

# SPECTRUM

Center Calls For  
Grant Proposals.  
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VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

<http://www.unirel.vt.edu/spectrum/>

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## Steger Settles in to New Role



President Charles Steger at work in his Burruss Hall office. (B. Veltri)

By Larry Hincker

Like the fading roar of a passing train, the thunder of Hokie Mania and Sugar Bowl hype are beginning to subside...but Charles W. Steger is just beginning to roll his engine down the track.

Steger quickly settled into the Burruss Hall "corner office" and is working his normal extended work days. "I've been amazed at the scores of well-wishers and notes of congratulations. But now the work begins," said Steger, a man who obviously relishes work and university life. He usually arrives at about 7 a.m. each morning and remains long after the doors are locked.

During the first weeks of his presidency, Steger has plunged into the role, like all Virginia college presidents, focusing on the state legislature. "The General Assembly sessions are always important, but this one even more so. It's the first session of the new biennium and the assembly will be considering record level appropriations," Steger said.

Like his predecessor, Paul Torgersen, Steger will spend several days each week in Richmond. This year's major project is the university's new Bioinformatics Institute. "We have an advantage since the governor included the institute in his budget, but we still need to shepherd it through the appropriation process," Steger said.

In August, the university Board of Visitors approved a university plan to seek increased funding for research initiatives, info-tech activities focusing on instruction, and increased operating budgets. Capital-funding requests will include continuation of the upper-quad conversion, technology upgrades, the Ag/Forestry complex, the bioinformatics complex, and several other non-general-fund projects. [Editor's note: Look for more detailed explanation of the university's legislative initiatives in future issues of *Spectrum*.]

When asked about what changes are in store for the university, Steger responded with a smile, "Not much, at first." His immediate executive staff will be the same as Torgersen's.

Steger said, "I want to build on the success and good feelings of the past several years. I've been having conversations with the deans, vice presidents, and others in university leadership roles. They have some ideas, I have some ideas...we all have ideas about where to take the university. I am not yet prepared to announce specific goals and objectives. That will take some give and take." Though he is still deliberating specific strategies, Steger said he will be focusing on a few themes.

"In academics, quality and accessibility should  
(See *STEGER* on 4)

## Tech partner for NEH planning grant

By Susan Trulove

Cooperative planning among humanities faculty members at Virginia Tech has made it possible for the university to partner with the University of Virginia and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities (VFH) to receive one of two National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grants to plan for a South Atlantic Regional Humanities Center. NEH funded 16 such planning grants to establish eight regional centers in the U.S. and its territories.

The \$50,000 grant will be used to plan a South Atlantic Center for the Study of Regional Cultures. According to an NEH news release, the grants were awarded based on the ability to collaborate with other cultural institutions, support research on regional topics, document regional history, preserve cultural resources, develop K-12 learning opportunities, build college-level degree programs in regional studies, and foster cultural tourism.

"This is a shot in the arm for campus humanities," said Anita Puckett, coordinator for the Appalachian Studies Program which is one of the Programs in the Humanities at Virginia Tech. "(Provost) Peggy Meszaros made it possible by taking an involved, personal interest. When John O'Neil went to

(See *NEH* on 4)



TEAM SPIRIT Tech supporters of all ages flocked to New Orleans for the Sugar Bowl, where the Hokies' bid to upset Florida State fell short, 46-29. (B. Veltri)

## Torgersen confers final degrees

By Larry Hincker

Continuing the practice begun six years ago, the Fall Commencement speaker was selected by students. This year, at the students' request, President Paul Torgersen delivered the keynote address.

Torgersen retired earlier this month. During his 33-year career at Virginia Tech, Torgersen served as department head, dean, interim president, and president. University of-

ficials believe he has conferred more diplomas than any other individual in the history of the university. Approximately 62,191 degrees carry his signature either as dean, interim president, or president.

At Commencement exercises, the university conferred degrees as follows: six associate, 1,223 undergraduate, 821 master's, 255 Ph.D., and two certificates of advance graduate studies.

## Astronomers announce discovery

By Sally Harris

Astronomers from Virginia Tech announced yesterday at the American Astronomical Society (AAS) meeting in Atlanta that a well-known, luminous cloud of gas in our galaxy called the Rosette Nebula is actually smaller than it appears.

Greg Topasna, a recent Ph.D. graduate of Virginia Tech, and professors Brian Dennison and John Simonetti used a special camera tuned to detect a particular wavelength of light emitted by hydrogen atoms, much like a radio tuned to receive a particular station.

Astronomers refer to this light from hydrogen as H-alpha. When they pointed their camera at the Rosette Nebula, they discovered that it appears larger than it actually is. The illusion is caused by scattering of H-alpha light from a dust shell surrounding the nebula, the astronomers said. This discovery means that when H-alpha light is used to view nebulae, one must take into consideration that their larger appearance may be an illusion caused by scattered light.

A related process occurs in the Earth's atmosphere, Topasna said. The sky looks bright during the day, he said, because sunlight is scattered from molecules and particles in the atmosphere. This is analogous to the Rosette Nebula, he said, because some of the light emitted in the hot core of the nebula is scattered by its surrounding shell.

(See *NEBULA* on 4)

# ACTIVITIES

## EVENTS

**Friday, 14**  
Salary and Wage Paydate.

**Saturday, 15**  
Men's Basketball, 2 p.m., Cassell Coliseum: George Washington.

**Sunday, 16**  
Women's Basketball, 1 p.m.: At La Salle.

**Monday, 17**  
Classes Begin.  
Martin Luther King Day.  
Diversity Summit, 5-8 p.m., Owens Banquet Hall.

**Tuesday, 18**  
Faculty Senate, 7 p.m., 32 Pamplin.

**Wednesday, 19**  
AOE Program, 5-6:30 p.m., DBHCC: Robert Zubrin, Mars Society.  
Men's Basketball, 7 p.m., Cassell Coliseum: Fordham.  
"With Good Reason," 7 p.m., WVTF: Topic TBA

**Thursday, 20**  
Staff Senate, noon, 1810 Litton-Reaves.

**Friday, 21**  
Last Day to Add.  
Women's Center Program, 3:30-5:30 p.m., McBryde House: Midwinter's Tea.  
Women's Basketball, 7 p.m.: At Temple.

## SEMINARS

**Monday, 17**  
Veterinary Medicine, 8:30-9:30 a.m., Heritage Room: Herman Staats, Duke.

**Tuesday, 18**  
Geological Sciences, 4 p.m., 4069 Derring: Clark Birchfield, AAPG.

**Wednesday, 19**  
ESM, 4-5 p.m., 136 Norris: Sergey A. Ambartsumian, Armenian Academy of Sciences.

**Thursday, 20**  
Statistics, 3:45 p.m., 409 Hutcheson: Bret Alden Stames.

## BULLETINS

### Xcaliber nominations open

The Center for Innovation in Learning is seeking nominations for the year 2000 XCaliber awards, which recognize outstanding contributions to learning that faculty members and teams of faculty and staff members are making as they develop courseware using technology.

The XCalibers are presented annually to celebrate and illustrate innovative approaches to teaching using technology. Nominees' works should illustrate student-oriented outcomes including active learning, interactive communications, more self-directed, self-paced learning, computer literacy integrated with course content, electronic access to course materials and supplemental resources; and electronic access to course information, announcements, and news.

The XCaliber carries with it a cash award and a commemorative plaque. Honorees will also be asked to demonstrate their award-winning work at appropriate occasions.

Nominations are due March 21. Awards will be made in the fall.

For more information on nomination procedures, visit <http://www.edtech.vt.edu/cil>, or contact Anne Moore, director of information technology initiatives by telephone at 1-7108 or e-mail at [ahmoore@vt.edu](mailto:ahmoore@vt.edu).

### Women Center tea scheduled

The Women's Center hold its annual Midwinter Tea on Friday, Jan. 21 from 3:30-5:30 p.m. at Price House (behind McBryde).

The public is welcome to come and enjoy food, conversation, and readings. Anyone interested in reading or performing should contact Jessie Meltner at 1-7806 or [jmelt@vt.edu](mailto:jmelt@vt.edu).

### Conference to address NRV needs

The Humanities Programs in the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies will present a conference titled "Preserving Community Identity and Place in the New River Valley: From Reflection to Action" Saturday, Jan. 29, 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m., at the Newport Recreation Center in Giles County.

The conference is free and is open to anyone interested in preserving and improving the communities of the New River Valley. Registration is required by Wednesday, Jan. 26.

This conference will provide an opportunity for critical reflection and dialogue on a variety of resources and methods communities can employ to address civic, cultural, historical, and environmental needs. Participants at the conference will have an opportunity to discuss their needs and plans for their communities. Students and faculty members involved in community service-learning projects will be on hand to listen and discuss ways they

can help.

For more information, call Elizabeth Fine at 1-9593.

### Caregivers sought for interview

Shannon E. Jarrott, an assistant professor in human development, is interviewing caregivers of seniors with memory problems for a study that is sponsored by the Alzheimer's and Related Diseases Research Award Fund, an entity administered by the Virginia Center on Aging.

The study consists of two 30-minute phone interviews, approximately two months apart. All interviews are confidential. Interested participants can reach Jarrott at 1-5434 or via e-mail at [sjarrott@vt.edu](mailto:sjarrott@vt.edu).

### BT increases service

Beginning January 17, Blacksburg Transit will increase the frequency of its service to the Oaklane community. From 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, the bus will run on a 15-minute schedule.

After 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and on weekends the Oaklane bus will run every half hour.

The Two Town Trolley late-night service on weekends, which operated on a trial basis for the fall semester, will be continued as part of BT's regular service.

For more information, contact BT at 961-1185, or Debby Barbour at 1-1737, [debarbou@vt.edu](mailto:debarbou@vt.edu).

## Center for Innovation in Learning calls for fifth round of grant proposals

By Catherine Doss

The Center for Innovation in Learning (CIL) is seeking proposals for the fifth round of course-transformation grants, which will be awarded for the period of July 1, 2000, to June 30, 2001.

The deadline for submission is Feb. 14, 2000. Two proposal-writing workshops are being planned, one at the Northern Virginia Center on January 17 at 1 p.m., the other at the Blacksburg Electronic Village classroom at 840 University City Boulevard on January 24 at 1 p.m.

Established by the Office of the Provost in 1996, the CIL aims to develop on-line courses and provide related infrastructure, technical support, and assessment of results in targeted curricular

areas. Its mission is to achieve the learning outcomes that describe independent, critical thinking, and technologically literate learners across disciplines.

Faculty members are invited to submit proposals to integrate technology into teaching in these four curricular areas: Distance-learning programs for graduate and professional students; core-curriculum courses with high student demand; upper-level undergraduate and professional courses with high student demand; and multiple-use courses that could be used for graduate and professional continuing education.

Successful proposals should include the following elements: emphasis on asynchronous, web-based course development; evidence of matching current operating support or cost-sharing,

evidence that the module/course/program can be offered to students on a recurring basis, plan for assessment of the program, report of activities and assessment, where appropriate (for those applying for continued support); and schedule of phased activities if applying for one year of potential multi-year project support.

Faculty members who have previously received grants for portions of multi-year projects are encouraged to apply for continued support as are teams of faculty and staff members who are proposing projects aimed at resolving particular specific curricular challenges of a college, center, or area of study.

For more information, visit <http://www.edtech.vt.edu/cil> or contact Anne Moore, director of information-technology initiatives, by telephone at 1-7108 or by e-mail at [ahmoore@vt.edu](mailto:ahmoore@vt.edu).

## Leffel named market research director for university's Outreach Division

By Catherine Doss

Linda G. Leffel has been named director of market research for the university's Outreach Division. Leffel has been with Virginia Tech more than 25 years, receiving her doctorate in education here in 1973 and subsequently serving in various leadership roles in continuing education. Her most recent position was director of program development for the Division of Continuing Education, a job she has held since 1988.

"Linda's leadership in Continuing Education has been extraordinary, and her unit's accomplishments under her direction have been staggering," said Ted Settle, director of Continu-

ing Education.

Since 1988, the program development team along with university faculty has completed nearly 5,000 continuing education programs that have generated over \$46 million in gross revenue and more than \$10 million in surplus revenue for Continuing Education and the colleges. The team developed the first multidisciplinary teleconference series for Virginia Tech, which served 33 states and 4,000 individuals at each of six programs. Also under Leffel's leadership, the program development team developed a business plan that resulted in \$1.2 million in funding and provided market research on the need for workforce technol-

ogy training. This nationally recognized research resulted in the formation of the Masters in Information Technology at the Northern Virginia Center.

"Linda has made a name for herself in the area of market research in higher education," said Clark Jones, vice provost for outreach. "There is no question she is one of the best in the field nationally."

Leffel will be a featured speaker at the annual conference of the University Continuing Education Association in April. Her topic will be "Marketing Research as a Leadership Tool for

(See LEFFEL on 4)

# EMPLOYMENT

## CLASSIFIED POSITIONS

The following classified positions are currently available. More details of these positions, specific application procedures and position-closing dates may be found on the Personnel Services web site at <http://www.ps.vt.edu>. Available positions are also listed on the Job Line, a 24-hour recorded message service. Offices/Clerical: 1-6196; Technical/Research: 1-6160; Service/Trades: 1-6176; Professional and Managerial: 1-4649; Information Technology: 1-2233. Some of the following positions include state benefits. Positions with numbers beginning with a "W" are hourly and do not include state benefits. Individuals with disabilities desiring assistance or accommodation in the application process should call by the application deadline.

Closing date for advertised positions is 1 p.m. Monday. An EO/AA employer committed to diversity.

### FULL TIME

**Animal Care Technician C**, 2639M, Grade 7, Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

**Applications Analyst**, 1372D, Grade 0, DIS.

**Applications Analyst**, 6739D, Grade 0, DIS.

**Architect**, 3374P, Grade 12, Physical Plant.

**Banner Desktop Support Technician**, 7409D, Grade 0, Administrative Information Systems.

**Budget Analyst**, 6935T, Grade 10, Budget/Financial Planning.

**Capital Outlay Program Manager**, 7545P, Grade 14, Capital Design and Construction.

**Computer Operations Technician Senior**, 1054D, Grade 8, Test Scoring.

**Development Associate for Student Calling Program**, 1450C, Grade 8, University Development/Annual Giving for Phonathon.

**Electronic Technician Sr.**, 7516J, Grade 10, Center for Transportation Research.

**Enrollment Services Assistant Academic Adviser**, 7485T, Grade 7, Computer Science.

**Executive Secretary Senior**, 6764D, Grade 7, University Relations.

**Fiscal Technician Bookkeeper**, 6511G, Grade 6, DBHCC.

**Nine full-time food-operations positions available**; two part-time positions.

**Food Operations Director A/Unit Manager**, 1251H, Grade 12, Residential and Dining Programs/Owens Food Court.

**Grounds Worker Senior**, 1546S, Grade 3, Physical Plant.

**Housekeeping Worker**, 7261G, Grade 1, Recreational Sports.

**Housekeeping Worker**, 075S, Grade 1,

Physical Plant/Housekeeping.

**Housekeeping Worker**, 1220C, Grade 1, Residential and Dining Programs.

**Human Resource Generalist**, 1073T, Grade 12, Personnel Services.

**Institutional Traffic/Parking Supervisor**, 1111T, Grade 9, Parking Services.

**Office Services Specialist**, 7080M, Grade 5, CVM.

**Office Services Specialist**, 6693S, Grade 5, University Library/ILL.

**Office Services Specialist**, 6751T, Grade 5, University Honors.

**Operating Systems Analyst**, 1244D, Grade 0, AIS.

**Operating Systems Analyst**, 6824, Grade 0, DIS.

**Program Support Technician**, 1457T, Grade 6, Communication Studies.

**Program Support Technician**, 3247M, Grade 6, Biological Systems Engineering.

**Program Support Technician**, 2288J, Grade 6, Teaching/Learning.

**Program Support Technician**, 7550J, Grade 6, Teaching/Learning.

**Program Support Technician Senior**, 5651J, Grade 7, College of Engineering.

**Program Support Technician Senior**, 7548T, Grade 7, Physics.

**Program Support Technician Senior**, LC045D, Grade 7, Alumni Relations.

**Programmer Analyst**, 570S, Grade 12, University Library.

**Programmer Analyst**, 7551J, Grade 12, Teaching/Learning.

**Senior Development Associate of Annual Giving**, 6695D, Grade 10, University Development.

**Student Services Coordinator**, 2316M, Grade 10, Academic Programs, CALS.

**Trades/Utilities Lead Worker, Mechanic**, 0416H, Grade 7, Residential/Dining Programs/Culinary Services Maintenance Department.

### PART-TIME

**Animal Care Technician A**, W022155M, Grade 3, Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

**Banner Trainer Personnel Analyst**, W022958T, Grade 9, AIS Application Support.

**Banquet/Setup FOA-B**, W022143G, Grade 2, DBHCC.

**Conference Registration Specialist**

**Prog Support Tech**, W020995G, Grade 6, Continuing Education.

**Housekeeping Worker**, W020574G, Grade 1, DBHCC.

**Housekeeping Worker**, W022490H, Grade 1, Residential/Dining Programs.

**Laboratory Specialist**, W022964M, Grade 8, PPWS.

**Library Assistant**, W022944S, Grade 8, University Library.

**Office Services Assistant**, W022260M, Grade 4, Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

**Office Services Specialist**, W022929J, Grade 5, Graduate School.

**Program Support Technician**, W022188B, Grade 6, AIS/HRIS Team.

**Radiologic Technologist**, W022238G, Grade 9, Health Center.

**Starter/Marsall/Shop Attendant Office Services Aide**, W022113G, Grade 2, Golf Course.

**Storekeeper**, W022291M, Grade 4, Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

### UNIVERSITY ONLY

**Building Trades Supervisor Building/Grounds Supervisor A**, U1689P, Grade 9, Physical Plant.

**Building Trades Supervisor Building/Grounds Supervisor A**, U177P, Grade 9, Physical Plant.

**Carpenter Senior**, U581P, Grade 8, Physical Plant.

**Laboratory Manager**, U7553J, Grade 13, CCMS.

### OFF-CAMPUS

**Agricultural Technician B**, 3010M, Grade 5, Northern Piedmont Agricultural Research/Extension Center.

**Evening Announcer**, 1962D, Grade 8, WVTF.

**Laboratory Specialist**, 3985M, Grade 8, Tidewater Agricultural Research and Extension Center.

**Office Services Assistant**, 7530J, Grade 4, Henrico.

**Office Services Assistant**, 7531J, Grade 4, Richmond City.

**Program Support Technician**, 7543J, Grade 6, NVC—Computer Science.

## FACULTY POSITIONS

### INSTRUCTIONAL

**Department of Economics. Associate/Full Professor.** Contact: Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, 3016 Pamplin (0316). Review continues until position filled.

**Department of History. Assistant/Associate Professor of American History.** Contact: American History Search, Department of History (0117). Review begins March 1.

### NON-INSTRUCTIONAL

**Center for Power Electronics Systems. Outreach Director.** Contact: Fred C. Lee, CPES (0111). Review begins immediately.

**Center for Interdisciplinary Studies. Director of the Center for Science and Technology Studies/Graduate Program in Science and Technology Studies.** Contact: Barbara Carlisle, 121 Lane (0227). Review begins January 21.

**Athletics. Head Women's Volleyball Coach.** Contact: Pamela Linkous, 359 Jamerson Athletic Center (0502). Review begins March 10.

**Athletics. Administrative Assistant, Women's Basketball.** Contact: Pamela Linkous, 359 Jamerson Athletics Center (0502). Review begins March 31.

**Development and University Relations. Vice President for Development and University Relations.** Contact: Minnie Ridenour, 210 Burruss (0148). Review begins February 1.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension. Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent (re-advertisement).** #FA678. Contact: Steve Umberger, 122 Hutcheson (0437). Review begins February 7 and continues until position filled.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension. Extension Agent, Crop and Soil Science.** #FA571. Contact: Steve Umberger, 122 Hutcheson (0437). Review continues until position filled.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension. Agricultural and Natural Resources Extension Agent.** #111875. Contact: Steve Umberger, 122 Hutcheson (0437). Review begins January 17.

**Center for Interdisciplinary Studies Science and Technology Studies (STS). Assistant Professor/Associate Professor/Assistant Director of STS Graduate Program.** Contact: Gary Downey, 121 Lane (0227). Review begins February 15.

**Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. Lab Supervisor.** Manassas. Call (703) 361-5606 x110. Position open until filled.

Complete information regarding faculty positions is available at <http://www.vt.edu:10021/admin/eoaa/index.html>.

## Robinson honored for work with Maribor's MBA program

By Sookhan Ho

Management Professor Jerry Robinson was a guest speaker at the 10th anniversary celebration of the University of Maribor's MBA program last November in Maribor, Slovenia. Robinson, who discussed the importance of partnerships between universities and businesses, was given a standing ovation by the university's MBA alumni and faculty, a reflection of his long relationship with the MBA community there.

The celebration, held at the National Theatre in Maribor and its concert and opera house, "was quite an event, with many alumni returning," Robinson said. The guests included key government officials from the nation's capital in Ljubljana, representatives from other universities, and the U.S. ambassador to Slovenia.

"Maribor," he said, "is the first university in a former communist state to receive an MBA accreditation by the European Council for Business Education." Robinson received the University of Maribor's Silver Medal last year for "significant contributions" to the university's development. He is the first foreigner to receive the medal. It is similar to the Ruffner Medal at Virginia Tech.

Robinson has played a major role during

the past eight years in establishing academic ties between Virginia Tech and the University of Maribor. He helps organize an annual visit by its faculty and MBA students to Virginia Tech—seven of the 11 professors responsible for developing Maribor's MBA program have visited Virginia Tech—and to Southwest Virginia businesses. He has also helped organize visits by Maribor faculty members and students to other U.S. companies, including Boeing and Microsoft in Seattle.

Maribor is also a four-to-five-day stop for Pamplin College of Business students who participate in Robinson's annual summer study-abroad program to Europe, which compares various aspects of U.S. and European work places. "Slovene businesses," Robinson said, "are in the process of adapting to the free-market system after decades of socialist operation."

Robinson also leads Pamplin MBA students on an annual international business consulting program to Slovenia during spring break. The group has included students from Virginia Tech's part-time MBA programs in Northern Virginia and other locations around the state in addition to full-time MBA stu-

dents on campus.

"The students typically work on projects as consultants for some of these businesses in transition," Robinson said. "To date, 14 firms have hosted Pamplin students." They include a bank, a large multi-line insurance company, a steel foundry, an aluminum foundry, a hotel chain, a winery, a municipal water company, a flour and pasta company, a cotton textile producer, and a silk producer.

The MBA students are usually in Maribor for about seven days, after which they visit companies in other parts of Slovenia. (Accounting Professor James Hicks also includes a stay in Maribor in his summer study-abroad program to Europe.)

Robinson said his interest in Maribor developed out of a joint research project that involved the then dean of the business school there. That colleague, Dusan Radonjic, is now the director of the university's MBA program.

The University of Maribor published a commemorative color booklet that included many references to Virginia Tech as well as photos of MBA students from both universities during visits to each campus.



VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE  
AND STATE UNIVERSITY

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## LEFFEL

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Instructional Change.”

The director of market research, which is a new position for the Outreach Division, was established to help spur growth and development within the various outreach units but also to maintain current programs and relationships.

“The Academic Agenda identifies outreach and economic development as a priority item for the next five years,” Jones said. “Therefore, we need a strategic marketing plan that will help promote existing programs and services as well as identify and develop new initiatives and an overall direction for all areas within the Outreach Division.”

## STEGER

Continued from 1

undergird everything we do. I firmly believe in the spirit of the land-grant mission. Virginia Tech should try to make a place for all those who qualify for admission. Yet, we also should be pleased that our ever-improving student-quality profile is raising the bar for admission.

“And that brings me to my second point. The U.S. Army made this expression into a cliché, but we should not be afraid to aspire for the very best in all we can be. That includes our faculty members and the quality of their research. It includes the quality of classroom interactions. And that includes the quality of matriculating students. The pursuit of excellence is not trivial. I find it exhilarating.”

After the legislative session, Steger plans to personally work on one broad mission. “If we are to fulfill the land-grant dictate, if we are to fully satisfy the role of the modern American university, we must focus on the research and graduate-education enterprise. Excellence, in much of what we do, originates there. We must find a way to reverse sliding graduate enrollments and at the same time improve our standing among America’s great research universities,” Steger said.

At the undergraduate level, Steger is looking at several ideas including bolstering the honors program. He said, “I’m not sure yet what that will be, but among America’s leading universities, the honors program is like the soul of the undergraduate experience. It not only attracts the brightest young scholars, it serves as an inspirational beacon to the entire instructional enterprise.”

Steger also sees a continual emphasis on the topic of information technology. “So much of our world today revolves around information technology. The economic miracles in state of Virginia and the stock market, for example, owe their success to info tech. Its application to instruction is a natural. I think that information technology will be at the heart of a shakeout in higher education over the next decade. Information technology, e-commerce, and for-profit educational enterprises are putting increased pressure on traditional universities. Some colleges and universities will fail. I want Virginia Tech to not only be a survivor, but a leader in creation of information technology, or in course delivery, or as a supplier of qualified graduates to employers around the world.”

Noting that “knowledge generation is linked more closely to wealth generation than ever before,” Steger said Virginia Tech will find itself increasingly at the core of economic-development initiatives. The newly created Bioinformatics Institute is a case in point. “This new institute is a pure knowledge play. What could be more exciting and academically stimulating than gene mapping the world’s most important plants and animals? Yet, this very action could be the source of thousands of job while it tackles vexing problems...like feeding the billions of new people on earth over

## NEBULA

Continued from 1

The Rosette Nebula in the constellation Monoceros is about 5,000 light years from Earth and can be seen with a modest telescope. It has a symmetrical rose-like appearance, which gives it its name. A cluster of hot stars heats gas within the nebula’s core to nearly 18,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The gas is so hot that it emits light, much like a fluorescent tube. Much of the light emitted in the Rosette Nebula is H-alpha light from hydrogen atoms.

The Virginia Tech scientists used a special camera that they developed to detect H-alpha light and light from other atoms in space. The camera is located at a dark mountain site at

the next century.”

Steger said that over the course of the next few months, in conjunction with the administrative and faculty leadership, he will formulate his long-term goals and strategies. He plans to discuss these goals at the Founders Day convocation (April 28), which will also double as his formal installation as president. In addition to topics mentioned earlier, he also plans to address Virginia Tech’s off-campus presence, outreach activities, international studies, diversity, and the university’s planning process itself.

As soon as possible, he will begin regular meetings with faculty, staff, and student leadership. Steger said, “We’ll meet with student government and other campus leaders soon. I especially want to have some informal sessions with campus residents later in the year so I look forward to several ‘pizza sessions.’”

Pondering the future of Virginia Tech, Steger reflected on its past. “Great universities are built on the shoulders of the men and women from its past. Its great presidents, its inspirational faculty members, the bright students launching productive careers, those committed alumni working to advance the alma mater, and staffers who embody the spirit of *ut proximi*...all lead the way for us to follow.”

A Richmond native, Steger’s ties to Virginia Tech span four decades, beginning with his undergraduate studies in the 1960s. He received his bachelor and master of architecture in 1970 and 1971 respectively and a Ph.D. in environmental sciences and engineering in 1978, all from Virginia Tech. He was a project engineer and department head with Wiley and Wilson of Lynchburg from 1971 to 1974 and has consulted with organizations world wide.

When asked by a reporter shortly after his appointment why he has remained at Virginia Tech so long, Steger quickly responded, “the quality of the people at Virginia Tech, my strong belief in the value of public higher education, and the affection so many people have for the institution.” Steger’s career has taken him around the world, but his tracks are etched in Hokie stone.

Virginia Tech’s Horton Research Center. Topasna modified the camera to detect polarization of the light.

The research was sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the Horton Foundation.

“When we found strong polarization in the H-alpha light from what appeared to be the outer parts of the Rosette Nebula, I knew we were onto something,” he said. “Just as scattered sunlight from the daylight sky is polarized, we found that scattering in the dust shell surrounding the Rosette Nebula also causes polarization.” Polarization is a common phenomenon usually present when light is scattered, the astronomers said, and many brands of sunglasses use this property of scattered light to reduce glare. Topasna already has evidence that similar effects are seen around other bright nebulae, such as the North America Nebula, so-called because of its crude resemblance to North America.

The trio is carrying out a highly sensitive survey of hydrogen gas between the stars. Their camera produces digital images that can be manipulated in a computer. Topasna, who implemented the polarization technique for his Ph.D. thesis, will present the results at the AAS meeting.

Topasna can be reached at 1-8757 or via e-mail at [topasna@astro.phys.vt.edu](mailto:topasna@astro.phys.vt.edu).

## OBITUARY

## Mary Dills Taylor Pauley, 53

Mary Dills Taylor Pauley died Sunday, Jan. 9, at the age of 53. She was a Tech employee for 22 years, serving the Graduate School for 20 years.

humanistic perspectives. Virginia Tech offers a vision of the humanities that is unique and valuable.”

The application process helped Virginia Tech humanities-program representatives “understand our resources and how we can collaborate—from curriculum development to outreach and policy development,” said Puckett, who is one of 14 regional Appalachian Program directors. “I am very much in favor of pooling resources across institutions. Information technology makes it possible to collaborate and it is crucial that we do so.”

She said that every aspect of the proposal can be addressed by Virginia Tech’s humanities resources, which include strong legacies in historical preservation and research, such as Bud Robertson and the Civil War Institute and Crandall Shifflett and the Virtual Jamestown Project, also funded by the NEH.

“The NEH also responded to the technology component in our joint proposal,” she said. “Through the work of Roger Ehrich, Jack Carroll, and others in computer science, Tim Luke in political science, Jim Bohland in urban affairs, Len Hatfield and Dan Mosser in English, and the Blacksburg Electronic Village initiative, Virginia Tech has applied Internet technology to educational, humanistic, and community-based learning.

The final grant to implement the South Atlantic Regional Humanities Center will be awarded in late 2000 or early 2001. NEH will award \$5 million in matching funds to one institution, including consortia, to implement their plans. Each recipient must match this amount three to one, raising \$15 million over seven years. The goal is for each of 10 centers nationwide to have a \$20 million endowment to support regional humanities research, education, preservation and public programs.

If the consortium is successful, the regional center will be based in Charlottesville, according to the VFH. It will be governed by a region-wide advisory board and staffed by the VFH. “All partners will collaborate to ensure that people will have access to the region’s complex and intriguing history by providing advanced Internet and computer programming at the center. In addition to its commitment to public programming and scholarly research, a strong focus will be placed on developing cultural-heritage tourism in the South Atlantic region.”

Faculty members interested in participating in the planning effort may contact Puckett at [apuckett@vt.edu](mailto:apuckett@vt.edu).

## NEH

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her with the NEH announcement of the Initiative for Regional Humanities Centers, she contacted Robert Bates, the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, and Joe Merola to put together a team to submit a proposal. The support of the provost has been very welcome by those of us in the humanities.”

Meszaros said, “This grant will enable our faculty members and students to play a more prominent and visible role in the region. We bring many strengths to the table. I feel very strongly about support for the humanities and brought the faculty members together some time ago to look for ways to leverage our strengths in a unique partnership with U.Va. and other collaborators. I am very pleased to see the recognition given through the planning grant to our strengths and what may be an outstanding regional partnership.”

Virginia Tech’s Center for Interdisciplinary Studies (CIS) took the lead in establishing the collaboration. “The center offers resources that foster and encourage the NEH’s goals,” Puckett said. “The NEH wants interdisciplinary centers and Tech’s Center for Interdisciplinary Studies has as its goals the kind of cross-disciplinary collaboration that NEH has called for. “CIS programs in Humanities, Appalachian Studies, and Humanities, Science, and Technology closely conform to these goals. Other CIS programs in Women’s Studies, Black Studies, Judaic Studies, and Religious Studies also embrace interdisciplinary approaches to humanistic issues. Our programs have a regional reputation and we have scholars of national repute.”

Barbara Carlisle, CIS chair, said, “Virginia Tech and CIS brings to the grant a new way of seeing technology and the sciences through

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