

VIRGINIA TECH CONDUCTOR

A GUIDE FOR OUR JOURNEY TOWARD EXCELLENCE, EQUITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

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Anderson wins award

Susan Anderson, instructor in Mathematics receives an award from Lawrence E. Carter, dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College in Atlanta and creator of an international peace exhibit, "Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace," displayed at the Torgersen Museum in April. The exhibit, a part of Tech's "Victory over Violence Week," delivered a message about individual leadership, and the difference that one person can make in promoting peace through non-violent action. Carter's keynote presentation included the following tribute to Anderson:

"Among the many things that you are and that you do, you are a teacher, student organizations advisor, and human rights activist extraordinaire.

For 20 years now you have devoted yourself to training America's top mathematicians as an esteemed member of Virginia Tech's venerable mathematics department. On the one hand, you have endeavored to give opportunity to all by supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds with your guidance. On the other, for the past eight years you chaired the department's annual "Women in Mathematics: Career Day at Virginia Tech" event for 250 sixth grade girls and encouraged them to realize their potential. Through your example, you have inspired hundreds of youth, many of whom would doubtless not have chosen math as a career were it not for you.

In addition to serving your esteemed university as chair of the Legislative Working Group of the Faculty Senate, you have championed human rights and justice by serving as faculty advisor to the student organizations Womenspace and Amnesty International for 12 years, respectively."



Dr. Cater presents Susan Anderson Community Builder's award

Energy packed diversity conference peaks with moving sendoff

by Jean Elliott

The 2005 Mid-Atlantic Conference on the Scholarship of Diversity provided a lively forum for sharing research in the second annual gathering sponsored by Virginia Tech. Held at Hotel Roanoke, more than 125 participants from five states shared and pondered their research.

"This year's conference combined outstanding diversity research, a tribute to the arts, and an incredible camaraderie among participants," said Ben Dixon, vice president for multicultural affairs at Virginia Tech.

Topics ranged from strategies to increase diversity in computer science, to developing effective interventions with regard to international cultures in marriage and family therapy. "Jazzing Women," a New York and local tap and jazz group who entertained the participants one evening at Mill Mountain Theatre, also performed an encore at the conference's sendoff luncheon to a crowd already invigorated by a Nikki

Giovanni keynote. A spontaneous and moving conference finale incorporated sign language and crowd participation in a song written by Elise Witt, called Open the Window.



Conference goers attend poster session

Opening Keynote
William Harvey, vice president of the American Council on Education, delivered the opening keynote. Co-author of *Minorities in Higher Education Twenty-first Annual Status Report (2003-2004)*, Harvey noted that students of color continue to make significant gains in college enrollment, but still lag behind their white

counterparts in the rates at which they pursue a higher education.

The report, which was released in February of 2005, finds that from 1991 to 2001, college enrollment of minorities rose by nearly 1.5 million students (52 percent) to more than 4.3 million.

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Student reflects on Elie Wiesel's visit

by Kristen Erickson



his attitude. After all, what good is tragedy if it cannot make us stronger, better people? I think humor is the real sign of survival. If someone can come out of a great tragedy and still find things to laugh about in life, he has survived. Not only a sign of survival, humor is a means to survival. I think this applies to many aspects of life; it takes a strong person to find the good amidst bad situations.

Elie Wiesel's key message was that to be indifferent is to cease living. If we think about the Holocaust, it is easy to imagine how one could become apathetic in such horrible circumstances. But to be apathetic was to greatly decrease one's chances for survival. Wiesel said that many things can fight indifference, among them love, charity, and sympathy. I would add to his list purpose. If one can find purpose in his life, he cannot be indifferent. I am reading a book by Viktor Frankl, another Holocaust survivor, entitled *Man's Search for Meaning*. In it, he discusses many of the same things mentioned by Wiesel.

The first thing that struck me about Elie Wiesel was his ability to joke about his life. I'm sure a majority of the audience, including myself, expected a Holocaust survivor to give an altogether serious lecture. But he began with a lighthearted comment on his late start. It was surprising, but comforting. I immediately respected him not only for his experience but also for

Frankl argues that those who survived the camps were those who found a motivation to live, an ultimate meaning to life. That meaning was different for everyone; it could be a person, a faith, or a career. Whatever one's purpose was, it provided a motivation to keep living. Thus one could not be indifferent to life.

We can take Wiesel's message and apply it not only to tragic circumstances, but everyday life. Everyday in class we ask about racism, sexism, etc., "How do we change things?" Most often we decide it is small efforts that make the difference. For instance, if someone uses an offensive word to describe a person of another race, we should speak up. The same goes for most injustices to other human beings; to be silent is to say that we are accepting of the situation or worse, indifferent to it. In this way, Elie Wiesel's lecture was especially relevant to our class. There are many days when I leave class overwhelmed; it seems that there is so much wrong with the world, even now in 2005. It's frustrating to feel helpless. But after listening to Elie Wiesel, I realized that my frustration and concern already shows that I am not indifferent to others. I may not have found the way that I can make the largest difference, but I want to. My favorite thing that Wiesel said during his lecture was, "I am not free because others are not free." He added to that freedom comes when other are free also. I thought

that was a wonderful way to look at freedom. That's certainly how I feel. As long as there are people around the world being subjugated, facing

injustice, no one is truly free. It's like that with the issues we discuss in class. Here in the United States, where we pride ourselves on having civil rights and freedom, there are still many people of different races, ethnic backgrounds, or classes who do not share in all liberties. We should be grateful that we are more free than most, but we should not accept that our freedom comes at the cost of others'. That is the indifference Wiesel warns about.

...to be indifferent is to cease living.

Mid-Atlantic Conference...

Continued from page 1

Even with this progress, African Americans and Hispanics were not enrolled at the same rate as their white peers. Forty percent of African Americans and 34 percent of Hispanics attended college, compared with 45 percent of whites.

"Persistent gaps in college participation among whites and minorities tell us that we must be more creative and imaginative in developing strategies and finding additional resources so that more students of color are



Dr. William Harvey, Dr. Megan Boler, and Dr. Ben Dixon

successful on our campuses," said Harvey. "The long-term economic and social well being of this country is connected to closing this gap."

Harvey also noted that while high school graduation rates are improving across the board

(African Americans - 75.5 to 77.2; Whites - 82.5 to 87.1; and Hispanic 54.6 to 61.5), there is an obvious disparity as to where they are enrolled as both the Black and Hispanic enrollments have increased significantly more in two-year institutions. In addition, women continue to dominate men in undergraduate college enrollment, creating a "yawning and social economic gap." White females experienced the largest numerical increase in doctoral degrees of any group from 1991-92 to 2001-02, with 1,700 additional degrees earned.

Harvey maintains that we must also continue to diversify faculty ranks and curriculum. Nationally, white males make up 83 percent of those achieving rank of full faculty. "We all must embrace change because if institutions are to be the best they can be, they aren't great unless they are a diverse academic institution," said Harvey. He also noted that 91 percent of students feel that professors of color have a positive impact; while 83 percent of white students feel that Black professors have a positive impact on their learning experience as well.

In concluding, Harvey encouraged all to become

active. "If higher ed is important - let people in Washington know... and be politically active at every level, in local and state governments, from school boards to legislatures." He also suggested that "Virginia Tech move aggressively forward - from undergraduate education to senior level administration."

Making Space for Difference in New Media and Technologies

In an information-packed, thought-provoking multimedia session, Megan Boler of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education examined how digital media have given voice to the disenfranchised in terms of dissent and increased civic participation. In a climate where mainstream media are increasingly restricted for public participation due to media ownership concentration and the cultural repression following 9/11, Boler cautioned not

to be content being spoon-fed video news releases, contending that the United States is in an age of censorship and media blackouts.

In a world where eyes are glazed by sugary offerings of media conglomerates, it's tough to conjure up a true independent journalist on your remote. Surfing the tsunami of ever increasing web sites is daunting, but Boler encouraged this exploration with a heavy dose of critical thinking.

Her recently published edited collection, *Dialogue in Education: Troubling speech, Distrubing Silences* (Peter Lang, 2004) addresses how race, colonialism, and homophobia are addressed through voice and silence in classrooms and introduces controversial notions such as "affirmative action pedagogy" to highlight marginalized voices.

"Corporate profit over quality journalism has had an effect on the diversity of voices we hear in the news and in the bandwidth," said Boler. The good news, said Boler, who maintained that there is always room for hope, is that "new media technologies have spawned major new forms of civic participation including WICIPedias, blogs, multimedia political animation, and digital storytell." The onus is on us to determine the truth.

Visit Boler's web site for more information on this topic at: <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/depts/tps/Boler/>



Nikki Giovannoni

how do we get more black people. But the reality is that we are in the 21st century," she said we ought to be talking about how we're going to respond to life forms and folks we don't know. "We ought to be talking about what's going to happen when we find out there's some bacteria on Mars and its not just up to us to decide to kill it but to find a way to live with it," Giovannoni said "There's going to be something, somewhere that we've never seen. If we can't deal with black and white people who are breathing air, with red blood, what the hell's

going to happen when we get to 2050? We'll be crazy. Does it ever occur to you why nobody ever comes to earth? Nobody's going to come to Earth! We're nuts. You've got to be out of your mind to come down to Earth. We're primitive. We're narrow-minded. We're bigoted. We're crazy. We're having discussion

on things like gay marriage in the 21st century." I'm a Black American - and I know Black Americans were not allowed to marry. We jumped the broom. We finally brought that up to date. Remember, we're in Virginia - where anti-miscegenation laws were only recently gotten rid of - where Black people and white people couldn't marry each other. And then people keep bringing it up. We've got a lot of reason to discriminate. Now we've got the gays - God's sake, get over it. We go forward because life is a good idea," she said.

"It's time we got out of the 19th century. It's time we quit considering war is a good idea. War was a bad idea when it was a

new idea. It's the worst idea we've ever had... Why is it we're not being free to be kind? What's the downside of love. Let's give it a try for 700 hundred years, and if it doesn't work, let's go back to being crazy," Giovanni said.

"Life is about the diversity. Life is about something wild in the fields.

"What will our legacy be? It has to be better because we were here. It has to be better for you having walked on Earth. Everything was better, for Tech, for you, for me, for education... because we tried, not because we succeeded. Success is not within human beings but we try to make life a little better, we try to hand something down. Its all about the love we share for each other. Take a stand and make a difference. It's important."

What conference goers said

"Most of the keynote sessions were very effective and covered a broad range of information. I was glad to see that diversity seemed to be more expanded this year in its inclusion of issues around sexual orientation. There was good discussion about educational pedagogy and thoughts towards curricular change and what we might do as faculty and administrators".

- Kathy McCleafe, Mary Baldwin College

"I particularly enjoyed the session called "What's in a name?" (Research by Sheryl Ball). "She looked at how names impact perceptions and behavior. She looked at it in an economic sense but I began to think about it in terms of education and how teachers might look at names and unknowingly, unconsciously, treat students differently based on name alone, particularly in the assessment process."

- Anthony Graham, North Carolina A&T

"I thought the session (Prompting and Advancing the Educational Attainment and College Aspirations of Virginia High School Students Through the Faculty-in-Residence Program) with Steven Wright from James Madison University on its faculty residence program had a lot of relevance. The program wasn't initially intended to be a recruiting project, and yet I think that it is indirectly going to be that. The whole idea involved faculty participation, and going into five high schools. It taps into getting students interested in higher education, which is key as we know the numbers are declining for both white and black males."

- Beverlyln Samuels, Virginia Tech

About 'The Conductor'

The Conductor is produced twice during the fall and twice during the spring semesters by the Multicultural Fellows and is published by the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

All members of the university community are invited to contribute. Please submit articles to the editorial board at multicultural@vt.edu.

Back issues are online at <http://www.multicultural.vt.edu/conductor>

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Next issue of the Conductor will be in October 2005.

2005 Diversity Summit participants seek action

Calls for changes in training and curriculum, university communication, policies and procedures, participation by administration and the faculty, and diversity-centered opportunities dominated the 8th Annual Diversity Summit on January 21. Faculty members, students, and staff worked together to assess the campus climate. They participated in several different activities, offering their views, experiences, and suggestions for improving diversity at the university. Participants voiced their weariness with talking and emphasized the need for university-wide action and visible commitment from all.



2005 Summit participants

Activity 1

Groups were asked to respond to five visions of transformation regarding diversity on campus by providing their own images, markers, and other indicators that would point to progress toward a more inclusive, diverse, and welcoming environment. The results were varied in the way each group formed and reported their answers. There was also answer crossover from question to question, which underscored the recursive nature of diversity in the lives of the faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders. Overall, the majority called for:

- Mandatory sensitivity and diversity training for all;
- More opportunities to work, play, interact, and grow together;
- Diversity incorporated into core courses and other courses in all departments;
- Better communication, both university and community-wide;
- Improved student and faculty recruiting practices;
- A clearer definition of diversity;
- Better policies and procedures in regard to diversity issues; and
- Fewer incidents of hate crimes and discriminatory language and acts.



Charles Steger, president, Virginia Tech with Ben Davenport, Jr., rector, Board of Visitors

Section 1

Vision: **“Where students, faculty, and staff are conversant with a diverse society and have knowledge, understanding, and respect for difference”**

Predominate images surrounding communications and interactions included:

- More diversity among faculty and students;
- Fewer incidents of discrimination and hate crimes;
- Open communications among people without fear of attack, including vigorous debates and appropriate

language;

- A clearer, inclusive, universally-used and accepted definition of diversity;
- Diversity announcements in class;
- Campus-wide non-discrimination statement on syllabi;
- Diversity apparent in all forms of communications across campus;
- Greater awareness of hidden disabilities;
- Diversity issues presented in core curriculum classes; and mandatory programs and training courses for all groups.

Section 2

Vision: **“Where diversity is inclusive and infused throughout the institution’s activities/events”**

The most common indicators of a more welcoming community would be:

- Improved communications when promoting events, especially in the CT and campus activity calendar;
- Activities include more diverse groups;
- Diversity activities occur year-round and not just during national holidays;
- More funding given to the Cranwell Center;
- ADA accessibility at all events;
- Increased celebration of MLK’s birthday;
- More diversity activities university wide;
- Mandatory diversity course included in their curriculum;
- Better student and faculty recruiting and training practices;
- Increased retention of students and faculty members from underrepresented groups;



Members of D.R.O.P. Alliance promote the PATH Pledge

- More participation in events by administration, faculty members, and other leaders;
- More diversity in leadership and faculty members positions;
- Inclusion of diverse populations in all aspects of academic, extra-curricular, and co-curricular facets of university life;
- Visual art and events showcasing diversity; and
- Greater collaboration between organizations and groups.

Section 3

Vision: **“Where the education and understanding of diversity by all constituents (faculty, staff, students, alumni, leadership) is a priority”**

Responses to this section seemed to be focused on changes in policies and procedures that have the potential to shift the power from those members of faculty, staff, administration, and leadership who do not support diversity to the people in the university who have shown commitment to a more inclusive campus. Such as:

- Required faculty training for more overall diversity awareness and understanding and tenure;
- Training programs for faculty members focusing on integrating diversity into the classroom;
- The faculty offering students more opportunities to connect in class;
- Fewer threat of retaliation if a student addresses a diversity issue; and

- The university goals of diversity written in syllabi and other official documents.
- Development of courses and more obvious indications of changes in attitude were also stressed in this vision:
- Core courses would cover diversity issues;
- New course content in current curriculum would include diversity and cultural issues,
- A diversity minor would be offered to all majors;
- University-wide commitment to the celebration of



2005 Summit participants

difference – not a “one size fits all” expectation;

- Stereotypes would be broken down;
- Increases in retention of faculty members and students of differing cultures and races;
- Equity in benefits and compensation and affordable childcare;
- People would be rewarded and held accountable for their attitudes regarding diversity;
- Dining halls and other convenient venues would be used to present diversity issues; and
- Events would be less like the summit and more about the celebration of change and difference.

Section 4

Vision: **“Where educational diversity is promoted as value-added and an enrichment to the lives of all”**

Once again, many called for required diversity and culturally-focused courses for all students, especially freshmen. Additional common markers and indicators were:

- Policies in place to ensure larger numbers of underrepresented groups;
- Awards to those who contribute to diversity;
- An expanded definition of diversity;
- Increases in freedom of expression;
- Increases in participation at events;
- Better understanding of other cultures in all settings; and
- An overall awareness of the issues surrounding the university community locally and globally.

Section 5

Vision: **“Where a diverse society is understood and celebrated”**

An overriding vision of genuine, internalized dedication to diversity was a common thread, through such responses as:

- Privilege disappears;
- All people are celebrated;
- Diversity is clearly defined;
- Where Virginia Tech is known as a welcoming community;
- The entire university has a soul-level appreciation of other cultures;
- Diversity is tied to social justice and equity;
- Virginia Tech folks realize that their ways are not the “normal” way; there is no right or wrong;
- Those who exhibit and acknowledge difference are celebrated;
- Cultural mixing, not segregation;
- People of color and women can honestly say that the campus is conducive to their success;
- Respect for individuals and no stereotyping of different groups; and
- Students of marginalized groups would feel welcome on our campus and able to learn from one another and grow.

May 6, 2005

A Historic Moment at Virginia Tech

by Ray Plaza, Chair of the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity

On March 14, 2005, Virginia Tech took a historic step when the Virginia Tech Principles of Community were officially adopted and signed.

This effort was the result of countless hours of hard work on a number of fronts. It was not easy, as all of us had to confront the ghosts of Virginia Tech's past and the skepticism of others. In the end, a statement was created that truly reflects the ideals and aspirations of the entire university community of students, staff, faculty, alumni, administration, and the board of visitors.

The adoption of the Virginia Tech Principles of Community is just the first step on the journey to help transform and shape Virginia Tech for the future. It will be the responsibility of the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity (CEOD) to ensure that the principles become a lasting legacy for current and future generations of students, staff, and faculty.

No matter the odds, no matter the challenges, no matter the obstacles that are placed before us, we all need to work together to create an inclusive community and environment. As members of the university community, we each have a responsibility to hold each other accountable for our actions according to specified standards. The Virginia Tech Principles of Community provide an additional standard for how we as a community are going to respond to and manage negative situations that occur on campus.

It is disappointing that some still see and experience a campus that is a desolate and unwelcoming environment. We cannot ignore such perceptions, and we cannot remain silent on such issues. We all have a role in helping to improve the campus climate for all. We each have a responsibility in helping to transform our community. It is not just the responsibility of members of underrepresented groups, but it is also the responsibility of the majority.

I would encourage you to reflect on the Virginia Tech Principles of Community. What does the statement mean to you? Do you exemplify the principles? Are you currently fulfilling the principles? What does "community" mean to you? How can you help others understand the principles?

Over the next few weeks and months, you will see the principles become more visible and more commonplace throughout the community. I encourage you to engage in conversations and in actions that help to promote this new standard.



Signatories Left to right: W. Sam Easterly, president, Faculty Senate; Kimble Reynolds, Jr., president, Alumni Association; Myrna Callison, co-president, Graduate Student Assembly; Ben Davenport, Jr., rector, Board of Visitors; Charles Steger, president, Virginia Tech; Ray Plaza, chair of the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity; Sumeet Bayai, president, Student Government Association; Sue Ellen Crocker, president, Staff Senate; and Yvette Quintela, co-president, Graduate Student Assembly.

Virginia Tech Principles of Community

Virginia Tech is a public land-grant university, committed to teaching and learning, research, and outreach to the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world community. Learning from the experiences that shape Virginia Tech as an institution, we acknowledge those aspects of our legacy that reflected bias and exclusion. Therefore, we adopt and practice the following principles as fundamental to our on-going efforts to increase access and inclusion and to create a community that nurtures learning and growth for all of its members:


We affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding.


We affirm the right of each person to express thoughts and opinions freely. We encourage open expression within a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect.


We affirm the value of human diversity because it enriches our lives and the university. We acknowledge and respect our differences while affirming our common humanity.


We reject all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others.


We pledge our collective commitment to these principles in the spirit of the Virginia Tech motto of *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve).



Rector, Board of Visitors

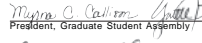

President, Faculty Senate

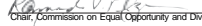

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Chair, Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity

March 14, 2005

