

VIRGINIA TECH CONDUCTOR

A GUIDE FOR OUR JOURNEY TOWARD EXCELLENCE, EQUITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Debate and become involved, former Delegate urges

In this issue

Last year, when I learned that Norfolk State University would hold a CASE Media Fellowship program on "Affirmative Action and Increasing the Number of Minorities in the Fields of Science and Technology," I contacted Sharon R. Hoggard, director of News and Media Relations at NSU, and asked her if I could attend. She invited me to apply for a CASE Media Fellowship as a public relations professional from Virginia Tech. I received the fellowship, possibly based both on my assignment with the Office of the Vice President for Research and on my being a Multicultural Fellow — meaning I was NSU's guest at the symposium.

The media fellows were introduced to every speaker and a clear message to me was the expectation that Virginia Tech, "a majority (white) institution," must be a partner with NSU, a historically black institution, in meeting the nation's need for diversity in the sciences. The federally supported minority opportunity programs that we heard about exists for all universities.

Articles in this and future issues of The Conductor will share information about opportunities and the issues raised by presenters and attendees at the symposium.

Susan Trulove

Address human resource needs in science, technology

The numbers of U.S. students entering science and technology is low, and the number of minorities in science and technology is very low.

But Affirmative Action works, says Levon Parker, retired Minority Special Programs Officer for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Speaking at a CASE-sponsored symposium on "Affirmative Action and Increasing the Number of Minorities in the Sciences," he suggested the following strategies for improving diversity and opportunities.

- Sponsor workshops and create diverse panels. The organizations listed below are a source of participants.
- Encourage sabbaticals at NIH, NASA, and the National Science Foundation (NSF).
- Create visiting professorship programs. Invite faculty from NIH. Use them to visit

See Science on page 2

Jerrauld C. Jones, director of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, and former 89th District Delegate to the General Assembly for more than 15 years, calls Affirmative Action "one of the critical issues facing the nation."



Jerrauld C. Jones

Speaking at a Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)-sponsored symposium on "Affirmative Action and Increasing the Number of Minorities in the Sciences," he said "the effect of Affirmative Action on higher education in Virginia is — not enough."

"I chaired the Virginia Commission on Access and Diversity and was a spokesperson for black delegates," Jones said. "Now the issue is how to decrease the ratio of children

of color who are incarcerated."

"We have no viable choice but to invest in our children's future — lift them up — not lock them up," Jones said.

"I could regale you with the battles in the legislature required to pass a few good bills. But I will debunk the myths* that I've had to fight."

Myth 1 — The only way to create a color-blind society is to adopt color blind policies. In fact, that favors whites because of early educational advantages. Colorblind policies only reinforce that.

Myth 2 — Affirmative Action has not advanced race and gender equality. In fact, Affirmative Action has helped 5 million minority

members and 6 million white and minority women move up in the workplace.

Myth 3 — The playing field is level today. In fact, women earn 76 cents for every dollar men earn; infant mortality among blacks is twice that of whites; without affirmative action, college enrollment of blacks would drop to 2 percent.

Myth 4 — The public does not support Affirmative Action. In fact, a Time/CNN poll found that 80% of the public felt "affirmative action programs for minorities and women should be continued at some level." What the public opposes are quotas, set asides, and "reverse discrimination."

Myth 5 — Whites will lose out. In fact, if every unemployed black worker displaced a white worker, less than 1 percent of workers would be displaced — many fewer than lose their jobs to factory relocation and downsizing.

Myth 6 — If Jews and Asians can advance, so can blacks. In fact, blacks have had 245 years of slavery, 100 years of legal discrimination, and only 30 years of anything else.

Myth 7 — You can't cure discrimination with discrimination. In fact, Affirmative Action is not discrimination, but is a special effort at inclusion.

Myth 8 — Affirmative Action undermines the self-esteem of women and minorities. In fact, in a few cases, it may. But providing employment and opportunity for advancement raises self-esteem.

Myth 9 — Affirmative Action is social engineering by liberal Democrats. In fact, Affirmative Action spanned seven administrations, and was significantly expanded by President Nixon in 1969. George Bush the elder signed the Civil Rights Act of 1991.

Myth 10 — Affirmative Action favors unqualified candidates over

See Become involved on page 2

Nation needs minority scientists

The United States needs more minority scientists, said Norfolk State University Professor of Biology Arthur Bowman.

Speaking at a Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)-sponsored symposium on "Affirmative Action and Increasing the Number of Minorities in the Sciences," Bowman pointed out that there are declining numbers of scientists at a time when the U.S. science base is critical to national security, global positioning, economics, and the advancement of knowledge.

"There is a bit of a paradox because this shortage is occurring during a time where there are more and more opportunities for the advanced training of minority students," Bowman said. "In many instances, there are more training opportunities for minority undergraduate and graduate students than there are students to fill such positions."

This overall trend for fewer students to pursue science as a career option is not just a minority issue, but is true for the country in general, he said. "However, in that there has been a historical shortage of minority scientists, the current trend away from the pursuit of science training makes the minority issues even more critical," he said.

Bowman told the students attending the symposium at Norfolk State University that some of the elements of a good training programs in science are:

- 1) A sincere commitment to the education of minorities, hence success in producing high quality minority graduates,
- 2) A competent staff.
- 3) A support system - emotional, social, academic, and financial. Bowman said, "HBCUs (historically black colleges and universities) are good incubators for building confidence in minority students, especially African Americans." He advised

the students to "Read your potential training environment, so that there is a good awareness of what might be called the culture of the lab."

4) A networking system so that future links supporting career advancement can be established.

Bowman said, "Students need an apprentice's mentality and exposure to the larger world of science. For minority students matriculating at HBCUs, participation in national programs and internships at large research intense institutions and government laboratories is very important because such experiences allow students to demonstrate what they can do.

"Don't go to summer school," he told the students, "participate in an internship."

He endorsed the National Institutes of Health bridging programs, which help people make the transition from a community college to a bachelor's degree program, from a bachelor's degree to graduate school, and from a master's degree to a Ph.D. program.

"Affirmative Action programs are important and very necessary because they allow minorities to enter the science training and career pipeline, thus eliminating such frequently heard statements as, "We don't know any minorities in the field," Bowman explained.

Even though Bowman stressed involvement in the sciences, he said, "What is holding back human progress are our current deficits in mathematics and technology. More complex mathematics and greatly improved computing power are necessary to comprehend life processes, the Earth, and the Universe. Many more scientists and mathematicians from amongst all humans are greatly needed and essential for our progress on planet Earth."

Crossing the Border through Service-Learning: Transformative Relationships in the Latino Community

By Gresilda A. Tilley-Lubbs, Ph.D., Virginia Tech
The service-learning course that I developed at Virginia Tech emerged from my life experiences, my academic background, and my passion for all things Latino; but more important than any of the impetuses that came from my own personal interests were the grassroots needs in the Latino community for cultural mediation coupled with the needs of university students studying Spanish at Virginia Tech for immersion experiences to develop linguistic and cultural understanding within the Latino community. In the summer of 1999, I was fortunate to be admitted into a community that has since become a vital part of my life, and one that has given immeasurably and richly to my students at the university, providing them with experiences that could never be replicated without the Latino community that has embraced and nurtured us in academia for the last five years. It is to this community that I dedicate this article.

In a casual conversation, I mentioned to my department head that I wished my students could be in the community with the Latinos, serving as interpreters, cultural mediators, and ESL instructors, not only for the benefit of the Latinos, but also for the benefit of the students who would be able to learn more about Latino culture as they practiced their Spanish. She suggested that I design a course that would provide the opportunity for the students and Latino families to interact thus, Crossing the Border through Service-Learning. As part of a curriculum class in which I was enrolled, I developed the course, based on educational theory. The course was approved, and the first class became a reality in Spring 2001.

Logistics

The class represented the intersection of academia, community, and teaching-learning. The students read approximately 55 articles, dealing with issues of service-learning, of being Latino in the United States, and of social justice. We met once a week on campus for a three-hour class, engaging in rich discussions and activities that related the readings to the experiences the students were having as they spent time with their partner families in the community. The class meetings included guest speakers from the community: Latino families, representatives from Easter Seals who were working with the children in our program, the Latino representative from the Diocese of Richmond, an English as a Second Language (ESL) specialist, an immigration specialist, and nurses from the Health Department, to mention a few.

During their twice-weekly visits with the families in Roanoke, the students taught ESL, tutored and mentored the children in the families, helped with transportation to and interpretation at medical and social service appointments, translated documents, made phone calls, and served as cultural mediators as needed. Many of the students found themselves acting as advocates for their families in situations as diverse as negotiating rental contracts or registering children for the Salvation Army Christmas gift program.

Each week the students posted a journal to the Discussion Board on Blackboard in which they related the readings for the week to the experiences and conversations they were having with their families. At the end of the semester, they wrote a transformation paper to reflect back on their expectations at the beginning of the course and to examine whether their perspectives and perceptions had changed during the semester.

The capstone experience of the semester has been the final fiesta, providing a social occasion for the students to know other families as well as to provide closure for the students and the families. When we first began holding the final fiestas, we ordered pizza for everyone, but as the Latinas and students moved into positions of ownership for the course and all its components, the meals evolved into potlucks at which everyone shares a favorite dish, always representing a variety of cultures, including the Latino food furnished by our primarily Mexican and Honduran families to the Arabic and

Indian dishes provided by students whose heritage includes those cultures. In every way the final fiesta has become a collaborative effort that involves all the stakeholders.

Coming to Campus

In the fall of 2003, we organized a trip to campus for approximately 35 Latinos, funded by the Latino fraternity, Lambda Sigma Upsilon (LSU) and by an anonymous donor, in addition to the grant monies from the Service-Learning Center (SLC). We left by Abbott Bus from Roanoke at 8 a.m. in order to arrive on campus in time for the parents to leave their children at the Baptist Student Union, where the students had arranged for childcare shifts throughout the day. After a bus



Latino community members at the War Memorial

tour of the campus, we continued on to Jacqueline Bixler's Spanish Translation class, where the Latino community members collaborated with the class members to translate a document for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Following Dr. Bixler's class, we went to the Donaldson Brown for the lunch buffet. After an afternoon meeting during which we planned the next semester's curriculum, we enjoyed a catered ice cream social before boarding the bus to return to Roanoke.

The visit inspired several of the community members to work toward passing the TOEFL exam so they can attend Tech in the future. Several of the family members graduated from high school; some had begun college courses before the economic situation in their countries forced them to come to the United States in search of economic freedom. Hopefully within the next few years, we will see some of these community members matriculate at Tech.

Current Iterations of the Class

In the spring of 2003, Crossing the Border through Service-Learning metamorphosed into Crossing the Border: Closing the Gap (CTB:CTG), and in fall of 2004, the course became Crossing the Border: Living the Literature (CTB:LTL). The rationale for the change was in response to a concern expressed by the Spanish section of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures (FLL) that the course needed to be delivered solely in Spanish in order for the course to carry a 4000/5000 designation. Since the course needed to be available for graduate credit to fulfill state requirement for multicultural course for ESL endorsement and since graduate students in the Area Studies program, a joint master's supported by FLL and History, the course is now strictly in Spanish.

The on-campus class is conducted in Spanish, and all the reading and written work are also in Spanish. The community experience continues to be primarily in Spanish, as do the social gatherings that take place at the beginning and the end of the semester. The work in the community is less needs-based as the families become acclimated to living in the United States, allowing the course to have a more academic focus. The Latinos have taken on leadership roles as *promotores*, or lay teachers, helping the students to understand the often complex readings that comprise the course. A donation enabled us to buy textbooks for the family members, and they read along with the students, explaining

See *Crossing the Border* on page 3

Science...

Continued from page 1

schools and encourage careers in science and technology.

- Form partnerships with agencies that will provide summer internships for students, particularly minority undergraduates who might decide to continue to graduate school.
- Find mentors at agencies such as NIH. Become a mentor. Encourage graduate students to mentor undergraduate students.
- Visit <http://www.training.nih.gov>.

The following organizations and web sites are resources for diversifying applicant pools, directing potential students, participating in dialogue, and being a part of the solution:

Just Garcia Hill is a national website for minority scientists. It has a link to post jobs, among other resources. <http://www.justgarciahill.org>.

Become involved...

Continued from page 1

qualified candidates. In fact, selection should be among equally qualified or comparable candidates. Selection of unqualified candidates is not permitted.

"Affirmative Action was never proposed as the cure all, but to redress inequality in hiring and education," Jones said. "The research record suggests that it works. The case against Affirmative action is weak and based on myths, prejudices, and misunderstandings."

"Political discourse has been reduced to three-word slogans – 'No car tax' – and we're dealing with the fall out. It is difficult to deal with real world issues through reasonable debate. That is one reason people are tuning out and not voting."

"It points up the need for people to become involved," Jones said. "When academia is not involved, that is when bad things happen. If the public was focused on the gap in the cost to educate, I doubt they would say, 'That's okay.' But few people show up for town hall meetings and few people read newspapers. I'm surprised newspapers still carry in-depth stories."

He said he tries to make sure his teen-aged son is tuned into what is happening in the state – and the world. "Today's freshman was born in the 1980s. Things that hearken back to discrimination are not in their life experience – they think."

*See more detail on these myths at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Office of Affirmative Action web site: <http://www.uwosh.edu/affirm-act/aooffice.html>

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.

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

Editorial Board

Richard Conners, 231-6896, rconners@vt.edu
Benjamin Dixon, 231-1820, bdixon@vt.edu
Jean Elliott, 231-5915, elliottj@vt.edu
Mahmood A. Khan, 703-538-8398, mahmood@vt.edu
Judith Snoko, 231-6963, eslsnoko@vt.edu

Production

Roxanna Link, Coordinator of Communications, Office of Multicultural Affairs, 231-2610, roxanna@vt.edu
Salem Times Register

Deadline for the next issue is November 29.

Crossing the borders...

Continued from page 2

concepts and vocabulary to the students as they prepare for class. All the literature used for the class was written by Latinos living in the geographical area now called the United States, and it traces the struggle of immigrating to and living in a country as a marginalized group of people. Not only do we deal with literary concepts through a sociocultural lens; we also examine the concepts of racism, classism, and linguistic. The students continue to examine the lived experiences of their families as compared to the literary experiences presented in the literature.

Reasons for Participation in Crossing the Border

In analyzing the reflections and transformation papers produced by the students, several themes emerged. The students talked at length about their motives for participating in the program; in their early reflections, they talked about "becoming more fluent in Spanish" and "helping the less



Translation class

fortunate." Many of the students were motivated by the desire to help Latino immigrants adapt to an English-speaking society and new environment. By the final transformation papers, however,

they wrote about how much they had learned from the families; many expressed a belief that they had learned far more from their families than their families had learned from them. Similarly, in the first interviews conducted with the families, the Latinas expressed a desire to learn English and to have help with navigating in society. In the final interviews, they spoke of the friendships they had developed and the ways they had been able to help the students with learning Spanish; they were also proud at having been able to share their culture with the students. Both groups spoke of the exchange of information, language, and life experiences while developing a personal, reciprocal relationship.

Being the "Other"

The students commented on how they came to see themselves as the "Other" through the eyes of their partner families while at the same time, ceasing to regard Latino immigrants as the "Other." The interviews I conducted with the Latinas showed similar changes in attitude. As they grew to know the students, they ceased to regard Anglos, or natives of the United States, as the "Other." They said that whereas they had previously regarded Anglos as racists, they now realized that Anglos could be good people, people with whom they could be friends and have relationships. There are limitations to the reciprocity of the relationships because nothing can erase the fact that many students represent the dominant culture, whereas the families are members of a marginalized group. Nonetheless, the blurring of Otherness seems to emerge in most of the relationships. The data showed that the students, as members of a privileged population began working in solidarity with a targeted population. The members of the dominant culture crossed the border to understand, empathize with, and advocate for a targeted population.

ESL Preservice Teachers

The students who were preparing to be ESL teachers were unanimous in their praise of the experience they had with their families. Many of them spoke little or no Spanish, which actually enabled them to be more effective teachers since they could not rely on communicating in a common language. Since many of them had expressed a desire to work with children, I placed them with families who had school age children. They became advocates for the children, acting as mediators with the public school system. Those whose Spanish was adequate acted as interpreters for parent-teacher meetings. They helped

the children with homework, and they also helped the parents to wade through the quagmire of paperwork that came home from school every day. They became aware of the lives the children led in circumstances often quite different from their own middle-class backgrounds.

The students realized that not all families have disposable income that ensures participation in field trips and extracurricular activities. They became aware of the gulf that could occur between parents whose developing English could not keep up with that of their children who were learning English in school. As they helped the children with homework, they realized the plight of children whose parents were unable to function at an elementary school level of language and/or education to help their children with schoolwork. They became advocates for children and parents, often becoming angry with teachers whose attitudes were less than sympathetic to children who were struggling with language barriers while trying to learn their academic subjects.

The theme that the course should be required for all preservice teachers, especially those who plan to teach ESL, ran through the reflections and transformation papers of all the students who were in the Teacher Education program. The reasons regarding the importance of including the course varied from helping preservice teachers understand the backgrounds of diverse students to enabling them to discover a means of personally understanding cultural differences.

The course provided an opportunity for students and families to develop an understanding of and appreciation for diversity.



Crossing The Border Class

Statistics

Since the initial class, approximately 190 students have taken the course, representing a wide variety of proficiency levels as defined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines (www.actfl.org). The students represent a variety of backgrounds and disciplines, but about 25 have been in the Teacher Education program at Tech, preparing to be Spanish teachers or teachers of English to speakers of other languages. The majority of the students have been Spanish majors or minors. Of the remaining students, many have been working toward majors in International Studies, but also represented are Business, Agriculture, Sociology, Human Development, Teaching and Learning, to name a few. In other words, the students participating in the course have represented a variety of the program areas that comprise Virginia Tech.

The Latino Voice

Since my position had been that of hire behind for Judith Shrum, the Director of the Second Language Education program, when she returned to her position, I no longer had a position at Virginia Tech. During my last year in that position, four members of LSU, the Latino fraternity, were in my CTB:CTG class. When a student inquired about taking the course in the fall rather than that spring, I replied that my position was uncertain, so I could not give her a definitive answer. Oscar Viera, president of the fraternity, along with members Jesse Delgado, Alvaro Higuera, and José Peralta, approached the Hispanic Caucus to request that the course be kept on campus. They were advised to request meetings with Andrew Becker, Department Head of FLL; Dean Jerry Niles, CLAHS; and Ben Dixon, Vice President of Multicultural Affairs. They proceeded through the channels, with the result that the Latino voice was heard throughout the campus.

As a result, the course is once again in place, and we are still in the community. The fraternity is currently establishing an *Hora latina*, or Latino Hour for university and community members to come together for informal socializing on a weekly

basis. The local families with whom we partner will be involved as well.

The power of the course lies in the cross-cultural experiences that involve both majority and minority students



Latino members collaborated with class members to translate a brochure

in the Latino community. Through experiential education as espoused by Dewey, students are able to put into practice the theory they learn in the classroom, whether learning Spanish or learning about immigration and social justice. They have the opportunity to take the classroom into the community; the community becomes the classroom.

Collaborations

As a result of the work the students are doing in the community, a number of collaborations have developed.

- Through a collaboration with the Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine, five Latino families attended the Mini-Medical Clinic sponsored by VCOM on October 23.
- Due to the success of the service-learning students working with elementary school students at Westside Elementary School in Roanoke City, we have developed a tutoring/mentoring partnership with Roanoke City Public Schools in the ESL classes.
- Students continue to collaborate with the Roanoke City Health Department, with whom we have an agreement for students to interpret when interested.
- We collaborate with Community Hospital of Roanoke Valley to interpret for grief counseling for infant death.
- We have had students interpret at the Women's Clinic in Christiansburg and at the Montgomery County Health Department.
- We have an on-going collaborative agreement with Oak Grove Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, where we hold our meetings free of charge.

Crossing the Border shows the importance of creating a



Latino community members trip to campus

space where two diverse populations can come together with resulting communication and dialogue that can plant the seeds of critical consciousness and social justice. These seeds take root and flourish in the fertile soil of the SL class, watered by reciprocal relationships, resulting in change and illumination for both the students and the families. We as educators can serve as gardeners who tend the seeds and reap the benefits of the critical thinking we have planted in our students.

The goals of the course can best be summed up in the words of a student who said:

We have been faced with the socially constructed border between cultures for our entire lives. Through this class, we have been given the experience of crossing this border. We cross it only to find that the people on the other side are the same as us (PowerPoint presentation, May 2, 2003).

See the full article, with student quotes and more about the latino empowerment group, at <http://www.multicultural.vt.edu/crossingborders>

Built on partnerships:

MAOP a labor of love for Randy Grayson

By Richard Conners, Multicultural Fellow

Since 1992, there has been a wonderful program here at Virginia Tech that has been dedicated to encouraging first generation college students to come here by providing the support that these students need to successfully complete their undergraduate degree. The students are then encouraged to pursue graduate work, and the support continues, if it is needed.

Originally called the Minority Academic Opportunities Program, the program was renamed the Multicultural Academic Opportunities Program last year. But it has always been best known as the MAOP program.

MAOP has had an impact on approximately 1,200 young people. It has been based on interactive partnerships, such as off-campus partners to help recruit students and on-campus partners to take care of the students' needs once they get here. Currently, there are about 60 off-campus partners throughout the United States, mostly in Virginia and the Southeast, and 168 on-campus partners. But, the most impressive thing about MAOP has been its graduation rates. The 12-year average graduation rate for undergraduate students is 93 percent, and for MAOP graduate students, it is 90 percent.

MAOP founder Randy Grayson, a professor in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, retired last summer. Fortunately for everyone on this campus, the Provost has assured us all that this program will continue and has appointed Karen Sanders director. MAOP is now being run out of the Office of the Provost.

In recognition of Professor Grayson's leadership and contribution to Virginia Tech, the Conductor asked me to interview him about MAOP. This interview will appear in two installments. I think you will see that Professor Grayson has been dedicated to MAOP and is very honest about his feelings and beliefs — traits I admire. You will also see quite strikingly that one person can make a difference. Professor Grayson certainly has made a difference on this campus and, I think, on the state and nation, as well as this university and many individuals.

Conners: How did the MAOP program get started?

Grayson: I came to Virginia Tech in 1984 to direct the Electron Microscopy Center for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. From 1984 to 1992, I worked with a number of committees at the departmental, college, and university level that dealt with various topics. At least one continuing topic was diversity at this university. To be more specific, we were talking about recruiting, retaining, and graduating minority students. I certainly gave them the benefit of my personal and professional experiences, being a minority myself, about the overall situation that minority students face, whether Afro-American or not. They listened intently but continued on with the same policies, procedures, and philosophy.

In 1992, I went to a scientific meeting in St. Louis. I looked around the room and saw that there were very few Afro-Americans in attendance. Most of the minority attendees were from either Africa or Asia. I had one of my peers with me, Dr. Herman Warren. We got into a discussion on the plane coming back I explained my disappointment about the low number of American minorities in the field of science. This has been a continuing problem since I started teaching, and that goes back to the 1950s.

After I got back I was frustrated enough that I said, "Okay I told you how to approach this problem. You listened to me politely, but there was simply no action. So, I will just show you." Then I had to decide which strategy I would use.

I went to a statewide meeting of minority faculty and staff in Richmond. I had been invited to give a presentation there. I expressed my vision to other individuals from various institutions inside and outside Virginia. A large number of them thought that I was on track and the strategies that could be utilized to carry out the vision would work. They were willing

to work with me from their respective institutions. So, then, given that "money is what makes the horses run," it became a matter of getting some funds.

One of the featured speakers at that meeting was Senator Lambert. His presence gave me an opportunity to meet with him. I expressed the vision and strategies that I had in mind. He became so interested that he told me to meet him after his presentation. I did so and we talked for



Randy Grayson

an hour and a half about my concept, how it could be approached, and how this problem could eventually be solved over a period of time. He said that he would certainly become a partner in the effort and would help me secure some funds. To make a long story short, that is exactly what he did by working with others. Of course, I got introduced to others through him and the partners kept growing.

After I met with Senator Lambert, I met with Andy Swiger, dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. In fact, I had all ready given Andy a brief on my vision and strategies. After I let him know about my meeting with Senator Lambert, within about 48 hours, he and I were back in Richmond meeting with Senator Lambert.

An amendment was written up and passed, which put the administration of the program in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

After the amendment was passed, we went to see Virginia Tech President James McComas. He was so enthusiastic about it that he wanted to bring the entire legislative body that supported me here to campus to show them what Virginia Tech was doing. I was working on getting all the legislators here, but the trip had to take place after the legislative session was over, probably in May or June. By that time, Dr. McComas started having health problems.

Both Drs. McComas and Swiger deserve recognition and credit for being administrators with the courage to believe in the vision. Too many administrators are so focused on their own personal positions, power, and control that students and others are further down on their priority list.

On campus, after the amendment passed and I knew I had something to work with, I started to talk seriously to people about joining this effort. We started in the College of Agriculture with summer students. There were 12 summer interns recruited that first year. Soon after that, Dr. Larry Moore expressed his desire to help, which I appreciated. We then started building up our on-campus partnerships.

For a time, both he and I continued with our respective academic responsibilities to the university. We did the MAOP program as an addition. But the program grew so fast and garnered so many more partners that it became obvious that we could not continue as we had. Dean Swiger had us make a choice. Of course, Dr. Swiger knew what my choice was and, in fact, he told me that in his opinion this program was far more important to the college and this campus than being the director of the Electron Microscopy Laboratory. I told him that I shared the same opinion. That is when I gave up the directorship of the microscopy laboratory.

The program has continued to grow and is larger

now than it has ever been in its history. The results have shown that the vision, the strategy, and the methodology were correct. One only has to compare the graduation rate with the university average to say, "Hey, there is a difference."

Conners: What are you proudest of?

Grayson: It is hard for me to rank one thing against the other. One of the things that I am most proud of from an academic and philosophical point of view is that I was able to prove that the vision, strategy, and mission behind MAOP are correct ... I am also proud of the fact that there is a real thing called an interactive partner versus a lip service partnership... This type of interactive partnership shows, in a nutshell, that MAOP is family. This is one of MAOP's main themes.

I have pushed this family theme for MAOP because one of the big obstacles for individuals, when they move from one type of an environment to another, is to make that move without feeling that they have been abandoned, that they have no one that they can depend upon to have an association with or help guide them. Regardless of ones ethnicity or race, when you find yourself in that type of situation either you conquer the situation or you flee from the situation.

Another aspect of family-hood we try to emphasize is that a victory for one is a victory for all and a defeat for one is a defeat for all. These concepts are very important right along with the concepts of being honest and ethical, with caring for each other. This "brotherly love" is the glue that holds the MAOP family together.

Another thing that I have been proud of is that MAOP has been a contributor to changing the face of Virginia Tech. Of course, to me, changing the face of Virginia Tech is more than just a physical thing. It is more than having people of different ethnicities and different skin color running around the campus. To me, changing the face of Virginia Tech means changing that space up there between the ears. When people are unable to move from their own cultural and racial perspectives to accept and understand the racial and cultural perspectives of other people, this represents a problem. People who say, "Let's recruit these students to diversify our campus" need to really examine what they are saying relative to their expected outcomes. Some people believe that education is an opportunity to change minority beliefs so that they reflect the middle class majority culture and perspectives. This is just another way of saying to a person that you must surrender your self-identity, your cultural heritage, your ethnic heritage, and accept ours.

What I am talking about is mono-accommodation. That is not going to work. It is going to have to be mutual accommodation.... This is what multiculturalism is. It is a change on everybody's part not just a change of two or three groups to become like one group. America is not a melting pot. Nothing has melted here. Some people say that it is like a bowl with various colors of Jell-O in it. If it is, it certainly is a shaky situation ... because as soon as something happens where there is sociological stress in society, then old societal hate, biases, and so forth comes right to the surface again. ... A lot of things are just buried under the surface and people need to be more honest and up front about it and they need to really address these issues, and understand that for everybody to achieve something, everybody has to give up something. And so that is the only way you are going to reach mutual accommodation where everybody's perspectives, accomplishments, and so forth are brought into part of the sociological web of the society within a country.

The next issue will cover Professor Grayson's views on some of the things Virginia Tech needs to do to create a truly diverse university. If you have comments about this article contact me at rconners@vt.edu. Please note that since I have retired it might take sometime for me to get back you.