President’s Letter to Members of the University Community

(See LETTER on 3)

President named to national food-safety post

By Stewart MacInnis

Professor Merle D. Pierson has been named deputy undersecretary for food safety by U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman. The appointment, which was effective February 4, makes Pierson the second-ranking federal official concerned with food safety.

“This is an exciting opportunity,” said Pierson, who has been a member of the Department of Food Science and Technology since 1970. “I’ve worked closely with the USDA and other government agencies over the years and look forward to furthering the application of science to meeting our government’s public-health goals.”

President Charles Steger credited Pierson with bringing international prestige to the university.

“Dr. Pierson has developed a richly deserved reputation among colleagues and policy makers around the globe,” Steger said. “I am gratified that the same expertise that has been so well-applied to educating our students, assisting industry, and advising regulators over the years will now be focused at the national policy-making level to ensure the safety of the food supply for all Americans.”

The food-science-and-technology department was recently ranked as one of the top such departments in the country, which Department Head Susan Sumner said was due in part to Pierson’s contributions. “Food safety is one of the strengths of our department,” Sumner said. “We are certainly honored and pleased to have one of our faculty members appointed to such a high-level government position.”

Pierson will work with the undersecretary for food safety in providing overall direction to the activities of USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Torgersen appointed to state advisory panel

Governor Mark Warner has appointed former President Paul Torgersen to a seven-member panel established to advise him on appointments to state college boards, the State Council of Higher Education and the Virginia Community Colleges Board.

The panel members will review the qualifications, judgment and experience of the potential appointees. Warner said that board appointments have apparently been made as political statements or rewards to contributors rather than in the “best interests of higher education in Virginia.”

Torgersen served as president of the university from 1994 until 2001 and earlier served as dean of the College of Engineering.

Parking master plan comment deadline extended

By Karen Cronin

The comment period for the university’s Parking and Transportation Master Plan has been extended from February 15 to February 28. According to Director of Transportation Steve Mouras, the extension is a continuation of the open nature of the process which started more than a year ago and has included a customer survey, transportation fair, and the designated Transportation and Parking Committee providing contacts for faculty and staff members and students.

Mouras said the plan seeks to address parking and transportation problems proactively by projecting parking demand through the year 2008. (See accompanying chart for specific projection figures.) New construction in the central campus area removes parking spaces and increases the number of cars needing parking spaces. During the 2002-2004 biennium, the Bioinformatics Building, New Engineering Facility, Biology Building, Agriculture and Forestry Research Laboratory, and Chemistry/Physics Building will result in a loss of 548 parking spaces. These buildings plus a Dining and Student Union Facility, Fine Arts Center, New Vivalairum Facility, and Building Construction Facility would bring 865 new faculty/staff members and students to the central campus area. Additional projects slated for future years will decrease available parking by another 600 spaces and bring even more people to the campus. The goal of this plan is to have spaces available before new buildings are constructed.

Another goal is to increase pedestrian safety by decreasing traffic. Mouras said traffic is a problem because drivers hunting for parking spaces create traffic.

Surveys and comments have shown that faculty and staff members want convenient parking. The only way to expand convenient parking is with parking structures, which are expensive. According to Mouras, structures are 10 times more expensive than surface lots. Surface-lot expansion is also a possibility, but these lots can only be expanded on the campus perimeter. Surveys indicate that people find perimeter parking inconvenient. Even without structures, Mouras said parking-permit fees will increase because the cost of constructing and maintaining lots...

By Stewart MacInnis

Spending on agricultural research at Virginia Tech increased more than 6 percent in 2000 compared to the year before, according to figures released by the National Science Foundation (NSF).

“This increase in funding is a tribute to the high esteem in which our faculty members are held, which in turn is a reflection of the consistent quality of the work they have produced through the years,” said Andy Swiger, dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Despite the increase in funding, Virginia Tech’s agriculture research spending dropped two places to the number-seven position in the NSF’s nation-wide ranking of programs in 2000.

“Our agricultural research program continues to grow, and our program is still firmly among the top 10 programs in the nation despite slipping in the rankings,” said Kriton Hatzios, associate dean for research and director of the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station. “The programs in some other states grew faster.”

Virginia Tech, which was number five in last year’s rankings, was overtaken by...
President’s Award for Excellence nominations sought

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2002 President’s Award for Excellence. The purpose of this award is to annually recognize up to five selected employees who have made extraordinary contributions by consistent excellence in the performance of their job or a single incident, contribution, or heroic act.

All salaried classified staff at any pay level, as well as administrative or professional faculty, with at least two years of university service are eligible for consideration. Specific exclusions for the award are instructional faculty members, administrative department heads, deans, assistant and associate deans, vice presidents, Extension agents, and wage employees.

Previous award recipients are not eligible until five years after receiving the award. For more information regarding the eligibility of any employee, contact Personnel Services at 1-7784.

For more information, contact Andrea Kavaughan at kavan@vt.edu, or call 1-1806.

For Pulitizer for Poetry winner to read

Yusef Komunyakaa, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry will read from his work at 7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 22 at Volume Two Bookstore.

The reading is expected to be of particular interest to students and scholars of African American literature and contemporary poetry. Komunyakaa is the author of 12 books of poetry, most recently of which include Pleasure Dome: New and Collected Poems, Talking Dirty to the Gods and Thieves of Paradise.

Internationally noted educator to give Black History Month keynote address

By Clara B. Cox

Johnnetta B. Cole, recipient of 45 honorary degrees from colleges and universities throughout this country and abroad, will deliver the keynote address for Virginia Tech’s celebration of Black History Month at 7 p.m. on February 27 in Squires Colonial Hall. Her topic will be “The Color Line Revisited: Is Racism Dead?”

The talk is open to the public and is free.

Cole, now the presidential distinguished professor of anthropology, women’s studies, and African American studies at Emory University, became the first woman president of Spelman College in 1987. During 10 years there, she led the liberal arts school for women to an eighth national ranking in Money magazine’s “Best College Buys” and a 21st national faculty ranking in U.S. News & World Report’s annual college issue.

Under her leadership, Spelman raised $113.8 million in a major capital campaign, at the time the largest amount ever raised by an historically black college and more than $20 million over the goal.

In 1998, President Clinton appointed Cole to an 11-member commission on the Celebration of Women in American History, and the following year, she was named to Georgia's University Council, to an 11-member commission on the Celebration of Women in American History, and the following year, she was named to Georgia's University Council, became the first woman president of Spelman College in 1987. During 10 years there, she led the liberal arts school for women to an eighth national ranking in Money magazine’s “Best College Buys” and a 21st national faculty ranking in U.S. News & World Report’s annual college issue.

International topics subject of lecture series

The Pamplin College of Business and the French program of the Department of Foreign Languages will host a lecture series featuring speakers on globalization, technology, and interdisciplinary programs.

The university community can learn about the proposed Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity at an open session at noon on Wednesday, Feb. 20, in 150 Squires.

Representatives of the University Commission on Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action and the Advisory Council on Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, the two units that drafted the resolution to establish the commission, will be on hand to answer questions and provide information. Written comments and questions can be sent via e-mail to multicultural@vt.edu.
Classified Positions

The following classified positions are currently available. Position details, specific application procedures, position-closing dates may be found on Personnel Services web site. http://www.ps.vt.edu. Positions are also listed on the Job Line, a 24-hour recorded message service. For information on all job titles, call 1-5300. Some positions include state benefits. Positions with numbers beginning with “W” are hourly and do not include state benefits. Individuals with disabilities desiring assistance or accommodation in the application process should call by the application deadline. Closing date for advertised positions is 1 p.m. Monday. An EOAA employer committed to diversity.

FULL TIME

Administrative Assistant, 001854F, PB 3, BFP.

Administrative Assistant, 000478H, PB 1, RDP.

Office Specialist, 006552H, PB 3, RDP.

Radiologic Technologist, 002351M, PB 3, VTH.

Research Assistant, 002611J, PB 3, BFP.

Sous Chef, 000794H, PB 2, RDP.

Pharmacy Assistant, 002089R, PB 2, Northern Virginia Center.

Data Reporting Coordinator, 007916S, PB 3, University Development.

Fiscal Technician, 007918S, PB 3, University Development.

One full-time food-service position available.

Office Specialist, 000940H, PB 2, RDP.

Program Support Technician, 001671J, PB 3, College of Business—Undergraduate Programs.

Program Support Technician, 001717, PB 3, CPAP.

Radiologic Technologist, 002394M, PB 3, VTH.

Sales/Marketing Manager, 000478H, PB 3, RDP.

Student Service Representative, 000786R, PB 3, Graduate School.

Computer Systems Operations, 004285F, PB 3, USA.

Conference Registration Specialist, 002244Q, PB 2, CE—Conference Registration.

Program Support Technician, 002538M, PB 3, APS.

Program Support Technician, 004570M, PB 3, CSES.

Program Support Technician, 002325M, PB 3, VTH.

Research Assistant, 002335M, PB 3, AAE, VTH.

Visitor Center Receptionist, 002957S, PB 2, University Relations.

OFF CAMPUS

Director of Nursing, 002178M, PB 4, CVM—Equine Medical Center.

Geographic Data Developer, 007913M, PB 4, BSE.

Employment

Memorandum to State Employees from Administration Sandra D. Bowen

On January 22, Governor Mark Warner submitted a number of executive budget amendments to the General Assembly for consideration. As you know, state revenues are down significantly, requiring the governor to make some very tough decisions to reduce state expenditures.

One of the most difficult issues was the decision not to retain the salary increase proposed in the introduced budget. Funding it would have required deeper cuts in agency budgets, and more reductions in funding for programs that many Virginians consider essential.

Although the salary increase could not be retained, Governor Warner has been very concerned about the major changes in your health insurance benefits that were included in the original budget. That proposal would increase your premium costs, impose a deductible, and increase co-payments and other expenses. To minimize the impact on your family’s finances, he has requested a commitment of an additional $37 million to reduce premium increases by half and to increase the portion of your health insurance premium paid by the state. In addition, he has eliminated the proposed deductible of $150 per family and the added co-insurance, and held out-of-pocket maximums for medical expenses at their current level. His action will reduce the burden on you and your family as we weather this difficult period.

You may hear about another of the proposed actions—this one concerning funding of the Virginia Retirement System. The governor’s amendments change the rates paid by state agencies and institutions of higher education to the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) for retirement contributions made on behalf of state employees—in part by using the contribution rate that the VRS actuary recommended, and in part by clearing up accounts for which no beneficiary is known.

If you have questions regarding anything contained in this letter, please feel free to contact my office at (804) 786-1201.

PERSONNEL SERVICES INFORMATION

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Parking

Parking continues to increase and parking must pay its own way. Mouras also maintains that bunting first-year student cars on campus would do little to relieve the parking situation because these students park in the most remote areas even now.

Mouras said the final recommendation probably will include three parking structures—a 600-space structure at B-lot in the Derring/ Cowgill area, providing a net parking gain of 341 spaces; one behind Wallace Hall, providing a net gain of 800 spaces; and an 800-space structure in conjunction with the proposed Fine Arts Center which would provide a net gain of 550 spaces. The plan also calls for expansion and construction of surface lots on the north side of I-lot (“the cage”) by 350 spaces and in the stadium area on “chicken hill” by 200 spaces.

In addition, the plan calls for a tiered parking permit system in which the most-desirable parking zones will cost a lot more than less desirable zones. More shuttles would be provided for movement around campus and from more remote parking areas. This would also reduce traffic as fewer cars hunt for spaces in the campus core and allow gradation in permit costs. The plan’s tiered pricing shows a range from a low of $30 for parking in the most remote lots to $180 for individually reserved spaces in central-campus area lots.

All members of the university community are urged to read the Parking and Transportation Master Plan and make comments. The plan can be accessed from the university’s home page. Comments will be accepted by the project consultants Hayes, Sey, Matern & Matern, Inc., and presented along with the final recommendation.

Letter

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University Advisory Council on Strategic Budgeting and Planning. This council is composed of faculty and staff members and students. We will communicate our decisions to the university community by May 1.

Since 80 percent of the university budget is personnel cost, we do know that these reductions will lead to reducing the number of positions in the university. We are working on alternatives for reducing these costs through holding open positions that are currently vacant, and holding positions as they become vacant through retirements and individuals leaving the university. We will make every effort to avoid laying off employees.

We will continue to provide updates to the university community as we learn more about the budget reductions and receive additional information from the deputy employees on their continued commitment to the university.

Sincerely,
Charles W. Steger, president

Yes, the image contains a classified positions section, personnel services information, and a letter from the university's administration. The text is formatted into paragraphs and sections, with proper headings and bullet points for clarity. The content is educational and informational, providing details on job listings, university policies, and budgetary decisions.
**IN OTHER NEWS**

**Mentoring program helps minority students thrive at Virginia Tech**

*By Stewart MacIntosh*

A mentoring and support program for minority students at Virginia Tech has been so successful that it has helped the university become a top-ranking institution nationally in terms of minority graduates in the agricultural sciences.

Randolph Grayson, a professor, founder, and co-director of the university’s Minority Affairs Opportunities Program (MAOP), said participants in this program complete their academic careers at a greater rate than can be claimed by most other institutions.

Grayson added that students understand what is expected of them, and if you set standards with a challenging level of performance, most students will give you that or better.

For minority members, many of those challenges are stereotypes and financial factors, distractions that can deflect even the most diligent student from academic success.

MAOP is a multi-cultural, multi-racial program designed to help minimize those distractions through scholarships, mentoring, and creating bonds among the participants.

“Students when become MAOP scholars they must agree to participate in all official MAOP functions and to be active in Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS),” Grayson explained. “We meet regularly to create an informal support network for the participants—an integral element of the program.

Another reason for the success of students in MAOP is the quality of students accepted into the program. All of the participants have shown potential or have achieved academic excellence on the high-school level. Grayson said grade-point averages are neither the first nor the last things evaluated when considering a student for participation.

“We attempt to evaluate a student’s capabilities in all aspects,” he said. “We try to cut through everything that distracts students, cut through the stereotypes, and evaluate and individual based on present performance and potential. Our goal is to move them from where they are to where they want to be.”

Grayson added, “If students understand what is expected of them, and if you set standards with a challenging level of performance, most students will give you that or better.”

He stressed that the graduate component of MAOP represents the program’s ultimate goal of helping minority members and women obtain advanced degrees. The number of minority members with advanced degrees, especially in the sciences, technology, architecture, business, and some related areas is generally very low, he said.

Increasing the number of students with master’s, doctorates, and professional degrees will contribute to the breaking of “glass ceilings” found throughout.

Grayson emphasized that the achievements of the MAOP program have been possible because of the talents and commitments of student sponsors, mentors, and role models is what is helping these talented students succeed.

**Ellis honored for contributions to ISE education**

*By Liz Crumbley*

The Society of Automotive Engineers, Inc. (SAE) is recognizing Kimberly Ellis, an assistant professor, for outstanding contributions as one of the nation’s top engineering educators in the field of industrial and systems engineering (ISE).

Ellis will receive the 2002 Ralph R. Teeter Educational Award during SAE’s 2002 World Congress and Exposition in Detroit, Michigan, in March.

Since joining the Virginia Tech faculty in 1996, Ellis has been cited three times on the College of Engineering Dean’s List for Teaching Excellence. Her undergraduate and graduate students are designed to instruct students in successful methods of manufacturing design, production and distribution.

As a senior-design project adviser for the ISE department, Ellis provides guidance for undergraduates who work directly with industry sponsors. Currently, she advises a senior-level project on redesigning an assembly operation at Volvo Trucks in Pulaski. She also is helping to plan a conference at Virginia Tech that will increase undergraduate students’ awareness of career opportunities in the automotive industry.

For the past five years, Ellis has been the faculty adviser for the Virginia Tech chapter of the Beta Mu, the national industrial engineering honor society. She also is active in the student chapter of the Institute of Industrial Engineers.

Ellis is a co-director of the Dover Laboratory for Manufacturing Systems at Virginia Tech and an associate of the Center for High Performance Manufacturing. Her research focuses primarily on improving productivity in manufacturing systems and she has received funding from the National Science Foundation, Ericsson Inc. and Lucent Technologies. She has organized two Industry Forums on Computer Integrated Manufacturing with Ericsson, during which graduate students and industrial engineers exchange research information and ideas.

As a participant in the Teeter Award Program, Ellis plans to increase industry involvement in the education of her graduate and undergraduate students.

SAE’s Teeter Program offers engineering educators the opportunity to learn more about professional activities in the automotive and aerospace industries and to exchange views with practicing engineers. Teeter is an SAE member for 50 years, established the educational award in 1964.

SAE is a non-profit educational and scientific organization with a membership of more than 83,000 engineers, business executives, educators and students who share information and exchange ideas for advancing the engineering of all forms of self-propelled land, air and water vehicles.

**PROFESSOR**

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