**Session Begins: Legislators Face Difficult Decisions**

By Ralph Byers, director of government relations

The 2002 General Assembly began its work on January 9, facing the worst revenue shortfall in 10 years. While prospects are favorable for the passage of a large capital-outlay package for higher education, at the same time, deep cuts in operating budgets seem inevitable given the state’s fiscal situation.

Outgoing Governor James Gilmore proposed General Fund cuts to all state agencies of 2 percent for the remainder of FY2002, and 6 percent cuts for the 2002-2004 biennium. Gilmore also proposed additional cuts to higher education that could be offset to some extent by tuition increases. In addition, the allocations for the Equipment Trust Fund and Maintenance Reserve Fund were cut in half, and funding was also reduced for the Eminent Scholars program and Virtual Library of Virginia.

In his State of the Commonwealth address January 14, new Governor Mark Warner proposed General Fund cuts of 3 percent, 7 percent, and 9 percent, respectively, for the three years in question. How possible tuition increases might be treated was not discussed in the speech, and details of Warner’s budget proposals will not be available until January 23.

In the meantime, the leadership of the House of Delegates and Senate has agreed on a historically large capital-outlay package for higher education. This package provides considerably more than the previous proposal by Gilmore, which was reported in the December 21 issue of Spectrum. Warner has indicated he will wait for more information on revenue and debt service costs before deciding whether to support the General Assembly package in its entirety. (See accompanying chart for specific projects.)

Details of the new budget proposals will be reported in Spectrum and on line as they become available.

** Presidents’ scholarship to benefit employees’ dependents **

By Terry McGuire

President Charles W. Steger has joined with three past university presidents and the widow of a fourth, to establish a $25,000 endowed scholarship that will benefit the dependents of current and past leaders of Virginia Tech.

“Virginia Tech’s well-earned reputation for excellence can be directly attributed to the quality of its staff and faculty members,” Steger said. “And this scholarship is one way to recognize their dedication and professionalism.”

The scholarship will help strengthen the continuing efforts of the university to attract and retain top staff and faculty members. During the past two years, a scholarship committee composed of university volunteers has worked with Tech’s Office of University Development to develop a program to attract contributions from university employees for dependent-scholarship awards. In 1999 and 2000, six $500 scholarships were given, while nearly 12 scholarships already have been funded during the current academic year.

“The establishment of the Presidential Dependent Endowed Scholarship is really a vote of confidence from university leadership. It ensures the future of the program,” said Tom McAvoy, a founding member of the Employees’ Spouse and Dependent Scholarship Committee. “The need for this type of scholarship is growing, and we hope to continue building upon the solid foundation provided by the generosity of current and past leaders of Virginia Tech.”

** Meat science programs ranked seventh in nation **

By Angela Correa

Meat & Poultry Magazine, a leading journal for the meat and poultry industries, has ranked Virginia Tech seventh in the nation for its meat and poultry programs.

The magazine, which appeared in November, contained the magazine’s debut college ranking of the nation’s top-10 overall programs. The ranking was based on a combination of a review of eligible programs by the magazine’s editorial staff and surveys of professionals working in all segments of the industry.

Virginia Tech’s ranking, which puts it ahead of Penn State, Ohio State, and Oklahoma State Universities, reflects the university’s established reputation within the meat and poultry industry for supplying a steady stream of quality students and providing low-cost problem-solving services. Texas A&M was the top-ranked program.

Virginia Tech is the highest-ranked program east of the Mississippi.

** Emergency network demonstrated for officials **

By Liz Crumbley

A number of federal agency representatives and Southside Virginia officials recently attended a demonstration in Chatham of a new emergency/wireless-communications network developed by Virginia Tech’s Center for Wireless Telecommunications (CWT) and the Virginia Office of SAIC (a high-technology research and engineering company based in San Diego, California).

The unique broadband wireless network can be set up quickly for communications in emergency and disaster response and recovery efforts. The project is sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF), with additional funding from the National Response Center (NRC).

Communications systems connected by wire and fiber can be destroyed by attacks or natural disasters. The new wireless network can be deployed rapidly in such situations to carry vast amounts of voice and computer information.

(See BUDGET on 4)

** Dean to continue leave of absence **

By Lynn Nystrom

F. William Stephenson, dean of the College of Engineering since 1994, who has been on a medical leave of absence, will not be resuming his duties as dean this semester as originally planned. Mark McMann, provost, has extended Stephenson’s leave.

Malcolm McPherson, acting dean for the past three months, will continue in this capacity, McMann said.

McMann is meeting with the college leadership to discuss plans.

McMann cited Stephenson for his many contributions to the college and to the university, and said, “We all share an overriding interest in making sure Bill’s immediate and long-term health issues receive high-priority attention.”

(See EMERGENCY on 4)
Faculty Development workshops scheduled for spring semester

Starting Monday, Jan. 28 and continuing through Thursday, March 14, nearly 60 Faculty Development workshops are scheduled for spring semester, from 10 a.m. to noon or 3 to 5 p.m. FDI workshop topics are organized by themes such as desktop-computing skills, web development, digital-content creation, web-based instruction, web-based research and emerging technologies.

New this semester is Element K, consisting of self-paced, on-line modules for hundreds of popular programs by Adobe, Macromedia, Microsoft and others. Additionally, a three-part series on classroom assessment techniques, will also be offered, with an emphasis on on-line course development.

Most FDI workshops focus on teaching and learning with technology. The Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning (IDDL) support team will give several workshops on distance teaching. Three workshops will cover topics related to Blackboard, the university’s web-course management system.

This year’s workshops range from techniques to add narration to PowerPoint presentations for on-line lectures and creating Flash vector graphic animation to designing effective feedback questions. New versions of several computer programs will also be featured during the spring workshops, such as Adobe’s Premiere and Apple’s Quicktime. Macromedia FreeHand is a vector-based graphics program designed to simplify the task of vector graphics for print media or web sites. Flash is a vector-based program that can replace or enhance HTML for the creation of dynamic web sites, including simple animations.

Featured in other workshops are updated versions of familiar computer software, such as Adobe PhotoShop, Real Media, Apple QuickTime VR and Blackboard.

FDI workshops are designed for instructional faculty members, however all workshops are open to staff members and graduate students. Seating is limited per workshop and on-line registration is possible at http://www.fdi.vt.edu/spring/2002/default.html All workshops held in the FDI Classroom (3060 Torgersen) or New Media Center, (1120 Torgersen), unless otherwise indicated.

For more information, contact Ed McPherson at 1-8029, ejay@vt.edu or http://www.fdi.vt.edu.

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*Totally funded by Virginia College Building Authority over next 6 to 8 months.
**EMPLOYMENT**

**PERSONNEL SERVICES INFORMATION**

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Medical Technologist, 002596M, PB 4, VTH.**
**Office Services Assistant, 000464G, PB 2.**
**Office Services Specialist, 000414M, PB 2, FST.**
**Office Services Specialist, 001719R, PB 2, Registrar.**
**Operations Manager, 007121H, PB 4, RCE.**
**Radiologic Technologist, 002394M, PB 3, VTH.**
**Senior Systems Administrator, 000241G, PB 6, Mathematics.**
**Sous Chef, 000788H, PB 3, RDP.**
**Sous Chef, 000940H, PB 3, RDP.**

**PART TIME**

**Administrative Assistant, W023358J, PB 3, Athletics.**
**Audio Support Specialist, W023130J, PB 3, UUGA.**
**Course Developer, W023214R, PB 4, IDDL.**
**Fiscal Technician, W020810M, PB 3, VTH.**
**Graphic Artist, W020567H, PB 3, RDP.**
**ICU Veterinary Technologist Large Animal, W022218M, PB 2, VTH.**
**Laboratory Specialist, W023305M, PB 3, APS.**
**Program Support Technician, W023352J, PB 3, HTM.**
**Research Assistant, W023315M, PB 3, AAE.**

**Tax-Sheltered-Annuities and Tax-Reform Legislation Noted**

By Douglas D. Martin, senior human-resources manager

Recently enacted federal legislation, Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 (EGTRRA), changed several rules applicable to tax-sheltered annuities, the state deferred-compensation plan, and tuition waivers. In general, the following changes are applicable at this time:

- The contribution limits to the 403(b) tax-sheltered annuities and state 457 deferred-compensation plan has increased from $10,500 to $11,000 in 2002. An individual may now use both plans, which would permit an individual to shelter 100 percent of salary up to at least $11,000 in the 403(b) program and another $11,000 into the 457 deferred-compensation plan. Participants who will be age 50 or over by Dec. 31, 2002, may make an additional contribution of $1,000 in 2002 to their 403(b) tax shelter, thereby sheltering $12,000 instead of the $11,000 general limit. As stated above, individuals may now use the 457 deferred-compensation plan in addition to the traditional 403(b) tax-shelter program. The 457 deferred-compensation plan is administered by the Virginia Retirement System and the vendor is Great West.

- The Maximum Exclusion Allowance (MEA) calculation for 403(b) plans is eliminated. However, some long-term (over 15 years) employees have used a catch-up provision that allowed for an additional contribution of up to $3,000 per year. Special calculations provided by vendors are needed to determine if participants are still eligible for the special “catch-up” provision.

- Rollover rules have been liberalized. Distributions from qualified retirement plans, 403(b) plans, state and local government 457 plans, and IRA’s may be rolled into any one of such plans or into IRA’s. An important change is that faculty or classified staff members will now be able to use 403(b) or 457 funds to purchase approved service credit in VRS. Forms and guidelines are now available that allow participants to do a “trust-to-trust” transfer from 403(b) or 457 plans directly to the Virginia Retirement System to purchase service credit such as military time, other public service and related service.

Beginning in 2002, tuition waivers will no longer be taxable for graduate-level or professional-level degree programs. To provide more detailed information and to address specific questions or concerns, general meetings are scheduled for faculty and staff members in Donaldson Brown Continuing Education Center rooms D and E. Today from 1 to 3 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 22, from 9 to 11 a.m., and Thursday, Jan. 24, from 1 to 3 p.m.

Registration is not required, and faculty and staff members are encouraged to attend.

Individual questions concerning tax-sheltered annuities or the state deferred-compensation plan may be addressed to Jim Richardson at jrichardson@vt.edu or 1-9213; Ella Mae Vaught at emvaught@vt.edu or 1-7774, or Carolyn Pratt at cpratt@vt.edu or 1-7776.

**IEEE honors Trew for national leadership**

By Liz Crumbley

Robert Trew, head of the Bradley Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE), is being honored by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)-USA for his significant contributions while in government service to the field of electrotechnology.

IEEE USA announced it is presenting the Harry Diamond Memorial Award to Trew “for his technical contributions to the theory and design of microwave power devices using wide bandgap semiconductors, and leadership in managing DOD’S (U.S. Department of Defense) basic research program.”

Trew served for four years as director of research for DOD for five years as a program manager for the U.S. Army Research Office at North Carolina’s Research Triangle Park.

As DOD’S director of research from 1997 to 2001, Trew provided scientific leadership and oversight for the agency’s annual $1.3-billion military and defense-research programs. He also managed the $292-million DOD University Research Initiative, which includes the Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative and the Defense University Research Instrumentation Program.

Trew also served as vice-chair of a national committee of U.S. government agency representatives that led the way in formulating the National Nanotechnology Initiative (NNI). The NNI provides support for long-range research in nanotechnology, and produced an increase in the annual federal research support for nanotechnology from $270 million to $430 million.

In addition to holding government posts, (See IEEE on 4)
Soybean community looks at new marketplace

By Lynn Nystrom

The agricultural community has invested nearly half-a-million dollars at Virginia Tech to determine if polyurethanes could be economically synthesized from soybean oil.

The polyurethane business is huge, as these resins are used in numerous types of chemical-resistant coatings and in adhesives and foams or other similar products. If soybean oil were found to be a feasible ingredient in the manufacturing of polyurethanes, the economic returns to the farming community would be potentially significant.

College consolidates information-technology programs

By Jeffrey Douglas

Computer operations in the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine have been strategically restructured under the leadership of a recently hired IT professional.

David Sampson, a former information-technology administrator at Appalachian State University, has served in the college’s newly created position of director of information technology since late last summer. He was recruited to integrate, organize and oversee strategic growth for the college’s broadbanding information-technology initiatives.

The system we are developing is exactly what was needed in New York after September 11,” said Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE) Professor Charles Bostian, co-founder and one filled with opportunity. I’m pleased to be a part of it.”

BUDGET

Spectrum, Delegate Vince Callahan and Senator John Chichester have proposed a bond package through which the Board of Visitors will support a major instructional-development initiative under way throughout Virginia’s college and university system. The re-organization created a Support Center with trained professionals to provide technical and user support; Applications Development, which provides support for business systems and web development; Systems Administration and Operations, which supports the infrastructure of the entire IT program; Media Services, which includes multimedia and publications support; and Reprographics, which provides copy, fax, and mail services.

As a researcher, Trew has developed important technologies and theories in the areas of semiconductor and microwave computer-aided design. He holds four patents as a result of his research. Among his numerous career honors are the IEEE Third Millennium Award, IEEE’s Microwave Theory and Techniques Society’s Distinguished Educator Award, and the Alcoa Foundation Distinguished Engineer Research Award.

EMERGENCY

Trew was on the faculty of North Carolina State University for 17 years and was chair of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Applied Physics at Case Western University from 1993 to 1997. He came to Virginia Tech as ECE’s department head and Willis G. Worchester professor in 2001. As a researcher, Trew has developed important technologies and theories in the areas of semiconductors and microwave computer-aided design. He holds four patents as a result of his research. Among his numerous career honors are the IEEE Third Millennium Award, IEEE’s Microwave Theory and Techniques Society’s Distinguished Educator Award, and the Alcoa Foundation Distinguished Engineer Research Award.

OBITUARY

Jimmy P. Todd, 51

Jimmy P. (JT) Todd, 51, died Friday, Jan. 4, at his residence in Blacksburg. He had been a television systems engineer with Video Broadcast Services since 1991.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Fox Cemetery, 9097 Wilson Highway, Independence, VA, 24348.

Tech senior gives speech

Virginia Tech wide receiver André Davis was selected to respond on behalf of the 2001 class of National College Scholar-Athletes at the annual awards banquet in November. Davis was selected from the 16 award winners to give a short speech to those attending the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame’s Awards Dinner.

“This is a great accomplishment and I intend to represent myself, my family, and Virginia Tech well,” Davis said. “It’s quite an honor to be chosen from the 16 award winners and I’m proud of this honor. I’ll be a little nervous, but I know I can do a good job.”

Since 1959, when the first class was selected, 602 scholar-athletes have been awarded this honor based on superior academic performance, outstanding football ability, strong leadership and citizenship. Each scholar-athlete receives an $18,000 postgraduate scholarship and is recognized at the foundation’s awards dinner in New York City.

A three-time Academic All-Big East Conference selection, Davis has demonstrated his academic prowess in four-plus years at Virginia Tech. A Dean’s List member, Davis is also a member of the Virginia Tech Athletic Director’s Honor Roll and the Kappa Omicron Nu Honor Society. Davis has already graduated with a degree in residential property management. He is also one of the most successful receivers and punt returners in Tech football history.

Veterinary informatics researcher lands USDA grant

Eric M. Mills, a research associate in the Department of Biomedical Sciences and Pathobiology, has been awarded a $100,000 grant from the United States’ Department of Agriculture’s Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service.

The grant will support a major instructional-development initiative under way in the college that is being accomplished by a team led by Holly Bender.

The Problem List Generator software technology that has been developed by the researchers challenges students to develop deductive reasoning and higher-order thinking skills as they apply fact-based knowledge in making diagnostic assessments.

Mills will assist in implementing and evaluating the PLG instructional-technology program at partner universities that include the University of California at Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine and the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph in Canada.

Mills, who formerly operated veterinary practices in the Tidewater area, was the first Ph.D. student recruited to conduct academic work in veterinary informatics by the late Richard B. Talbot.

Talbot, who was founding dean of the VMRCVM and later held several posts in the Food and Drug Administration’s Center for Veterinary Medicine, died in 1994.

Talbot was considered a pioneer in the veterinary-informatics field, which combines veterinary medicine with information technology.

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