Rural communities get access to ‘information economy’

By Charlie Scott

Twenty-nine communities in nine rural Virginia counties will be getting new opportunities to tap into the “Information Economy,” and to work with the Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV) and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Andrew Cohill, director of the BEV, said, “The project will help rural communities in Virginia develop the capacities needed to prosper in the information-age economy. It will permanently increase the capacity of these communities to take control of and to use technology effectively to improve local economic conditions, while including many more citizens in the decision-making process.”

The 29 communities selected for the program are located in Accomack, Carroll, Craig, Cumberland, Dickenson, Grayson, Louisa, King, Queen, and Northampton counties.

The BEV, a part of Virginia Tech’s information systems, and Virginia Cooperative Extension will jointly administer, “Getting Rural Virginia Connected,” which is being funded by a $748,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Technology Opportunities Program.

In an innovative partnership, Extension’s “Take Charge” planning process is being allied with the “BEV in a Box” program. The BEV staff will work closely with local and regional Extension agents to bring the participating counties a broad combination of technical expertise from Virginia Tech.

J. David Barrett, director of cooperative Extension, said, “We are excited to be able to extend technology and new community-planning programs to rural communities from the Eastern Shore to far southwest Virginia. We are taking the time-tested Extension model into the 21st century. Extension’s mission has always been to provide education for people—in their communities—to improve their livelihood and their lives. This is one more way that we are fulfilling that mission.”

The BEV originated in 1993 and is one of the oldest continuously operated community networks in the country. “This funding will allow us to fulfill one of the original goals of our project which was to share what we have learned with communities across Virginia,” Cohill said.

Psychology Ph.D. program approved for academy membership

The Ph.D. program in clinical psychology in the Department of Psychology, which was fully re-accredited in 2000 for seven years by the American Psychological Association, has recently been notified that the Executive Committee of the Academy of Psychological/Clinical Science Programs has approved its application to join that alliance of clinical-research programs.

The academy is comprised of the top 40 research-oriented programs in the United States and Canada. The mission of the academy is to advance clinical science, defined as “psychological science directed at the promotion of adaptive functioning; at the assessment, understanding, amelioration, and prevention of human problems in behavior, affect, cognition or health; and at the application of knowledge in ways consistent with scientific evidence.” The academy has a commitment to scientific, empirically based approaches to the training of students, research, and theory development and testing, applications, and dissemination of scientifically based treatment and prevention protocols and programs.

The program at Virginia Tech was directed for many years by Thomas Ollendick, who steered the program toward its research emphasis. Beginning in 1996, the program has been directed by Richard Winett, who has sought to further develop the program into one of the leading research-oriented programs in the country.

“Both the evolution of the clinical program and its recent acceptance by the executive committee into the academy are exciting developments that correspond well with Virginia Tech’s research emphasis to bring humanistic considerations to the students and faculty of the university in the U.S.,” Winett said.

The program has about 40 students in five years. Many former students hold positions at top universities and medical schools.

In addition to Ollendick and Winett, the program’s faculty includes Jack Finney, the Department of Psychology’s chair, and Danny Axon, George Clum, Lee Cooper, Richard Eisler, Russell Jones, Angela Scarpa, Scott Geller, David Harrison, and Robert Stephens.

CIS graduate program in STS gets innovation award

By Sally Harris

The Center for Interdisciplinary Studies/Graduate Program in Science and Technology Studies has been selected to receive a Woodrow Wilson Innovation Award.

The award is designed to recognize and support university departments and programs in the humanities that use creative approaches to encourage students to interact with the world outside the academy as part of their graduate training.

The Innovation Awards, according to Robert Weisbuch, president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation (WWNFF), are part of a larger effort by the WWNFF called Humanities at Work, which was designed to broaden career opportunities for humanities Ph.D.’s.

At Virginia Tech, “the policy track of the Graduate Program in Science and Technology Studies will connect with the university’s Choices and Challenges public-issues forum through a new, interdisciplinary, doctoral-level course that explores the social and ethical dimensions of emerging issues in science and technology,” the WWNFF announcement said. “Focusing on local concerns and drawing on community views and experiences, students will integrate the perspectives of the sciences, philosophy, political thought, and history to produce findings and recommendations, which they will share at the Choices and Challenges public forums. This service-learning opportunity will not only hone the students’ ability to bring humanistic considerations to bear on the impact of new advances in science and technology, but it will also introduce them to new networks and ways through which they, as scholars and future leaders, can impact society more largely.

According to the WWNFF’s web page, “the program seeks to encourage meaningful change through the creation of replicable models. Awards were based on the newness of the idea, evidence of need, and evidence of institutional commitment and impact.”

Doris Zallen, founder of the Choices and Challenges forums and a professor in the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences, will develop the new course. “We are currently organizing the course that will connect the Choices and Challenges forum this coming spring with the new graduate course Science and the Public,” she said.

The award is for $10,000. Two other universities received Innovation Awards this year: The New York University Graduate School of Arts and Science in partnership with the Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Science, and the Program on the Analysis and Resolution of Conflicts at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.

West Virginia receives Civil War videos

By Clara B. Cox

As part of its chief goal to educate the nation’s young people about the Civil War, Virginia Tech’s Center for Civil War Studies has distributed a two-volume video set, West Virginia as a Child of the Civil War, to every elementary and middle school and to every library in West Virginia.

On Thursday, Nov. 8, James I. Robertson, Jr., executive director of the Civil War center and alumni distinguished professor of history, will also present copies of the tapes to members of the State Board of Education in Charleston.

The videos were produced by Greystone Communications, an award-winning filmmaker based in North Hollywood, Calif. They were underwritten by a grant from the Hugh I. Shott Jr. Foundation, an independent foundation that supports secondary and higher education, historic preservation, the arts, community development, and health in West Virginia and Virginia.

Written and narrated in part by Robertson and William C. Davis, director of programs for the center and professor of history at the university, the two videos look at the effect of Virginia’s secession on its western counties; examine Virginia’s efforts to hold onto those western counties, which resulted in a number of military actions; and chronicle West Virginia’s development into a separate state.

“The Civil War is often referred to as a war of brother against brother and father against son. No other state serves as a better example of this than West Virginia, where there was relatively equal support for Northern and Southern causes,” said Robertson, who has written and narrated the videos.

Board of Visitors to meet November 11-12

By Larry Hincker

The Virginia Tech Board of Visitors will hold its quarterly meeting on campus Sunday, Nov. 11, and Monday, Nov. 12.

The full meeting of the board will be held Monday, Nov. 12, beginning at 1 p.m. in the Torgersen Board Room, room 2100.

The board will consider, among other activities, business appointments to the local sanitation authority and to the Virginia Biosciences Institute Policy Advisory Board, consider awards for exemplary departments, review Pratt Fund expenditures, and receive the year-end financial-
RURAL
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The differences in the technology capabilities between rural and suburban/urban areas are not unique to these Virginia counties. Most rural communities across the U.S. lag significantly behind their urban counterparts. A primary reason that these nine counties were selected was that they are similar to other rural counties in Virginia and the nation. Additionally, local government in the counties selected has shown strong support for partnering with Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Blacksburg Electronic Village.
C. Lee Lintecum, Louisa County administrator, said, “We are excited about the plans. We see this as a way to broaden the social and economic opportunities for our citizens. We envision significant local benefits, including economic development, increased citizen participation in local political affairs, an increased knowledge base, a more attractive local work force, a 21st Century telecommunications infrastructure, new markets for the private sector and new, improved ways for our citizens to communicate.
“We believe the creation of this community network will pay big dividends for our local government and for every citizen,” Lintecum said.

The project uses four key programs to help communities better control and direct their own destiny. There will be leadership and technology training for local and area Extension agents who work directly in each community. This direct connection to Virginia Tech will facilitate access to cutting-edge information-technology developments as well as community development resources.
Citizen teams will be comprised of a broad cross-section of people who agree to commit significant time and energy to the effort.

The “Take Charge” program will help communities reach a consensus on major tenets of their development agenda and will provide on-going support and resources for the citizen-based planning process.
A tested, turn-key community-network system (BEV in a Box), will include e-mail, web hosting and design assistance, mailing lists, a community directory system, an on-line conference system, and professional technical support throughout the life of the project and beyond, coupled with extensive technical training for Extension agents and citizen teams.

Timber expert to lecture at Virginia Tech
Jon Caulfield, vice president of Research and Investment at Timber Vest, LLC, will give a public lecture on “Forest Certification and the Future of Family Forests” in 315 Chapleaut from 3 to 4 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 29, as part of the seminar series on certification issues in natural resources.
A registered forester in Georgia, Caulfield chaired the Society of American Foresters Georgia Division in 2000. He received a B.S. in forest management from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, before earning an M.S. and a Ph.D. in forest economics from North Carolina State University.
Information and a schedule of upcoming lectures are available at http://calendar.vt.edu/week.phtml.

ACM programming contest scheduled
IBM will sponsor the ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest on November 10 at Virginia Tech. College teams comprised of three students and one coach will compete from noon to 5 p.m. in McBryde Hall. Sally Henry, associate professor of computer science, has coached the university team for the past 18 years. In 2000, Virginia Tech received first place in North America and second place in the world finals.
The goal of the ACM is to challenge student’s programming skills, creativity, and teamwork while they solve six to eight real-world programming challenges within five hours. The team that solves the most problems correctly in the least amount of time will advance to the World Finals held in Honolulu. For more information, visit http://www.acm.org/contest.

Marine conservation head to lecture
Michael Sinton, head of the Marine Conservation Program at the David and Lucile Packard Foundation in Los Altos, Calif., will give a public lecture titled “Certification of Marine Fisheries in North America” in Fralin auditorium from 3-4 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 15.
Sutton founded, directed, and later became the vice president of the World Wildlife Fund’s Endangered Seas Campaign, a world-wide effort to promote the conservation and sustainable use of marine fisheries and ecosystems. He served as a senior advisor to the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of State on marine conservation issues and co-founded the Marine Fish Conservation Network and the Ocean Wildlife Campaign.
This lecture is part of the College of Natural Resources Fall 2001 Seminar Series, “Certification Issues in Sustainable Natural Resource Management.”

Board
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The Finance and Audit Committee will meet in closed session at 7:30 a.m. in the DHBCC Private Dining Room and in open session at 8:30 a.m. in the Executive Conference Room.
The Student Affairs Committee will meet in conference room C at 9 a.m.
At its Sunday information session, the board will hear from the chairman and director of the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia about its budget recommendations for higher education.

West Virginia
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numerous videos about the Civil War in Virginia for public television and currently serves as historical consultant to the major motion picture Gods & Generals now being shot in Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland.
“As the Civil War spread across the country, Virginians seceded from the Union, and western Virginians began to think seriously of seceding from Virginia,” Robertson said. “The evolution of West Virginia statehood began in 1861 and 1862 when, at the Wheeling Convention, the idea of a state called Kanawha was proposed. This sentiment resulted in the formation of the West Virginia regiments, mainly Union but some Confederate, and led to additional military engagements, such as Rich Creek, Sewell Mountain, and Cloyd’s Mountain.”
West Virginia seceded from Virginia and joined the Union as the country’s 35th state. Although the video set was distributed without charge to the West Virginia schools and libraries, the center will sell boxed sets to the public for $36 per set, which includes postage. Persons interested in obtaining the set should write the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies, Department of History (0117), Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061. Proceeds will be used by the center to fund additional projects.
Government research-funding opportunities plentiful

The Pentagon is seeking ideas on combating terrorism and offering many new funding opportunities. Special SBIR (small business) partnering opportunities are available, such as in protocol translating, wireless initiatives, and expert-system-based data interpretation. The National Science Foundation (NSF) is boosting funding for plant-genome research, and there is a large selection of post-doctoral and graduate fellowships.

All of these funding programs are listed on the Research Division Opportunity Update site at www.rgs.vt.edu/funding/opupdate.html.

Many funding agencies place limits on the number of proposals or applications that a university may submit in response to a particular announcement. To prevent any potential disqualification of submissions from Virginia Tech, the Research Division has established guidelines:

- Programs such as the Limited Submissions Calendar under the month that the first internal deadline occurs. There are many opportunities with deadlines this month and in December and January. New programs will be added as the information becomes available.
- New opportunities include an NSF Major Research Instrumentation (MRI) program, with a November 15 deadline and the Special Opportunity Awards in Biomedical Engineering from the Whitaker Foundation, due in January. See www.research.vt.edu/research/limitsubs/index.html for details.
- Those who wish to submit a proposal for one of the listed programs should send a brief letter of intent to Jim Blair (jblair@vt.edu) as soon as they know they have an interest in the funding program. The e-mail letter needs should include only the name of the principal investigator, any co-PI’s, and the subject or title of the proposed project. The deadline for the internal letter of intent is in the indicated—submissions calendar.

The next internal deadline for a limited submission letter of intent is November 14 for research grants in biomedicine and pharmacology offered by the Pfeiffer Research Foundation.

To receive the Opportunity Update as an e-mail attachment, send an e-mail to lizacker@vt.edu.

An American Mosaic shows world through popular culture

By Sally Harris

The book An American Mosaic: Rethinking American Culture Studies, edited by Marshall Fishwick, looks through the past and the present to imagine the future in this new millennium.

By presenting a series of independent thoughts and insights, Fishwick, professor of humanities and American studies, attempts to present to the reader’s mind and eyes a view of our world—and the study of popular culture in it—that no one person or perspective could achieve. “Certain insects have ‘mosaic vision,’” Fishwick said. “They have compound eyes made up of many independent units so that objects viewed are not seen in isolation but as a mosaic.”

Tom Wolfe, author of the sixties classic The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, the seventies bestseller The Right Stuff, the nineties hit A Man in Full, and the more recently published novel Hooking Up, wrote the forward to An American Mosaic. Wolfe, a former student in Fishwick’s American Studies classes at Washington and Lee, contrasts Fishwick with the American Mariner, “who was a monomaniac, determined to tell everybody a single story.” Fishwick, he said, “was the reverse, an omnimaniac” whose “scholarly interest knew no bounds.” The field of popular culture, Wolfe said, is “a subject big enough and broad enough” even for Fishwick. Popular culture, Wolfe wrote, “often combines great technical sophistication with a Rube Boy mental atmosphere” and that popular culture’s “influences have become well-nigh unavoidable.”

The book offers a mosaic of topics about American culture in its 19 essays by experts. With an introduction by Fishwick, it includes such topics as “From Chaucer to Bob Dylan: The Synthesis of Classical Literature and Popular Culture,” “‘Time Warp’ Triumphant: Film and Television in Mass Culture,” “American Studies as a Social Movement,” “What to Make of the Millenium,” and Fishwick’s own essay entitled “The Hero: Lost, Strayed, or Stolen?”

The message is clear,” Fishwick wrote in the introduction. “We must change with the times, but never forsake our past. We cannot turn our back on change, like it or not as we will. We have no choice but to evolve if we are to survive and prosper. None of the old curtains—iron, bamboo, plastic, paper—can block electronic revolution, the Internet, and World Wide Web.”

In An American Mosaic, he said, “The essays…cover many aspects of our fascinating and sometimes baffling culture. After a look at our academic beginnings, we attempt a mosaic of recent movements, innovative ideas, and disputes. Like Janus, we strive to look both backward and forward. We hope it will encourage others to do the same.”

Fishwick has received the Ray and Pat Browne Award for lifetime achievement from the American Culture Association, is a founder and past president of the Popular Culture Association, and serves on the advisory board of the Journal of Popular Culture and the Journal of American Culture. His books include Great Awakenings: Popular Religion and Popular Culture, Go and Catch a Falling Star: Popular Culture, and Popular Culture in a New Age.
SPECTRUM FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2001

CVC WINNER

By Liz Crambley

The Biomedical Engineering Society (BMES) has presented its Distinguished Service Award to Daniel Schneck, recently retired professor of engineering science and mechanics.

The award is given periodically to recognize members who have made outstanding contributions to the society, and Schneck is only the fourth recipient since the award was established in 1992. Schneck was honored for his national leadership in the field of biomedical engineering and his service to the society as founding editor of the BMES Bulletin, BMES president in 1990, and chairman of the first BMES Annual Fall Meeting, which was held at Virginia Tech in 1990.

Schneck is a founding fellow of the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering, which places him among the top 2 percent of biomedical engineers worldwide who have helped shape the profession and have guided it to its current prominence.

Since joining the Virginia Tech faculty in 1973, Schneck has been a leader in establishing the university’s Biomedical Engineering Program. He was head of the program from 1973 until 1980 and chairman of the Biomedical Engineering Technical Interest Group for the next five years. Due in part to Schneck’s efforts, the university now has a Center for Biomedical Engineering.

In addition to promoting faculty research and professional opportunities in the field of biomedical engineering, Schneck also initiated programs for interested students. He developed a Clinical Internship Program that enables Virginia Tech engineering students to work as summer interns at area hospitals, rotating through all of the major hospital departments and participating in all aspects of medical care.

In 1991, the American Society for Engineering Education named Schneck the National Outstanding Biomedical Engineering Educator for his work with the internship program. In the 1980s, he helped enhance cooperative education opportunities for Virginia Tech biomedical engineering students, enabling the placement of several co-op students each semester at medical facilities.

His educational efforts also have been recognized with the Outstanding Educator of the Year Award from the Engineering Science and Mechanics Society, seven Academy of Teaching Excellence Awards from the Virginia Tech College of Engineering, and the university’s W.E. Wine Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Before retiring from the university in August, Schneck had written 14 textbooks and numerous papers on biomedical engineering and developed 20 undergraduate and graduate courses and 11 continuing-education and short courses in the field. From 1999 until his retirement, he held the W.S. “Pete” White Chair for Innovation in Engineering Education.

Chemistry graduate student receives $100,000 scholarship

By Sally Harris

Aafia Karikari, a doctoral student in polymer chemistry, has received a $100,000 scholarship from The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

The foundation supports graduates of historically black colleges and universities (HBCU’s) who are admitted to doctoral programs in the sciences and engineering at any United States university. Nominees are sought once a year from some 40 HBCU’s, and an advisory panel of educators assists the foundation in evaluating candidates. The foundation gives up to 15 scholarships per year.

The president of Clark Atlanta University, where Karikari was a student, nominated her for the award. She will receive $20,000 per year for five years while working on her Ph.D. at Virginia Tech.

Karikari, a native of Ghana, West Africa, and her family moved to the United States so her father could work on the Ph.D. in material-science engineering from the University of Virginia.

She started doing research in chemistry her sophomore year of college. Her work then, a capillary electrophoresis project, consisted of developing a fast and efficient method of separating chiral drugs using cyclodextrins.

Her work was to use different cyclodextrines to perform the separation of drugs such as enepinephrine, noradrenaline, and several others. “I found that different cyclodextrines interact with drugs differently,” she said. “Sulfated beta cyclodextrine had the highest interaction with the chiro drugs.”

In addition to her research, Karikari, as an undergraduate, was a preceptor teacher of recitation classes in organic chemistry and assisted in teaching organic chemistry and general-chemistry lab classes at Morehouse College.

Karikari came to Virginia Tech in August of this year. Her research advisor is Tim Long of chemistry. Her project will be in polymer organic chemistry and will involve the synthesis of poly(lactides) and poly(glycolides).

IN OTHER NEWS

Tech’s McAlister appointed to governor’s task force

By Jeanne M. Garon

J. Douglas McAlister, executive director of Virginia Tech’s Public Service Programs in University Outreach, has been appointed by Gov. James Gilmore to the state’s new Post-Attack Economic Response Task Force.

“We will not allow our economy to fall victim to terrorism,” Gilmore said in creating the task force, which met for the first time on September 26. “We will take immediate action and chart a course for future action. We will keep our economy growing and our people working.”

Gilmore convened the task force to assist Virginia businesses, organizations, and individuals in rebounding from the adverse impacts of the September 11 terrorist attacks. The attacks resulted in the temporary closings of two regional airports and significant blows to Virginia’s economy, which relies heavily on tourism activity that, on average, nets the state $13.1 billion annually.

The task force is divided into work-groups organized around areas such as economic development and trade, tourism, workforce services, ground transportation, aviation, finance, agriculture, ports, and legal services. Each group includes representatives from appropriate state agencies, local government entities, and the private sector.

The task force, chaired by Secretary of Commerce and Trade Barry E. DuVal, is comprised of individuals from business, government, labor, public-interest groups, and professional associations from across the state. Together, they will coordinate Virginia’s economic recovery, working closely with affected industries, labor groups, and communities until-normalcy has been restored to economic, financial, and transportation systems.

Gilmore has charged the groups with assessing the level and nature of impacts of the attacks on the state’s economy, businesses, and workforce; developing and implementing a long-term recovery plan; coordinating the provision of federal, state, and private funding; providing technical assistance to affected businesses and communities; and serving as a catalyst for public and private community partnerships to promote recovery.

McAlister, who will serve on the work-groups for tourism and economic development and trade, said, “Travel is one of the most fundamental freedoms Americans cherish. A return to travel is a return to normalcy and economic stability. I am pleased to have been given the opportunity to help develop a plan for our state’s recovery. Clearly, the governor sees the critical role that higher education can play in recovery efforts, and I’m eager to bring the expertise and experience of Virginia Tech to this effort.”

OTIBIARY

Glen Heuberger, 68

By Stewart MacInnis

Glen L. Heuberger, former director of the Tidewater Agricultural Research and Extension Center, died November 2 at the age of 68.

Heuberger led the research center near the Suffolk community of Holland from 1985 to his retirement in 1999.

“Dr. Heuberger oversaw an important expansion in research focus at the center at the same time budgets and staff were being reduced,” said Kriton Hatzios, director of the Virginia Tidewater Agricultural Research and Extension Center, the parent organization of the research center in Suffolk.

“Through his leadership and hard work, the center has remained an important asset to Virginia’s agriculture industry.”

While director of the Tidewater center, Heuberger worked extensively with the peanut, sweet and sorghum commodity associations in Virginia, he served as president of the Virginia-North Carolina Peanut Advisory Committee, and he served in other capacities with the agriculture industry.

“Both in his leadership at the center and in his direct relationship with the agriculture industry, Dr. Heuberger was an important leader in Virginia agriculture during the transition period of the 1990s,” Hatzios said.

Though faced with significant state budget cuts and a reduction in staff in the early 1990s, Heuberger organized the remaining faculty members at the center to address the changing nature of Virginia agriculture. Through his leadership, a research and Extension program was established for cotton, which re-emerged as an important crop in some areas of Virginia during that decade.

INFORMATION

Loren Janeczko, interdisciplinary studies.

STUDENT DEATH NOTICE

Frank Thomas, 20

By Sally Harris

Frank Thomas, 20, a junior at Virginia Tech majoring in interdisciplinary studies, died November 4 when he was run over by a car on U.S. 29.

Thomas was from Blacksburg. He attended Virginia Tech’s College of Science, where he was majoring in chemistry.

Byline:

By Jeanne M. Garon

By Stewart MacInnis

By Sally Harris

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