Diversity Summit evaluates university’s progress

By Clara B. Cox

Over 100 representatives from the university’s diverse communities, including members of the faculty, staff, administration, and student body, met in January to discuss and assess diversity at Virginia Tech and to offer suggestions for improving the campus climate.

The summit provided the Virginia Tech community with an opportunity to examine some of its practices and norms that might be barriers to creating a truly diverse and inclusive community. Creating a forum where diverse voices could join together in civil discourse was a major feat. While divergent opinions were shared, they were shared in a manner in which the dialogue was not hampered,” said Barbara Pendergrass, dean of students and summit coordinator.

Sponsored by the Division of Student Affairs and the Office of the Vice President for Multicultural Affairs, the university’s second annual Diversity Summit drew suggestions from 16 diverse campus communities about what the university should start doing, what it should stop doing, and what it should continue doing to create a welcoming environment for all people.

Among those things the participants decided the university should stop are “thinking and acting like diversity is a stand-alone topic that is the responsibility of certain offices,” “the disparity between words and actions,” “viewing diversity as an obligation,” “relying on under-represented populations to bring diversity issues to light,” “pandering to a segregationist past,” “making excuses regarding data,” and “treating incidents of discrimination as only the problem of a particular group since discrimination is a problem for all of society.”

Summit participants said they would like to see the university start transforming the “curriculum to reflect diversity of cultures, aesthetics, and histories”; “teaching strategically to mainstream diversity, using some of the same successful strategies as used for technology, outreach, and international programs”; observing “ethnic and religious holidays that are observed nationally”; requiring a “core class on diversity”; “using more inclusive language, pictures, posters, and examples”; and putting more diverse executive body with responsibilities other than those related to diversity”; and setting “an example in the classroom of open-mindedness.”

The participants also recognized the programs and activities already under way that should be continued and, in some cases, expanded. Among them are “mixed meals,” “cultural dialogues,” “human diversity,” and “messaging from diversity to multi-culturalism.”

In all, the communities made 48 recommendations for each of the start, stop, and continue categories. Every community represented at the summit selected a representative, who reported his or her respective community’s final three recommendations in each of the three areas to the entire summit.

“It’s amazing how the participants produced such a rich and broad set of recommendations in such a short amount of time. We are pleased that the process we came up with was so productive,” said Benjamin Dixon, vice president for multicultural affairs.

At the beginning of the three-hour summit, Pendergrass reported on programs and activities added by the university since the first summit in January 1998. Among those she mentioned were an Office of Multicultural Affairs and the appointment of Dixon as vice president for multicultural affairs; the identification by students of Comfort Zones; the establishment of a Campus Climate Task Force; the re-classification of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Alliance to a university-chartered student organization; the cussions emphasizing a university-wide diversity website; the appointment of an associate dean for diversity and curriculum in the College of Arts and Sciences; and the return of the Minority Graduate Transition Retreat to introduce graduate students to Virginia Tech.

Communities represented at the summit included Appalachian, Native American, Jewish, black, Hispanic, women, Asian, sexual minorities, and persons with differing abilities. Faculty members (Faculty Senate), administrators, students, and staff members (Staff Senate) represented the university at large.

The recommendations of what the university should start, stop, and continue will soon be distributed by the Office of Multicultural Affairs to deans, directors, and department heads as well as to various committees and councils.

Institute Designed to Aid Teachers

By Jean Elliott

At a time when so many schools are concerned with improving students’ Standards of Learning scores, the Institute for Connecting Science Research to the Classroom is taking a leadership role in helping teachers find new and innovative ways to re-vitalize math and science programs.

Co-founded through the Virginia Tech College of Human Resources and Education, the institute brings teachers and professors together in collaborative teams to develop learning applications for K-12 based on actual research projects at the university. As a result, students connect with practicing scientists to investigate “real-world” problems such as the causes for deformities in certain frog populations, management of the brucellosis problem in the Greater Yellowstone area and identification of plants with pharmacological potential.

Following a year spent in developing research applications for K-12, the institute is now assisting teachers to infuse appropriate technologies in the science lab as students learn to extract DNA from fruits and vegetables, use robotics to perform repetitive tasks and explore online virtual environments.

Science, math and technology educators across Virginia can learn how to connect their classrooms to this leading-edge research at the institute’s third annual conference for Teaching Inquiry with the Latest Technologies. The conference, held Feb. 22-23, will focus on helping teachers create new strategies for teaching the Virginia SOLs.

World-renowned paleontologist John R. “Jack” Horner will present the keynote address on exploring ways to teach students about scientific principles and concepts in biology, engineering and chemistry using dinosaurs as the medium.

As curator of paleontology at the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, Mont., Horner discovered the first dinosaur eggs in North America, the first dinosaur embryos

Cohen joins OMA staff

By Clara B. Cox

Alicia P. Cohen, former coordinator of leadership development in University Union and Student Activities, has assumed new duties in the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) as assistant to the vice president for multicultural affairs. In the job, Cohen assists Vice President Benjamin Dixon in the administration of daily operations, project management, long-range planning, and analytical functions.

According to Dixon, Cohen will be working on special projects and reports, developing presentation materials, representing the multicultural affairs office at on- and off-campus meetings, and interacting on behalf of OMA with the university community and other constituents of the office.

Cohen brings a range of relevant experience to the job. Dixon said. In her previous job, Cohen helped teach courses in leadership, advised the Student Government Association, planned and facilitated the Summer
Events

Thursday, 18
Bloodmobile, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Squires.
YMCA Slide Show, noon, Cranwell Coliseum: "A Two-Week Bike Tour to Southern China," by Dave Jenkins.
Staff Senate Meeting, 5:30 p.m., 1810 Linton Reaves.
Black History Month Program: 7 p.m., Black Cultural Center, Squires: Discussion/Forum.
Women's Basketball, 7 p.m. At La Salle.

Friday, 19
International Club Coffee Hour, 5 p.m., Cranwell Center: "The Spanish-American War of 1898 and 100 years of U.S.-Cuban Relations Revisited," by Sonuo Muro, Cuba.

Saturday, 20
Men's Basketball, 2 p.m., Cassell Coliseum: Dayton.
Black History Month/Cultural Program, 8 p.m., Burruss auditorium: "Harlem Nights."
University Chamber Music Series. 8 p.m., Squires Recital Salon: The Kandinsky Trio.

Sunday, 21
Engineers’ Week Begins.
YMCA Hike, 1:30 p.m., meet in parking lot 403 Washington St.: Pandapas Pond.
Women's Basketball, noon, Cassell Coliseum: George Washington.
University Chamber Music Series. 3 p.m., Squires Recital Salon: The Kandinsky Trio.
Student Recital, 8 p.m., Squires Recital Salon: Amanda Meseke.

Monday, 22
Faculty Development Workshop, 10 a.m.-noon, 234 WMH and 463 NEB: “Teaching Strategies for Videoconferencing Courses.”
Buffet Lunch, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., DBHCC: Cajun Fare.
Faculty Development Workshop, 3-5 p.m., Newman Classroom A: “Using Adobe Premier 5.0 and Apple QuickTime 3.0.”
Black History Month Program, 6:30 p.m., Squires Black Cultural Center: Lecture and Film on Black Panthers.

Tuesday, 23
Faculty Development Workshop, 10 a.m.-noon, NMC, Newman Library: “Creating Web-Based Courses Using CourseRoom.”
VTOnline/IDDL Workshop, 2 p.m., 502 Major Williams: “Basic Classroom Design and Construction for On-Line Education.”

Activities

Wednesday, 24
YMCA Mornings, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Luther Memorial Church: "Indonesian Cooking."
Faculty Development Workshop, 3-5 p.m., NMC, Newman Library: “Introduction to Visualization Tools for Designers.”
"With Good Reason," 7 p.m., WVTY: "Virtually Virginia," with Randy Shullfert.
Men’s Basketball, 7:30 p.m.: At George Washington.

Thursday, 25
Faculty Development Workshop, 10 a.m.-noon, 234 WMH: "Planning a Web-Based Course."
Multicultural Program, noon, Black Cultural Center: "Is Judaism Strongest in Times of Persecution?"
YMCA Slide Show, noon, Cranwell Center: "Glimpses of Prague and Southern Bohemia," by Beth Thomas.
Black History Month Program, 7 p.m., Squires Colonial Ballroom: Keynote by Gwendolyn Goldsby Grant.
Book Reading/Signing, 7 p.m., Volume Two: R.T. Smith.
Guest Recital, 8 p.m., Squires Recital Salon: Louise Bilblass.
TAUT Mainstage Production, 8 p.m., Squires Haymarket Theatre: Into the Woods.

Seminars

Thursday, 18
Chemical Engineering, 4 p.m., 313 Randolph: "Transport of Growth Factors Through the Extracellular Matrix: Implications for Drug Delivery and Tissue Engineering," by Matthew Nugent, Boston U.
Entomology, 4 p.m., 220 Price: TBA, by Jeff Walters.
Geological Sciences, 4 p.m., 2044 Dering: "A Cooks Tour of Carbonates from the Poles to the Tropics, Australia and New Zealand," by Fred Read.

Friday, 19
MCBR, noon, 102 Farlin: "Growth Factor-Proteoglycan Dynamics: Implications for Cell Growth Control," by Matthew Nugent, Boston U.

Bullets

Geographic Society announces next speaker
The next colloquium in the Geography Series will be Friday, Feb. 19 at 4 p.m. in 136 McBryde. John Boyer will give a talk titled “Diffusion of Wine from Mesopotamia to Modern Virginia.”

Volunteer fair set for March 1
"Ut Prosim: That I May Serve" Month will hold a volunteer fair on March 1, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. in Squires Commonwealth Ballroom. The fair is a joint effort between Tech student organizations and the New River Valley community-service agencies to honor the visit of General Colin Powell. The fair is open to the public.

OMDK seeks membership nominations
Omicron Delta Kappa is a national leadership honor society with sixty-five-year old history. Omicron chapter seeks to honor outstanding undergraduate juniors and/or seniors, graduate students, administration (faculty or staff members), and alumni (who have graduated at least five years) for membership into the society. Those nominees should demonstrate exemplary character, responsible leadership and service in campus or community life, superior scholarship, genuine fellowship and consecration to democratic ideals.

President for Multicultural Affairs
The public is welcome. RSVP to the Office of Multicultural Affairs at 1-820,TTY 1-8871, or by e-mail to okinowv. Anyone requiring special accommodations to participate should call these numbers or e-mail the office.


Geographic Society, 4 p.m., 136 McBryde: "Diffusion of Wine from Mesopotamia to Modern Virginia," by John Boyer.

Science/Technology Studies Center, 4-5:30 p.m., 132 Lane: "Selecting Students Scientifically; the Medical College Admission Test and the Debate About Criteria for Admission to Medical School, 1920-1940," by Charlotte Borst, St. Louis.

Monday, 22
Electrical/Computer Engineering, noon, 654 Whittemore: Topic TBA.

Tuesday, 23
Electrical/Computer Engineering, 3:30 p.m., 300 Whittemore: "Smart Materials and Applications," by D.J. Inman.

Wednesday, 24
Southern Pine Council, 1 p.m., DBHCC: "Engineered Wood Systems."

Electrical/Computer Engineering, 4 p.m., 654 Whittemore: "Optimal Design of Rotating Machinery," by V. Steffen.

Thursday, 25

Entomology, 4 p.m., 220 Price: "Management and Ecology of Spruce Cone Maggots in Atlantic Canada," by Jon Sweeney, Canadian Forest Service.

Task force will look at undergraduate advising
Virginia Tech’s task force on academic advising will hold the second in its series of Afternoon Chats on undergraduate advising Friday, Feb. 19, at 3:30 p.m. in the Yorktown Room of Squires Student Center. The topic for discussion will be student/advisor responsibilities in an advising relationship.

Governor’s meeting tapes viewing set
Governor James Gilmore conducted four Governor’s Employee Town Hall Meetings last year. At the meetings, employees commented on and asked about issues such as compensation, healthcare and retirement, and wage or hourly employment.

Tapes of the meetings have been distributed to each agency and employees who wish to view the tapes may do so on agency time without impacting their leave balances. Two open sessions have been scheduled on February 25 and March 1 for faculty and staff members to view the video of the Roanoke session. Employees do not have to register, but they should coordinate their attendance with their supervisors before leaving the work site. Sessions are scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 25, from 8:30-10:30 p.m. in the DBHCC front auditorium, and Monday, March 1, from 1:30-3:30 p.m. in the DBHCC front auditorium.
Tech center to aid access to employment

By Susan Trulove
The Virginia Tech Center for Transportation Research (CTR) has begun work on a $50,000 project with local organizations and citizens to develop a service called AGG-ITES. The CTR service is intended to benefit low-income residents who need transportation to prepare for, secure, and maintain jobs, said Stephanie Herbert, the project manager for the CTR portion of the project.

ACCESS TO JOBS will transport clients of the Montgomery County Department of Social Services (DSS), New River Community Action (NRCA), and the New River Family Shelter (NRFS) to job-related activities such as GED programs and job training.

Client trips will be coordinated using a dynamic-database-and-dispatch system the CTR is designing that will match trip requests to the nearest available transportation resources to create the most efficient route and schedule. Herbert says she believes the ACCESS TO JOBS system will make finding the resources for and scheduling client trips much easier than the manual system currently employed, and will allow our non-profit and community partners to focus their energy and resources on direct service.

Project funding, including in-kind contributions, is split about evenly between the CTR’s Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Implementation Center and several community groups and agencies. Major partners include the Managing Information for Rural America Team (MIRA) and the Voluntary Action Center (VAC). The MIRA Team is a group of Blacksburg residents responsible for administering a $15,000 Keough grant designed to help people living in rural America use Information Technology to improve their communities. Because transportation has been identified by the Virginia Department of Social Services as a major barrier to employment in Montgomery County, the CTR and MIRA Team began working together to craft the idea, build the support, and generate the resources needed for the project to succeed.

To make ACCESS TO JOBS a viable service, the CTR and the MIRA Team are partnering with the Voluntary Action Center. “Building a relationship with VAC is critical because the service will be run with the help of volunteers and local civic organizations,” said Aaron Schroeder, the co-director of CTR’s ITS Implementation Center. VAC seeks, among other things, to involve citizens in the fight against poverty. VAC will not only assist in volunteer management, but the project will be run out of their offices at the Wesley Foundation.

“I believe it is this type of project, where the university teams with local community groups and agencies to help address local social problems, that stands the best chance at continued success,” Schroeder said. “Together the CTR, the MIRA Team, and VAC hope to begin to address the major barrier to economic independence that is reliable rural transport.”

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ever unearthed and the largest bed of dinosaur bones ever found. He is noted for his scientific discovery that dinosaur eggs were a single egg rather than a dozen, as was thought.

The conference provides further opportunities for the institute to broker connections between K-12 teachers and researchers. Topics range from paleontology to the model for learning about NASA K-12 summer teacher workshops; from web sites to DNA technologies. During the closing session at the conference, Nicholas C. Franz, curator of vertebrate paleontology at the Virginia Museum of Natural History, will explain how teachers can be eligible to participate in a dinosaur dig this summer.

Keown is also active in student advising. As the faculty advisor to the Finance Club since 1990, he has helped students to New York to visit stock exchanges, banks, and brokerage houses. He also advises the students Chapter of the Financial Management Association.

Keown was head of the finance department for nine years before returning to full-time teaching in 1991. A fellow of the Decision Sciences Institute, he is co-editor of the Financial Management Association’s Survey and Synthesis Series and co-editor of the Journal of Financial Research. He has spoken on personal investing strategies as the Pamplin College’s representative at the American Finance Association, as well as at the annual public-lecture series to celebrate the university’s 125th anniversary.

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She has been a member of the Women’s Leadership Program Planning Committee and a presenter for the Multicultural Programs Leadership Institute, editor of the American College Personnel Association-convention publications, a trained facilitator for Project SAFE (Sexual Assault Family Education), and a member of the Virginia Association of Student Personnel Administrators (VASPA) Student Leadership Conference, a member-at-large of the VASPA executive board, and a member of the board of Student Affairs Staff Development Committee. She is also trained in team facilitation and team management.

Cohen holds a master’s degree in college and university administration from Michigan State University.

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Keown is a 25-year veteran of Virginia Tech. He joined the university after receiving a doctorate in business administration from Indiana University in 1974. An award-winning teacher, Keown has received five Certificates of Teaching Excellence, a Wine Award, and the Alumni Teaching Excellence Award. Keown has taught exclusively at the undergraduate level for the past nine years. His typical teaching load consists of mass sections of Corporate Finance, a core course for business majors. Despite his large classes (up to 600 or more students), students have, in end-of-terms evaluations, consistently praised Keown’s enthusiasm and dedication, his ability to make the study of finance fun, and his respect and concern for them.

Two of Keown’s books—Basic Financial Management and Foundations of Finance: The Logic and Practice of Financial Management—are used in college finance classes in 16 Virginia universities and colleges and in others all over the country. His latest book, Personal Finance: Turning Money into Wealth, was published last year by Prentice-Hall.

Keown has also developed a variety of innovative instructional materials, including web sites, study guides, readings, and lecture planners. The web site he created to complement his new book provides the student with web-based exercises and discussions tied to links to about 850 related sites.

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