

# Virginia Tech Conductor

A GUIDE FOR OUR JOURNEY TOWARD EXCELLENCE, EQUITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

## In this issue

- Page 3 - Three Virginia Tech alums discuss improving access to higher education.
- Page 3 - More events mark the anniversary of the first black student at Virginia Tech.
- Page 4 - Will the Internet change our perceptions of race?
- Page 4 - Presidential Campus Enrichment Grant recipient reflects on her experiences.
- Page 4 - Students talk about how their perception of diversity has changed.

## Quest for diversity a continuation of land-grant mission

Excerpted from Founders Day 2003 comments by President Charles Steger

Today is Founders Day. We celebrate the accomplishments of our alumni, faculty, and students. ...This also is the time when we reflect on our mission and our past. The land-grant college premise reaches back almost one and a half centuries. It is built on a multi-dimensional platform... It has many planks. Basic and applied research. Taking the power of the academy to the community. Professional training. Educating the whole student. And more. However, there is one plank we should never forget. Land-grant colleges, since their beginnings, have been all about access and opportunity.

For generations, young men, and later young women, were empowered through education. The land-grant university came into full bloom after the Second World War when GIs flocked back to school. Indeed, the GI Bill likely is one of the greatest "social engineering" innovations of all time. Some in our society dislike that term - social engineering - but think about it. The GI Bill created access to education for men and women who never dreamed of college - who never dreamed of opportunity. And it likely was responsible for creation of a 20th century phenomenon - this country's great middle class.

And later, my generation, the children of those World War II vets, benefited from the

See Mission on page 2



## New sponsors of the Multicultural Fellows program

The Multicultural Fellows will enter their fourth year with new sponsors.

In 1999, Dean of Students Barbara Pendergrass, Vice President of Multicultural Affairs Ben Dixon, and the Department of Political Science, represented by Richard Shingles, launched a program to recognize members of the university community for their voluntary contributions to diversity, and to foster professional development. The resulting Multicultural Fellows Program has become a volunteer association whose members - faculty, staff, and administrators - enjoy lively debate while they contribute to the university's mission of fostering a welcoming community for all. The fellows produced the Conductor and workshops such as training in interactive performance, for instance.

With Pendergrass' retirement this summer and the restructuring of the Dean of Students Office, Vice President of Multicultural Affairs Ben Dixon invited Personnel Services and the Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching (CEUT) to be sponsors, which they gladly



Wildman



Woodard

accepted. "The opportunity to participate in discussions about issues that are critical to retention and recruitment of staff and faculty members will be invaluable, particularly given Personnel Services role offices have in supporting the quality of work life for university employees," says Linda Woodard, Assistant Vice President for Personnel Services. "Family and work/life, wellness programs, benefits and disability services, and employee relations are part of the university's overall human resources function. Serving as a sponsor for the Multicultural Fellows Program will provide additional insights about concerns that could assist my offices with our programming efforts."

"Personnel Services will also help the Fellows address issues important to staff, such as recognizing and valuing local culture and acknowledging the critical day-to-day role of staff in creating a welcoming campus," says Woodard.

"I am delighted that CEUT was afforded the opportunity this  
See Sponsors on page 4

## Retiring dean offers recommendations

Remarks presented at Founders Day 2003 by Barbara Pendergrass, retired Dean of Students

Just like there are no perfect human families, there are no perfect work families. Virginia Tech is not a perfect place, **but it is good place.** It has many **positive qualities** - many talented and caring people, wonderful students, distinguished professors, productive researchers, a dedicated staff, conscientious administrators, beautiful buildings, and well manicured grounds. We have many reasons to be proud, despite the cloud of despair that made it difficult this past year for many of us to see our positive attributes. This was a difficult year, even for me, an eternal optimist.

Because I care about this university, I will use this opportunity to provide some recommendations that I think might be helpful as we continue on our journey toward excellence. So that you will know that there is an end in sight, I am presenting six points.

**First, we must always appreciate, understand, and value what we have.** Using the glass empty/glass full analogy to illustrate my point, we must recognize what is in our glass instead of focusing solely on what is missing from it. We should appreciate and enjoy the half that is present while at the same time working fervently to enhance its quantity. We all recognize that the desirable goal is to have a full glass, but since we all live in the real world, we know that desiring something does not make it happen, at least not on our schedule. The challenge for all of us who thirst for a full glass is to decide how we treat the half we have. Do we ignore it until the volume reaches a capacity that is congruent with our goals? Do we dispose of it if there is not enough to fill the glass. When I am feeling impatient about what is missing from the glass, two images from my memory bank help me to refocus on the half that we have. I think of the plight of a half carton of milk that was left out of the refrigerator accidentally for a few days. **It spoiled.** The second image that comes to mind is



from my childhood when one of my jobs after working in the fields was to pump the water for the daily laundry. I have vivid memories of how difficult it was to fill an empty tub. For some reason, it always seemed like the first half was more difficult to pump. I preferred adding to the second half; that always felt like I was making progress. The point I am trying to make here is that we must not allow our liabilities or the missing half from our glass to sour or destroy our positive attributes.

**Number two, we must invest time to understand the characteristics of the ingredients in the glass.** We need to know the properties of the elements in the glass to make wise decisions about what needs to be added. For example, most chemists would not add chemicals to a container without knowing and understanding the properties of the chemicals that are already in the container. One obvious reason is to avoid a disaster, all chemicals do not mix well together. Another important reason is that many chemists are trying to uncover new territories, or trying to create something that is stronger or better than what already exists. Something different and special might not be created by restricting the chemicals that can be used in an experiment. Often, diversity in the properties of the chemicals is necessary for new discoveries. Not surprisingly, true diversity in the workforce will move us to new horizons. We all bring different gifts to the table. It is essential that we learn to appropriately recognize the power in workforce diversity and not be like the chemist whose discoveries are stagnated due to the use of the same **old** familiar chemical.

**Number three, we must interpret and use statistics appropriately.** Sometimes incorrect interpretation of data, lack of historical knowledge, and perhaps a biased perspective cause us to misuse statistics to undervalue our ingredients. To me, this characterizes many critics of affirmative action. I believe that many misuse statistics to support their viewpoints. For example, in response to the most recent board of visitors' decision, several commentaries cited comparative graduation data on Black and White students to support their assertions that active pursuit of diversity at Virginia Tech is harmful. They interpret a 60 percent graduation rate for Black students over six years in comparison to a 75 percent rate for White students over the same period of time to be a **negative**. I am certain they have come to this conclusion because of their lack of knowledge and understanding. They simply don't understand the properties of the ingredients in the glass.

See Recommendations on page 2

## Recommendations ...

*Continued from page 1*

They don't understand that, despite 450 years of oppression and government sponsored systematic discrimination, despite an unwelcoming and often hostile environment, despite living in a world that defines dark skin as being synonymous with inferiority, despite constant subtle and sometimes overt insults because of a darker skin color, despite being in the spotlight everyday of your life simply because you were born with more melanin in your skin than others, despite the negative stereotypes disseminated by the media and biased researchers, **60 percent persevere**. This is amazing. We should recognize and celebrate the achievement this represents. We should understand that students with this type of track record will help us become a stronger institution. They have a track record of surviving and succeeding under the most severe of circumstances.

**Number four, we must acknowledge and appreciate all problem-solving approaches that seek to improve what is missing from the glass.** People solve problems in different ways. Typically, every approach is needed and provides value to the process. We need the protesters, for they make sure that we understand the severity of the pain and suffering caused by our policies, procedures, and practices. We need the behind-the-scenes workers, for they are the ones who translate the message and often help us find a common language. We need the keepers of the establishment, those who work diligently to preserve what is good about the institution. These individuals dedicate their energy to protecting what is in the glass, so that we always have something to celebrate and appreciate. Individuals who truly value diversity recognize and appreciate the necessity of different problem solving approaches. They understand that there is room at the table for all approaches that have at their core the goal of improving the institution for everyone.

**Number five – As an institution, we must recognize and reconcile our heritage of exclusion.** We must acknowledge that racism and other forms of “isms” continue to influence our practices, how we interact with each other, the privileges that some have and others do not, and who are in and out of the circle of influence. Only through acknowledging our “isms” will we be able to minimize and, perhaps, control their deleterious consequences. Our “isms” will not evaporate if we ignore them. Instead, ignoring them causes them to reproduce and take a firmer root. Controlling the harmful effects of our “isms” requires the effort of everyone in the community. The process of controlling and managing these venomous ingredients require that all of us examine our beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors and make a continuous effort to spew out those practices that are skewed by “isms.” We must challenge and hold each other accountable. However, we must not become discouraged, but rather recognize that all of us represent a “work in progress” – we are victims of the influences of “isms” and it is only through acknowledging our shortcomings and defects that we can make progress in overcoming them.

Our legacy of exclusion makes our climb steeper, but not impossible.

**Number six, we must have a “caring character,” one that seeks to encourage, uncover, and cultivate new talents.** This is personal for me. I am here today because many people cared about me. Being a college administrator at any institution was certainly not on my radar screen. I am the little girl who sat outside at night at the edge of the dirt road that ran by my family's home, waiting for my real family to return to retrieve me. I just knew that I did not belong to this poor family. Of course, no one ever came. The two room school for poor farm kids was condemned at the end of my third grade. Reluctantly, I had to now travel by bus to the school in town. This was traumatic for me. In the two room school, we were all poor. In fact, I was among the elite of the poor because my parents owned their own land. In my new school, my differences were obvious. I did not dress like the other children – my mother's motto was as long we were clean, nothing else mattered. Of course it mattered to me. My difference made me

want to be invisible. By the time I reached the seventh grade, I was assumed to be retarded. I not only looked strange because of my attire, I also had a speech impediment. The last thing I wanted was to be noticed. To say I was reticent is an understatement. My seventh grade geography teacher initiated my escape from my cocoon, with very little help from me. After learning that I was not retarded when I earned the highest score on the first exam, she encouraged me – sometimes by force – to speak in class. That was my beginning. Mrs. McClary had discovered me and would not allow me to return to my status of invisibility. Now I am thankful to Mrs. McClary, who looked beyond the camouflage of my impoverished condition and saw that I had the potential of moving beyond my circumstances. Like Mrs. McClary, there are many people who have encouraged me during my Virginia Tech journey. I will forever be grateful to the late Tom Cook, who hired me in 1979 and served as a wonderful mentor and friend to me. His support, encouragement, and confidence in my abilities are the reasons for my long tenure at the university. I am thankful to Tom Goodale for introducing me to administration. This was certainly not on my list of priorities; however, with the encouragement of my good friend, Joyce Williams Green, who believes that I can do anything, I made the leap into administration 14 years ago. Thank you Paul Torgersen and Peggy Meszaros for insisting that I serve as Dean of Students. Your encouragement and confidence in me convinced me to accept the best job of my career. Carol Nickerson, Pat Hyer, and Nikki Giovanni made sure that I did not embark on this journey alone. Carol and Pat encouraged my soul through donating their personal funds in support of diversity programs in my area. Nikki contributed her talents, resources, and contacts, and provided incredible support to me. She made sure that I knew she was in my corner. The staff in the Dean of Students Office, the Black Caucus, the Virginia Tech students, and my family at St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church have made this journey a good one. I can not imagine life in Blacksburg without my adopted sisters, Michele Holmes and Kimberly Ware. They have been true friends and confidants. You have all made me feel loved and supported.

To conclude, I care deeply about the image of Virginia

## Mission...

*Continued from page 1*

largest expansion of higher education the world has ever seen. More colleges were built during the 1960s than any time in our history. The community college concept was born during this era. The economic expansions of the 1980s and 90s likely had their roots in the intellectual ferment of the 60s and 70s.

And it was all about access to the transformative power of education.

One sector of our society, however, had been denied access since before the founding of our republic more than 200 years ago. Blacks in America were shut out. It was only 50 years ago that this institution allowed access to African Americans. The year 2003 marks the 50th anniversary of admittance of Blacks to Virginia Tech. If academic years had themes, this one ought to be Remembering How We Broke Down the Barriers.

The quest for access — the quest for opportunity — is not yet achieved. We recently had a “discussion” of sorts on this campus about how we might continue to find ways to extend access to sectors of our society who would not otherwise have the opportunity.

While I acknowledge that the laws of this country may be changing and affirmative action, as currently practiced, may soon no longer be allowed, we should recognize that the quest for diversity is, in some respects, simply a continuation of the century old land-grant tradition of providing access. Regardless of where our leaders direct us and regardless of where the Supreme Court leads us, we ought to remember the opportunity afforded those other generations and find ways to help current and future generations.

Tech. I believe that our image is critical to our future success. It will determine who we are able to attract to become a part of the family. Not many individuals want to join a dysfunctional family. Potential faculty, staff, and students do not have an investment in our success like those of us who are already here. People are looking for a stable home and, thus, are seeking the best investment or buy. They don't have the good memories and family loyalties to inspire them to join the home improvement committee. They want it to be ready for them. They are not like my good friends Lucinda Roy, Bev Watford, and Sam Cook, and many others who are vested in improving the existing structure. These and many other individuals appreciate what is in the glass and will work fervently to insure that the right ingredients are added. Our greatest asset in many ways are the current members of the Virginia Tech family, those with a commitment to the well-being of the university. We must treat them well. **We must support them and reward them.**

**Finally,** I will give you my wish list. I would like to see a Virginia Tech which does not turn a blind eye to the vestige of privilege that has been afforded some at the sacrifice of others. I would like to see a Virginia Tech that is **not only** accepting of people of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientations, differing abilities, social economic status, and religions, but is affirming of them. I would like to see a Virginia Tech that refuses to take refuge in laws created to return us to the legacy of the past. Of course, that would mean that we have learned from the past laws of the commonwealth that denied Blacks and Native Americans the opportunity to pursue an education. That means, we must acknowledge that the founding fathers of this great institution wrongly embraced those exclusionary laws instead of standing up for what was right. They embraced the flawed laws that denied my ancestors the opportunity to attend this institution for its first 80 years. We must fight the impulse to repeat their mistakes. We must understand that all laws are flawed because they are created by flawed humans and that they favor someone's philosophical perspective. So, let's go with the laws that favor justice. Let's go with the laws that favor inclusion. Let's go with the laws that favor progress. Let's refuse to turn back the hands of time. Let's learn from the mistakes of our ancestors and pledge not to repeat them.

## About 'The Conductor'

*The Conductor* is produced twice during the fall and twice during the spring semesters by the Multicultural Fellows and is published by the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

**All members of the university community are invited to contribute.** Please submit articles to the editorial board at [multicultural@vt.edu](mailto:multicultural@vt.edu).

Back issues are online at <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/vtpubs/spectrum/>

### Editorial Board

Kimberly S. Brown, 231-8440, [ksbrown@vt.edu](mailto:ksbrown@vt.edu)  
Richard Conners, 231-6896, [rconners@vt.edu](mailto:rconners@vt.edu)  
Benjamin Dixon, 231-1820, [bdixon@vt.edu](mailto:bdixon@vt.edu)  
Mahmood A. Khan, 703-538-8398, [mahmood@vt.edu](mailto:mahmood@vt.edu)  
Susan Trulove, 231-5646, [strulove@vt.edu](mailto:strulove@vt.edu)

### Production

Roxanna Link, Coordinator of Communications, Office of Multicultural Affairs, 231-2610, [roxanna@vt.edu](mailto:roxanna@vt.edu)  
Salem Times Register

**The deadline for the next issue is November 12.**

# Higher education access important to society

by Susan Trulove, Multicultural Fellow

Higher education is the best way to tap into the American dream, three Virginia Tech graduates told those attending a community forum on "Delivering on the Promise: Access and Inclusion in Higher Education" in September.

The forum, part of the continuing celebration of the 50th anniversary of admission of the first Black student to Virginia Tech in 1953, featured Tech graduates Linda Edmonds Turner and Ted King, and retired dean of students Barbara Pendergrass, who received her Ed.D. from Virginia Tech in 1987.

Moderator Benjamin Dixon, vice president for multicultural affairs, observed that "Despite its position as the most democratic nation on earth, America continues to struggle to fully implement one of its most highly espoused values: 'Every citizen has the right to participate in and benefit from the social and economic benefits of a free society.'"

Linda Edmonds Turner, who holds a Ph.D. in business administration and an MBA from Tech, is president of Boston Urban College (UCB) – a two-year college that is a close partner of Action for Boston Community Development, Inc., Boston's official antipoverty agency. UCB provides inner-city residents who might otherwise never go to college with the opportunity to achieve higher education credentials. The college provides students with support services that enable them to stay in school and complete their degrees. It grants associate degrees and certificate programs in human services administration, early childhood education, and general studies. It holds classes in downtown Boston and in neighborhood centers across the city. UCB also offers certificate programs in computer applications, management, and other areas. And it offers bilingual Early Childhood Education certification in both Spanish and Cantonese.

Ted King, legal counsel for the Maryland legislature, who entered Virginia Tech in the late 1960s and earned bachelor's and master's degrees in economics before going on to earn a law degree at the University of Virginia, said that without scholarships, "I would never have been able to come here."

"One purpose of this forum is to explore the issues and challenges for increasing the percentages of people from underrepresented groups who are successfully accessing and being effectively included in higher education opportunities in this country," Dixon explained. "Another purpose is to continue the dialogue and conversation on how, at both community and institutional levels, we might change the prevailing view of many that racial, ethnic, religious, and other differences are liabilities, to a view that these differences are assets that we have to manage much more effectively."

Education is still a privilege in the United States, Turner said. "The first problem is attitude. People say they 'see no

problem', that we don't need multicultural programs, and that 'we can't afford this.' But money does solve problems," Turner emphasized. Multicultural programs are an investment, she said. "The second problem is that words do not match actions," she said. "People say 'it's important, but we can't find faculty members or students who would succeed in this environment.' What is not said is, 'I'm not sure they're qualified anyway.'"

Asked what Virginia Tech should do, Turner said, "Promote diversity across the campus and don't just expect it to be pursued by the multicultural affairs division. We are all in this together. Insist on a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. Differences are a positive that help the individual and an institution."

Pendergrass, who founded the Diversity Summit, Multicultural Fellows, and Student Voices advisory council at Virginia Tech, said she is confident there is value in discussion. But "the myth of an egalitarian society is pervasive."

---

**'We still need to examine ourselves, be honest with ourselves, about the way we behave, make decisions, include some people.'**

---

While the discriminatory practices of 400 years are no longer the law of the land, as a result of the Civil Rights Act of only 40 years ago, hate and prejudice have not disappeared, she said. Because she still experiences discrimination, she continues to believe in Affirmative Action. "In order for me to believe Affirmative Action is not necessary, I would have to believe that every child is encouraged," Pendergrass said. But she cited research documenting continued differential treatment by teachers of Black and White grade-school children.

"We still need to examine ourselves, be honest with ourselves, about the way we behave, make decisions, include some people. Do we evaluate people based on what they can bring, or on the basis of stereotypes? Until we evaluate ourselves, we are always going to have haves and have-nots."

King said that at the time he entered college, "Virginia and Virginia Tech were trying to help citizens achieve all they could achieve." He grew up in Southside Virginia, "very poor." Tech was his first mixed race educational experience. "I was fortunate to be able to attend because of scholarships."

"Today, it seems to me there is an effort to make higher education less accessible to people like me – growing up where financial opportunities are lacking," King said. "When I see headlines that scream (about) budget cuts and tuition hikes, I begin to become alarmed. I become concerned about whether individuals from poor, less educated families will find the doors of higher education closed."

He said that individuals without access may come to believe that higher education has no benefit to them and, thus, reduce their future support as voters and tax payers.

"It is imperative that each of us begin to make the case for the importance of education and for supporting education, and not only to policy makers, but to individual private citizens," King said.

Before opening the forum to the audience, Dixon quoted James Duderstadt, former president of the University of Michigan, regarding the university's mandate on diversity, as he was preparing to step down from his office in 1995. "At that time he was pleased to report that the university had become a national leader 'in building the kind of diverse learning community necessary to serve the increasingly diverse society.' He said:

'Sometimes people ask why the university has made this commitment to change, why diversity is the cornerstone of our efforts to achieve national excellence and leadership during the 1990's. Fundamentally, it is the morally right thing to do. Plurality, equal opportunity, and freedom from discrimination are the foundations upon which the university is built. In an often painfully divided society, America's universities must act as leading engines of progress in our long struggle toward true equality.'

Virginia Tech faculty member Rebecca Scheckler said, "We are interested in getting more Black Virginians into science and technology."

King responded, "You have to start before high school so that when students reach high school they have the training and the mind set that college makes sense to them. You have to have the whole community working to achieve that goal."

Dixon added, "We know of successful pipelines, but the issue is one of scale."

Tysus Jackson of University Development asked, "How do we begin to make students of color at Virginia Tech feel affirmed that this is their university?"

King responded, "One thing I always tell students coming to Virginia Tech is to get involved. Take advantage of all this university has offer. Don't close your mind to new experiences and adventures. Find a way to give your interests expression".

Jessica Anderson, an undergraduate student in human development, suggested, "We as students can share our Virginia Tech experience and invite others to come here. There are many opportunities."

Lakisha Miller, a new graduate student in science and technology studies, talked about her previous experience at Iowa State, where the president met with students and where there were weekly roundtable discussions. Dixon told her of the Black Caucus and other groups and the annual Diversity Summit, which addresses issues of climate. He also pointed out that there will be a forum on Monday, Nov. 10, 3 to 5 p.m., in Owens to update the community on the review of race-conscious programs.

"We need more people to be involved," Dixon said.

## The Celebration Continues

The following events are part of the year-long celebration of the admission of the first Black student to Virginia Tech in 1953.

**November 6, 8 p.m.**, Haymarket Theater, Squires Student Center: SWOPERA - Spoken Word Opera, presented by the Carpetbag Theatre, Inc., a nonprofit, community based, professional theatre company. The event is free.

The mission of the Carpetbag Theatre is to give artistic voice to the underserved. We address the issues and dreams of people who have historically been silenced by racism, classism, sexism, and ageism; tell stories of empowerment; celebrate our culture; and reveal hidden stories.

**November 11 - December 10**, Armory Art Gallery: Art exhibit featuring the paintings of Virginia Tech Professors Robert Graham and Yonsenia White.



Ted King, Barbara Pendergrass, Linda Edmonds Turner, and Ben Dixon led the community forum on improving access to higher education.

## “Has your perception of diversity changed since you became a student at Virginia Tech? If so, was there a pivotal event or experience?”



I came from a very diverse community to begin with, so, to be quite honest, I had a very broad perception of diversity coming to Virginia Tech. I have friends from home of almost all races and religions. In fact, I was actually slightly surprised at times to see how prejudice some people can be even at a place as large

as Virginia Tech.

Frank Doran  
University Studies

Yes, my perception of diversity has changed since I became a student at Virginia Tech. I have always considered myself an open-minded person. However, growing up in a small town in New Hampshire, there was not much cultural diversity. Since coming to Tech, I have had many opportunities to meet and create friendships with people from different backgrounds.

Katelin Langley  
Mechanical Engineering



Since I was a freshman, there have been increases in the percentages of minority students. However, there is still a lot of room for improvement, especially in regards to diverse thinking in the classroom.

Kim Shelton  
Industrial and Systems Engineering



My perception has changed in a somewhat minor fashion. I had always thought of the widest variety of personal ideas and ethnicities when I imagined diversity, but Virginia Tech presented me with people and thoughts I had never encountered before.

Matthew Walker  
History



## Sponsors...

Continued from page 1

year to become one of the sponsors of the Multicultural Fellows program,” says CEUT director Terry Wildman. “The centerpiece of CEUT’s mission is to support and advocate for a campus environment where instructional excellence can flourish. The key phrase in this statement is that it takes a healthy environment to support learning and development, which extends the focus well beyond the individual efforts of faculty members and graduate students in their respective classrooms. We will always have much work to do to make classrooms and individual courses function well, but I have come to believe that is the easy part of our larger obligation. The more difficult task is to work toward an entire system that converges on the one broad goal of making Virginia Tech an effective learning community.”

Wildman, who is professor of educational psychology, recalls, “Several years ago, when we began the Learning Communities Initiative, our first product was an analysis that revealed gaps between the ideals we espoused as a community and the realities of our functioning as an organization at that time. While the results were perhaps not surprising, they were sobering in terms of the barriers that a large organization can put in the path to learning, student development, and community. In our work, we had to confront the reality that the environment that surrounds the educational apparatus is not

## Reflections

# Presidential Campus Enrichment Grant recipient reflects on her experiences

The Presidential Campus Enrichment Grant (PCEG) for students was established in the spring of 2001 as a cross-college effort at enhancing diversity at Virginia Tech. Selection criteria include the diversity activities of the candidate before arriving at Virginia Tech as well as their commitment to educational diversity. Academic achievement, financial status, and family educational background are also considered in the selection process. To ensure the fostering of educational diversity, recipients are required to continue and expand their activities on the campus and in the community by participating in programs and writing about their experiences in a journal. Other activities and the monitoring of progress are coordinated by the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Recipients must maintain a 2.5 QCA or better and be enrolled as full-time students. Below is a journal entry of one of the PCEG students.

## PHC wonder

Nikkie Eley 1-19-02

This morning I awoke to the maddening cheers of ten girls on my hall. Their excitement wouldn’t have bothered me had it not have been eight in the morning on a Sunday. Despite the hour, they cheered in celebration of their bids from different sororities of the PHC (Historically White sororities). For an hour, all I remember wanting to do was open my door and tell them to “shut up.” Sadly, I now consider my thoughts completely unnecessary and possibly discriminatory. Allow me to explain.

There is a certain stereotype of white women who wear American Eagle or Abercrombie and Finch. They flip their hair, wear small, tight clothes that fit perfectly, and giggle at the most profane things. Somehow, these girls, ladies, and women became the scapegoat of all ditzy individuals. The media implants these images into our head. In turn, I learned to view these characteristics with negative connotations. Naturally, through time (as I grew older), I learned that not all women are the same; but there are certain moments I cannot help but sink back into the inexcusable mind frame of thoughts that were implanted in my mind as a child. Point in case: This morning I awoke to screaming, high-pitched cheers of girls who received their bids. Naturally, they were only celebrating, but my first instinct was to dismiss their

simply neutral in its effect on students and faculty, but serves to indirectly produce much of the learning that occurs.

“This is why the work of the Multicultural Fellows, and all related programs, is so important,” says Wildman. “This work contributes to the creation of a community for learning that is safe and tolerant, but also intensely observant of how we work together and develop as a community. Without programs like this, our capacity for self-reflection and improvement would be reduced, and the prospects for our students would be less bright. This is a natural partnership for CEUT, and we are very pleased to support the overall effort.”

## Diversity scholarship sought for conference

The College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences and the Office of the Provost have issued a call for papers on diversity to be presented at the Mid-Atlantic Conference on the Scholarship of Diversity. Preference will be given to scholars addressing diversity issues in education, the social sciences, and humanities. Nov. 17 is the deadline for submissions.

The conference will be held on March 18-19, 2004, at the Donaldson Brown Hotel and Conference Center.

The conference will showcase diversity as a legitimate

and valued area of scholarship and research. It is for those studying and/or committed to issues related to race, gender, culture, class, sexual orientation, and disability. There will be plenary speakers, breakout sessions, roundtables, posters, and panels, as well as fellowship, support, and celebration.

Presenters papers and presentations will be published in proceedings following the conference.

For more information, contact Beth Schroder, 540-231-3144, eschrode@vt.edu, or visit [www.conted.vt.edu/macsd/](http://www.conted.vt.edu/macsd/).

## A glance at the spring issue of *Dissent*: Race and the Internet

Will the Internet change our perceptions of race? Jerry Kang, a professor of law at the University of California at Los Angeles, says that depends on how we construct our online environments.

Kang writes that, at this stage, most Internet communication takes place through text, in which participants’ races may remain invisible. “This prompts giddy speculations about Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream Version 2.0 — to be judged by the content of one’s text-characters, not the color of one’s skin,” says Kang.

But ultimately he sees only limited use for Internet environments in which all mention of an author’s race is excluded. While acknowledging that “zoning most marketplaces for ‘abolition’” could be useful, he suggests that the Internet’s real promise may not be in eliminating racial perceptions, but in changing and enriching them. “Virtual communities are centered around common interests, experiences, and fates,” he writes. A focus on common goals may allow people to relate to those of other races in ways that change their perceptions of race. This is especially likely, he says, if information about people’s race is not revealed until they have already established a relationship.

Constructing a positive environment for racial interaction on the Internet will become even more challenging as online environments come to rely heavily on graphics as well as text. Kang hopes that those who build these new online environments will consider their potential to improve or harm race relations. “If we are coding a new ‘cyburban’ reality,” he writes, “let us at least make new mistakes.”

The article is not online. Information about the journal is available at <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/>

Copyright (c) 2003 The Chronicle of Higher Education, Inc. Reprinted with permission.