Cross-cutting initiatives’ needs assessed, strategies to be implemented

By Catherine Doss

After nearly three years since their conception, Virginia Tech’s seven cross-cutting initiatives (CCI’s) have seen a number of successes, everything from a slick, high-visibility television advertising campaign, to a unique multi-million-dollar biotechnology partnership with Carilion Health System and the University of Virginia.

“One of our greatest successes has been the way various disciplines have come together, developed joint initiatives, and have given us something to build upon in the future,” said Senior Vice President and Provost Peggy S. Meszaros. “I know of no other university that has taken this approach to identifying its niches and capitalizing on them. Virginia Tech will continue to make a name for itself, especially in those seven areas.”

The seven CCI’s are biosciences and biotechnology; computing, information, and communications technology; environmental sciences and energy systems; food, nutrition, and health; learning communities; materials science; and transportation. These areas were identified as established or emerging strengths of the university and were selected because they address critical state and national needs and have the potential for significant external resources and partnerships.

The CCI committees, all faculty-led, developed a case statement, gap analysis, needs assessment, and recommendations for each initiative.

Meszaros recently allocated funding based on recommendations from each committee:

- **Biosciences and Biotechnology**
  - Resource allocation for improved infrastructure and additional faculty members;
  - Launching of the Carilion Biomedical Institute;
  - Proposal for a major bioinformatics initiative (still under consideration in the General Assembly);
  - Hiring of an outreach and distance-education coordinator

- **Computing, Information Systems, and Communications Technology**
  - Addition of new faculty members as part of state base appropriations;
  - Creation of masters degree in information technology;
  - Creation of the Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning;
  - Establishment of the Information Technology Advisory Council.

- **Environmental Sciences and Energy Systems**
  - Support for establishment of an Energy and Environmental Council;
  - Allocation of resources to the development of communications and marketing materials.

- **Food, Nutrition, and Health**
  - Development of a new institute to focus on the synergistic character of the joint (See CROSS-CUTTING on 3)

Engineering offering dual degrees

By Liz Crumbley

The College of Engineering is working with three other Virginia schools—Longwood College, Radford University, and Sweet Briar College—to offer dual undergraduate degrees.

These dual-degree programs allow students to begin their studies at one of the liberal arts schools and finish at Virginia Tech, earning two degrees in five years. Students from Longwood and Sweet Briar will earn a B.S. or B.A. in physics from Virginia Tech.

The College of Engineering has a similar program with Roanoke College for several years, said Bev Wafford, associate dean for academic affairs for engineering. "Programs like these are common practice and are done in the spirit of cooperation," Wafford said.

Colleges without engineering programs usually initiate the exchanges, and Virginia Tech benefits by attracting transfer students with excellent grades and encouraging goodwill and diversity. Watford expects the programs to draw one or two students annually from each of the three schools.

“Sweet Briar initiated the program with Virginia Tech to help attract students who want the opportunity to study engineering as well as liberal arts,” said Scott Hyman, associate professor of physics at Sweet Briar. The dual degrees make graduates more attractive to employers, he said.

Students who enroll in the program will be ready for engineering studies at Virginia Tech after only two years at Sweet Briar, Hyman said. The participants will

Team formed to implement graduate review

By Catherine Doss

A 10-member implementation team, chaired by Peter Eyre, dean of the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, will conduct a thorough review of the Graduate School at Virginia Tech. The group was formed in response to recommendations made by last year’s Graduate Education Review Task Force, chaired by Joe Pitt. The implementation team will carry out the review as its first task during the 2000 calendar year.

“This is the first step in implementation of the recommendations in last year’s report,” said Peggy S Meszaros, senior vice president and provost. “It is a critical task if we are to enhance our status as a major research university and center for graduate education as stated in the Academic Agenda.”

In its report, submitted last November, the Graduate Education Review Task Force cited several major changes that are affecting graduate education nationally. These included more intense competition for graduate students, changing graduate-student profile, changes in the structure of graduate education as well as the structure and character of academic research, changing career opportunities for new Ph.D. students, and changing availability of resources. The task force recommended ways to address these changes in relation to recruitment, retention, placement, and resources within the graduate program at Virginia Tech.

Members of the implementation task force are Robert Bush, wood science and forest products; Claire Vaughan, educational leadership and policy studies; Walter O’Brian, mechanical engineering; Elizabeth Graham, plant pathology, physiology, and weed science; James Brown, marketing; Joe Scarpace, urban affairs and planning; Bob Rogers, mathematics; Julia Reamish, new
EXEMPLARY NOMINATIONS SOUGHT

Each year the university recognizes academic departments or programs that have demonstrated outstanding achievement in maintaining an excellent teaching and learning environment for students and faculty members. This year, the departments and programs will be recognized for their work in increasing diversity of faculty and staff members, and students, and/or enhancing multi-cultural perspectives in teaching, research, and outreach programs. Special attention will be given to programs and initiatives that have demonstrated results and outcomes. The recognition includes two $10,000 awards and a $20,000 award to the university community.

Nominations are encouraged from students, faculty members, and from others who have benefited from the work of the department in the area of diversity.

Letters of nominations not to exceed two pages should describe the linking of research with particular concentration of the department in the area of diversity. Topics that have emerged in previous conversations include making connections: The Caring Dimension of Teaching.”

Example nominations sought

- Chemistry and Physics during fall semester 1999.
- The College of Engineering (AOE).
- The Department of Aerospace and Ocean Engineering (AOE).
- The strength of our programs and of the diligence and hard work of our faculty and graduate students also have a long history of winning the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics’ Student Design Competition.
- Grossman cited other evidence that Virginia Tech’s aerospace program is a national leader. In 1999 the program was ranked first in the nation in U.S. News & World Report’s survey of engineering-school classes. Aerospace students also have a long history of winning the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics’ Student Design Competition.
- Grossman said researchers in several Virginia Tech departments, including AOE, electrical and computer engineering, engineering science and mechanics, and mechanical engineering, publish papers on the subject of aerospace engineering.
EMPLOYMENT

CLASSIFIED POSITIONS

Public Relations Specialist, 7549J, Grade 10, Center for Transportation Research, Recreation Center Supervisor (Recreation Sup B), 6956G, Grade 7, University Unions/Student Activities.

Security Guard (Parking Enforcement Off.), W022451T, Grade 5, Parking Services.

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

Student Programs Coordinator, LC05D, Grade 12, Alumni Relations.

Trades Utility Worker (Maintenance Engineer), 7589G, Grade 3, DBHCC.

Alumni Relations Staff, 1005G, Grade 7, Office of Development.

Auditor, 7055G, Grade 6, Financial Planning.

Classified Positions Coordinator, 1011T, Grade 10, Office of University Relations.

E-Reserve server.

Reserve very user friendly. A majority of the students and faculty members can use the system wherever they have Internet access, for example, in the residence halls, in the libraries, or in public places such as coffee shops or cafes.

At Virginia Tech, E-Reserve is a central location for students and faculty to access course materials at any time from anywhere. It beats the traditional library reserve materials and makes them available on line 24 hours a day, seven days a week, wherever students and faculty happen to be. E-Reserve allows faculty members to use copyrighted materials for one semester without requesting permission from the copyright holder. It is a closed system accessible only by the university community, but students and faculty members can use the system wherever they have Internet access.

Documents linked to E-Reserve vary from simple PDF files to sophisticated web sites supporting both faculty and student access. Some documents may be password protected. However, students and faculty members may access these resources at any time from anywhere.

By Caryl Gray

By Karen Gilbert

The Industrial and Systems Engineering (ISE) Department is celebrating its 80th anniversary this year. The ISE Department was established in 1920 as the Department of Commercial Engineering.

Only four programs in industrial engineering were in existence in the United States before this date, with Penn State University being one of them. One of the Advisory Board’s latest projects is a new Student Design Center for ISE students to facilitate team presentations, which will be equipped with all of the latest in communications and group presentation technology. This equipment will be used extensively by students enrolled in the ISE Senior Design course who work in teams, some having students from other universities in France and Puerto Rico, to solve real-world problems for a variety of industries.

More than 4,600 ISE alumni have gone on to careers in industry. Many have achieved high-ranking positions of leadership, many in high-ranking positions of executive leadership or as professors at high-ranking universities. Many have also retired from their careers.

By Caryl Gray

“The wonderful thing about electronic reserve is that it is available at all times, and is very user friendly. A majority of the students and faculty members can use the system wherever they have Internet access, for example, in the residence halls, in the libraries, or in public places such as coffee shops or cafes. E-Reserve allows faculty members to use copyrighted materials for one semester without requesting permission from the copyright holder. It is a closed system accessible only by the university community, but students and faculty members can use the system wherever they have Internet access and web access.

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Electronic reserves are non-profit publications of the Office of University Relations. This column is written by Karen Gilbert, associate director for Public Affairs.

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Students Success Grants to take new renewed-funding approach

By Catherine Dors

For the first time, Virginia Tech’s Student Success Grants will be eligible for renewed annual funding. The grants, sponsored by the Office of the Provost, are designed to foster innovative approaches to assisting undergraduate students who are at risk for academic probation. The Student Success initiative, now in its third year, is directly linked to the academic-eligibility policy that requires students to maintain a 2.0 quality credit average (QCA).

Proposals will be accepted starting February 24 for grants for the 2000-01 academic year. Faculty members who have been awarded current projects may reapply for funding. In addition, non-Student Success grant projects may apply for funding through the program. The grants are divided into two categories: intervention projects and research projects.

Selection criteria for intervention projects include projects that foster collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs; include student participation in the planning process; include undergraduate involvement; demonstrate the ability to implement a strong evaluation plan; increase student interaction with faculty members; and involve students in small-group activities.

Research grants, designed to support evaluation of programs that currently enhance undergraduate student success, must include a process analysis and a detailed plan for analyzing student outcomes.

Intervention proposals are normally funded in the range of $25,000; however, with appropriate justification, a few proposals may be funded at amounts up to $50,000. Research proposals are funded up to $5,000.

“Our intent with the new approach this year is to enable current worthy projects to receive renewed funding,” said David R. Ford, vice provost for academic affairs. “It is not an automatic renewal, though. The proposals much justify renewed funding based on the assessment of their outcomes.”

The deadline for submitting proposals is March 25. Submit one original and four copies of the proposal to Ford, vice provost for academic affairs, 330 Burruss (0132). Recipients will be notified by May 1.

For more information, contact Elaine Humphrey at 1-9595 or by e-mail at elaineh@vt.edu or access http://

IN OTHER NEWS

Serving students better–Halal and Kosher foods now available at Owens food court

By Lori Greiner

Virginia Tech’s Culinary Services has introduced several new halal and kosher food entries to its Dining Food Court menu in an effort to better serve its diverse student population. Muslim and Jewish students now have more on-campus dining options that meet their religious dietary guidelines.

With collaboration from Muslim and Jewish student groups, using advanced technology, and Culinary Services’ commitment to meet all student needs, a cost-effective program was developed that offers halal and kosher foods in only two minutes.

“There are very few universities in the United States that serve both halal and kosher foods,” said Rick Johnson, director of Culinary Services.

“We take pride in honoring every individual’s culture and religious guidelines, and meeting a student’s religiously mandated dietary needs is part of a quality experience.”

The data collected from these surveys assist the University Libraries in its continuing work to support the instruction efforts of the faculty and to improve library services. In addition to the student survey, a faculty survey has been developed to gather data from faculty members about their experiences with E-Reserve. The faculty survey is located on the E-Reserve “Instructions for Instructors” page at http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ereserve/instructions/instructors.

The CCI’s also served as the basis for two major-achievement brochures, symposiums, and legislative receptions to be held in the coming years. The CCI also will serve as the basis for two television advertising campaigns created through the University Relations and funded by the Virginia Tech Foundation.

By identifying and focusing on these seven areas of pre-eminence, the university has been granted tremendous opportunities for visibility,” Meszaros said. “Plants for 2000-01 include revisiting the case statements to update information and evaluation of the progress in closing the gaps with our competition.”

Meszaros said new plans also call for increased visibility. A major achievement brochure, symposiums, and legislative receptions will be considered.

In the coming weeks, the CCI committees will be changing their composition, as most committee members agreed to serve three years.

“We have some individuals who want to rotate off their committee and others who want to stay closely involved,” Meszaros said. This by no means the end of the cross-cutting initiatives. They will continue to guide the university in its strategic planning for years to come.”

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