

VIRGINIA TECH CONDUCTOR

A GUIDE FOR OUR JOURNEY TOWARD EXCELLENCE, EQUITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

In this issue:

Activities, actions, and accomplishments are the common thread of this issue of *The Conductor*.

On page 1 is an article about accomplishments of the last year, reported at the Diversity Summit.

On page 2 is an article about activities in the College of Arts and Sciences.

On page 3, Unpack your assumptions about welfare recipients.

On page 4 is an essay responding to the Diversity Summit and photos from the summit.

Calendar

The History of Upcoming Cultural Celebrations

Compiled by David R. Winston,
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Black History Month is celebrated during February each year. It was started in 1926 in the United States. February was chosen because both Abraham Lincoln (President of the United States who freed slaves during the Civil War) and Frederick Douglass (a Black who worked to end slavery) have birthdays in February (Source: www.diversityatwork.com). For more information on Black History Month events at Virginia Tech, visit: <http://fbox.vt.edu:10021/admin/students/mcp> Do follow-up at the web site. The many sponsoring organizations have assembled a program that addresses a cross section of issues.

March is **Women's History Month**. This celebration started in California as a week-long celebration in 1978. The National Women's History Project petitioned Congress in 1987 to expand the national celebration to the entire month of March. The program has grown extensively since that time (Source: www.nwhp.org). Virginia Tech's celebration will be called **Women's Month 2000**. For more information, contact Jaime Clemmer (jclemmer@vt.edu) or the Women's Center (231-7806).

Good news, good news:

Diversity Summit hears a year of achievement

by Barbara Pendergrass, dean of students

Monday, January 17, 2000, in honor of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, 130 individuals attended the Third Annual Diversity Summit from 5 to 8 p.m. in Owens Banquet Hall. This collaborative effort between the Division of Student Affairs and the Office of the Vice President for Multicultural Affairs was created in 1998 by the Division of Student Affairs to provide the administration with an informal assessment of the campus climate and an opportunity to learn about the perspectives of its many constituent groups. To achieve this goal, individuals representing the diversity of our university are invited to participate.

The Summit is structured in a manner that fosters healthy discourse. Borrowing from the Kiva format, a Pueblo Native American tradition, each community is allowed time to give collective wisdom to a question and then select someone from their community to share their decision with the entire group. The process gives all participants a voice.

The 2000 Summit began with a progress report: "Steps on the Journey to Inclusion," presented by Benjamin Dixon, vice president for multicultural affairs. The report highlighted the following achievements of the university since the 1999 Summit.

Recruitment and retention

- The College of Arts and Sciences has developed faculty recruitment and search procedures that include accountability measures. The pilot effort may become a model for and/or adopted by the entire university.
- New positions have been created to focus on diversity initiatives. The College of Natural Resources has hired a Coordinator of Enrollment Management and Diversity Programs, and

through a collaborative effort between the Office of the Vice President for Multicultural Affairs and Alumni Affairs an assistant director of admission and coordinator of Black alumni programs was hired.

- The College of Engineering hosted a "Conversation with the Dean" for faculty women to discuss equity and climate issues. Five new women faculty members were hired, including an African American.
- Mentoring programs for minority students were enhanced through the collaborative efforts of the Center for Academic Enrichment and various academic departments.
- Minority Engineering has established a student support group for Native Americans.
- The Office Managers Development Group, supported by the Office of Multicultural Affairs and by an Affirmative Action Incentive Grant, has established a mentoring program for support staff from underrepresented groups.

Assessment

- The Advisory Council on Diversity and Multicultural Affairs completed an inventory of diversity initiatives at Virginia Tech that identified 61 program types and 47 target groups.
- The Office of the Provost completed research on the status of women and minorities at Virginia Tech.
- Under the leadership of the provost's office, the campus climate data have been analyzed and presented at forums and disseminated to several groups.
- The American Disability Act (ADA) executive committee completed a campus accessibility audit.

See Diversity on page 4

What would you do?

Is training the solution to insensitivity?

by Richard W. Conners, Multicultural Fellow and associate professor of electrical and computer engineering — rconners@vt.edu

Well, once again things did not go exactly as planned. The web page was not properly set up to record any comments you may have wanted to make in response to the second column. Since I feel my credibility has already been badly eroded, I will make absolutely certain that things work right this time. To respond, and I hope many of you will, please go to the diversity forum web page, (www.diversity.vt.edu/forum.html), and click on Join the discussion now. Then click on the title of this column. I should be able to give selected excerpts of these responses in the next issue of The Conductor. Remember, finding good topics is critical. If any of you have any suggestions for topics, please send them to multicultural@vt.edu.

While I am unable to determine how you felt about the University of Virginia faculty senate's resolution on diversity, I can report that the Commonwealth of Virginia faculty senate did pass a very similar resolution. Given Virginia's somewhat checkered past on matters of diversity, I feel this was a step in the right direction.

The topic for today is diversity training at Virginia Tech. I am writing about this topic because diversity training has been mentioned as a way to help address a number of perceived problems on campus. These problems have been mentioned a number of times by different individuals at each of the many meetings that have been held across campus on issues of diversity. These meetings include the annual Diversity Summit held in January, the Seminar on the Status of Women and Minorities at Virginia Tech held in March of 1999, and the President's Forum on Campus Climate for Diversity held in May of 1999.

The matters of concern seemingly involve faculty insensitivity to a number of issues. Concern has been expressed about the faculty's lack of sensitivity to religious holidays in religions other than the Christian religion. Concern has been expressed about the faculty's Eurocentrism and not providing a more balanced approach where contributions from members of all cultures are given fair due. Concern has been expressed about possible male faculty's bias against women in their classrooms. This bias seemingly shows itself in both word and action. It has also been suggested that this bias does not stop in the classroom. It is suggested that it also shows itself when women faculty come up for tenure review. And, finally, concern has been expressed about faculty bias against minorities, again expressed in both word and action.

One might argue that these concerns should be dismissed because they are probably generated by some very small number of disgruntled students, faculty, and/or staff members. However, this argument does not address the fact that such things are continually being mentioned across a number of meetings and coming from a variety of different people. The frequency of occurrence lends credibility to the argument that if there is some smoke, then there must be at least some fire. A method that has been suggested for putting out this fire is to give faculty diversity training to sensitize us to the above concerns.

How, do you feel about this? In particular, I would like you to think about whether these problems are real or only perceived. If they are only perceived, then why do they continually come up? If they are real, is diversity training the right approach to address the grievances? In an even broader setting, as educators, is it our job to make sure everyone is comfortable in our classrooms?

Arts and sciences diversity committee an action tool

by Bob Leonard, diversity committee chair, and Myra Gordon, associate dean for diversity and curriculum, College of Arts and Sciences

The College of Arts and Sciences Cultural Diversity Committee (CDC) is the principal mechanism by which the faculty, students and staff consider, recommend, and oversee initiatives to improve the classroom and community climate for cultural diversity.

The CDC understands that the term "cultural diversity" covers a broad span of concerns, including race, gender, class, culture, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, physical ability, and more. While the CDC addresses and is sensitive to this pluralistic range of concerns, over the last several years, the committee has taken specific action on issues of recruitment and retention of African American students, staff, and faculty members. This specific focus rests on the CDC's commitment to accomplishing real and valuable actions within the constraints posed by current resources. The CDC understands that issues of classroom and community climate

must be seen and considered only within the large pluralistic frame of reference.

The CDC is self directed and functions in partnership with the associate dean for diversity and curriculum, Myra Gordon. The chair, Robert Leonard, is a member of the teaching faculty. Recruitment of its members is a function of the CDC, which maintains a broad representation of faculty, staff, and graduate students. The committee is made up of nine faculty members, two staff, and two graduate students who meet every other week throughout the Fall and Spring semesters, and has a student advisory board, of eight to 12 undergraduates.

The student advisory board (SAB) is important as a sounding board for CDC initiatives, and provides a means for undergraduates to inform the CDC and to develop their own initiatives to recommend for action by the college.

CDC accomplishments to date have been made possible by an extremely committed and productive group of people. Over its three-

year history, the CDC has initiated several programs (see below), funded through a modest allocation from the dean's office.

With these programs in place, the CDC is entering a new phase of attention. There is no doubt that programmatic response to the needs of people of color and women at every level in the college is important. The CAS Peer Mentoring Program is, arguably, one of the most important, along with "real money" funding mechanisms and other tangible, practical programs that can provide equitable access to resources and level the playing field for one and all. The CDC will continue to consider, recommend, and implement programmatic actions with these objectives in mind. However, such actions are focused primarily on making changes in the student, adjusting the student to the climate and culture of Virginia Tech, and otherwise easing the individual into the college and university.

Real advancement in creating a healthy and effective climate for a broadly diverse college and university can be accomplished

only through change in the institutional habits and assumptions of the college and university themselves. Making change within the culture and climate of the institution requires other, different strategies altogether — strategies for systemic change. To be effective, strategies for change must be complementary to the strategies of programmatic assistance to the individuals entering the institution. They must be integrated into an overall plan.

Substantive, long-term improvement in the climate for diversity will occur finally and only in the actual classrooms and laboratories of the working university. The CDC is now focused on activating that improvement. The primary area of attention for the CDC is the development of a network of like-minded activists at every level throughout the college who are committed to creating a healthy multicultural learning community. The CDC looks forward with strong hope to participating in the development and implementation of effective and considerate strategies that advance excellence in a multicultural context.

1999 a year of action

In the 99/00 school year, three major actions have shifted the College of Arts and Sciences beyond programmatic response towards the development of strategies for change. Each has been led by Gordon, working in close partnership with the CDC.

Revised Faculty Search Procedures

Institutional data from the Office of the Provost indicate that Virginia Tech is ranked near the bottom in faculty diversity among 50 benchmark institutions and that hiring outcomes in recent years have not contributed significantly to improving our status. These factors, along with others too numerous to detail here, led the dean in the College of Arts and Sciences to approve the development of a pilot project on revised faculty search procedures. Building on the current set of procedures, the revised procedures introduce more accountability into the faculty search process; require heterogeneity in search committee membership; stress the dean's commitment to diversifying the faculty that will take the college into the 21st century; encourage an examination of bias in the screening and evaluation of candidates; and make clearer the functions of the search committee. Grounded in institutional research, best practices, and an understanding of the faculty recruitment literature, the revisions are intended to increase the pool of qualified female and minority candidates early in the process so as to increase the probability that diverse hires can be made at the end of the process. The pilot will run for one hiring cycle – 1999-2000 – after which it will be evaluated to see to what extent 1) the procedures did change, 2) candidate pools and hiring outcomes were more diverse, and 3) unanticipated benefits or problems occurred. The findings will be documented in a written report and forwarded to the provost.

An Assessment of Departmental Climates

Using the student advisory board members as student researchers, a project was undertaken in October 1999 to design and implement a methodology to assess the perceptions of departmental climates held by African American undergraduates in the College of Arts and Sciences. The names and contact information for all African American undergraduates in the college were obtained from Institutional Research, a survey instrument and focus group questions were designed, and SAB members were trained to gather the data. To date, the students have assessed the three departments in the college with the largest African American undergraduate enrollment — interdisciplinary studies, psychology, and biology. The remaining departments will be assessed during the Spring 2000 semester.

The target date for completing this project is June 30, 2000. The results of the assessment will be documented in a written report and shared with the dean, the CDC, and the department heads.

Evaluating College Diversity Initiatives

In December 1999, Gordon, in conjunction with a team of College of Arts and Sciences personnel and a work group from the Advisory Council for Diversity and Multicultural Affairs (ACDMA), completed a campus-wide inventory of diversity enhancement initiatives. Among many other variables, this inventory identified 60 program types and 47 target groups. With such a wide proliferation of diversity initiatives aimed at so many different people, it is not clear why Virginia Tech is not further along in issues of diversity. This paradox was presented briefly to the college's CDC and will be discussed in greater detail during the spring. What is clear is that there is much activity, but little evaluation of effectiveness. Before moving forward with more programmatic responses, the CDC will examine the role that evaluation should play in determining what works, what could work with modification, and what simply is not working and should be discontinued.

Diversity Programs Generated

1. The College of Arts and Sciences Annual Diversity Award honors faculty members and staff who have made significant contributions to improve the campus climate for persons of color and women at Virginia Tech, who have made efforts toward institutional change, and who have served in some capacity to educate the campus community about diversity issues. The CDC and the SAB work together to identify and select the award recipients. Nominations for this award are accepted in the fall.
2. The Diversity Enhancement Program offers one-time, calendar year grants to departments or groups of departments in support of projects that design and begin to implement one or more systematic efforts to recruit and retain African American undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty members. Diversity Enhancement support is usually relatively small (i.e., \$2,000 - \$3,000). However, a project can potentially be funded up to \$10,000 if it seems likely that implementation of the project will significantly aid the college's aims of recruitment and retention of women and people of color. Proposals are due in the fall of each year.
3. The Graduate Diversity Research and Mentoring Program offers small grants to cover travel and other appropriate

expenses of College of Arts and Sciences graduate students who are conducting research as part of their degree program or are presenting research results at professional meetings. The research being conducted or presented must satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- the research promotes cultural diversity
- the research is on diversity issues, including investigations of cultural diversity (or the lack thereof) in societies, institutions, and communities and studies of methods for promoting or sustaining cultural diversity
- the research concerns or is on a population not traditionally included or studied in the applicant's field

In addition, grants will be awarded on the condition that the students receiving the grant enter into a mentoring relationship with at least one junior graduate student or undergraduate student in order to convey the lessons learned in the research process, with the small grant, or at the conference. The objectives of the mentoring are to further the professional development of graduate students of color and/or to inform undergraduate students of color about what graduate study and professional work are like so they can make better-informed decisions about entering graduate school. Proposals are due three times a year: mid-spring, early fall and late fall.

4. The Graduate Research in Mathematics, Natural and Physical Sciences Program awards small grants to support research projects in the so-called "hard" sciences. Funded projects must identify a graduate student of color or a female graduate student who will be an active partner in the research. The student will be presented with a research experience that fosters the skills of research, writing, and the presentation of the research. This program requires the student be an active partner from the start to finish of the project. This program supports projects over a 24-month period. The call for proposals is announced in the fall of each year.
5. The college's Peer Mentoring Program matches undergraduate mentors with incoming freshmen and new undergraduate transfer students of non-dominant cultural background to help the new students in their initial adjustment to college life. The goal of the program is to promote academic excellence, to aid retention, and generally to insure that a new student's tenure at Virginia Tech begins with a strong student-to-student connection and proactive inclusion in the university community. This program is run by the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and is supported by the Cultural Diversity Committee, which originated the program in 1998.

Unpack your assumptions

TANF: Just desert for Welfare Queens?

by Richard Shingles, Multicultural Fellow sponsor and
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Welfare Reform

In 1996, President Clinton and Congress "changed welfare as we know it." Their stated purpose was to cut costs and remove cheaters from the welfare rolls, while maintaining a safety net for the deserving poor. A new, largely state-based welfare system was introduced when the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) became law. The new policy is draconian.

The old program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) has been replaced with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). TANF limits welfare assistance to two years in any one stretch and has a five year lifetime cap. Our own state version of TANF, the Virginia Independent Program (VIP) requires recipients to stay off welfare for three years before they can be placed back on the rolls, and mothers with children older than 12 weeks are expected to find employment within 90 days.

Research by social scientists suggests that the welfare debate that culminated in these reforms was influenced by a widely held belief that welfare recipients were mostly people of color. For many, "welfare mother" is synonymous with "Black woman." The image of Black welfare moms is pejorative. It signifies an "underclass," comprised of a permanently unemployed welfare dependent population, of promiscuous "Welfare Queens" who would rather live "high" on the government dole than work, and who keep having babies to increase the size of their welfare checks. These assumptions are more than harsh stereotypes. They provide the ideological justification for withholding public assistance from millions of truly disadvantaged people, most of them children. If one lives in the Northeast or Southwest, these characterizations are associated with other disproportionately impoverished, women of color: Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans. The image of Welfare Queens demeans entire races of women. Moreover, it is inconsistent with the facts.

The color of welfare

Blacks (as well as Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans) are disproportionately on welfare because they are disproportionately poor. However, the majority of welfare recipients and the majority of poor are White, reflecting the fact that the majority of Americans are White. Because Black fathers have always earned substantially less income than White fathers, Black women have always worked. For any year, they have had as high or higher labor force participation rate than White women, and they are more likely than White women to be in the labor force during their child bearing and child rearing years.

The great majority of Blacks do not depend upon welfare. In 1982, 25 percent of Black families received part of their income from welfare; 75 percent did not. Receipts from welfare accounted for less than 5 percent of aggregate income of all

Black families. Most welfare recipients, including those of color, want to be economically self-sufficient. A detailed study by the U.S. Census of the three years just prior to the passage of PRWORA reported a large circular movement of large numbers of people in and out of poverty; just 5.3 percent of the population remained in poverty for as long as two years. It is true that people of color were much more likely to fall back below the poverty line, but they had to climb out first. Yet, in the news and entertainment media, welfare recipients are usually portrayed as people of color, and in many people's minds people of color are indolent and on the dole.

Female-Headed Households, Race and Birth Rates

The rapid expansion of the welfare rolls after 1970 was largely caused by litigation leading to court decreed welfare reform, though it is commonly accredited to a simultaneous increase in illegitimate birth rates. The fact that illegitimacy rates began climbing in 1950, long before the escalation of AFDC recipients, reminds us to be cautious in inferring causation from mere association. The image of promiscuous Black baby machines has been propagated by anecdotes repeated by opponents of public welfare. The birth rate of Black, Puerto

... stereotypes ... provide the ideological justification for withholding public assistance from millions of truly disadvantaged people, most of them children.

Rican, and Mexican-American women is higher than that of Whites, a phenomenon common to lower income groups around the world. However, in the United States, the racial gap in illegitimacy had been declining steadily for years before Congress felt moved to end welfare as we know it. In 1970, the birth rate for unmarried Black women was seven times higher than that for single White women; it was only four times higher in 1980, and 2.7 times higher in 1996, the year PRWORA was made law. The drop in the ratio was due to the combination of a sharp decline in the birth rate among Black teens (and a smaller decline for older, unmarried Black women) and a near doubling of the birth rate among single White women between 1980 and 1995.

These data demonstrate that premarital sexual activity is not the monopoly of any single group. It is not peculiar to women of color. A 1992 study indicates that adolescent women of all races are likely to be sexually active, but that White women are more likely to have multiple partners. The 1988 National Survey of Family Growth surveyed 8,450 women, and found that White women of all ages "were significantly more likely to report having had more than 10 partners than either Black or Hispanic women." Such findings serve no purpose in judging the sexual behavior of any group of women, nor of men for whom our culture hypocritically commends sexual "conquests." The point is that promiscuity is not a "Black thing."

Nor is having babies a "welfare mother thing." In most states, including Virginia, since PRWORA, women on welfare cannot receive any additional funds if they bear more children. However, before 1995, Virginia welfare recipients received \$55 per month for each additional child up to five children. Having babies was far from profitable. Welfare mothers averaged the same number of children as do other women: just under two children per family. There was no relationship between AFDC benefit levels and out-of-wedlock birth rates. Unlike the fictional couple, Phyllis and Harold, described in Charles Murray's *Losing Ground*, unmarried women were much more likely to choose abortions than married women (73 percent and 27 percent respectively) and poor women had a disproportionate number of all abortions.

Today, the primary reason minority women are disproportionate recipients of welfare is because they are poorer than White women. Households headed by single Black and Hispanic women are almost twice as likely to be poor than households

headed by a single White females (the percentages respectively are: 45 percent, 49 percent, and 27 percent). This is because minority women receive poorer educations, have far less access to well paying jobs, and (for the same reasons) fathers of color are far poorer than White men, and far less able to financially support their children. Women and men of color are much more dependent on the minimum wage. A minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour earns a single bread winner working a 40-hour week for 52 weeks a year (assuming no vacation time) \$10,712 annually. This is well below the 1998 poverty line of \$16,665 and \$28,173 below the median income for a four person household, \$38,885. Without public assistance, a large proportion of these working poor cannot provide basic necessities for their families.

The illusion of progress

Today a strong economy and the lowest unemployment (4.5 percent) in 30 years have lifted millions out of poverty, while exaggerating the perceived efficacy of welfare reform. However, a 1999 study by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that, adjusted for inflation, the poverty rate remains higher than any year since the 1970s. This is largely because of cuts in welfare since 1996. The percentage of impoverished children receiving cash assistance fell to 41 percent in 1998, down from 57 percent in 1995. There remains a wide racial gap in the poverty rates: the 1998 incidence of poverty for Blacks and Hispanics is more than three times higher than the 8.2 percent rate for Non-Hispanic

Whites. The asset gap between rich and poor continues to grow, according to the January 2000 *Bulletin of the Federal Reserve*. Thus, Blacks and Hispanics remain much more dependent upon public aid, which is in much shorter supply than at any time since the 1960s. The result is growing poverty among children of color, and disparate life chance based on one's race at birth.

World of 100

If we could shrink the earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human rations remaining the same, it would look something like the following:

There would be:

57 Asians
21 Europeans
14 from the Western Hemisphere, both north and south
8 Africans

52 would be female
48 would be male
70 would be non-White
30 would be White

70 would be non-Christian
30 would be Christian
89 would be heterosexual
11 would be homosexual

Six people would possess 59 percent of the entire world's wealth and all six would be from the United States.

80 would live in substandard housing
70 would be unable to read
50 would suffer from malnutrition
1 would be near death; 1 would be near birth
1 (yes, only 1) would have a college education
1 would own a computer

When one considers our world from such a compressed perspective, the need for both acceptance, understanding, and education becomes glaringly apparent.

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Can we really stop?

by Barry Simmons, director, Scholarships and Financial Aid

Stop using stereotypes!

At the January 2000 VT Diversity Summit, my table (I was a maverick and joined a table of students rather than administrators) identified this phenomenon as something to STOP DOING to enhance diversity around campus.

As we discussed this "stop," it became evident this was much easier said than done. Why? Because one of the hallmarks of education is how to recognize, classify, and group similarities. That's pretty much what stereotyping is all about, except for one important facet: when we stereotype we oversimplify the classification. Can we stop using stereotypes? Or is the real issue "How do we mitigate the use of stereotypes?"

Our table's discussion reached consensus that to "stop using stereotypes" might well be impossible and not within human nature. It is a strong temptation to over-simplify. While some use stereotypes intentionally, others do so unintentionally. This simplification process has been taught from birth, not with malicious intent, but to help the individual deal with the environment with which they must interact. To stop something like this calls for a drastic change in human behavior. We may be more successful to change (diminish) the degree of stereotype usage.

Another table identified a STOP that went something like "Don't let them get away with it." Borrowing from that, don't let people get away with using stereotypes. Mitigate their use. Don't forget to start with yourself. And when you hear a colleague using an unintentional stereotype, call it to their attention. Ask "Do you realize what you just said can be taken as stereotyping?" Or ask "Did you really mean what you just said?" Don't attack or be rude or self righteous. You may want to re-phrase the speaker's words in a manner that does not stereotype. The use of stereotypes is sometimes so unconscious, even those sensitized to avoid the use of stereotypes still use them. This happened several times later in the evening at our table as I gently pointed out to the stereotypers.

I don't believe we can "Stop using stereotypes" collectively in an easy, quick, or complete manner. We can mitigate it by recognizing when we and others use stereotypes. We first can hold ourselves responsible and set a good example. Depending on the setting and the relationship, there will be opportunities to impress this responsibility on others. Choose them carefully.

Am I encouraging political correctness? Well, that's another topic to write about in the future.



Diversity 2000 participants, working in 15 small communities, selected five "stops" from a list of 47 actions they believe create the greatest hindrances to the achievement of diversity and inclusion at Virginia Tech. The list of 47 items was generated at the 1999 Summit. Look for the summary report in the next Conductor.

Photos by John McCormick



Diversity achievements

Continued from page 1

Communications and dialogue

- The provost's office, the Office of Institutional Research, and the Office of Multicultural Affairs held a Campus Climate Forum for more than 100 faculty members and administrators.
- The Office of Multicultural Affairs held three forums on the draft Diversity Strategic Plan: one for staff, one for the faculty, and one for students.
- The Dean of Students Office and the Women's Center conducted the first Sexual Assault Summit this fall. The second Sexual Assault Summit will be held on March 1, 2000.
- The Multicultural Fellows have created *The Virginia Tech Conductor*, a newsletter to foster dialogue and diversity awareness throughout the university.

Recognition

- The university appointed Nikki Giovanni as a University Distinguished Professor.
- The College of Architecture and Urban Studies has been selected as the competition consultants for the National Memorial to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- The provost's office has announced the University Exemplary Department Award focus for academic year 2000-2001 will be on diversity and multicultural activities.

Education and training

- The Center for Interdisciplinary Studies will begin a Native American concentration in the fall.
- A new Women's Leadership Program Concentration has been proposed and will be presented to the University Curriculum Committee.
- The Office Managers Development Group, sponsored by the Office of the Executive Vice President, continued to support staff through professional development meetings and a major conference.
- A College of Architecture and Urban Studies graduate student established a course to support, encourage, and prepare entrants for the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Competition.
- The Women's Center initiated workshops to sensitize faculty members, staff, and students on issues of diversity.
- The College of Human Resources and Education initiated a Women's Leadership Project to provide professional development to women faculty members, staff and administrators.
- New classes were introduced into the curriculum that focused on contributions of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community.

Outreach and inclusion

- Cultural awareness programs expanded to include a focused concentration on Holocaust Awareness.
- The first Deaf Awareness Week was held in Fall 1999. (The Galludet - school for the deaf - Dance Troupe will perform on campus in March.)
- The first college transition weekend was held for high school students with disabilities.
- A lactation space was established in Newman Library for nursing mothers.
- The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences hosted the 1999 national Minorities in Natural Resources (MANNRS) Conference.
- The Office of Multicultural Affairs, Graduate School, and several departments in the College of Arts and Sciences and College of Human Resources and Education sponsored a three-session Symposium on Public School Equity, involving community organizations.
- The Office of Family Support and the Office of Multicultural Affairs have initiated studies to assess the availability of community resources for childcare, and the impact of multicultural resources and staff diversity training on the development of children in childcare facilities.
- A \$1 million grant was awarded to a consortium of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Virginia Tech (VITAE-HBCU) for instructional technology initiatives.