Kelly named dean of College of Natural Resources

By Clara B. Cox

J. Michael Kelly, chair of the Natural Resource Ecology and Management Department at Iowa State University, will become the second dean of the College of Natural Resources, effective September 1. He will replace Gregory N. Brown, founding dean of the college, who has announced his retirement this summer.

“I am delighted that Dr. Kelly has accepted our offer to become dean of Natural Resources. His background and leadership skills will allow the college to continue the great progress begun under Dr. Brown,” said Mark G. McNamee, university provost and vice president for academic affairs, in making the announcement.

“Interest in and pressures on natural resources will continue to intensify as this century progresses. Virginia Tech’s College of Natural Resources is well positioned to take a leadership role in educating the next generation of natural-resource managers as well as providing the research base and Extension programs needed to effectively manage, utilize, and protect the natural resources of Virginia and the nation,” Kelly said.

A fellow of the Soil Science Society of America, Kelly joined the Iowa State University Department of Forestry as professor and department chair in 1995, a position he held until 2002. He also served as interim chair of the Department of Horticulture during 2001.

In 2002, he was responsible for developing and implementing a merged Department of Forestry and Department of Animal Ecology to form the Department of Natural Resources Ecology and Management and was named chair of the new department, the position he now holds.

Sanders selected to be new assistant provost

By Clara B. Cox

Karen Eley Sanders has been named assistant provost and director of Academic and Career Support Services at Virginia Tech, effective August 1.

Sanders has served as director of the Center for Academic Enrichment and Excellence since July, 2001. In her new position, Sanders will oversee the Center for Academic Enrichment and Excellence, Multicultural Academic Opportunities Program (MAOP), Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, university-wide academic support initiatives, and Pipeline programs, which are designed to create early exposure to college opportunities for potential students at an early age.

“We were extremely pleased to attract Dr. Sanders to her present position, and now the opportunity presents itself to utilize further her professional talents in this broader responsibility of academic support services,” said David R. Ford, vice provost for academic affairs, in making the announcement.

“Karen’s appointment reflects the university’s commitment to the success and mission of MAOP and its role as a university-wide resource,” said Patricia B. Hyer, associate provost for academic administration. MAOP had reported to Hyer, but the program will now report to Ford with Sanders’ appointment.

Before joining the administration at Virginia Tech, Sanders spent nine years at the University of Arkansas, where she directed Minority Education Services from 1997-2001 and the Boyer Advising Center from 1992-1997. She has been a program analyst for the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command at Fort Monroe, and has taught at the University of Illinois and Virginia State University, where she also coordinated the Enrichment in the Sciences Program.

She has made presentations at conferences throughout the country and is the recipient of numerous honors and awards, among them the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. University of Arkansas Faculty/Staff Award and the American Association for Higher Education Black Caucus Outstanding Dissertation Award. She was recognized by the Virginia Tech Black Caucus in 2003 for contributions in campus and community outreach and in 2002 for service to students. She is listed in several Who’s Who publications, most recently Who’s Who in Executives and Professionals 2003-04, and (See SANDERS on 3)

Ball to oversee Tech’s Department of Mechanical Engineering

By Lynn A. Nystrom

Kenneth S. Ball, professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Texas at Austin, will become the head of the Department of Mechanical Engineering in Virginia Tech’s College of Engineering August 1.

Ball, who held the Temple Foundation Endowed Faculty Fellow in Engineering No. 5 at the University of Texas at Austin, also is the college’s nominee for the L.S. Randolph Professorship of Mechanical Engineering at Virginia Tech, said Hassan Aref, dean of the College of Engineering.

“I am pleased we could recruit Dr. Ball to Virginia Tech. He has built a world-class research center at the Texas,” Aref said.

“Our mechanical-engineering department is the home of several premier educational and research facilities, and I believe Dr. Ball’s vision will complement and enhance our efforts.”

Currently, the Department of Mechanical Engineering ranks 22nd in the country, according to the 2004 survey conducted by U.S. News and World Report. Most recently, the department played the leading role in the university’s partnering with the Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center to offer graduate degrees in biomedical engineering and in its successful bid to become a lead university of a consortium selected by NASA to create the National Institute of Aeronautics.

(Today’s edition)

TODAY’S EDITION
See page 2 for information on CommonHealth medical screenings.

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G. Don Taylor Jr., director of the Center for Engineering Logistics and Distribution at the University of Louisville, will become head of the Grado Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering in the College of Engineering this fall.

“I am pleased to announce that we were able to recruit Dr. Taylor to Blacksburg,” said Hassan Aref, dean of Virginia Tech’s College of Engineering. “He held an endowed chair at the University of Louisville where he founded the research center he currently directs.”

“Dr. Taylor has held the Mary Lee and George F. Duthie Chair in Engineering Logistics. The department’s honorifics committee and I have nominated Dr. Taylor to hold our Charles O. Gordon Professorship,” Aref said.

The Grado Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering is highly respected among its peers across the country. In the latest rankings by U.S. News and World Report, the department ranks seventh in the quality of its graduate education and fifth for its undergraduate program.

Taylor, who joined the University of Louisville in the spring of 2000, is an expert on the logistical intricacies and potential economies of supply-chain management, from materials flow inside a factory to transportation dispatching and routing.

(Today’s edition)

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VBI, partners receive largest NIH contract

By Susan Bland

The Virginia Bioinformatics Institute (VBI) and its partners have been awarded a five-year, $10.3-million contract from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), which is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The purpose of the contract, which is one of the largest NIH contracts in Virginia Tech’s history, is to establish a national Bioinformatics Resource Center (BRC) that consists of a multi-organism relational database in support of infectious-disease research, especially as it affects biodefense and emerging infectious diseases.

VBI’s BRC will focus on brucella (causes brucellosis in cattle, pigs, and humans), caliciviruses (causes many of the viral dysenteries on cruise ships), coronaviruses, hepatitis A. rabiesvirus, coxiella burnetii/rickettsia/rickettsias (which cause Q fever, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and typhus).

VBI will serve as the lead research group with collaborators at the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, Virginia Tech’s Department of Computer Science, Loyola University Medical School, the University of Maryland, and Social and Scientific Systems Inc.

VBI’s professor and Director Bruno Sobral will lead the project, and VBI’s Joao Setubal, co-principal investigator for the project, will interact with other Virginia Tech faculty members, including Stephen Boyle from the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine and Deborah Hix and Naren Ramakrishnan from the Department of Computer Science.

“This NIH award highlights the (See VBI on 4)

Taylor to head Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering

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(Today’s edition)
JOUSTER project aimed at readying unmanned vehicles for military

By Liz Cramble

Using a $2.2-million grant from the U.S. Department of Defense, university researchers will begin developing an experimentation site at the Virginia International Raceway near Danville, as an initial step in the Joint Unmanned Systems Testing, Experimentation, and Research (JOUSTER) program.

The JOUSTER program can receive as much as $12.2 million in defense grants over the next three years for research advancing the technology of unmanned military air and ground vehicles, said Charles Reinholz, alumni distinguished professor of mechanical engineering, and Al Wicks, associate professor of mechanical engineering, both in the College of Engineering, are the lead researchers for the JOUSTER project.

Unmanned and autonomous vehicles are increasingly important in military and search-and-rescue activities. Advancing the technology through programs like JOUSTER will make it possible for unmanned machines to do more of the dangerous work, such as finding land mines and conducting close-range air surveillance in military conflicts. “Virginia Tech has played an important role in defense research over the years, and this grant for unmanned vehicle development will help Virginia Tech and Southside continue in that strong tradition,” said Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), who announced congressional appropriation of JOUSTER funding during a ceremony in March at the speedway. Virginia Tech received the grant in June.

“We’re conducting two sets of unmanned air-ground vehicle experiments in 2004,” said Reinholz, who, along with Wicks, has directed research and student projects on unmanned and autonomous vehicles for a number of years at Virginia Tech. “To our knowledge, this will be the first experimentation site devoted to both unmanned air and unmanned ground vehicles.”

An initial set of experiments featured test vehicles supplied by Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida, including a remotely piloted Yamaha RMAX helicopter and a Matilda ground vehicle. A second series of tests will be conducted this fall, linking an Athena Golden Eye ducted-fan aerial vehicle with an iRobot ground vehicle. “We’re approaching the tests as a learning opportunity, but we also intend to collect a significant amount of performance data, develop performance benchmarks and supply all on-site support services,” Reinholz said. “We hope this work will demonstrate the importance of JOUSTER in the long-range plans of the Department of Defense’s Joint Robotics Program.”

Currently, few standards exist for unmanned vehicles used by the military, Wicks said. JOUSTER tests will help determine standards and evaluate whether these vehicles are functioning as required. The experiments also are aimed at finding out how well unmanned vehicles interact with humans who monitor and remotely control vehicle activity.

(See SPECTRUM on 3)
Salbador appointed Pamplin interim associate dean

By Sookhun Ho
Debra A. Salbador, associate professor of accounting and information systems, has been appointed interim associate dean of undergraduate programs at Virginia Tech’s Pamplin College of Business, effective July 1.

A member of the faculty since 1994, Salbador has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in taxation and accounting as well as continuing-education courses. She has served on the finance committee of the Curriculum Committee and continues to serve on a number of department, college, and university committees.

She has served as the chairman of the alumni relations and recruitment committee of the Organization of Women Faculty and was a member of the Virginia Tech Services Board of Directors, the Audit Committee of which she chaired for six years. She has been an advisor to about 30 students since 1994 and was the faculty advisor to the Beta Alpha Psi honorary fraternity.

Her research interest is tax policy. She has examined the effects of tax policy on a firm’s investment, financing, and operating decisions and on the measurement of tax burdens and marginal tax costs; economic and non-economic effects on tax-compliance behavior; the effects of e-business on tax policy; and the effects of tax-accounting methods on income reporting.

Salbador is a certified public accountant and a member of the American Accounting Association; National Tax Association; the American Society of Women Accountants; and a member of the American Accounting Association’s sister society, the American Accounting Association, which she served in various official capacities, and Phi Kappa Phi.

Salbador received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in accounting at the University of New Orleans and a Ph.D. in accounting at the University of South Carolina. She came to Virginia Tech in 1994.

Professional-development certificates presented to university employees

By Sookhun Ho
Wilson Prichett, senior engineer and project manager at ASEGI Inc. in Tennessee, has been named to the new position of campus energy manager beginning July 6.

A registered professional engineer, a certified energy manager, a green-lights surveyor ally, and a registered energy professional, Prichett also holds a boiler-operations certificate and has more than 20 years’ experience in energy conservation, facilities management, and sustainable-facility design.

He also has expertise in renewable energy technologies and supplemental energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, small hydro, biomass, biogas, and fuel cells.

Prichett has been with ASEGI since 1985 and has performed more than 500 facilities energy audits and obtained approximately $10 million in savings for clients. He has directed hundreds of commercial, industrial, and governmental clients to help them to design and build energy-efficient/sustainable facilities and conducts workshops in his expertise areas.

As campus energy manager, Prichett will aid Assistant Vice President for Facilities Bill Elvey and will “act as team leader for the development of long-range plans to implement and build energy-efficient/sustainable facilities and conducts workshops in his expertise areas.”

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“Improving the technology of machine-human interaction is critical,” said Wicks. “Unmanned military vehicles will be remotely controlled by troops in battlefield situations.”

Although JOBSTER research will be led by Virginia Tech faculty members, the program’s headquarters will be in Danville at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, which was established by Virginia Tech, Danville Community College, Averett University and Southside Virginia organizations to bring technological and economic development to the region.

Recipients of the Certificate in Office Software Skills are Brenda Husser, sociology; Tracey Jarvis Keister, materials science engineering; Kellie Morris, Alumni Relations; Dedreia Perkins, COTA.

Office Software Skills. Participants in the Office Software Skills program are able to tailor their course selections based on the particular demands of their department and position responsibilities. The requirements for successfully completing the certificate are structured mainly around the Microsoft Office Software skills involving Access, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Word plus courses in HTML, PageMaker and FrontPage.

The successful major-certificate holder completes six one-day courses with at least two days of training in each of two different desktop applications. Participants also have the option of completing up to three of these courses online through Tech’s Element K program, an asynchronous, self-paced, competency-based program.

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Akerson named head of Department of Dairy Science

By Charlie Scott

R. Michael Akerson is the new head of the Department of Dairy Science in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, effective July 1.

Akerson joined the faculty in 1981. He became a full professor in 1992, and in 1996 he was selected as the Horace E. and Elizabeth F. Alphin professor of dairy science.

“Dairy industry, and thus the dairy-science department, play an important role in the state’s and the region’s agricultural economy,” said Sharron Quisenberry, dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. “R. Michael Akerson’s contributions to the Dairy Science Department will be invaluable in making the department and the industry even stronger. We are indeed fortunate to have someone of Mike’s abilities to lead this department.”

Akerson said of his new appointment: “I believe that with the support of an outstanding group of faculty members and in cooperation with the industry, we can reach new heights. I look forward to this opportunity.”

Akerson has received four national awards for research excellence, including the Growth and Development Award from the American Society of Animal Science in 2003. He also received Virginia Tech’s Alumni Award for Research Excellence in 2000.

His research has emphasized endocrine and growth-factor regulation of mammary development and mammary function. Most recently, he has focused on identification of local-tissue elements that regulate mammary-cell proliferation.

Although his major responsibility has been research, Akerson has taught the college’s fundamental anatomy and physiology course to about 70 undergraduate students as well as graduate courses. He has been the major professor for seven master’s and five Ph.D. students.

Akerson earned his bachelor’s in biology and a master’s in dairy science from Virginia Tech and his Ph.D. from Michigan State University. He was a research physiologist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s research center in Beltsville, Md., before joining the dairy-science department.

In Other News

Tech dean confers master’s degrees in education in Malawi

By Jean Elliott

Jerry Niles, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, conferred curriculum-and-instruction degrees master’s degrees in arts and human sciences, conferred the college of agriculture and life sciences. The U.S. ambassador to Malawi and local teachers, Malawi was represented by 24 Malawi residents this week.

In a visit to Virginia Tech last week, Simeon Hau, director of Malawi Institute of Education, praised the program. “We are extremely delighted. In Malawi, for the first time, our tutors are becoming real professionals in issues regarding teacher development.”

Professional Continued from 3

174 major certificates in Office Software Skills.

Supervision and Leadership. Employees who successfully complete both the Principles of Supervision and Leadership. A major certificate in Supervision and Leadership in Career Studies from New River Community College is awarded for successful completion of all seven courses in the Supervision and Leadership program, totaling 21 college-credit hours. The employees who were awarded the certificate in Supervision and Leadership, are Learn Cook, Dining Services; Lynette Cruise, Personnel Services; Sandy Dalton, Industrial systems engineering; Velva Groover, Horticulture; Scott Lai, Virginia Tech Police; Cynthia LeFebvre, University Libraries; Francis Miano, Virginia Tech Police; Louis Price, Computer Labs Support; Lynn Snyder, Southgate Bakery; Steven Swannell, Student Programs.

Jeffrey A. Kaminski, 32

Jeffrey A. Kaminski, a master’s degree student in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences in the College of Natural Resources, died Thursday, July 8 at Montgomery Regional Hospital. He was 32.

Kaminski received his bachelor’s degree in biology with honors from the University of Southern Mississippi. He enrolled in the fisheries-and-wildlife graduate program in fall 2002.

“This is a sad and tragic event, and our hearts extend to his family and friends,” said Donald J. Orth, head of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences. “Jeff loved to fish and hoped to make his teaching career. He started as an undergraduate teaching assistant, where he contributed art work to the new laboratory manual and teaching exhibit.

In lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Jeffrey A. Kaminski Memorial Fund at Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences, 100 Cheatham Hall, Blacksburg VA 24061. Checks should be made payable to the Virginia Tech Foundation with Kaminski Fund noted at the bottom.

KELLY

Continued from 1

KELLY holds. He also conducts research, principally in mammalian models of renal-nutrient uptake, and teaches an undergraduate course in forest biology/ecology and a graduate course in scientific writing.

While he was forestry-department head, research grew significantly, with external annual support increasing by a factor of five, and his initiatives led the department to prominence in reforestation, forest biology, and biofuels research, and the pedagogy of undergraduate natural-resource education. He also helped grow the department’s endowed gifts by $2.2 million.

Before going to Iowa State University, he spent 20 years with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), where he progressed through a series of assignments leading to a position as senior environmental scientist/team leader. He served as the Ozone Non-attainment Program team leader and the Ecosystem Studies program team leader. His personal research from 1976-1995 focused on nutrient cycling and plant response to environmental toxins.

At TVA, he conceived, developed, and directed the Cooperative Forest Studies Program, a joint effort between TVA and Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and helped develop and conduct several programs for the Electric Power Research Institute.

The work of Kelly and his colleagues in theoretical and experimental evolutions of acidic-deposition impacts on forest soils and in surface waters was a key component of the National Acidic Precipitation Assessment Program and contributed to the knowledge base on ozone impacts used in recent amendments to the Clean Air Act.