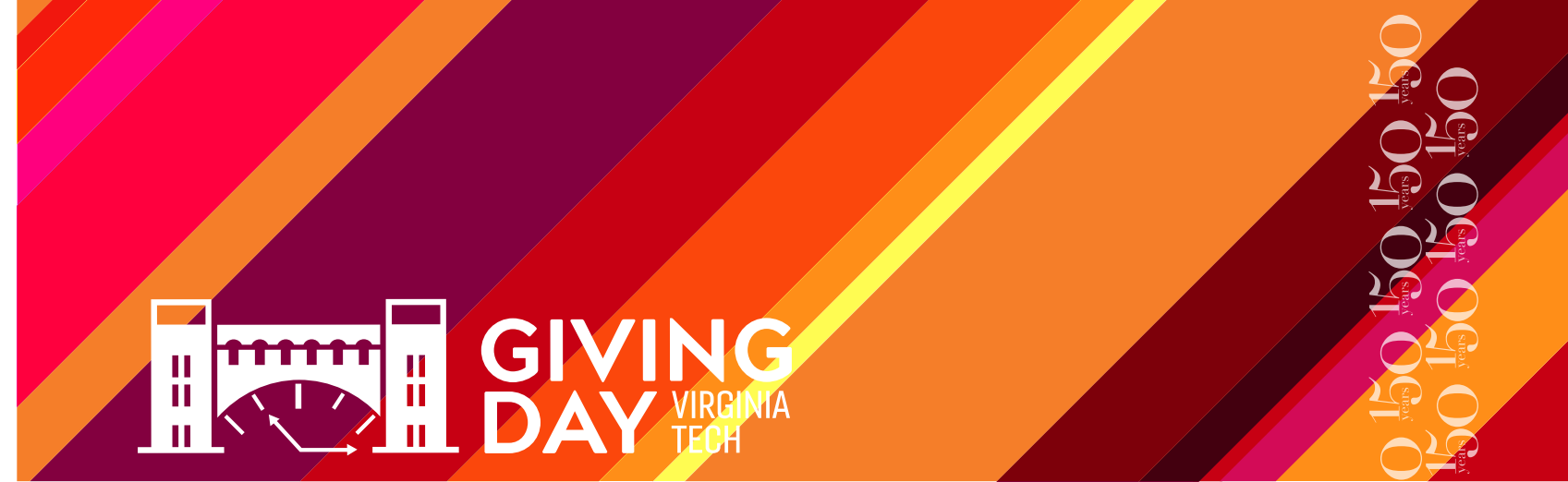
This story was excerpted from the fall 2021 edition of Virginia Tech Engineer. Read more and watch a video at [eng.vt.edu/magazine](http://eng.vt.edu/magazine).



Raffaella De Vita



STRETCH Lab members (left to right) Justin Dubik, Angel Collins, Kandace Donaldson, Aileen Suarez, and William Snyder.



## RECORD GIVING DAY

OVER THE COURSE OF 24 HOURS, Virginia Tech challenged its community, and, once again, that community responded in record fashion. The university’s fourth Giving Day resulted in 15,787 alumni, faculty, staff, students, parents, and friends coming together to celebrate Virginia Tech and give over \$8.4 million in support.

The number of donors and of dollars raised both set records. Giving Day 2021 saw nearly 12,400 donors contribute \$6.3 million combined. Giving Day 2022, which concluded at midnight Feb. 25, offered opportunities for Hokie Nation to give back to a host of departments, programs, student organizations, and teams of their choosing.

“Giving Day has become an important tradition that allows our far-reaching Virginia Tech community to join

in a show of support for the university’s comprehensive global mission,” Virginia Tech President Tim Sands said. “We are grateful for the generosity of all the supporters who are helping us advance education, research, and our commonwealth’s future.”

Virginia Tech received gifts from Hokies in all 50 states and in 29 countries outside the U.S. Much of the credit for this global generosity goes to Virginia Tech’s 1,088 Giving Day ambassadors, who promoted Giving Day to their networks of friends, family, and colleagues, using social media and other means. Together, the ambassadors made or brought in more than 6,600 gifts, totaling over \$808,500. Giving Day challenges augmented the impact of gifts by many in the Virginia Tech community, unlocking more than \$800,000 in bonus funding by meeting certain benchmarks.

The numbers of dollars raised and of Hokies participating have increased each Giving Day since the tradition began in 2018. Virginia Tech is in the middle of a years-long, \$1.5 billion fundraising campaign known as Boundless Impact, and the surge of generosity on Giving Day helped propel the campaign total to nearly \$1.1 billion as of the end of February.

“Yet again, the Virginia Tech community has come together for an unprecedented show of support,” Brittany Staggers, the university’s assistant director for digital philanthropy, who also co-chaired the Giving Day initiative, said shortly after the event concluded. “The generosity of Hokie Nation in backing current and future Hokies is overwhelming and a wonderful example of the spirit that permeates everyone associated with this university. We’re so grateful to everyone who contributed.” ■ JR

MORE THAN 15,000 HOKIES RAISE OVER  
**\$8.4 MILLION**



HOW TECH TICKS

# SHAKE IT UP

“ I THINK IT’S REALLY COOL HOW SOME PEOPLE, THEY ABSOLUTELY NEED TO COME GET A MILKSHAKE. SOMETHING THAT WE LOOK AT AS A FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITY PLAYS A BIGGER IMPACT TO SOME PEOPLE. **WHEN THEY GO TO A BASKETBALL GAME, IT’S THE EXPERIENCE.**”

G.W. Sebright  
student milkshake chair

**BASKETBALL AND FOOTBALL AT** Virginia Tech wouldn’t be the same without the popular Dairy Club delicacy—the milkshake.

“I have been buying them for years,” said Roger Weeks ’70, while sipping a chocolate milkshake at a men’s basketball game in January.

“This is all I’m eating tonight,” he said, chuckling.

The Dairy Club, a student organization of the Department of Dairy Science at Virginia Tech, has been selling milkshakes at football games since 2001 and at basketball games since 2002.

The club sells, on average, 3,200 shakes during football season and 6,000 combined for men’s and women’s basketball games.

Proceeds from the milkshake sales fund a variety of events throughout the year,

from study abroad opportunities for club members to the Little All-American Dairy Show and Hokie Dairy Day. For Hokie Dairy Day, the club invites elementary and middle school students to campus to learn about dairy farming and milk production.

Milkshake connoisseurs will find the Dairy Club milkshake booth inside Cassell Coliseum for basketball games and at Lane Stadium during football season. For \$6, fans may choose from chocolate or vanilla-flavored shakes. Strawberry shakes are available occasionally. At least four members of the Dairy Club work the milkshake booth for basketball games.

The students make the shakes using a mix from PET Dairy in Tennessee, a farmer-owned brand of Dairy Farmers of America, and flavored syrup.

“I think it’s really cool how some people, they absolutely need to come get a milk-

shake,” said G.W. Sebright, who is the club’s milkshake chair for basketball season. “Something that we look at as a fundraising opportunity plays a bigger impact to some people. When they go to a basketball game, it’s the experience.”

Hokie basketball games and milkshakes go hand-in-hand for John Shelor.

At a recent basketball game, he said he always seeks out the milkshake booth,

walking the full circle around the coliseum until he finds it.

“It’s kind of a tradition,” Shelor said. He prefers the vanilla shakes.

His friend, Becca Stephens, described her Dairy Club chocolate shake as creamy and not too sugary.

“Amazing,” she said as she sipped the shake. ■ *JKB/SW*



THOMAS MILLER

**SINCE WHEN?**  
Starting in 2001 at football games and 2002 at basketball games

**FROM WHERE?**  
PET Dairy in Tennessee, a farmer-owned brand of Dairy Farmers of America

**HOW MUCH?**  
\$6

**SOLD BY WHOM?**  
Dairy Club

**HOW MANY ARE SOLD?**  
On average, 3,200 shakes during football season and 6,000 combined for men’s and women’s basketball games

**FLAVORS?**  
Chocolate, vanilla, and occasionally strawberry

# YOU GO, GIRL!

Although little is officially noted about them, early records indicate that women have helped staff Virginia Tech since its founding in 1872. One early female faculty member, Ella Graham Agnew, known as the founder of home demonstration work in Virginia, became the nation's first female field agent in 1910 and served as an Extension agent for Virginia Tech from 1914-19.

Virginia Tech admitted the first female students in 1921, and by the 1932-33 academic year, the number of enrolled women topped 100.

Over the past 100 years, the numbers of female faculty, staff, and students have continued to grow. In 2022, women on campus number in the tens of thousands.

## FEMALE UNDERGRAD STUDENTS

**12,711** 47.5%

## FEMALE GRADUATE STUDENTS

**3,269** 43.5%

## LIVING FEMALE ALUMNAE

**111,361** 40.3%



## 2021 FEMALE FIRST-TIME COLLEGE ENROLLEES

**3,010** 44.3%

## 2022 FEMALE ATHLETES

**250+**

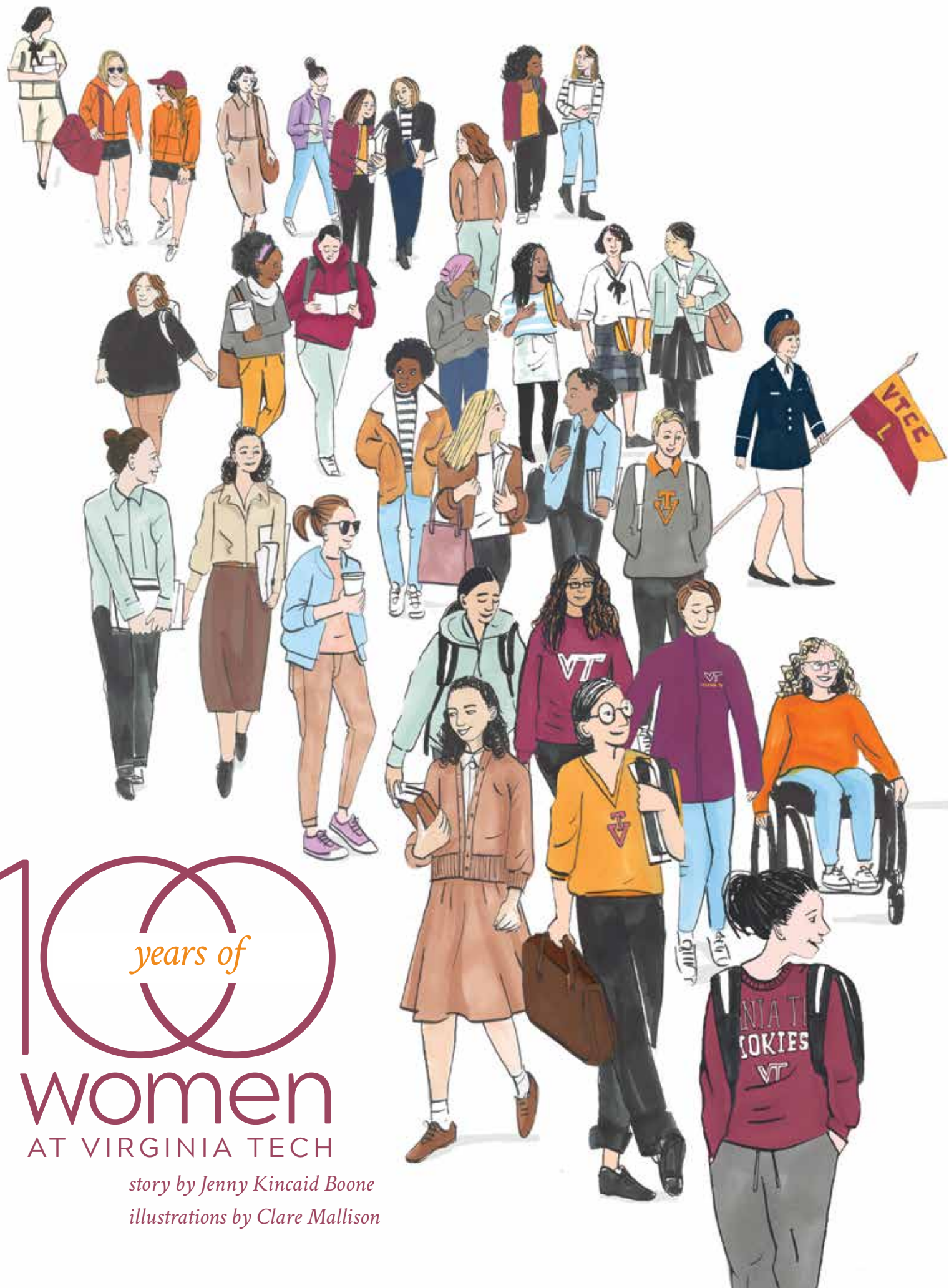


## FEMALE EMPLOYEES AT VIRGINIA TECH

STAFF	ADMIN & PROF. FACULTY	TEACHING FACULTY	RESEARCH FACULTY
<b>60.4%</b>	<b>54.9%</b>	<b>37.7%</b>	<b>37.3%</b>

WAGE	PART-TIME FACULTY	GRADUATE ASSISTANT
<b>56.1%</b>	<b>41.3%</b>	<b>44.1%</b>





# 100 years of women AT VIRGINIA TECH

story by Jenny Kincaid Boone  
illustrations by Clare Mallison

**IN 1921, THERE WERE FIVE. NOW, THERE ARE 12,711.**

In a span of 100 years, the number of undergraduate female students at Virginia Tech has grown remarkably.

Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, an all-male institution commonly called VPI, enrolled the first full-time female students a century ago. This set the stage for future throngs of women who would not only receive a Virginia Tech education, but shape the university and the world through their skills, talents, and sheer might.

Turn the page to meet several Hokies whose experiences as students and faculty marked significant milestones in women's progress at Virginia Tech.

Their voices span decades—each story a microcosm of what life was like for women at the university then and now—and offer personal accounts that reflect how individual experiences collectively lay a path for the generations who follow.





First female graduates (left to right) Mary Ella Carr Brumfield, Ruth Terrett Earle, Lucy Lee Lancaster, Lousie Jacobs, Carrie Taylor Sibold.

1925



Hillcrest Hall, the first women's residence hall, opens.

1940



Mildred Tate (far left, face forward) served as Virginia Tech's first dean of women from 1937 to 1947.

1947



Mary Virginia "Prim" Jones is among the first women to graduate with an engineering degree. She becomes the first female registered mechanical engineer in Virginia.

1962



Women are allowed to wear slacks on campus.

1968



Marva Felder is the first Black woman to be crowned Homecoming queen.

1980

Peggy S. Meszaros becomes the first female senior vice president and provost.



Lucy Hawk Banks is the first woman inducted into the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame.

1995

Barbara Pendergrass, dean of students, 1998-2003.

1998



The Women's Center celebrates its 25th anniversary.

2019

It began with VPI President Julian Burruss, who had previously served as the first president of Harrisonburg State Normal School, a teacher's college for women, now James Madison University. Burruss argued to the VPI Board of Visitors that allowing women to enroll was a good idea on many accounts. World War I had opened new lines of work for women, female scientists already were making strides in the world, and two other state institutions—the University of Virginia and William & Mary—had found women “satisfactory,” according to “Generations of Women Leaders at Virginia Tech,” a book written by Clara Cox to celebrate the 75th anniversary of women at the university.

To be sure, there were some female students at VPI before 1921. Women were allowed to sit in classes for no credit, and they could attend summer classes. A few female staff members worked at the university, including Lizzie Arabella Jenkins, a home demonstration agent who was also one of the first Black employees.

Even so, VPI was one of the last five or six land-grant institutions in the nation formally to admit women, who initially were called co-eds on the Blacksburg campus.

The change did not come without growing pains.

1921

Mary Moore Davis (center) was among the first female faculty members at Virginia Tech, establishing the home economics department.



1938

Carmen Venegas of Costa Rica was the first known Latina/Hispanic woman to graduate from Virginia Tech, earning a B.S. in electrical engineering in 1938.



1944

Enrollment of women tops 100, about 5.9 percent of the total student population.

VPI affiliates with Radford State Teachers College. Radford becomes Radford College, Women's Division of Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

1960

Laura Jean Harper, dean of the School of Home Economics, is the first female academic dean.



1966

(left to right) Chiquita Hudson, Marguerite Harper Scott '70, and Linda Adams Hoyle '68 are among the first Black women to enroll.



1973

The first group of women joins the Corps of Cadets.



1987

Internationally renowned poet Nikki Giovanni joins the faculty, later being named a University Distinguished Professor.



2014

Deborah Petrine '78 is appointed rector of the Board of Visitors, the first woman to serve in the position.



## TELLING HER-STORY

By Elise Puckett, communications and development coordinator for University Libraries

History can be hard to find. Kira Dietz and Anna LoMascolo are on a mission to share the history and untold stories of the women of Virginia Tech. After thumbing through thousands of historic campus photos, yellow-aged handwritten letters, class notes, and other rarities, the duo has organized an interactive virtual timeline.

The History of Women at Virginia Tech, [vtwomenshistory.lib.vt.edu](http://vtwomenshistory.lib.vt.edu), is a digital effort to share the history of the roles that women, including students, staff, faculty, and administrators, have played on campus even before women were first admitted as full-time students in 1921. The site includes scanned documents and images, oral histories, and university publications.

Dietz, University Libraries' assistant director of Special Collections and University Archives, and LoMascolo, co-director of programming for Virginia Tech's Women's Center, are leading the project. However, they said the impetus and energy behind the launch of the project was Patricia Hyer, associate provost emerita, who was inspired by the Virginia Tech LGBTQ+ Digital History and Timeline.

"Women are central to Virginia Tech's story and at the core of our success, growth, and impact as an institution of higher education," said LoMascolo. "Unfortunately, women have historically been excluded from the telling of that story."

The timeline also includes some full stories told by the women themselves, such as in the collection of Black Women at VT Oral Histories.

Women's history at Virginia Tech is continually evolving as the team has opportunities to explore more historical materials.

"There are many more places to look on campus that might reveal more of this story," said Dietz.



**Lucy Lee Lancaster** was among the first five women to enroll at Virginia Tech.

Lancaster, who grew up in Blacksburg, decided to major in biology because it was a general topic, and she initially planned to become a teacher, according to a Blacksburg oral history project record available through Special Collections and University Archives in the University Libraries.

In "Generations of Women Leaders at Virginia Tech," Lancaster recounts the feelings of male students toward their first female classmates.

"The students individually were not impolite to the women students, but as a whole they did not like the idea of co-education."

The trouble came from the upperclassmen, she surmised, because they "were used to all-male classes and thought that having women around spoiled the sacred traditions of Tech."

As a junior, Lancaster took a job in the Virginia Tech library as a student assistant and decided that she wanted to become a librarian.

After graduating in 1925, Lancaster enrolled in New York State Library School.

Soon after completing her training, Lancaster returned to Virginia Tech, working in the campus library until she retired in 1975.

When Lancaster died in 1989, she donated her house on Washington Street to the YMCA at Virginia Tech. The Lancaster House still serves as the offices for the organization.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Everyone was buzzing.

The high school students all talked about **Linda Edmonds, now Linda Turner**, valedictorian at Mary McLeod Bethune High School in Halifax County, Virginia.

"Linda's going to Virginia Tech," they said.

Most of her classmates were headed to predominantly Black colleges. For years before that, Turner thought she was, too. Her sights were set on Hampton University.

But after visiting Virginia Tech's campus the previous summer for a scholarship competition, Turner made a decision that would change Hokie history.

"I was so young, and it seemed like such an opportunity," she said. "I didn't consider myself to be Rosa Parks or anything. I just wanted to do it."

Turner received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation and participated in the federal work-study program to finance her education at Virginia Tech.

For the first few years, she described her experience on the Blacksburg campus as "being on a stage 24 hours a day."

"Walking across campus, there were a few people who would be nice to you, but they were rare, and the professors, the same way," she said. "I didn't hear a whole lot of negative talk, but the stares. I remember that there was always somebody watching you."

Students and professors rarely spoke to Turner in classes, but she did befriend several female students, both Black and white. Still, some of the white students who would greet her in the all-female residence hall, Hillcrest Hall, would ignore her if their parents visited for the weekend.

"It was what they had learned," Turner said. "It's all they knew."

When she was feeling down, Turner would go to the university bookstore and find Mrs. Perdue, a store employee who was always nice to her.

"I would go in there feeling down, but when I came out, I felt like the sun had come out," Turner said.

Those bookstore visits helped compensate for the support Turner missed so much from her Black teachers and community back in Halifax County.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

"I was so young, and it seemed like such an opportunity, I didn't consider myself to be Rosa Parks or anything. I just wanted to do it."

-Linda Turner



She recalled attending gatherings off campus as part of a Black social fellowship, Groove Phi Groove. Congregating with other Black male and female students, she felt comfortable, and she said "you could just be you."

Nationally, it was a time of change and uncertainty. The Vietnam War was unfolding, and Turner's brother, a student at Howard University, was drafted, as were the family members and friends of many of her classmates. Entertainment also was evolving. Black music was moving into the mainstream, and entertainers, such as Marvin Gaye, Tammi Terrell, and the Impressions, performed on campus.

Hair styles, including variations of Afros, gained popularity.

"I always say, 'When I entered Virginia Tech, I came in colored, and I left Black,'" Turner said of the way the culture shifted while she was an undergraduate student.

And although change did happen, it was gradual. The evidence of what Turner describes as discrimination was subtle.

Turner was the only female student in a chemistry lab. During class, someone knocked a bottle of solution off

a table. The contents spilled onto Turner's legs and ate away her panty hose.

The professor, who never spoke to her directly, advised the students to be more careful, never asking about her legs. A male student poured water onto her legs to help remove the chemical. Turner left the lab and ran into her chemistry lecture professor, who expressed concern and encouraged her to shower to eliminate any remaining solution.

She received a B for the labwork that day. The lab instructor deducted points, denying her an A because she left class before the end of the instruction period.

A highlight of Turner's time at Virginia Tech involved the close relationship she developed with Laura Jean Harper, the dean of

the School of Home Economics and namesake for Harper Hall. Turner held a work-study position under Harper, who ultimately became her mentor.

Turner credits Harper with encouraging her to return to Virginia Tech to earn her Ph.D., after Turner received a master's in general ecology at Michigan State University.

In 1973, Turner entered a business program in the Pamplin College of Business, where she earned an MBA and ultimately, a Ph.D in marketing and business administration.

She recalls being one of very few women in her classes. She received fewer stares during those years, but Turner said it seemed that people did not believe she belonged in the program.



"They were surprised when you did well," she said. "You don't forget those things. You don't forget how people make you feel."

Turner has taken these lessons with her. Throughout her career, she has held top marketing positions for corporations and numerous leadership roles in higher education, including serving as president of Urban College of Boston and interim president of Roxbury Community College in Massachusetts.

In higher education, her passion was working with students who were trying to determine their career direction and forging a way for themselves.

"One thing I took from Virginia Tech—I always spoke to everybody," she said.

Turner retired in 2019 as director of the Massachusetts Department of Industrial Accidents. She plans to move back to Halifax County, Virginia, this year.

She often speaks to Virginia Tech groups about her experiences as a Hokie.

"Virginia Tech taught me how to stand in the storm," she said.

A clipboard with four pages of questions. This was what **Emily Pillsbury Davis** carried with her in 1973 during her first meeting with Brig. Gen. Earl Acuff, then the commandant of the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets. Davis visited Virginia Tech's campus with her parents to inquire about the university's plans to welcome the women into the Corps of Cadets that fall.

Davis' father was a U.S. Army colonel, and her siblings all were in the military. Davis planned to follow in her family's footsteps.

By then, women were serving in the military but there were few, if any, in academic military corps. Davis, who lived in Springfield, Virginia, wanted to be one of them.

"I thought, 'I'd love to be a part of the beginnings of this, because it's so fresh and new,'" she said.

She arrived for the meeting with Acuff armed with questions about daily life, uniforms, and integration into the corps. Acuff admitted that some of Davis' questions hadn't yet been fully addressed.

Suddenly, Davis was swept up into a new chapter at Virginia Tech, and her questions were leading the way that decisions were made.

"We may not have had the easiest time those years, but the learning was incredible. If you could adapt and roll with the punches and become a unified group, that was really good. I feel like I gave the corps 150 percent. I did it because I loved it, I believed in it."

-Emily Davis



It was 1973, just after the Vietnam War. Interest in the corps had dwindled, and there were fewer than 300 cadets. Admitting women could help to increase its numbers.

That year, 18 freshmen and seven upperclassmen women entered the corps, forming L Squadron.

Davis recalls having to make copies of the cadet manual for the women, because initially there were only two copies available for them all to read and memorize.

There also was a limited plan for uniforms for women in the beginning. As the first winter approached, representatives of L Squadron found an overcoat at Leggett's, a former department store chain on South Main Street, and each woman ordered

her own. They took them to the tailor shop, where the tailor stitched each woman's rank and other information onto them.

The male cadets weren't so sure about the females, Davis said. She became a commander her junior year and when she attended commanders' meetings, the men were not very receptive.

"They thought they could drive us out, but the girls were very resilient," said Davis, who remembers going to local high schools in her hometown over school breaks to recruit members to the corps. "We just kept doing our thing and we followed every rule."

Eventually, the men began to accept the females, and some ended up dating one another.

Davis recalls spearheading the effort to stop female cadets from having to wear heels to class. She reached out to her sister, Nora, an officer in the U.S. Army, who recommended orthopedic or "granny" shoes as she called them. This helped eliminate the issue of sore feet for the women. They would bandage their feet after marching in heels across campus.

"We can't have our feet bandaged when we are trying to march," Davis said. "Heels are ridiculous."

Davis also pushed for women to have warmer uniforms. They had blue pants or a blue skirt, all polyester, and they often were freezing outside, while the male cadets had wool clothing. Davis received demerits for telling the women to wear their overcoats on a cold day when they had to wake to raise the flag at 6 a.m.



COURTESY PAT HYER

The challenges helped to bring the women together. Davis recalled that in 1975, she and other members of L Squadron, along with other members of the corps, even shared their experiences with representatives from some U.S. military academies who were bringing in their first classes of women following VTCC's lead.

"We may not have had the easiest time those years, but the learning was incredible," said Davis, who majored in human nutrition and foods. "If you could adapt and roll with the punches and become a unified group that was really good. I feel like I gave the corps 150 percent. I did it because I loved it and I believed in it."

Davis, who married a corps member and has two sons and two granddaughters, lives in Reno, Nevada, and is looking forward to returning to the New River Valley in the future.

It was like stepping back in time. That's how **Pat Hyer** felt when she and her husband, Mike, arrived at Virginia Tech in 1978.

Mike Hyer had accepted a faculty position in the College of Engineering.

After finishing graduate degrees at the University of Michigan, the couple had spent several years at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, where Pat Hyer helped to start a women's center and served as president of the faculty women's caucus.

The women's movement had little impact on Virginia Tech in the 1970s, according to Pat Hyer. The institutional culture remained strongly male-centered, with an all-male leadership at the time. Sandra Sullivan, vice president of student affairs, was the anomaly.

"The legacy of segregation by race and gender, along with its military history, still permeated the culture," Pat Hyer said. "The most vivid memory I had was feeling like an endangered species. There were so few women faculty members on campus, period."

Although she was a doctoral student, she joined a newly formed Women's Network that aimed to address specific concerns, such as increasing the number of female faculty, equal pay, and support for women's studies. Pat Hyer's dissertation topic, affirmative action for women faculty, also reflected this activism.

"Although the institution admitted women long ago, little had been done to make it a place that nurtured their presence and development."

-Pat Hyer



At Virginia Tech, in that era, some women faculty found themselves in hostile territory; they were denied tenure, or they left the university for more supportive environments.

After finishing her doctorate in 1983, Pat Hyer left Blacksburg for a policy and planning position at the University of Maryland for several years, and Mike Hyer eventually joined her.

They returned to Virginia Tech in 1987, when Mike Hyer was recruited to manage a large grant program.

Pat Hyer did not want to come back.

"I had no reason to believe that it was going to be a good place to pursue my own career," she said.

But 1987 was a time of great change in institutional leadership at Virginia Tech, and this opened up the possibility of cultural change. Pat Hyer went to work in the provost's office.

Soon, James McComas was named president of Virginia Tech, and he was an advocate of diversity. He hired Fred Carlisle



as provost, who also was deeply committed to race and gender equity. Change began, though it came in baby steps, Pat Hyer said.

“Although the institution admitted women long ago, little had been done to make it a place that nurtured their presence and development,” she said.

That changed over the next decade with institutional support for women’s studies, a women’s research institute, funded positions to work with victims of sexual assault, and the creation of the Women’s Center in 1994. Virginia Tech also made investments for and changes related to issues of race and eventually sexual orientation.

In 2002, Pat Hyer and several faculty women in the sciences and engineering prepared an application for a National Science Foundation Advance grant. Virginia Tech received the \$3.5 million grant in 2003, and with it created AdvanceVT, an initiative to advance the careers of female faculty in the fields of science and engineering through institutional change. The project initiated many policies to assist faculty in balancing the responsibilities of professional and personal life, such as extending the tenure clock for a new parent and offering job assistance for dual career hires.

“The STEM fields are still very high pressure, but at least we have a set of policies to work from,” Pat Hyer said.

Virginia Tech took the grant commitment for institutional change seriously and applied the new strategies to all of the colleges, not just science and engineering.

Pat Hyer retired from Virginia Tech in 2010 as associate provost for academic administration.

“All of the provosts I worked for allowed me to be at the table, helping to make change for the institution,” she said.

Pat Hyer’s strengths were running committees, writing policies, collaborating with colleagues, and ushering in change from within.

“There are many different ways to create change. Some of them are in your face and aggressive. That’s not what I was trying to do,” Pat Hyer said. “I was trying to do it from the inside, which means you are making choices every day about what things you let go and what things you speak out about. I needed to figure out ways to make a difference without falling out of the boat that I was rocking.”

“It didn’t happen overnight. It happened over decades, and it’s not done yet,” she said.

In her retirement, she helped to found and now has a leadership role in the Lifelong Learning Institute at Virginia Tech, a volunteer organization that provides intellectual, cultural, and social experiences for adults 50 and older.

**Anna LoMascolo** has a unique perspective on Virginia Tech history. Her family is part of the fabric of the university, literally.

Her great-grandfather, Angelo LoMascolo, was the university’s first tailor and from his small shop on campus, he outfitted the Corps of Cadets.

It was no surprise that his great-granddaughter would attend Virginia Tech one day. But the university where Anna LoMascolo earned both a bachelor’s degree and a doctorate and now is a full-time employee differs from the one that her great-grandfather knew.

In 1992, LoMascolo graduated from Virginia Tech with a bachelor’s degree in communication studies. She went on to earn a master’s degree in sociology at Humboldt State University in California. In 2000, she returned to Virginia Tech to pursue a Ph.D. in sociology, and in 2004, she landed an education and outreach role at the Women’s Center, which promotes a safe and equitable community for women at Virginia Tech.

LoMascolo’s interest in women’s studies was sparked by her experiences living in New York City after graduating from Virginia Tech in 1992. As a young woman, she was a target of street harassment and aggression, something that she wasn’t accustomed to growing up in Blacksburg.

“It sparked a fierce curiosity in me, about the way those kinds of hostilities manifest themselves and being able to clearly understand at the time that it’s because I’m a young woman that I am confronted with these things,” she said. “These persistent experiences permeated my young life in NYC, and it made me angry.”

Now LoMascolo is co-director of the Virginia Tech center. And throughout the years she has worked there, she said the center’s focus has remained steadfast. Many of the same issues and concerns surrounding women persist, she said, and they include everything from power and gender-based violence to implicit bias in the classroom and workplace.

The Women’s Center provides counseling and support services and offers programs to address and advocate for many of these issues. It also sponsors several student groups that reinforce its mission, including the peer education team, Sexual Assault and Violence Education by Students (SAVES), and the award-winning

“We want to be a women’s center for people of all identities at Virginia Tech.”

-Anna LoMascolo



AWARE team, which is a mentoring program that pairs Virginia Tech women with middle school girls.

Other actions by the university have helped to bolster these topics, such as the formation of the Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Work Group last fall. The goal of the group, established by President Tim Sands, is to advance Virginia Tech’s commitment to end sexual violence and enhance the university’s preventative programming.

One of the center’s primary missions is to ensure that all people feel welcome, even if a person doesn’t identify with a particular gender. It is even considering a name change that would be more inclusive, LoMascolo said.

“We want to be a women’s center for people of all identities at Virginia Tech,” she said. “We can’t just be a center where white women feel comfortable.”

Virginia Tech’s work in creating a supportive environment for everyone, in particular women, is ongoing.

“We are not perfect, but we are committed,” LoMascolo said. “We all want to leave Virginia Tech better for future generations.” ■



TIM TRUMBLE

ROAD LESS TRAVELED: After getting her master's and Ph.D. from Virginia Tech, Anisya Fritz has made an impact across multiple fields in her career, including academia, disaster relief, and now as the owner of a winery in California.

# AROUND THE HOKIE NATION

- 50 How Hokie
- 54 Young Alumni
- 59 Class Notes
- 62 Family
- 68 Retro

## WINDING ROAD LEADS TO CAREER IN WINE COUNTRY

**ANISYA FRITZ IS QUICK TO SAY THAT HER LIFE JOURNEY** from India to California wine country has been winding, unscripted, and definitely enhanced by having gone through Blacksburg.

Her career has spanned academia, disaster relief, and overseeing the customer experience at a winery in California's Sonoma County. Though each of those roles have been very different, Fritz credits her graduate education at Virginia Tech's Pamplin College of Business with preparing her to adapt to different situations and make an impact across multiple fields.

Fritz arrived in the United States from India at age 17, carrying just one small red suitcase, to begin her college studies at Loyola University Maryland. She earned her master's degree in 1989 and Ph.D. in 1990 from Pamplin's management program, with a focus on strategy, and served as a graduate assistant to former Professor and Department Head Robert Litschert.

"One thing Dr. Litschert told me and I've used in any endeavor I've ever done is that if you ask the right questions, the answers will become apparent, and if they don't, then keep going and ask better questions," Fritz said while sharing her insights with Pamplin students and faculty as part of the Wells Fargo Distinguished Speaker Series.

JUSTIN ROCHA



“  
THE VIRGINIA TECH EXPERIENCE  
DID CHANGE ME—AND IT  
OPENED UP THE WORLD TO ME.”

Anisya Fritz M.S. '89, Ph.D. '90

Today, Fritz oversees customer experiences at the Lynmar Estate winery she and her husband, Lynn Fritz, own in California's Sonoma County. It's a very different responsibility than those she had earlier in her career, which included being an associate professor at Florida International University, serving as CEO of a logistics company, and co-founding a nonprofit—the Fritz Institute—that identified and helped to apply best practices in logistics to humanitarian relief projects around the world.

Nevertheless, Fritz said she has continued to apply many strategic principles she learned in Pamplin throughout her varying professional roles. These include assessing business challenges, identifying data to help make better decisions, and building networks of people with similar concerns so that the collective intelligence of groups can be harnessed.

“Did I know logistics at first? No,” Fritz said during her lecture. “Did I know disaster relief? No, but I knew how to ask questions and develop a strategic framework. ... The field of humanitarian relief is pretty chaotic, but over the 10 years we worked in it, we were able to address a few issues in some pretty substantial ways by creating a community of practice, developing technology, and publishing our findings and doing research.”

Through her work with the institute, Fritz literally helped define the field of humanitarian supply chain management. Starting in the early 2000s, the Fritz Institute became a driving force for research and collaboration that has led to numerous improvements in how humanitarian relief is provided.

The institute launched conferences and played a key role developing a humanitarian logistics software platform, HELIOS, that is used by Oxfam and other leading relief groups. Today, the Fritz Institute partners with more than 150 groups, including humanitarian organizations such as the United Nations and Red Cross/Red Crescent Society, government agencies such as the World Bank and the U.S. Agency for International Development, multiple global corporations, over 25 universities, and more than a dozen foundations and charitable organizations.

Owning and operating a small winery also offers numerous complex challenges, Fritz said, adding that when they decided to focus on Lynmar Estate full time, “My husband and I didn't know much about wine, but we did know about business.”

They recognized that in a crowded industry such as wine, they would have to find ways to differentiate themselves in order to succeed. The solution they came up with was to engage customers directly, providing not just bottles of wine but unforgettable experiences for people who visit their vineyard. A guiding insight, Fritz said, was that “the wine business is not just a product business but a joy business.”

To build on that insight, she and her husband made dramatic changes to how their winery operates compared to how it worked before they acquired it.

“We looked to create a system so we can sell wine directly to people and not be so reliant on [distributors or] anyone else,” Fritz explained. “We built a CRM [customer relationship management] system, developed a hospitality system, and seek to know every customer.”

Unlike many wineries, Lynmar Estate offers lodging on the property. And it has three chefs on-site, allowing Fritz and her team to carefully pair wines with food for visitors and guests. Her vineyards primarily produce chardonnay and pinot noir, and her chief winemaker, Peter Soergel, is also a Hokie, having earned his degree in horticulture from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Sustainability is a guiding principle for Lynmar Estate, Fritz said. Located in a region that has been dramatically affected by climate change, her winery is not just carbon neutral, but carbon negative.

“Climate change is a question that's pressing in our industry that everyone is aware of,” she said. “It's a question our trade association is engaged in. There are a lot of little initiatives and big initiatives that are going on. ... We are fully engaged, doing our part through regenerative farming, carbon sequestration, and participation in a pilot to create certification for climate-friendly farming.”

Fritz said being involved in her community, both the local one and the broader community of small vineyards, is important to her.

Drawing from her both academic and winemaking backgrounds, she teaches a course in wine business entrepreneurship at Sonoma State University. She also helped to establish the Wine Entrepreneurship Network to bring people together to learn from each other, collaborate, and network.

Fritz said she recognized the power of setting up local networks while working in disaster relief, and has since applied that concept in her new field to good effect.

“The whole is greater than the sum of the parts,” she explained. “The concept is that once you get a community together then your access to resources is multiplied—not necessarily financial resources but skills and knowledge and experience, which are equally important to share.”

Fritz's generous willingness to share her knowledge was on display in prominent fashion at Pamplin this past fall as she delivered the first in-person Wells Fargo Speaker Series lecture since the pandemic emerged. The Wells Fargo Distinguished Speaker Series is Pamplin's most prestigious event of its type, reserved for speakers of extraordinary professional accomplishment. To a crowded room of students and faculty members, with many more people watching via Zoom, Fritz shared insights from a career that has spanned decades and taken her to dozens of countries to apply her knowledge to help people.

“We're proud to welcome back such an accomplished graduate alumna, whose research and outreach have had a truly global impact,” said Devi Gnyawali, the R.B. Pamplin Professor of Manage-

ment, who also heads Pamplin's Department of Management. “Events like this are extremely inspiring and enlightening for our college community. We're very grateful to Dr. Fritz for making a cross-country journey and sharing her remarkable story.”

Janice Litschert, the widow of Fritz's mentor at Virginia Tech, was also in the audience for Fritz's lecture.

“I just know that Bob thought very highly of Anisya and of her work as a graduate student,” Litschert said. “And I think the proof [of her ability] is in how successful she has been in her career. It was wonderful to see her again—and to hear her speak about her life after graduate school and the high regard she held for Bob.”

Fritz said Professor Litschert “represented the best of academia. He chose his career to give, and he never stopped doing that. He was so caring and focused on really bringing out the best in his students.”

She added that, as an alumna and a teacher herself, she was happy to connect with the current generation of Pamplin students, on a campus that had made such a mark on her.

“The Virginia Tech experience did change me—and it opened up the world to me,” she said. ■ AR



# HOKIE SPIRIT CONTEST

IN FALL 2021, VIRGINIA TECH CHALLENGED students, alumni, and fans to prove just how “Hokie” they are. Hokies were invited to enter a Hokie Spirit Contest featuring four categories: Best Hokie Pet, Best Hokie Home, Best Hokie Workspace, and Best Hokie Birthday Bash.

Staff in alumni relations selected a student and a friend/alum winner from each category. Each winner received a theme-based Hokie prize. For example, the winning pet entry received a Hokie food bowl. This page includes some of the winning entries. ■ JR



Kim Shanahan, pet



Brittany Turley, birthday bash



Karey Gray, workspace



Jennifer Sowers, home

## BOLD DECISIONS LEAD TO SUCCESS

TORRI HUSKE SET AN AMERICAN record in the 100-meter butterfly, qualified for the Summer Olympics in Tokyo, won a silver medal in a relay event at the Olympic Games, and now competes on the Stanford University women’s swimming and diving team.

She accumulated all of these accomplishments as a teenager, though not without guidance and support from others, including her mother, Ying, who understates her role in Torri’s development.

“It takes a village to raise an Olympian,” Ying Huske said. “I was just a cheerleader throughout Torri’s Olympic journey.”

Ying Huske may not sport the Olympic pedigree of her daughter, but her own achievements are impressive. The Virginia Tech alumna, who graduated with a master’s degree in civil engineering in 1995, overcame the hardships of life in the remote countryside of China, having grown up during the Cultural Revolution under leader Mao Zedong. At 30, Huske came to the U.S. to pursue a dream.

Today, she has raised an Olympian (with help from husband, Jim) and works in information technology for the U.S. Navy’s Naval Sea Systems Command, Carderock Division, Bethesda, Maryland.

“I feel like I was lucky,” Huske said. “I’ve been very lucky.”

Or at least, courageous and very persistent.

Huske’s story deserves to be told, especially as Virginia Tech celebrates 100 years of women at the university. She is unquestionably a university success story, like the many who came to Virginia Tech before her and blazed their own trails.

Huske grew up in Guangzhou, China, northwest of Hong Kong. Her parents were relocated to the remote countryside from 1968-72, where they performed physical labor and attended meetings to study Mao’s “Little Red Book.” Huske and her siblings grew up playing in the river and in the mountains with other kids who lived in a village-like setting. Naïve to the situation at the time, they accepted their spartan conditions as a way of life.

Despite the rugged circumstances, Huske thrived in school. She graduated from college with a degree in architecture, and later, got a master’s degree in architecture design. She worked as an architect for several years.

Huske wasn’t happy as an architect, so she decided to do something different. She came to the U.S. and enrolled at the Ohio State University to pursue a master’s degree in urban and regional planning.

Huske was not comfortable at Ohio State, with its large student population and urban environment—a setting unfamiliar to her—and tuition costs worried her. Academically, her classes focused on urban planning, and Huske wanted to explore engineering. After a semester in Ohio, she transferred to Virginia Tech.

“I was so happy when I got to Virginia Tech,” Huske said. “The feel of the campus was so different. It was smaller in the sense of community. I felt like the faculty were more engaging to students. It just felt like home when I went to Virginia Tech.”

Huske received an Eisenhower fellowship that not only covered tuition and fees, but also provided a stipend. The fellowship brought her to the Washington, D.C., area to work for the U.S. Department of Transportation, which created an opportunity to collect data for her thesis. After completing her degree, Huske found employment in D.C., where she has remained.

“I reflect about my decision every so often,” Huske said of coming to the U.S. “It was just the best decision that I’ve ever made. I’m just so lucky to have been able to come to the States and meet my husband and have my daughter.” ■ JR



COURTESY OF YING HUSKE

# HOW TO BECOME PART OF A TRADITION WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN GOLD



TALKING ABOUT HIS FATHER, HIS father's 1942 Virginia Tech class ring, his mother's miniature ring, and the opportunity to add to his family's legacy with Virginia Tech brought forth a mix of emotions from Travis "Rusty" Unterzuber '72.

As the Unterzuber family carefully weighed the options for what to do with the rings, one possibility stood out. That possibility led the siblings to donate to the Hokie Gold Legacy Program, which allows alumni or families of alumni to donate class rings to be melted to create Hokie gold that is included in casting of rings for future generations of Hokies.

"It was emotional, but there was no indecisiveness," Unterzuber said. "When we realized what we could do, we knew it was what we had to do—and wanted to do."

A ring-melting ceremony has taken place annually at the VT FIRE Kroehling Advanced Materials Foundry on campus since 2012. Jesse Fowler and Jim Flynn, classmates from the 1964 M Company of the Corps of Cadets, came up with the idea that bridges the past and future.

Laura Wedin, associate director for student and young alumni engagement, coordinates the program, collecting rings from alumni who want them melted and removing the stones. She also oversees the melting ceremony.

Unterzuber, who earned a degree in agricultural engineering, brought three rings to be melted—his father's class ring, his mother's miniature ring, and his wife's engagement ring. Unterzuber's own class ring was placed in a "time capsule" near Burruss Hall as part of the university's sesquicentennial celebration.

Unterzuber attended the melting ceremony along with members of the ring design committee and 2023 Class President Prince Wang. Alan Druschitz, an associate professor in materials science engineering, oversaw the melting process in which a ring-filled crucible was placed into a small furnace and heated to 1,800 degrees.

Eight donated rings produced a gold bar weighing 6.315 ounces. The bar was shipped to Balfour, the company that makes Virginia Tech's class rings, to cast the class ring for the upcoming year. A small amount was reserved to include in future years' ring melts.

Each gold class ring today consists of 0.33 percent of Hokie gold. So, each student symbolically is connected to alumni from the past.

"We have the ability to help people look ahead and have impact going forward and to make people think about things like, 'How do I support causes?' and 'How do I continue traditions?'" Unterzuber said. "The Hokie Gold Program does both. It continues tradition and looks forward to how we're going to make the next class ring." ■ JR

## HOKIE GOLD LEGACY PROGRAM

To learn more about the Hokie Gold Legacy Program or to donate a ring, visit [alumni.vt.edu/classrings/hokiegold](http://alumni.vt.edu/classrings/hokiegold), call 540-231-6285, or email [lwedin@vt.edu](mailto:lwedin@vt.edu).



A GOLDEN LEGACY: Travis "Rusty" Unterzuber takes a photo of the cooled molten gold nugget created from eight donated Virginia Tech class rings that were melted at the VT FIRE Kroehling Advanced Materials Foundry for the Hokie Gold Legacy Program.



# LISTEN TO THIS

## Spotify

To celebrate 100 years of women at Virginia Tech, we've compiled a special Spotify playlist. All My Hokie Ladies features 100 tracks by today's top artists and timeless classics, such as:

<p>RUN THE WORLD</p> <p><b>Beyonce</b></p>	<p>RESPECT</p> <p><b>Aretha Franklin</b></p>	<p>GIRL ON FIRE</p> <p><b>Alicia Keys</b></p>
<p>I AM WOMAN</p> <p><b>Helen Reddy</b></p>	<p>BORN THIS WAY</p> <p><b>Lady Gaga</b></p>	<p>THIS COULD CHANGE EVERYTHING</p> <p><b>Francesca Battistelli</b></p>
<p>THE MAN</p> <p><b>Taylor Swift</b></p>	<p>DANCING QUEEN</p> <p><b>Cher</b></p>	<p>TALKIN' BOUT A REVOLUTION</p> <p><b>Tracy Chapman</b></p>
<p>I'M EVERY WOMAN</p> <p><b>Whitney Houston</b></p>	<p>THIS ONE'S FOR THE GIRLS</p> <p><b>Martina McBride</b></p>	<p>BRAVE</p> <p><b>Sara Bareilles</b></p>

TUNE IN TO ALL MY HOKIE LADIES AND OTHER UNIVERSITY PLAYLISTS. FOLLOW VIRGINIA TECH ON SPOTIFY.



# WINNING THE DAY



**KATHRYN HART**  
BUILDING AN ONLINE COMMUNITY

With women comprising only 10 percent of people working in construction, it may seem difficult for young female professionals entering the construction field to find their voice.

That's why Kathryn Hart, a 2016 alumna from the Myers-Lawson School of Construction, a joint venture between the College of Architecture and Urban Studies and the College of Engineering, created Space to Build. Space to Build is an online community for women in construction to network, share, and grow

with each other. The organization brings its community together through various platforms including an active Instagram page of nearly 1,000 followers. Space to Build also features a podcast that has been downloaded and streamed in 22 different countries and features weekly interviews and casual discussions with women in the fields of architecture, engineering, and construction.

"Women on construction sites can easily feel isolated and miss having another woman to go to for advice or support. That is not to say we don't appreciate our male co-workers who have supported and mentored us, because we do. There are just situations where having another female's perspective makes more sense," said Hart.

Space to Build provides resources for young female professionals in construction. They learn from other professionals who share their experience with difficult or unexpected situations in the field. The community also celebrates each other's victories and accomplishments, like earning internships and developing female-positive curricula about construction for parents to share with their children.

It has not been easy growing and maintaining her community, as Hart juggles

Space to Build along with her full-time job as a project manager for a commercial glass company and serving as president of the NOVA chapter for National Association of Women in Construction. However, she finds the spark of motivation to keep moving forward through touching success stories from young women in the community who feel they have been given permission to pursue their interests in the construction industry. Hart has recognized the importance of peer support since she was a student.

During her sophomore year, Hart noticed that construction professionals who came to speak stressed the importance of and their desire to support the students. Hart felt drawn to the question of how to urge her fellow students to come together and actively support one another.

She was given the opportunity to create a sustainable project in one of her courses, and the idea for Building Women in Construction (BWIC) took root. BWIC provides resources for women interested in construction careers.

Anyone interested in getting involved with the BWIC student organization can visit its Facebook page, BWIC at Virginia Tech, or email bwic.vt@gmail.com.



**ANURADHA BHOWMIK**  
STARRETT POETRY PRIZE  
'MADE MY YEAR'

One afternoon in January, during a work-related call, Anuradha Bhowmik received an email from the director of the University of Pittsburgh Press with "Starrett Prize" in the subject line. A student advisor by day and writer by night, Bhowmik had submitted a collection of her poetry in hopes of winning the Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize.

The email informed Bhowmik, who earned a Master of Fine Arts from Virginia Tech in 2018, that she had been selected as the winner of the award—one that goes to a poet writing in English who hasn't had a full-length book of poetry published. Bhowmik's collection, entitled "Brown Girl Chromatography," examines race, class, gender, and sexuality in a post-9/11 world.

"I definitely wasn't expecting it, but it made my year," she said.

Bhowmik started writing in fourth grade. She described herself as "nerdy," and that, along with being from Bangladesh and living in a mostly white community in South Jersey, left her feeling isolated. The Sept. 11 attacks negatively impacted Bhowmik's world, too. People mistakenly viewed her and her family unfavorably because of their immigrant roots.

Bhowmik started writing in a language arts class as an escape.

"Writing poetry was a distraction for most of my life at home and at school, where I always felt isolated," she said. "It was nice that my teacher validated my writing because that validated me as a person. That was around the first time that I was told by an adult that my writing was a skill and a talent that I had."

Bhowmik focuses mostly on poetry today and mixes in creative nonfiction essays. She plans on continuing to write and has set goals for herself.

"I do think that I will—regardless of how much time it takes or how many other work and life responsibilities I'll have that aren't related to writing—be publishing multiple books of poetry and creative nonfiction as I get older," she said.

The award was not the first for Bhowmik, who earned her undergraduate degree in women's and gender studies from the University of North Carolina in 2015. Her poetry has won her awards and fellowships in the past, and her poetry and prose have appeared in numerous national publications.

The Starrett prize came with a \$5,000 grand prize, and the University of Pittsburgh Press plans to publish her collection as part of its Pitt Poetry Series later this fall.



**DOMINIC PEDROTTY**  
GRADUATION GOAL HELPED DOMINIC PEDROTTY HEAL AFTER DEVASTATING CAR CRASH

The scars are there, forever reminders of the worst day of his life.

Dominic Pedrotty carried these scars with him when he walked across the stage at Virginia Tech's commencement ceremony in mid-December to receive a degree in mechanical engineering.

These unwanted souvenirs came from a car crash on May 31, 2018. Pedrotty, who had just completed his junior year, had no history of health issues, but 10 minutes from Kingsport, Tennessee, on the way to Knoxville, he lost consciousness and veered in front of a tractor trailer. The driver slammed into Pedrotty's vehicle, instantly killing his sister, Madison.

Pedrotty had suffered an aneurysm—when a blood vessel ruptures and leaks blood into the brain. A 9.5-hour surgery fixed the

COURTESY OF AMANDA GHOBAZI

COURTESY OF ANURADHA BHOWMIK, LF

leak, and after coming out of an induced coma, Pedrotty felt conflicting emotions.

“That was pretty tough,” he said. “Finding out about my sister, there’s nothing I could have done about it. That part is both ... I wouldn’t say reassuring, but I don’t feel as bad about that. But on the other hand, I was driving, so I do feel bad about that.”

Pedrotty spent seven months rehabilitating. He worked with physical therapists to get stronger and retrain muscles for balance and coordination.

Pedrotty needed more rehab, but he wanted more of a purpose to his life than rehab. Graduating gave him that purpose.

“I was always interested in finishing what I had started,” he said.

Returning to coursework presented hurdles. But his advisor, Heather Whedbee, navigated new curriculum requirements and hatched a plan.

“I just thought, ‘We have to do something for this student,’” Whedbee said. “We can’t just be, ‘Oh, everyone needs to be treated fairly.’ It doesn’t apply in this situation.”

Pedrotty’s first engineering class upon his return was a design class. He and a team of classmates designed a threshing machine to help Rwandan farmers harvest grain.

They designed the machine in fall 2019. The following spring, they built and tested it, while navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. That project propelled Pedrotty forward. He took his final two classes this past fall.

Pedrotty isn’t quite ready for the workforce, but after more rehab, he hopes to pursue a career working with agricultural machinery.

“It’s certainly nice to have options,” he said. “I don’t know yet what all those are going to be. In theory, I’m going to be getting better.”

Life nearly ended for Dominic Pedrotty three years ago. Now, it seems as if his life is just beginning.

### ADAM HENDRIX CAREER CHANGE TURNS UP ACES



In the summer of 2017, Adam Hendrix found himself facing a high-stakes decision regarding a possible career change.

He worked a well-paying, albeit mundane, position for a government contractor in Northern Virginia. The job offered steady income and nice benefits, but the drudgery of working 8 to 5 and dealing with traffic gridlock every day dulled Hendrix’s enthusiasm.

Hendrix bet on himself and joined the world of professional poker. A 2015 Virginia Tech graduate with a degree in economics and a minor in statistics from the

university’s College of Science, he finished 2021 ranked No. 10 in the Global Poker Index rankings and No. 6 among American players.

Hendrix first picked up the game as a child when he and relatives played for small change at his grandmother’s home in Homer, Alaska—Hendrix’s birthplace. But he somewhat lost touch with it while bouncing around the world. His father worked in the oil and gas industry, and his job took the family to places such as Aberdeen, Scotland, and Cairo, Egypt.

As a student at Tech, Hendrix came across some friends playing poker in a community room at now-demolished Thomas Hall, where he lived. He tried his luck and ultimately won big that night. That rekindled his interest, and he later joined a poker club. In 2015, he graduated and found a job, but poker was never far from his thoughts.

“I’d play maybe six hours every night as a side income, and I’d be accruing money to hopefully one day become professional,” Hendrix said. “It’s a higher risk market than a consistent income because you have to put your own money up to do this job.”

Hendrix quit his job in July 2017 and joined the world of professional poker. He headed to the World Series of Poker in Las Vegas, and at his first tournament, he joined a tournament playing Pot Limit Omaha 8 or Better. Out of 850 players, he finished second for \$137,992.

Today, Hendrix plays all over the country—everywhere from Las Vegas, where he and another player rent a home on “The Strip,” to California and North Carolina. His schedule varies, but he has played seven days a week in tournaments that last 10- to 12-hour days. ■ JR

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANTONIO ABREGO OF POKERGO



**STAY CONNECTED**

Make sure the university has your up-to-date mailing address, phone number, and email address. You can easily check your information online and make updates.

You can also email your updates to [alumnidata@vt.edu](mailto:alumnidata@vt.edu). Make sure you include your full name and class year in the email.

Visit [alumni.vt.edu/contact](https://alumni.vt.edu/contact).

**WELCOME TO THE CITY**

**WELCOME TO THE CITY, HOKIE!**

No matter where you land after graduating, you always can find a group of local Hokies.

Virginia Tech has active alumni chapters all over the world, and you’re invited to meet Hokies in your new city.

Join us in September in areas across the country for our Welcome to the City events. They’re a chance to connect with area Hokies.

Visit [alumni.vt.edu/welcome](https://alumni.vt.edu/welcome) to find an event in your area.

# MAKING HISTORY

**MARQUERITE HARPER SCOTT WAS** one of the first Black women to enroll at Virginia Tech.

Today, her place in university history is well established and well known. Her contributions to the Virginia Tech community and beyond are immeasurable.

But in the fall of 1966, she was miserable. “I would call home and say, ‘Please come and get me,’” Harper Scott recalled. “My father and mother told me not to call any more—no more long distance calls—and that they would not make this trip until June. I was stuck.”

When Harper Scott attended a Hokie football game for the first time, she was



horrified as the Highty-Tighties and the cheerleaders marched out carrying the largest Confederate flag she’d ever seen. The game was televised. Her mother saw and called, telling Harper Scott that she could come home to Virginia Beach.

But she didn’t.

“The more people who didn’t want me there, the more I wanted to be there,” Harper Scott said.

Harper Scott joined the student senate and pushed for change. The students’ efforts resulted in the elimination of not only the Confederate flag display, but also the playing of “Dixie” at football games.

Harper Scott graduated in 1970 from what is now the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences and became a teacher. Now retired, she taught and inspired generations of students for almost 40 years.

Last fall, Harper Scott returned to campus for her 50th reunion and induction into the Cornerstone Alumni. She currently serves on the Cornerstone Advisory Board.

Cornerstone Alumni are Virginia Tech’s most passionate and respected alumni who have served as the foundation of the university for more than 50 years.

“Having to go through what I did made me a very resilient person. It helped me focus on what I wanted to do in life, which was to teach others,” she said. “In my own way, I fought for social justice reform.”

Today, Harper Scott is among Virginia Tech’s more than 111,000 living female alumnae, and her story stands out as the embodiment of a key milestone as Virginia Tech marks its sesquicentennial.

After graduating, Harper Scott did not return to Virginia Tech often.

It wasn’t until a trip to the Blacksburg campus 26 years ago to mark the 75th anniversary of women at the university that she realized the significance of her place in history.

“That’s when I first realized that I had made some history—and that’s honestly the truth,” she said. “I knew we were the first girls, but it didn’t mean anything. That put my life into perspective. Maybe I did make a difference and change some minds and hearts of people. I hope I still do.”

Harper Scott’s story has been chronicled for Virginia Tech history, has inspired countless Hokies, and stands as a symbol for change and progress. ■ AM



**CORNERSTONE ALUMNI** are sharing their memories from their time as students at Virginia Tech. Hear from Marguerite Harper Scott in her own words, read archived stories on her journey, and learn about Cornerstone Alumni. Visit [alumni.vt.edu/marguerite](http://alumni.vt.edu/marguerite).

To learn more about Cornerstone Alumni and register for this year’s reunion, visit [alumni.vt.edu/cornerstone](http://alumni.vt.edu/cornerstone).

# CLASS NOTES

Alumni, we want to hear what you’ve been doing. Mail career, wedding, birth, and death news to Class Notes, Virginia Tech Alumni Association, Holtzman Alumni Center, 901 Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg, VA 24061; email the information to [classnotes@vt.edu](mailto:classnotes@vt.edu); or submit the news online at [vtmag.vt.edu/submit-classnote.php](http://vtmag.vt.edu/submit-classnote.php), where photos may also be uploaded for consideration. For assistance, call 540-231-6285.

’64

**CAREER Howard M. Pardue**, Henderson, Nev., was recently appointed to the Society of Human Resources Management HR Executive Council.

’65

**CAREER Irving M. Blank**, Richmond, Va., was recognized with a Humanitarian Award from the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities on Oct. 25, 2021.

’68

**CAREER Victor E. Sower**, Huntsville, Texas, published a third edition of his co-authored book, “RFID for the Supply Chain and Operations Professional.”

’69

**CAREER William R. Kelly**, Richmond, Va., retired from Dominion Energy after 33 years, and the City of Yonkers after nine more years, and then from the Town of Greenwich after another 10 years.

’70

**CAREER Thomas L. Muller**, Newark, Del., celebrated his 50-year service anniversary with Veolia North America on Sept. 27, 2021.

’71

**CAREER Randy H. Thurman**, Malvern, Pa., was named to the board of directors of the Villanova University Scarpa Center for Entrepreneurialism

and Law. He was also named to the Distinguished Flying Cross Society. He is chairman of the board, Outlook Therapeutics Inc.

’73

**CAREER Peggy Y. O’Neal**, Richmond, Victoria, Australia, has been appointed as RMIT University’s new chancellor.

’77

**CAREER Susan Jackson Getty**, Manchester, Md., was appointed to the Maryland State School Board for a four-year term.

**Fredrick S. Najjar**, San Francisco, Calif., is the 2020-22 International Chair of the board of directors of the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy.

**Frances M. Park**, Springfield, Va., announced plans for her forthcoming memoir, “That Lonely Spell: Stories of Family, Friends & Love.”

’78

**CAREER Saifur Rahman**, Arlington, Va., who is the Virginia Tech Joseph R. Loring Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering and founding director of the Advanced Research Institute, was elected 2022 president of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers.

**Stephanie R. Vaughan**, Winchester, Va., has received a doctorate in business administration.

**Paul A. Willard II**, Providence Forge, Va., was selected as the national recipient of the 2021 Brewer Aerospace Award for Lifetime Achievement by the National Headquarters Civil Air Patrol.



Mark and Mary Parker Davis

## RECRUITING THE NEXT GENERATION

In 2020, Mary Parker Davis ’81 and husband Mark, a former chemical engineering professor at Virginia Tech, established the Mary P. and Mark E. Davis Scholarship, which provides financial support for up to three years for qualified students. In December 2021, three students became the inaugural recipients of that scholarship.

To qualify, students must apply to the College of Engineering’s scholarship program, demonstrate academic excellence, and participate in an organization that supports women in STEM.

Davis received her chemical engineering degree during a time when women were underrepresented in the profession. Today, only approximately 30 percent of STEM jobs worldwide are held by women.

“I think more women need to know they can go into engineering,” she said. “I think women in any field bring in a different perspective.”



'79

CAREER **John Cardina**, Philadelphia, Pa., authored, "Lives of Weeds: Opportunism, Resistance, Folly."

'80

CAREER **Ervin V. Griffin Sr.**, Roanoke Rapids, N.C., who is president emeritus of Halifax Community College, was included in the Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research, Trailblazer Profile.

'82

CAREER **Michael J. Weaver**, Blacksburg, Va., professor emeritus of the Entomology Department at Virginia Tech, has been awarded the Distinguished Achievement Award in Extension from the Entomological Society of America.

'83

CAREER **William H. Mills**, Burke, Va., retired as senior executive in the Department of Defense after over 36 years of service.

'85

CAREER **John A. Iezzi**, Manakin-Sabot, Va., was recently honored in the 2021 Forbes Top 250 inaugural list of America's Top Financial Security Professionals.

**Eleanor C. Jones**, Falls Church, Va., received the 2021 Derringer Award from the Short Mystery Fiction Society for her mystery story, "The Great Bedbug Incident and the Invitation of Doom."

'86

CAREER **Norman E. Adkins**, Sandy Springs, Ga., has been promoted to president of wire and cable and chief operating officer at Southwire Company.

**Bettina K. Ring**, Charlottesville, Va., is chief sustainability and diversity officer for the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. She has served as the secretary of agriculture and forestry for the Commonwealth of Virginia since 2018.

'87

CAREER **Byron E. Bassett Jr.**, Cayce, S.C., was named president and CEO of Yupo Corp. America.

**Susan Compton Pilato**, Norfolk, Va., who is the founder and CEO of Mantra Inspired Furniture, was awarded Gold for Best of NeoCon 2021 in the benching category and received the Interior Design Magazine HiP Award for Greater Good in the manufacturing category.

'88

CAREER **Noel Nunnally Schulz**, Pullman, Wash., has been appointed co-director of the Washington State University and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory Advanced Grid Institute. She is a member of Washington State Academy of Sciences.

'89

CAREER **Jill Hahn Mills**, Alexandria, Va., was promoted to chief pilot -Washington, for United Airlines, and retains her position as president of the company's bridge business resource group.

'91

CAREER **Sherry L. Bryan**, Memphis, Tenn., was named professor emeritus of architecture + design in the Department of Architecture at the University of Memphis.

**Joe Jaso Jr.**, Alexandria, Va., joined Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck as a policy director.

'92

CAREER **Sharon K. "Shay" Dalton**, Greensboro, N.C., is the director of learning and leadership development for the Fresh Market and was awarded the Progressive Grocer Top Women In Grocery Rising Star.

'93

CAREER **Joseph C. Ferdinandsen**, Sumerduck, Va., was promoted to district wildlife biologist.

**Michael D. Miller**, Norfolk, Va., retired from the U.S. Air Force after 28 years of service.

**Edwin A. Thomas II**, Falls Church, Va., is vice president, government affairs for The Fertilizer Institute.



# SAVE THE DATES

## JOIN US! IN PERSON—AND ONLINE

We're hosting alumni events online, on campus, and in your community.

Make plans to join us!

There's something for everyone.

Connect with other Hokies to advance your career, learn something new, enjoy happy hour, and more.

Visit [alumni.vt.edu/events](http://alumni.vt.edu/events) or use the QR code printed here for a complete listing of upcoming events.

## SEE YOU SOON, HOKIES!



'94

CAREER **Michael A. Szymanski**, Elizabethtown, Pa., was promoted to global product leader for GSK Vaccines.

'96

CAREER **Olivier A. Girod**, Arlington, Va., was named director of support operations at the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, where he has been a senior officer 2015.

'99

CAREER **Kevin Baird**, Middletown, Del., has been named to Top Lawyers by Delaware Today magazine for two consecutive years.

**Sundar Sankaran**, Saratoga, Calif., published a book, "Wi-Fi 6: Protocol and Network."

'03

CAREER **Emily J. Hobbs Gibson**, Blacksburg, Va., has been named director of local government and community relations in the New River Valley for Virginia Tech.

'05

CAREER **Sarah B. Meador-Shannon**, Norfolk, Va., was promoted to lead doctor of veterinary medicine for three hospital locations in the Hampton Roads region, managing 20 doctors and a team of 80.

'07

CAREER **Christian E. Piccolo**, York, Pa., was promoted to counsel at Faegre Drinker.

**Kelley D. White**, Richmond, Va., was named a 2021 Emerging Professional by the Virginia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

BIRTH **Jonathan Neil Spinetto and Ashley Rood Spinetto**, Reston, Va., a son, 9/01/21.

'08

CAREER **Autumn M. Sylvester**, Blairstown, N.J., was appointed director of planning and economic development for the County of Sussex, N.J.

BIRTH **Bonnie E. Hamilton and Quentin Clay Penn-Hollar** '09, Henrico, Va., twins, 4/12/21.

'09

BIRTH **Daniel T. Laird and Brynn Caitlyn Laird**, Lavale, Md., a son, 10/7/21.

'12

CAREER **Mark W. Hildreth**, New York, N.Y., was named as a top young professional on the 20 Under 35 architects, engineers, and construction professionals by Commercial Observer.

'13

CAREER **Robert C. Hale**, Dallas, Texas, was named associate at Curtain-wall Design and Consulting.

**Laura E. Vinci**, New York, N.Y., was promoted to vice president, media relations specialist, New York health for FINN Partners.

BIRTH **Melissa D. Moreno Daniel**, Bossier City, La., a daughter, 7/2021.

**Robert C. Hale and Lauren D. Boitnott** '15, Dallas, Texas, a son, 12/6/21.

'14

CAREER **Catherine A. Ray**, Syracuse, N.Y., has joined Bousquet Holstein as an associate attorney in the firm's Trust and Estates and Elder Care Practice Group.

WEDDING **Laura L. Fitch and Neil Kennelly**, Virginia Beach, Va., 11/13/21.

BIRTH **Nathanael R. Vandygriff and Jessica Neal Watkins**, Yorktown, Va., a daughter, 9/22/21.

'15

CAREER **Sabithulla Khan**, Glendora, Calif., has started a socially conscious business, tlalipani.

'16

CAREER **Alex T. Apollonio**, Manakin-Sabot, Va., who graduated from the American University Washington College of Law in 2020, has been admitted to the District of Columbia Bar.

WEDDING **Austin N. Dunkum**, Richmond, Va., and Brandon Traylor, 7/17/21.

**Jessica M. Blumberg Osterloh and Jeffrey Parker Osterloh**, Helena, Mont., 8/14/21.

'17

WEDDING **John M. Payne and Holly Mercer Waide**, Virginia Beach, Va., 8/14/21.

**Michelle C. Arroyo Mullen and Michael Patrick Mullen** '18, New York, N.Y., 10/9/21.

'18

CAREER **Anuradha Bhowmik**, Northfield, N.J., is the 2021 winner of the Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize for her collection "Brown Girl Chromatography," selected by new Starrett Poetry Prize judge and award-winning poet Aaron Smith.

'19

CAREER **Lamont D. Livingston**, Goodlettsville, Tenn., has started a luxury candle company, A Moment Candles, and was featured in Tennessee Magazine's 2021 Holiday Gift Guide.



## 30 UNDER 30

Sophie DeWaal was named to Forbes' 30 Under 30 List 2022, an annual list produced by the global media company that focuses on business, investing, technology, entrepreneurship, leadership, and lifestyle. The 30 Under 30 List spotlights the brightest entrepreneurs, leaders, and stars under the age of 30.

Forbes selected DeWaal '13, who graduated with degrees in finance and accounting, for the finance category. She currently works as an investment banking vice president at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, focusing on the consumer and retail space.

DeWaal has advised on more than \$18 billion worth of transactions since 2014, including public-to-public company acquisitions, sales of founder-owned companies, initial public offerings, and broader debt/equity financings.

# FAMILY

**1** “In 2021, we logged our Hokie Hike at Blackwater Falls State Park in Davis, West Virginia, along with not one, but two sons, Carter and Wyatt.” —Dan Laird '09, Lavale, Maryland, who along with Brynn Ishler Laird '09, welcomed a son, Carter, 10/7/21.



**2** “Oliver is ready to cheer on the Hokies!” —Tyler Dotson, MACIS '17, Pulaski, Virginia, who welcomed a son, Oliver Ash, 1/19/21.



**3** “With twins, there’s always two times the fun and double the Hokie Spirit.” —Bonnie Hamilton '08, and Quentin Penn-Hollar '09, Richmond, Virginia, who welcomed twins, Elizabeth and Rhys, 4/12/21.

**4** “Our wedding celebration included friends, family, and lots of Hokies.” —Austin Dunkham Traylor '16, Richmond, Virginia, who married Brandon Traylor, 7/17/21.



**5** “Our Hokie wedding took place in the Big Apple. We got married in New York, where we both reside, surrounded by our Hokie friends.” —Michelle Clare Arroyo Mullen '17, New York, New York, who married Michael Mullen '18, 10/9/21.

**6** “Ours is a true Hokie love story. We met at Virginia Tech as sophomores in 2015 and have been together ever since!” —John Michael Payne '17, Virginia Beach, Virginia, who married Holly Waide '17, 8/14/21.

**7** “We wanted to share a Hokie Welcome with our Virginia Tech family.” —Ashley Rood Spinetto '07, Reston, Virginia, who along with Jonathan N. Spinetto '07 welcomed a son, Ryker, 9/1/21.



# IN MEMORIAM

Listing includes notices shared with the university from May 1, 2021, through Sept. 15, 2021.

## '43

**Benjamin P. Rouse Jr.**, Trinity On Laurens, S.C., 7/13/2021.

## '44

**William A. Shelton**, Boydton, Va., 8/28/2021.

## '46

**Ezra H. Williams**, Kingsport, Tenn., 8/9/2021.

## '47

**Willis S. "Pete" White Jr.**, Columbus, Ohio, 7/4/2021.

## '48

**Christian T. Beechwood III**, Huntingdon Valley, Pa., 5/8/2021.

**James M. Etheredge Jr.**, Chesapeake, Va., 7/19/2021.

**V. R. Hancock**, Emory, Va., 6/23/2021.

**Frank B. Magill**, Peterborough, N.H., 5/7/2021.

## '49

**Claiborne M. Ball**, Silver Spring, Md., 7/5/2021.

**Betty B. Fuqua**, Bluefield, W.Va., 7/3/2021.

**Alfred W. Hauser**, West Point, Va., 5/3/2021.

**Victor L. Vaughan Jr.**, Newport News, Va., 7/15/2021.

**B. Stuart Vincent**, Bridgewater, Va., 5/27/2021.

**Billy H. Wingfield**, Petersburg, Va., 5/19/2021.

## '50

**Charles W. Browning**, Chapel Hill, N.C., 8/6/2021.

**Winfred H. Hart Jr.**, Roanoke, Va., 9/1/2021.

**William T. Jarrett**, Willow Street, Pa., 8/7/2021.

**James R. MacMillan**, Florence, S.C., 6/10/2021.

**Burford J. Meredith Jr.**, Midlothian, Va., 5/22/2021.

**Millard C. Norman**, Delray Beach, Fla., 4/22/2021.

**Royal "Steve" Wheeler**, Blacksburg, Va., 9/4/2021.

**Goodridge E. White Jr.**, Webster Springs, W.Va., 6/2/2021.

## '51

**Herbert O. Abercrombie**, South Pasadena, Fla., 4/22/2021.

**Andrew B. Cooke Jr.**, Virginia Beach, Va., 7/7/2021.

**Clifton W. Davis**, New Kent, Va., 8/26/2021.

**Carlton G. Middlebrook**, Dahlgren, Va., 7/27/2021.

**Brooks M. Whitehurst**, New Bern, N.C., 6/14/2021.

## '52

**Martin W. Bankhead**, Plano, Texas, 6/9/2021.

**E. Ritchie Fishburne**, Greensboro, N.C., 5/10/2021.

**Earl J. Haden Jr.**, Virginia Beach, Va., 4/30/2021.

**John B. Holland**, Winchester, Va., 7/22/2021.

**J. C. Morris**, North Chesterfield, Va., 7/14/2021.

## '53

**Norman C. Bild**, Santa Ysabel, Calif., 11/22/2020.

## '54

**Kenneth Beachum**, Williamsburg, Va., 2/20/2021.

**Jean Gardner Brennan**, Marlborough, Mass., 8/2/2021.

**Robert O. Cavender**, Largo, Fla., 5/6/2021.

**Joseph A. Wright Jr.**, Edenton, N.C., 8/2/2021.

## '55

**Curtis L. Bishop**, Bramwell, W.Va., 8/30/2021.

**William E. Blalock**, Baskerville, Va., 5/1/2021.

**Robert E. Dudley**, Huntsville, Ala., 6/11/2021.

**Clifford C. Phillips**, Ennice, N.C., 8/20/2021.

**Robert W. Scates Jr.**, Stuarts Draft, Va., 5/15/2021.

**Jacquelin Adamson Wingard**, McKinney, Texas, 6/27/2021.

**Lee C. "LeRoy" Zastovnik**, Longview, Texas, 6/17/2021.

## '56

**Robert J. Bell**, San Antonio, Texas., 5/10/2021

**Richard T. Heath**, Charlottesville, Va., 8/9/2021.

**Meade H. Rudasill**, Annapolis, Md., 6/26/2021.

## '57

**Thomas M. Hufford**, Salem, Va., 8/29/2021.

**Robert S. Noel**, Daleville, Va., 5/18/2021.

**Daniel D. Parrish**, Staunton, Va., 5/13/2021.

**William "Reggie" Powell**, Blacksburg, Va., 7/26/2021.

## '58

**Clyde O. Bodie Jr.**, Powhatan, Va., 4/23/2021.

**Lindsay D. Brown**, Wilmette, Ill., 5/26/2021.

**Franklin R. Cheng**, Rock Island, Ill., 5/4/2021.

**William H. Collins**, Woodlawn, Va., 1/20/2021.

**Dallas W. Culbertson**, Charlottesville, Va., 8/8/2021.

**Dudley S. Engleby**, Ayden, N.C., 6/3/2021.

**Horace E. Fidler**, Charlottesville, Va., 8/5/2021.

**Harry E. Hamilton Jr.**, Charleston, S.C., 5/21/2021.

**William L. Hiner**, Macon, Ga., 2/20/2021.

**Paul H. Kipps**, Aroda, Va., 6/14/2021.

**David L. Reedy**, Kilmarnock, Va., 5/2/2021.

**William T. Tilling Jr.**, Winchester, Va., 5/22/2021.

## '59

**Norman V. Clinevell**, Roanoke, Va., 7/3/2021.

**Ralph W. Craig**, Luling, La., 7/28/2021.

**James N. Eller Jr.**, Savannah, Ga., 4/24/2021.

**John R. "Bob" Jones Jr.**, Goochland, Va., 7/14/2021.

**David T. Myles Jr.**, Friendswood, Texas, 8/25/2021.

**Jay N. Whitesell**, Waynesboro, Va., 5/12/2021.

**Lawrence H. "Woody" Woodward**, Zuni, Va., 6/30/2021.

## '60

**John L. Bartley**, Beaumont, Texas, 8/4/2021.

**William W. Bird**, Sterling, Mass., 8/13/2021.

**Douglas M. Franklin**, Burlington, N.C., 8/4/2021.

**Thomas M. Gordon Jr.**, Loveland, Colo., 5/23/2021.

**Anna Mason Greer**, Princeton, W.Va., 5/15/2021.

**Robert R. Haupt**, Salem, Va., 5/30/2021.

**James P. Jenkins V**, White Stone, Va., 7/1/2021.

**Richard W. Ogershok**, San Antonio, Texas, 5/24/2021.

**Norbert A. O'Hare**, Beaver Creek, Ohio, 8/6/2021.

**Robert G. Turner Jr.**, Blacksburg, Va., 6/29/2021.

## '61

**Edward E. Bailey Jr.**, Magnolia, Ark., 10/31/2020.

**Lester S. Borden**, Sunset, S.C., 2/10/2021.

**Len T. Busic**, Rehoboth Beach, Del., 3/16/2021.

**Robert P. Chandler**, Richmond, Va., 6/15/2021.

**Otis S. Childress Jr.**, Williamsburg, Va., 9/1/2021.

**Frank W. Davis Jr.**, Knoxville, Tenn., 5/31/2021.

**Allan P. Johnson III**, Corpus Christi, Texas, 6/30/2021.

**Clarence C. "Buddy" Poe Jr.**, Yorktown, Va., 7/24/2021.

**William A. Thomas Jr.**, Milton, W.Va., 7/24/2021.

**Lewis R. White**, Staunton, Va., 8/8/2021.

## '62

**Burton Dale Austin**, Wilmington, Del., 7/20/2021.

**Carl D. Meekins**, Annapolis, Md., 4/30/2021.

**Bettye C. Via**, Roanoke, Va., 8/3/2021.

## '63

**William Earl Browning**, Hume, Va., 7/30/2021.

**Tonu Bruns**, Huntington Beach, Calif., 6/2/2021.

**Donald W. Milby**, Richmond, Va., 6/5/2021.

**Thomas W. Moore Sr.**, Salem, Va., 5/14/2021.

**Kenneth K. Plemmons**, Leicester, N.C., 4/30/2021.

**Stafford M. Query Jr.**, Roanoke, Va., 8/26/2021.

**Henry E. "Hank" Richeson**, Virginia Beach, Va., 8/15/2021.

**Eddie L. Toler Jr.**, Springfield, Va., 6/24/2020.

**Melvin A. Wade**, Los Angeles, Calif., 7/15/2021.

## '64

**Dale B. Chisamore**, Plano, Texas, 5/16/2021.

**Joseph P. Gaino Jr.**, Gaffney, S.C., 6/17/2021.

**Jerry C. Laderberg**, Arlington, Va., 3/20/2021.

**Hunter Bennett Teates**, Blacksburg, Va., 6/23/2021.

**Carl W. Watkins**, Dickinson, Texas, 5/1/2021.

**George T. Williamson**, Palm Beach, Fla., 7/14/2021.

## '65

**Raymond T. Bell**, San Marcos, Calif., 6/26/2021.

**Edward Allen Copeland Jr.**, South Bend, Ind., 4/14/2021.

**Christopher N. Hagedon**, Harrisonburg, Va., 8/3/2021.

**Jerry W. Jackson**, Wilmington, N.C., 8/13/2021.

**Edgar "Larry" Robinson**, Cedar Park, Texas, 7/15/2021.

**Williams A. Joyner**, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., 9/2/2021.

**Richard Wayne Lafon**, Daleville, Va., 7/14/2021.

**Jerry T. McDowell**, Muncie, Ind., 4/23/2021.

**Kenneth H. Murray**, Jamestown, N.C., 5/19/2021.

**Reginald T. "Tommy" Upson Jr.**, Drewryville, Va., 5/17/2021.

## '66

**Thomas Aubrey Barnes**, Stanardsville, Va., 6/26/2021.

**David L. Dewell**, Petersburg, Va., 7/6/2021.

**Edgar H. DeHart Sr.**, Galax, Va., 6/5/2021.

**Thomas A. Dillard Jr.**, Greer, S.C., 6/30/2021.

**Preston L. Durrill**, Blacksburg, Va., 8/3/2021.

**Thomas E. King Jr.**, Richmond, Va., 7/25/2021.

**William D. Parris Jr.**, Valdosta, Ga., 6/30/2021.

**Kenneth W. Rice**, Hopkins, Minn., 6/25/2021.

**Paul R. Romig**, Estes Park, Colo., 9/1/2021.

**Henry Darrel Shelton**, Dry Fork, Va., 6/7/2021.

**Susan Whitener Kilbourne**, Henrico, Va., 7/16/2021.

## '67

**Martin L. Bregman**, Tulsa, Okla., 5/22/2021.

**Donald L. English**, Hamilton, Ohio, 6/1/2021.

**Robert L. Gravatt III**, Milford, Va., 7/2/2021.

**James A. Gray Jr.**, Mechanicsville, Va., 7/10/2021.

**Henry P. Grim**, Bluefield, Va., 8/10/2021.

**Michael L. Rigsby**, Richmond, Va., 6/13/2021.

**Tivadar Szabo**, Edmonton, Ala., 5/11/2021.

**Trula Crawford Tuck**, Blacksburg, Va., 8/1/2021.

**Charles E. Wayne**, Huntsville, Ala., 7/8/2021.

**Richard A. Zborofsky**, Manassas, Va., 7/21/2021.

## '68

**Madison V. Blanton**, Kingsport, Tenn., 5/26/2021.

**Thomas F. Butterfield**, Christiansburg, Va., 6/26/2021.

**John T. Deal Jr.**, Kingsport, Tenn., 6/28/2021.

**Robert E. Kahl**, Midlothian, Va., 5/16/2021.

**Laura Whitesell Norfleet**, Henrico, Va., 2/9/2021.

**Gary C. Wright**, Chesapeake, Va., 8/8/2021.

## '69

**Raymond T. Crescenzo**, Jamestown, N.C., 5/25/2021.

**Gerald T. Knight**, Bonita Springs, Fla., 6/24/2021.

**Doris Hankins Ruggera**, McLean, Va., 6/12/2021.

**Carl R. Smith**, Richmond, Va., 8/27/2021.

**Thomas D. Smith**, Fort Myers, Fla., 5/28/2021.

**Calvin F. Swisher**, Staunton, Va., 8/15/2021.

**Charles A. Teaters Jr.**, Christiansburg, Va., 5/30/2021.

**Marcia Conant Trevino**, Clover, S.C., 4/25/2021.

**Robert E. Todd**, Manassas, Va., 7/22/2021.

## '70

**Cecilroy J. Pettus**, Holts Summit, Mo., 9/18/2020.

**Howard L. Price Jr.**, Mc Dade, Texas., 4/20/2021.

## '71

**Robert E. Garber**, Madison, Va., 8/28/2021.

**William R. Jones**, Magnolia Springs, Ala., 7/19/2021.

**Benton R. Leach**, High Point, N.C., 5/26/2021.

**Ronald P. Peters**, Lynchburg, Va., 5/4/2021.

**James K. Walski**, Chesapeake, Va., 5/12/2021.

## '72

**John J. Boling**, Radford, Va., 5/26/2021.

**Stephen T. Hardiman**, Hackettstown, N.J., 6/15/2021.

**Walter J. Hogan Jr.**, Raleigh, N.C., 5/4/2021.

**Lois C. Hopkins**, Roanoke, Va., 7/16/2021.

**Kathryn Kelly**, Christiansburg, Va., 6/16/2021.

**Edward "Alan" Lion**, Wilmington, N.C., 8/21/2021.

**Charles A. "Buddy" Litchfield III**, Cary, Ill., 5/16/2021.

**Andrew W. Moncol Jr.**, Rockville, Va., 7/11/2021.

**Gary W. Williams**, Knoxville, Tenn., 7/6/2021.

## '73

**John C. Chien**, Westminster, Calif., 7/4/2020.

**Andrew J. Greer**, Salem, Va., 6/25/2021.

**Wilson D. Ross**, Corolla, N.C., 5/8/2021.

**William G. Smith**, Williamston, N.C., 8/18/2021.

**'74**

**Susan Perry Abbott**, Basye, Va., 8/22/2021.

**O. Douglas Cumbia II**, Bunker Hill, W.Va., 6/29/2021.

**Alfred L. Drinkard**, Marble Falls, Texas, 5/6/2021.

**Ronald E. English**, Kernersville, N.C., 5/7/2021.

**John Dennis Hood**, Big Stone Gap, Va., 6/6/2021.

**Mary Brown Robertson**, Gainesville, Va., 9/2/2021.

**Randolph L. Robins**, Elizabeth City, N.C., 7/23/2021.

**'75**

**James S. Blackwelder Jr.**, Fredericksburg, Va., 7/27/2021.

**Walter J. Bugel**, Durham, N.C., 5/2/2021.

**Mary Hooper Carter**, Blackstone, Va., 5/19/2021.

**Deborah Hylton Cureton**, Alexandria, Va., 8/15/2021.

**Karen Paradise Farrier**, Ruther Glen, Va., 7/24/2021.

**Randall L. Jamison**, Riner, Va., 5/22/2021.

**Anthony I. Krakoviak Jr.**, Oak Ridge, Tenn., 6/2/2021.

**Randolph B. Perfetti**, Reedville, Va., 6/23/2021.

**William L. Woodfin Jr.**, Moseley, Va., 6/27/2021.

**'76**

**William I. Garbee**, Hampton, Va., 4/21/2021.

**Elizabeth Hutcheson Keller**, Memphis, Tenn., 6/24/2021.

**David W. Moore**, Midlothian, Va., 7/28/2021.

**Karen M. Norton**, Hollywood, Fla., 8/25/2021.

**Lynn B. Short**, Patrick Springs, Va., 8/28/2021.

**Belinda Smallridge Hoagland**, Blue Ridge, Va., 8/24/2021.

**'77**

**Milton C. Blanks**, Troutville, Va., 5/16/2021.

**Robert E. Darst**, Lynchburg, Va., 7/7/2021.

**Douglas H. Fraser**, Fairfax, Va., 8/5/2021.

**Pamela Cornett Hoag**, Christiansburg, Va., 5/18/2021.

**'78**

**Paul A. Law**, Virginia Beach, Va., 8/4/2021.

**Mark McCrae**, Detroit, Mich., 8/29/2021.

**Nancy Marshall Mimms**, Charlottesville, Va., 6/17/2021.

**Douglas B. Robbins**, N. Myrtle Beach, S.C., 6/11/2021.

**'79**

**Daniel W. Harlan**, Disputanta, Va., 6/28/2021.

**James H. Lauth Jr.**, Placerville, Calif., 5/1/2021.

**'80**

**Lee A. Barbieri**, Elon, N.C., 8/28/2021.

**George R. Mulligan**, Cheltenham, Pa., 7/31/2021.

**Thomas S. Stump**, Chatham, Va., 8/18/2021.

**'81**

**William J. Ashcraft**, Derwood, Md., 8/31/2021.

**David L. Boitnott**, Rocky Mount, Va., 5/9/2021.

**Cassius M. Lawrence**, Lawrenceville, Ga., 4/24/2021.

**Clyde Meyer**, Port Saint Lucie, Fla., 4/25/2021.

**Rosa Keeler Slavik**, Abingdon, Va., 7/7/2021.

**Lillie Crofts Thomas**, Johnson City, Tenn., 6/1/2021.

**'82**

**Richard S. Croft**, La Grande, Ore., 6/4/2021.

**David W. Dunaway**, Richmond, Va., 4/23/2021.

**Donald L. Hile**, Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., 8/13/2021.

**James H. James Jr.**, Dublin, Va., 6/17/2021.

**Lucinda Gentry Knarr**, Colonial Heights, Va., 6/16/2021.

**David M. "Michael" Martini-Plank**, Charlotte, N.C., 6/9/2021.

**'83**

**Timothy R. Cooney**, Dublin, Va., 6/3/2021.

**Donald E. Hash**, Gainesville, Fla., 10/20/2020.

**Robert E. Isaac Sr.**, Norton, Va., 8/14/2021.

**Edgardo P. Rivera**, Henderson, Nev., 7/17/2021.

**'84**

**James G. Burket**, Petersburg, Va., 5/1/2021.

**John J. Coursen**, Silver Spring, Md., 8/5/2021.

**Dan W. Scallion**, Dunnellon, Fla., 6/26/2021.

**David W. TeStrake**, North Chesterfield, Va., 7/19/2021.

**Thomas J. Wallis**, Springfield, Va., 5/1/2021.

**'85**

**George Blair Sanders**, Dublin, Va., 4/27/2021.

**Karen Rose Schanck**, Hollywood, Md., 8/15/2021.

**Willis R. Vicars**, Kingsport, Tenn., 9/1/2021.

**'86**

**Robin Kitchen Johnson**, Sedley, Va., 7/14/2021.

**Richard J. Kidwell**, Amisville, Va., 6/2/2021.

**Gerald M. "Jerry" Knott**, Roswell, Ga., 5/9/2021.

**Paul D. Looney**, Bastian, Va., 8/13/2021.

**Stephen L. Moore**, Woodbridge, Tenn., 6/1/2021.

**Dana S. Osterndorf**, Silver Spring, Md., 9/17/2020.

**Kevin S. Roberts**, Berryville, Va., 11/30/2020.

**'87**

**Roderick J. Flores**, Portland, Ore., 9/8/2020.

**Vincent W. Plumpton Jr.**, Landenberg, Pa., 9/1/2021.

**Florence I. Smoczynski**, Springfield, Va., 6/5/2021.

**'88**

**Davis L. Butler**, Farmerville, La., 8/13/2021.

**Roland "Danny" Culpepper**, Yadkinville, N.C., 5/25/2021.

**Marek P. Grabowski**, Charlottesville, Va., 8/11/2021.

**Maurice L. "Morrie" LaFuze**, Amherst, Va., 5/18/2021.

**'90**

**David R. Nelson**, Birmingham, Ala., 2/14/2021.

**Michael W. Owens**, Saint Inigoes, Md., 8/21/2021.

**'91**

**Robert L. Brendlinger**, Lebanon, Va., 6/11/2021.

**Kenneth B. Moore**, Seattle, Wash., 5/22/2021.

**Gina B. Wilburn**, Roanoke, Va., 8/20/2021.

**'92**

**Stephen M. Blevins**, Virginia Beach, Va., 2/15/2020.

**Steven C. Smith**, Plano, Texas, 8/29/2021.

**'93**

**Kevin K. Martin**, Burke, Va., 7/1/2021.

**Thomas L. Rose**, Stuart, Va., 6/18/2021.

**Rachel E. Frey Zanardi**, Fair Oaks Ranch, Texas., 6/7/2021.

**'95**

**Amy E. Gatham Gebhard**, Fairfax, Va., 8/23/2021.

**Susan M. Piercy**, Blacksburg, Va., 7/22/2021.

**Tao Song**, Hudson, Ohio, 7/1/2021.

**'96**

**Bryan F. Holland**, Middletown, Del., 5/12/2021.

**Freda Z. Hutton**, Troutdale, Va., 6/12/2021.

**'98**

**Ernest H. Joy II**, Melbourne, Fla., 7/30/2021.

**'99**

**Steven A. Anjard**, Williamsport, Pa., 6/14/2021.

**'00**

**Brian R. Busick**, Ashburn, Va., 7/6/2021.

**Sarah E. Petet-Jones**, Disputanta, Va., 4/26/2021.

**'04**

**Michael J. Shore**, Centreville, Va., 7/23/2021.

**'06**

**Forest W. Allen**, Seguin, Texas, 6/11/2021.

**James C. Lindsey**, Marion, Va., 5/22/2021.

**'08**

**Michael C. Smith**, Brookwood, Ala., 6/7/2021.

**'09**

**Philip T. Heisel**, Blacksburg, Va., 6/1/2021.

**'10**

**Laurie G. Manning**, Arlington, Va., 5/28/2021.

**'11**

**Lashun K. Massey**, Little Rock, Ark., 4/27/2021.

**Adam A. Serafine**, Chesapeake, Va., 4/29/2021.

**Christopher M. Walker**, Brooklyn, N.Y., 5/1/2021.

**'13**

**Anna R. MacBean**, Paris, Tenn., 7/7/2021.

**'14**

**James E. Miller III**, Glen Allen, Va., 6/27/2021.

**'16**

**Kelsey N. Burch**, Leesburg, Va., 5/2/2021.

## OBITUARIES

### FACULTY/STAFF

**Michael A. Barnes**, professor emeritus of dairy science in the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, died Oct. 10, 2021. Barnes taught numerous undergraduate courses. He served as an academic advisor and longtime advisor to the college's Dairy Club. Barnes also coached the Dairy Cattle Judging Team, which won four national championships.

**Barbara Sutton Cowles**, associate director of Virginia Tech's Honors College and member of the university community from 1990-2008, died on Aug. 17, 2021. Cowles won the Golden Key Mid-Atlantic Region Advisor of the Year in 1994 and the Provost's Award for Excellence in Advising in 2007.

**Donald A. Drapeau**, professor of theatre arts, died Nov. 18, 2021. Drapeau led the Department of Theatre Arts at Virginia Tech for more than 30 years. He served as president of the National Association of Schools of Theatre, president of the Southeastern Theatre Conference, and president of the Virginia Theatre Association and was an active consultant and adjudicator for countless area high schools and colleges. He was inducted into the prestigious College Fellows of the American Theatre.

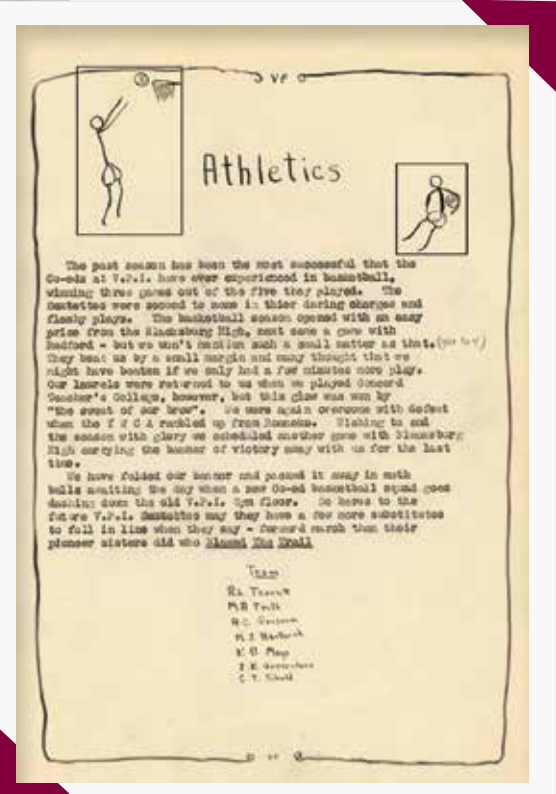
**Robert Heller**, professor emeritus of biomedical engineering and mechanics in the College of Engineering, died on Nov. 3, 2021. Heller joined Virginia Tech's faculty in 1967. He served as the J. Frank Maher Professor Emeritus, and his research interests included elastic behavior of structures, fatigue, reliability, and safety of structures and probabilistic mechanics.

**James Francis Herndon**, a professor emeritus of political science at Virginia Tech, died on Nov. 4, 2021. Herndon taught political science at Virginia Tech from 1967 to his retirement in 1994.

**Antoine Hobeika**, professor emeritus of civil and environmental engineering in the College of Engineering, died on Sept. 20, 2021. Hobeika served at Virginia Tech for 43 years, teaching courses in transportation infrastructure and systems engineering before retiring in 2016. He was the founding director of the Virginia Tech Center for Transportation Research, now known as the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute.

**David S. Lindsay**, professor of parasitology at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, died Nov. 17, 2021. Lindsay taught parasitology to graduate and undergraduate students for 24 years before retiring in 2021. Before joining the faculty at Virginia Tech, he was a senior research fellow at Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine.

**Reginald Glennis Mitchiner**, a professor emeritus of mechanical engineering at Virginia Tech, died Sept. 5, 2021. Mitchiner taught for more than 20 years at Virginia Tech, working with more than 7,000 students and pioneering technology across the campus. His mentorship of a student group yielded the first U.S. patent in Virginia Tech history awarded to such a group. He also helped to establish the Computer-Aided Engineering Design Program, and was a member of the Virginia Tech College of Engineering committee for the personal computer initiative, pressing the expansion of computers available to students in the late 1980s.



HOOP DREAMS: Ruth Terrett Earle helped organize the first women's basketball team at Virginia Tech. (right) A page from *The Tin Horn*, an alternative yearbook created by the female students, highlights the early women's basketball team.

# JUST ADD WATER

NOT MUCH COULD GET UNDER RUTH Terrett Earle's skin.

"She was almost unflappable, let's put it that way," her son, Sherod Earle, said during a phone conversation in January.

In 1921, Ruth Terrett Earle, then Ruth Terrett, was one of the first five women to enroll full-time at Virginia Tech, then Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute. In 1925, she would become the first woman to earn an engineering degree at the university.

Earle also is credited with spearheading the university's first women's basketball team, which legend says came about partly due to skills female students developed from avoiding water thrown at them by cadets.

"We became exceedingly alert and quick movers. In fact, we became so efficient in dodging water that we decided to extend our athletic ability even further, and as a consequence of this we had a basketball team," one female student of the time reportedly said.

The first team, the "Sextettes," formed in 1923 with Earle as the captain. Despite the male students attending games and rooting for the opposition, the team went 3-2 that season. The women scored victories over Blacksburg High School and Concord Teacher's College, while losing to Radford College and the YMCA of Roanoke. And the 1925 *Tin Horn*, an alternative yearbook that the women created after being denied entry into the *Bugle*, said Earle "stirred up an enthusiasm for basketball."

"She [Earle] mentioned that they [the university] didn't have much for the women to do, so I guess basketball was the easiest thing to organize," said Sherod Earle, who lives in Maryland. "I don't remember her talking too much about it, but I know that she did enjoy her classes and she did enjoy her time down there."

Sherod Earle said his mother also spoke of riding a train to Christiansburg and then taking the Huckleberry Line into Blacksburg. As a student, Earle often demonstrated the characteristic determination described by her son in response to the misogyny of the day.

One such response is described in the university archives. "One day, Ruth Terrett, a civil engineering student, decided to show the men she could do just as well as them. She donned a cadet uniform and climbed the university's water tower, a tradition the male cadets undertook to prove their strength and ability. That day, Ruth proved that women, when given the chance, could do what men could," according to "Climbing the Water Tower: How Women Went from Intruders to Leaders at Virginia Tech."

Earle also served at least one term as chair of the women students, a group that formed after female students were denied the ability to join most other campus organizations.

After graduating, Earle worked in a Washington, D.C., architect's office for six years. She married Sherod L. Earle Sr. in 1931 and left the workforce for a time before returning in 1950 to work as a statistician for the Chesapeake Bay Institute of Johns Hopkins University. She was a member of the Society of Women Engineers and the College Woman's Club of Annapolis and went on to breed and exhibit dachshunds before her death in 1995.

Sherod Earle said his mother stayed connected with the university throughout her life, went to reunions when possible, and even gave him some tips on attending Virginia Tech athletic events.

"She said, 'When you go down there, say, 'Hokie, Hokie, Hokie, hi,' and they'll know what you're talking about,'" he said.

Women's basketball at Virginia Tech would continue after Earle's 1925 graduation, with the team rebranding itself the

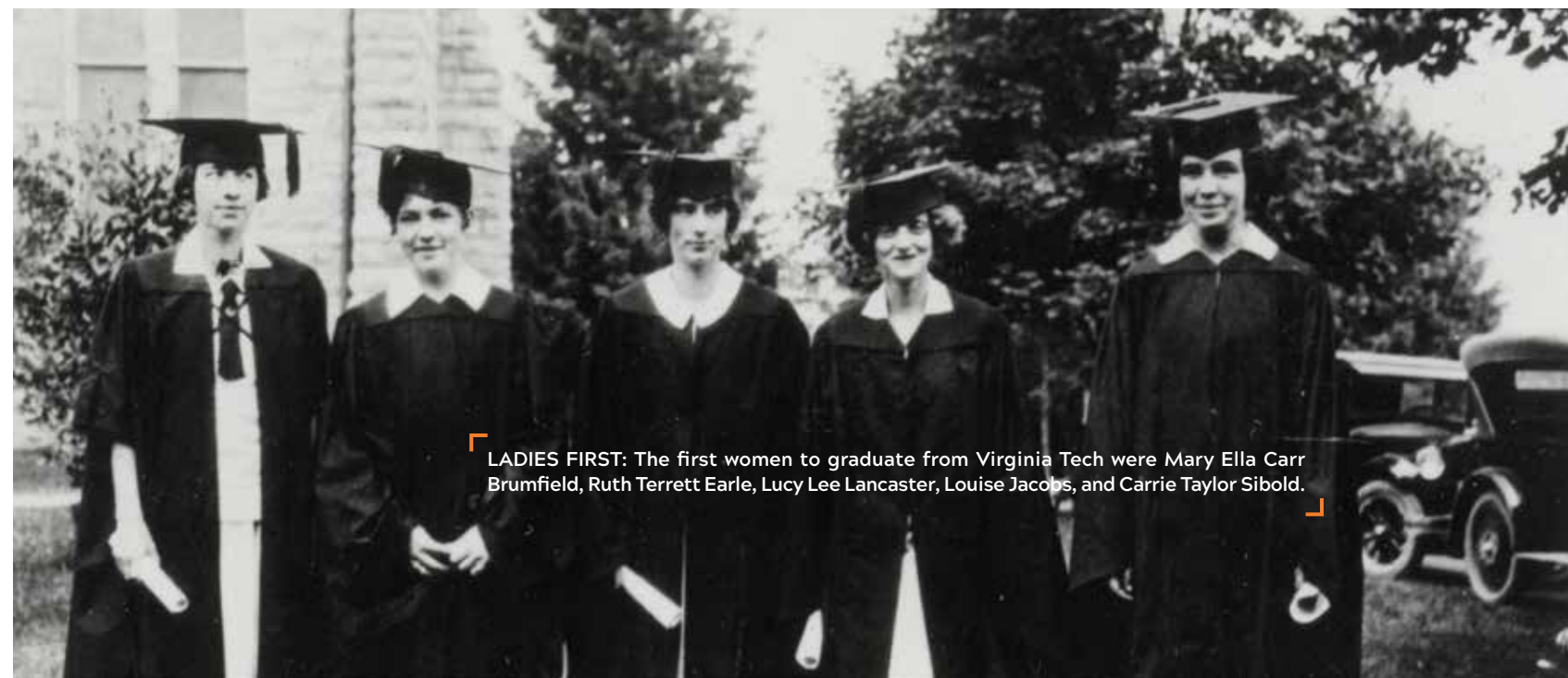
"Turkey Hens" sometime before 1929. Around that time, it's been said that the women began charging the male students, who were often still cheering on the opposition, exorbitant fees to attend games.

It wasn't until 1972 that the university officially sanctioned women's basketball as a club sport. In 1976, it became a varsity sport. In 1977, Helena Flannagan received partial aid, becoming the first women's basketball player to earn a scholarship, and Kim Albany, who played from 1978-82, was the first player with a full scholarship. The 2021-22 team opened the season ranked No. 24 by the Associated Press and proudly hung a banner from its NCAA tournament appearance the previous season.

Although the water-dodging tale connected to the origin of women's basketball at Virginia Tech may be more legend than fact, Sherod Earle believes his mom would be happy the story is being shared, and the game is being played.

"She would be proud of what y'all are doing," Sherod Earle said. ■ TW

VIRGINIA TECH SPECIAL COLLECTIONS



LADIES FIRST: The first women to graduate from Virginia Tech were Mary Ella Carr Brumfield, Ruth Terrett Earle, Lucy Lee Lancaster, Louise Jacobs, and Carrie Taylor Sibold.



STILL  
LIFE

**SPARK OF GENIUS:** Advanced Welding Technology, a class led by Christian Mariger, trains Ware Lab students so they can use various kinds of welding and cutting equipment and perform hot work processes.

"I think what the student walks away from, as engineers, is they have a much better understanding of how things are fabricated using these techniques. And that lends some insight into designing not only the product, but the process," Mariger said.

See more at [vtx.vt.edu/videos](http://vtx.vt.edu/videos).



Deseria Creighton Barney

# END NOTE

JUST SAY ... YES



THAT I MAY SERVE: Deseria Creighton Barney received the Ut Prosim Award at the 2018 Black Alumni Reunion.

IT IS HARD IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO PUT into words how special it is to be a Hokie.

How do you adequately describe the power of our community, the experiences we all share, the common bond of *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve)? Virginia Tech is a place, of course—a beautiful and special one—but for me and so many of you, it is so much more than that.

Virginia Tech is a feeling.

As president of the Virginia Tech Alumni Association Board of Directors, I have been able to share with the world what it means to be a Hokie and give back to our alma mater.

It has been an honor to serve you. This year, Virginia Tech's 150th, is my final year as leader of the alumni board. Thinking about my time as president, I am proud of what we have accomplished together and how far our university has come.

As part of our sesquicentennial, we celebrate our present while also honoring our past. This March marks 100 years of women students at Virginia Tech.



ON PARADE: The annual parade through downtown Blacksburg is a highlight of Virginia Tech Homecoming weekend.

Reflecting on my own place in history, I am the first Black female board president. The board I lead is one of the most diverse we have ever had. That fills me with immense pride, and it is my expectation that our board will continue to be representative of our diverse alumni population.

Looking back on my tenure, there is so much that I am proud of including the creation of our Black Alumni Society, our innovation through COVID-19, and the growing number of engaged Hokies.

The creation of our Black Alumni Society has come to fruition after countless years of planning and the tireless work of so many alumni. The society will celebrate the rich history of our Black alumni.

Through the pandemic we found new ways to stay connected. Our community came together during the last two years, and we faced an unprecedented pandemic together.

As board president, I was able to attend so many Hokie gatherings and connect with Hokies virtually. This would not have been possible if I had to physically travel

to each area. COVID-19 was difficult, but it made us look at things differently and demonstrated that Hokies show up for each other no matter what.

And even through such challenging circumstances, we grew our alumni engagement and giving. So far, more than 74,500 alumni have engaged with the university in meaningful ways over the course of our Boundless Impact campaign.

As my term comes to an end, I want to encourage you to give back to our alma mater and challenge you to share your reasons for believing that being a Hokie is special.

I often tell people that I never say no to Virginia Tech. There has never been anything that when asked I did not do for our great university. In the spirit of *Ut Prosim*, I will continue to work tirelessly for the Hokie Nation.

I charge you to do the same. Say yes. There are many ways to be involved, spend time with your local alumni chapter, mentor a student, serve on your reunion committee, or come back to campus for an event.

Thank you to Mark Lawrence, our immediate past president, for your support and guidance. I am excited about all the things that Nathan Lavinka, our next leader, will do for the board.

I hope you will join me in Blacksburg this fall for Homecoming Oct. 15-16 and for the Black Alumni Reunion, April 14-16, 2023.

Go Hokies! ■

*Deseria Creighton Barney '86, who earned a degree in communications, is a regional director of people development at WayForth and president of the Virginia Tech Alumni Association Board of Directors.*



## COUNT ME IN!

To learn more about ways to say yes to Virginia Tech, visit [alumni.vt.edu/yes](https://alumni.vt.edu/yes).