University strategic plan approved by Board of Visitors

As Virginia Tech enters the 21st century, we are mindful of the key role the university plays in the development of productive citizens and future professionals, of the contributions of our faculty and students to the generation of new knowledge, and of the impact on multiple levels of community and society.

The Virginia Tech Strategic Plan 2001-2006

After more than one year of effort including sessions with the university Board of Visitors, six meetings of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and input from countless staff and faculty members, the university strategic plan is now a reality. At its regular quarterly meeting on Monday, the Board of Visitors formally adopted the Virginia Tech Strategic Plan for 2001-2006.

“I am very pleased with our overall direction as well as specific goals and tasks enumerated in the plan. It describes the framework necessary for achieving top-30 ranking by the end of the decade,” said James Turner, university rector.

In the plan’s introduction, President Charles Steger said, “In order to be successful in raising its national and international reputation, Virginia Tech must have a cluster of programs that are considered to be among the best in the world.”

Steger added, “Our extended community of faculty members, friends, students, alumni, and government leaders has enthusiastically endorsed the notion that Virginia Tech can be one of the nation’s leading academic institutions. Becoming a top-30 university means raising the bar of excellence for all our programs. It means adding depth to the breadth of academic expertise. It means building on our strengths and maintaining world-class excellence while at the same time helping new departments and programs achieve international respect.”

Former interim provost Jim Bohland summarized the plan and the university future in this way, “Continue to look for bold initiatives in IT, a range of emerging critical technologies, various aspects of bioengineering, biomedical, and health applications, a new way of doing business in Northern Virginia, and strengthening of social sciences, fine arts, and humanities.”

Bohland will continue his personal involvement in many new projects. Earlier this month new Provost Mark McNamie appointed.

New faculty consulting program aids businesses

A university-sponsored faculty consulting program approved recently by the Board of Visitors is accelerating the rate at which Virginia Tech provides businesses with technical assistance, according to C. Clark Jones, vice provost for outreach. The Technical Assistance Program enables businesses to tap faculty expertise quickly when process-related or technical challenges necessitate a near-immediate response.

Jones said the program, active as a pilot project since 1998, has 20 to 30 projects completed or under way. Lead time between businesses contacting Tech and faculty members starting work on the projects has been as little as two to three working days.

“Our ability to respond quickly and thoroughly to businesses with technical challenges is no secret to the hundreds of companies Tech has served since its inception,” Jones said. “The Technical Assistance Program provides a new framework for this outreach to the business community, enabling entrepreneurs and business owners to access more quickly and efficiently the resources Tech can apply to help solve their everyday problems.” The program is one of Virginia Tech’s economic-development contributions to the state, he said.

The Technical Assistance Program addresses projects that are short in duration, do not involve the generation of new knowledge or intellectual property, and generally do not exceed $25,000 in direct costs. Examples of projects from the Grado Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering (ISEE), the first to deploy the program on a trial basis, include an organizational-transformation planning and aids businesses.

Tech assessing institutional effectiveness

By Clara B. Cox

Following on the heels of a State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) mandate in November 2000, Virginia Tech has developed a plan to measure its competency in teaching students how to write and is developing another plan to measure its students’ technology literacy.

The SCHEV mandate, which grew from Governor James Gilmore’s Blue Ribbon Commission recommendation, requires state colleges and universities to develop and execute plans for assessing institutional effectiveness in six areas between 2001 and 2004: writing, technology literacy, oral communication, scientific reasoning, critical thinking, and quantitative or mathematical skills.

SCHEV selected the first two areas for measurement during the current academic year. The schedule for evaluating the remaining four areas has not been set.

The state council provided some of the guidelines and criteria for the process, but in general the colleges and universities must define the measures themselves. “This has proven to be much more difficult than expected,” said Dixon Hanna, associate provost for academic planning, resources, and space, who is directing Tech’s efforts for the Office of the Provost.

SCHEV has already approved Tech’s approach to evaluate student writing, which may be the easiest area to assess, according to Provost Mark McNamie. The university’s plan focuses on a common writing assignment for students taking English courses. From 3,600 papers to be written by students this fall, 400 will be scored by two additional reviewers.

Peters Foundation to establish Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine

A Roanoke-based private foundation with strong ties to Virginia Tech, has announced plans to open a college of osteopathic medicine in Blacksburg.

The Board of Directors of the Harvey W. Peters Foundation disclosed its intentions Monday to establish the Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine. The medical college intends to begin operation later this year and ultimately plans to enroll its first class of students in the fall of 2003.

The osteopathic college will be the second major medical entity spawned by the Harvey Peters Foundation. The Harvey W. Peters Research Center for the Study of Parkinson’s Disease and Other Central Nervous System Disorders was established at Virginia Tech through an endowment of the late Marion Bradley Via, a Roanoke philanthropist. The Bradley Department of Electrical Engineering was named in honor of the family.

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ASPIRES competition announced

The deadline is September 14 to submit proposals for “A Support Program for Innovative Research Strategies.”

ASPIRES is an investment program dedicated to enhancing research and scholarship activities at Virginia Tech. Awards and grants to Virginia Tech faculty members on a competitive basis in response to proposals that describe strategies for improving sponsored research activities, the distinction of our scholarship, and the quality of graduate education in all academic disciplines.

For details and application forms, see the ASPIRES web page at www.research.vt.edu/aspires/.

Research funding info available

Researchers interested in funding may visit the Research Division’s Opportunity Update site at www.vt.edu/funding/opupdate.html, which is available exclusively to faculty and staff members and students.

The update contains notices on upcoming workshops, meetings, and special events; current funding programs from government agencies and private foundations in a wide variety of disciplines; and postdoctoral and graduate fellowships.

Philosophy Department announces conference

The Department of Philosophy will hold a conference titled “Objects and Artifacts: A Topic in the Philosophy of Technology” September 7-9 at the Hotel Roanoke Conference Center.

All sessions will be held at the Hotel Roanoke Conference Center. A registration fee of $40 covers breakfast Saturday and Sunday, breaks, and lunch Saturday in the Hotel Roanoke Dining Room.

For more information, contact Cheryl Adkins, Department of Philosophy (0126).

Non-credit on-line course offerings listed

Non-credit on-line course offerings are now listed with credit on-line course offerings on the new VTOonline at http://www.vto.vt.edu. The non-credit on-line courses are available at varying fees to faculty and staff members and students to improve job skills or for personal development. Current course offering areas include business, finance, gardening/landscaping, computer basics, technical web development, advanced computer networking and databases, marketing, and architecture.

For more information on the distance-learning program, see http://www.iddl.vt.edu.

Showcase makes nutrition learning fun

The Virginia Tech Farm and Family Showcase will be held Wednesday and Thursday, Sept. 5 and 6 at Kentland Farm.

At the showcase, held from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday, and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday, children and adults can learn about nutrition. Children can meet the “vegetable” and the Chef Combo puppets that will tell them about healthy eating. They can learn how much they need to eat each day of the food groups in the Food Guide Pyramid.

The nutrition exhibit will help parents learn to see child-size portions. A 3-ounce serving of meat is the size of a deck of cards. What is a medium-size apple or how can a parent visualize a half-cup of ice cream?

The package says the doughnut has 13 grams of fat. How much is a gram of fat? One of the nutrition displays will have various tubes of “fat” making it easy to visualize how much is really in that doughnut. How much fat is in a serving of French fries?

Nutrition is just one of many things on display at the showcase that highlight agricultural, natural, and human-resources education and research at the university.

How can you improve your chances of avoiding food-borne illness? The “Does The Food You Eat Make You Sick?” exhibit at the showcase will have tips for handling food safely at home. There will be information and Virginia Cooperative Extension publications on how to wash your hands, using thermometers, and carrying, storing, preparing, and serving foods the right way all affect food safety.

The showcase will have something for almost everyone. Special events include an Amazing Maize Maze, sheepdog herding demonstrations, a Wood Magic show, Water Wizard information, biotechnology, and antique farm equipment. There will be sessions on fishing, equestrian vaulters, saw-milling, butterfly gardens, woodland management, the Toms Creek Conservation Project, fall vegetable gardening, cheese-making, a livestock-breeding center and displays of buffalo, dairy calves, goats, and baby pigs.

There will also be technical information for those in the industries of agriculture and natural resources, as well as information and fun activities for landowners, homeowners, and families.

The showcase will feature information on field crops, cattle, fruits, swine, horses, poultry, forestry and wood, as well as lawn and garden care, landscaping, wildlife, forages, and many other topics of interest.

There will be walking tours viewing streambank conservation and wildlife-habitat projects. Sessions will feature household pest control and the importance of soil in selecting a home site.

For a full listing of activities and a schedule, visit the web site at www.farmandfamily.vt.edu.

Cultural presentations highlight diversity celebration

By Clara B. Cox

Students who contribute to the diversity of Virginia Tech will share their cultural traditions, personal stories, and informative facts during the university’s fourth annual Celebration of Diversity on Wednesday, Sept. 12. The 7:30 p.m. event, which will be held in Squires Commonwealth Ballroom, is open to the public.

“The purpose of the Celebration of Diversity is to showcase the diverse opportunity for learning and cultural exchanges that our students bring to this community. It is also an opportunity to learn about the concerns of diverse communities,” said Barbara Pendergrass, dean of students. Last year, the celebration attracted over 1,000 people.

The program consists of three components: “In My Own Voice,” where students share their experiences at Virginia Tech as a member of a particular community; “Did You Know?”, which consists of students sharing facts about diversity that are important to them; and “Cultural Exhibition,” which involves student groups sharing some activity that exists on campus because they are here.

Music department re-structures choral ensembles

By Sally Harris

Virginia Tech’s Department of Music has re-structured its two choral ensembles and added a third group.

The Symphonic Choir, a large, all-university choir, is a re-structured version of the former University Concert Choir that used to meet in the afternoons. While the earlier version of the choir consisted of all students, the Symphonic Choir is open to faculty and staff members and students who want to sing together. It will meet Tuesdays, from 7 to 9:30 p.m., in Squires Recital Salon.

The Symphonic Choir will perform symphonic works and other works for large choirs. It will begin its inaugural year by performing Benjamin Britten’s The War Requiem, which calls for two orchestras, a boy choir, and guest soloists. For this performance spring semester, Badanes will bring in an internationally acclaimed guest conductor. The group also will perform in the annual holiday scholarship benefit concert November 30.

The Symphonic Choir requires no formal audition, but does require some singing experience. There is no limit on the number of members.

(See CULTURAL on 3)
Football parking, traffic changes noted

The following parking and traffic changes will take place Friday, Aug 31 and on Saturday, Sept 1 for the first home football game.

On Friday before the game, the following lots and roads will be restricted to no new parking after 5 p.m. and all vehicles must be removed from the lots and roads by midnight.

The public parking area of B-Lot (located off Prices Fork Rd) and the Southgate Lots will be restricted to no new parking after 4 p.m. on Friday. Those without a valid VT parking permit will be charged $5 for parking.

For the second year, the Student Advisory Committee on Multicultural Affairs (SACDMA) will present a diversity award to a student organization that has contributed to the university’s goal of fostering an inclusive and welcoming community.

For more information, call 1-3200 for more information.
**NEW FACULTY**

By Dave Smith

Virginia Tech has announced that it will file suit against the Gazette Group, Inc., of Princeton, New Jersey, to recover expenses it was entitled to for hosting the 2000 Black Coaches Association (BCA) Football Classic between Virginia Tech and Virginia. The Gazette Group is the owner and promoter of the 2000 BCA football contest.

The ESPN televised pre-season football contest was to have been played on Aug. 27, 2000, at Lane Stadium, but was cancelled by officials due to a severe thunderstorm that arose before the kick-off. The game was never played.

Virginia Tech will ask the Circuit Court of Montgomery County, where the suit will be filed, to require the Gazette Group to remit a portion of the gross receipts that remained from the game. The suit will allege Virginia Tech is entitled to receive, in accordance with its host agreement with the Gazette Group, reimbursement of expenses for hosting a sanctioned, sanctioned event. The contract amount sought is for 35 percent of gross receipts.

The complaint alleges that the Gazette Group received $593,807 from non-refunded ticket stubs, program sales, parking fees and merchandise sales, and that Virginia Tech has not received any reimbursement for the expenses the Gazette Group itemized expenses approved and approved and paid by the Gazette Group following the cancelled game. Virginia Tech officials have been notified that Georgia Tech will also file a claim against the Gazette Group.

The Black Coaches Association (BCA), the title sponsor and the primary beneficiary of the NCAA-certified contest, will not be a party to the lawsuit since there was no contractual arrangement between Virginia Tech and the BCA. Virginia Tech officials have notified the BCA of the pending suit against the Gazette Group.

**UNIVERSITY**

By Dave Smith

him to become senior fellow for biomedical, bioengineering, and health projects.

Turner, Steger, and Bohland all agree that special strategic partnerships will be crucial to expanding opportunities and developing necessary resources. They all agree that we will jointly develop degree programs or an entire school with another Virginia university, a private university out of state, or a company or hospital. Steger said. Throughout the summer the university has been in discussion with several non-profit organizations.

The plan contains about 175 specific goals and objectives for undergraduate education, graduate education, research and scholarship, and outreach. Some highlights include expanding graduate enrollment and moving toward a 1:4 ratio of graduate to undergraduate students, increasing doctoral students as a percentage of graduate students, increasing sponsored research by the National Institutes of Health by 20 percent per year and increase overall sponsored research by 10-12 percent per year by 2006, and enriching the undergraduate learning experience, Bohland said.

Faculty members from Virginia Tech under a contract-agreement with Virginia Tech and the BCA. Virginia Tech officials have notified the BCA of the pending suit against the Gazette Group.

**TECH**

By Dave Smith

“Technical Assistance Program initiatives enable faculty members to have greater access to faculty members to have greater access to university resources in completing the project, to reduce the time they spend setting up and managing a project, to receive direct pay for their consulting work without having their time bought out, to pay students directly under the program, and to receive recognition for the work in the portion of their annual review that is associated with community outreach,” Phillips also said that initiatives pursued under the program enable faculty members to reduce or eliminate their personal liability for inadvertent errors or omissions.

SETTLE said the program benefits Virginia Tech and its faculty. His unit’s handling of the projects, he said, “allows faculty members to focus their time and attention on clients’ core technical problems, providing businesses with quicker answers and faculty members with reduced time spent on administrative tasks.” The program also enriches the university’s ability to help students prepare themselves to become members of “a well-trained next generation of professionals and managers,” he said.

Faculty members may learn more about the Technical Assistance Program by contacting Ed Nelson in Continuing Education at 1-9446 or enelson@vt.edu.

**PETERS**

By Dave Smith

The proposed college is a private venture that will be supported by private funds and tuition income. The medical college expects to begin construction on a state-of-the-art teaching facility by early 2002. The foundation has engaged Virginia Tech officials in discussions with college officials about use of teaching faculty members and university space to assist the new college. “If an agreement is approved, the Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine would operate under a collaboration agreement with Virginia Tech,” said James Bohland, senior fellow for biomedical, bioengineering and health projects. “The Peters Center would then serve as the coordinating unit for joint research endeavors. Should a collaborative agreement be reached, the medical college would contract for the use of certain university facilities for teaching and research. It intends to hire selected faculty members from Virginia Tech under a contract-agreement for teaching and research. The medical college also will have its own full-time faculty. It will not operate a practice plan or hospital, but will work with hospitals in Virginia for student training and post-graduate residency experiences.

Dixie Rawlins has been hired as founding dean of the college. Rawlins had been the acting dean at the Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in Missouri. In addition to educating the next generation of osteopathic physicians, we plan for the college to produce a significant number of medical research, Rawlings said. “With Virginia Tech’s emerging strengths in biotechnology applications and bioinformatics, there should be powerful synergies.”

In addition to assisting the start-up college with teaching and research, Virginia Tech also will pursue strategies to establish the telecommunication infrastructure for development of telemedicine in rural areas.

Bohland said that medical leaders around the country are becoming increasingly concerned about the shrinking opportunities for medical training in this country. Rural areas of Virginia suffer chronic shortages of physicians. State-wide, there is one physician for every 1,695 citizens. According to a report released earlier this year by the Southwest Virginia Medical Education Consortium (GMEC), many western Virginia counties have population-to-doctor ratios greater than 5,000 to 1. In 1998 the Virginia General Assembly created the GMEC to place graduate medical students in the Commonwealth.

Currently, there are 19 other osteopathic medical schools in the United States. Osteopathic physicians receive the same license to practice medicine and surgery as allopathic (M.D.) physicians. Osteopathic medicine is a distinctive form of medical care founded on the philosophy that all body systems are interrelated and dependent upon one another for good health. Osteopathic physicians use all of the tools available through modern medicine including prescription medications and surgery.