

Virginia Tech Conductor

A GUIDE FOR OUR JOURNEY TOWARD EXCELLENCE, EQUITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

In this issue

Page 2: The charge to the new commission and how to become a member. The action agenda for affirming diversity.

Page 3: Photos from Black alumni reunion events.

Page 4: Reflections of Black alumni and students.

Past was 'the force' with Black alumni at reunion, 50th anniversary celebration

by Susan Trulove, Multicultural Fellow and PR manager for the Office of the Vice Provost for Research

The last weekend in March began as spring and ended as winter. Emotions during the Black Alumni Reunion that weekend also ran a gamut.

It was a celebratory event, marking the 50th anniversary of the admission of the first Black student to Virginia Tech. Irv Peddrew, that lone Black student in 1953, returned to celebrate with members of the Black community who followed him.

And it was a righteous event, in keeping with the theme: "Remembering the Past, Creating the Future"

The ground was set for indignation in the weeks before the reunion. On March 10, the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors voted to remove affirmative action protection from admission and hiring decisions; voted to remove sexual orientation from protection against discrimination in its nondiscrimination statement; and voted to restrict certain controversial topics from being presented on campus. The Virginia attorney general ruled the third action unconstitutional. There were demonstrations to also reverse the other resolutions and a petition drive that netted more than 1,000 signatures.

In the days before the reunion, e-mail among Black alumni began to heat up. The Virginia Tech Black Alumni Network (VTBAN) would hold a protest Saturday, alum Brian Roberts, '85, announced. That event was squeezed out by other, happier activities, such as the Overton Johnson Step Show. But the reunion planning committee scheduled a "Black Alumni Interest Meeting" for Saturday morning with the university's top administration. "It would be difficult to convey the alumni's level of concern," says Ben Dixon, vice president of multicultural affairs.

There has been growth in opportunity in recent decades, pointed out Dean of Students Barbara Pendergrass and Beville

See Roundup on page 3

Action acknowledges difficult past

Residence hall dedication honors two leaders

From remarks by Edward Spencer, March 29, 2003

As assistant vice president for Student Affairs, one of my responsibilities is our residence and dining hall program. This is indeed a special day in which we gather to dedicate a beautiful residence hall in honor of two extraordinary men.

Peddrew-Yates Hall is one of four suite-design residence halls which we have built in recent years. Each of these buildings has been constructed to replace some of the older residence halls on the upper quad which have been or will be converted to academic use

for classrooms and offices. This process is truly a win/win situation for the university and its students: the university gains much needed and centrally located academic space through renovation of the older halls, and students gain from the opening of these new halls which better meet the needs and lifestyles of this millennial generation of students.



Edward Spencer

When a number of us worked together on a proposal to name this building, it was fitting that we moved towards naming it for two significant pioneers in the history of this university. Pioneers are those who brave new trails and often work in extremely adverse situations amidst highly difficult odds. In the case of the two men we honor today, the environment which they faced as students was indeed very challenging. Imagine how any of us would feel if we were barred from living in this residence program because of some characteristic which we had. Imagine the hostile message that the environment must have sent to these men when they entered here as students in the 1950s.

Unfortunately, prohibiting Irv Peddrew and Charlie Yates from living in our residence halls is a reality of our past. If you have looked at the brochure celebrating the 50th anniversary of African American students at Virginia Tech, you have seen the symbol for Sankofa, an Akan word that means: "We must reclaim our past so that we can move forward." Today we remember and reclaim our past so that we can move forward and celebrate our future. Today we appropriately honor these two pioneers, these two significant African



Charlie Yates and Irv Peddrew stand in front of the residence hall named for them. Photo by John McCormick

American leaders. The housing program that in the past closed doors to them, today honors them by naming a residence hall for them. I cannot think of a better way in which a university can learn from its past and light the way to its future than by honoring Mr. Peddrew and Dr. Yates in this very ironic, meaningful, and significant way.

Gentlemen, we all have enormous respect and admiration for the difficult challenges you faced and surmounted at Virginia Tech and we gratefully accept this building into the residence program in your honor. Thank you.

The 219 students who live in Peddrew-Yates Hall reside in six-person suites which include three bedrooms, a shared bath, and a living room. They enjoy carpeting, air-conditioning, a telecommunications package (voice, data, and video service to every room), a laundry room, a classroom/seminar room, and multiple lounge, meeting and office spaces. All of the students who live in the building are involved in the Residential Leadership Community, one of nine living-learning or theme housing programs on campus.

Peddrew-Yates Hall was designed by the firm of Hanbury, Evans, Wright, and Vlattas from Norfolk, Va. They do not simply design a building, they work as social engineers who promote the development of students in their communities. Peddrew-Yates, along with Harper, Payne, and New Residence Hall East, are testimonies to their success in doing so. The contractor was Branch and Associates of Roanoke and we have been very pleased to work with them on all of our recent projects as well.

Next step: Your chance to serve

Board of visitors approves Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity

After two years of extensive work by the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Committee and the Advisory Council on Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors voted on March 10 to create the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity (CEOD). The commission is charged with advising University Council on policy and procedures as they relate to the university's responsibilities for equal opportunity, affirmative action, accessibility, and compliance. This is to include diversity planning, evaluation, training and education, as well as assessment of institutional climate.

CEOD will also address issues of diversity and equity as they relate to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of faculty, staff, and students, particularly those from historically underrepresented groups and from international populations.

The nation's top research universities have long under-

stood and benefited from the intellectual talent and promise of individuals from widely varying backgrounds from the United States and abroad. "This is an aspect of excellence that Virginia Tech must emulate in order to compete nationally and internationally with highly regarded peers," said Ben Dixon, vice president for multicultural affairs. "The research evidence demonstrates that the intellectual environment is deeply enriched by the contributions of individuals from many cultures and with widely varying perspectives and experiences. Continued expansion of these efforts to identify, attract, and retain highly qualified faculty, staff, and students will only enhance the intellectual vitality of Virginia Tech and strengthen our university's attraction to corporate and government partners."

Diversity and community are significant components of each of the four domains of the university's strategic plan:

research and scholarship, graduate education, undergraduate education, and outreach. CEOD will support the university's efforts to achieve these stated goals.

Membership

The CEOD membership structure is designed to bring a wide variety of voices and perspectives to the table. Some appointments follow patterns typical of other university commissions, such as appointments from the Faculty and Staff Senates, various student organizations, and administrative offices. However, the CEOD also includes eight community representatives from the faculty or staff who will be elected (or selected) by specified organizations, programs or services. In addition there will be three at-large positions, open to faculty, staff, or students.

See Commission seeks members on page 2

New commission's charge, membership outlined

Approval of the new Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity (CEOD) by the board of visitors at the March, 2003 meeting successfully concludes an effort of nearly two years to establish a university-level body with responsibility for compliance, diversity planning and evaluation, and campus climate issues. The new commission replaces two existing advisory bodies -- the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Committee and the Advisory Council on Diversity and Multicultural Affairs -- which will be disbanded.

The charge and membership of the new commission is:

To study, formulate, and recommend to University Council policies and procedures as they relate to the university's responsibilities for equal opportunity, affirmative action, accessibility, and compliance; diversity planning and evaluation; diversity training and education; assessment of institutional climate; and similar matters of equity and diversity that affect the university. In collaboration with other university commissions and/or units, the commission will address issues of diversity and equity as they relate to recruitment, retention, and advancement of faculty, staff, and students, particularly those from historically underrepresented groups and international populations; student life; academic policies and support; curriculum; research, scholarship, and creative activity; and outreach.

The commission will have 32 members, as follows:

- Vice President of Multicultural Affairs
- Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity
- Assistant Vice President for Personnel Services
- Associate Provost for Academic Administration
- Vice President for Student Affairs
- Director of the Cranwell International Center
- One dean selected by the Council of Academic Deans (2-year term)
- Three faculty representatives elected by the Faculty Senate; at least one must be a senator (3-year terms)
- Three staff representatives elected by the Staff Senate; at least one must be a senator (3-year terms)
- One representative of the administrative/professional faculty elected by CAPFA (3-year term)
- One staff representative from the Commission on Classified Staff Affairs (1-year term)
- One student from the Commission on Student Affairs (1-year term)
- One faculty member from the Commission on Faculty Affairs (1-year term)

Commission seeks members

Continued from page 1

The background document and resolution establishing the commission are available at www.diversity.vt.edu/CEOD. Members of the university community are invited to read more about the new commission at the web site above and to get involved by indicating an interest in serving.

Elected or selected faculty and staff representatives will serve terms up to three years beginning in fall 2003. Because all members are being appointed at the same time, initial appointments will be staggered; one, two, or three-year terms will be randomly assigned. Reappointment or reelection is possible. As outlined in the university constitution, students serve one-year terms. Commission meetings are tentatively scheduled for second and fourth Monday mornings from 10:30 to noon. Initial organizational meetings will begin during late summer 2003, with the full commission taking shape in fall 2003. (Additional time may be required at the outset of the commission's work.)

If you are interested in serving as a community or at-large member, fill out the brief registration form available on-line or pick up the form at the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), 332 Burruss. You must register on-line or return the completed form to the OMA, by 5 p.m. April 30, 2003.

As outlined in the CEOD's membership, community members will be elected or selected by designated organizations or programs. The three existing, broadly representative faculty/staff organizations will conduct elections: the Black Caucus; the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Staff / Faculty Caucus; and the Hispanic Faculty/Staff Caucus. In the absence of relevant or appropriate organizations, the following programs or offices will develop

- Two representatives of the Student Government Association: the chair of the SGA Diversity Committee and one representative elected by the SGA (1-year terms)
- One representative of the Graduate Student Assembly elected by the GSA (1-year term)
- One student elected by the Council of International Student Organizations
- Eight faculty or staff community representatives (3-year terms)

Community representatives shall be chosen by one of two methods. 1) Where there is a single widely representative organization for faculty and staff, this organization would have responsibility for electing a representative. 2) Where there is no appropriate organization (or multiple organizations), then a related office, program, or center serving related interests will be responsible for the nomination and election (or selection) of a community representative. The Office of Multicultural Affairs will oversee the identification of community representatives, including assuring that named organizations, programs, or offices use an open process for securing nominations and interested participants if an election is not feasible or reasonable.

1) Representatives elected by a university organization with open membership for faculty and staff (one each): Black Caucus; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Staff/Faculty Caucus; and Hispanic Faculty/Staff Caucus

2) Representatives elected (or selected) by the following university offices or programs (one each): ADA Coordinator's Office, American Indian Studies Program, Appalachian Studies Program, Cranwell International Center, and Women's Center

- Three faculty, staff, or student at-large members (3-year terms for faculty/staff representatives; 1-year term for a student).

The at-large members will be chosen by an application process, open to faculty, staff, and students, and conducted by the CEOD annually for the available, undesignated slot. The commission will forward at least two nominations (so long as there are at least two) for each vacant position to the president for appointment. The commission may rank the candidates in order of preference. The at-large positions are designed to allow representation from groups not identified above as well as individuals who would make significant contributions to the work of the commission, regardless of background.

The chair will be elected from among the non-ex officio faculty or staff members of the commission.

and carry out an election or selection process for community representatives: the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator, the American Indian Studies Program, the Appalachian Studies Program, Cranwell International Center, and the Women's Center.

The Office of Multicultural Affairs is responsible for assuring that a process of identification and selection conducted by the designated organizations is an open one. You do not need to be a member of the identified group or program to request consideration for election or selection by them. The designated organizations, offices, or programs may establish different ways of electing or selecting representatives, but the process of gathering nominations for consideration must be open. Once you indicate your interest in serving on the CEOD by submitting a registration form, the OMA will notify the relevant groups of your interest so that you may be considered. You may indicate interest in serving as a representative of ONE community.

The commission also has three at-large members, who may be faculty, staff, or students. Two names are submitted to the university president for each slot. The length of initial appointment will also be staggered. See the membership article in this issue for additional information about these positions.

Applications from off-campus faculty members, staff, and students are welcome. Off-campus members have served successfully on other commissions via telephone participation if they are not able to attend in person. Classified staff may serve on official governance bodies as part of their regular work schedule. Advance discussion with your supervisor about meeting obligations for the commission is strongly recommended.

Action agenda for affirming diversity presented

Given the current crisis with diversity programs, policies, and practices, the Office of Multicultural Affairs recommended 10 actions to be initiated in the next eight months, in time to impact the 2004-2005 school year. The university's administrative group shared the action agenda at the meeting March 29 with concerned Black alumni.

1. Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity: Initiate membership selection procedures prior to close of 2002-2003 school year. Hold orientation meeting prior to first meeting of University Council in fall 2003.

2. University Diversity Strategic Plan: Review goals 2-5 and their related tasks, and assess degree of completion. Identify at least one activity for each task that can be initiated and/or completed by December 2003. Revise goal 1 in accordance with legal opinion of Virginia Attorney Generals' office.

3. Faculty Search Procedures: Authorize, at least on an interim basis, the revised recruitment, screening, and hiring guidelines, particularly with respect to inclusive procedures and practices, prior to the next hiring season (June 2003).

4. Nondiscrimination Policy Statement: Continue use of the policy statement in force prior to March 10, 2003. Prepare an administrative "position statement" reaffirming the importance of inclusive, nondiscriminatory practices and the educational value of diversity... (The board reinstated the original statement.)

5. Key Messages for Diversity at Virginia Tech: Obtain external expert assistance to assist campus resources in an aggressive campaign to "get the word out" that Virginia Tech is committed to (e.g.) "Excellent and Equity," "High Quality Education in a Diverse Environment," etc.

6. Research Agenda: Find or reallocate resources to create an official incentive/support program to stimulate focused research in the area of diversity, multiculturalism, and globalism.

7. Diversity Education & Training: Double the resources devoted to professional development in the area of diversity. Provide incentive funds for curriculum transformation to incorporate diversity and multicultural principles into core and elective courses.

8. Exemplary Programs: Significantly expand or enhance current exemplary student pipeline, recruitment, and support programs, particularly those that identify and prepare a diverse pool of talented students for graduate education. These programs are Center for the Enhancement of Engineering Diversity, Minority Academic Opportunities Program, McNair Scholars, VT Summer Training Academy for Rising Stars, Center for Academic Achievement and Excellence.

9. Presidential Campus Enrichment Grant: Increase the number of awards for entering freshman by 80 percent over three years, beginning in fall 2004.

10. Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions: Review recruitment and admission practices for undergraduate and graduate students. Identify socio/economic, geographical, family status, and other such indicators to inform a revision or extension of practices that tend to yield more diverse outcomes.

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 on-line at www.multicultural.vt.edu/conductor.html.

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Roundup

Continued from page 1

Watford, director of Center for the Enhancement of Engineering Diversity. There was not only concern that opportunities would be lost, but also that the gains that have been made would become invisible and that fears of an unwelcoming climate would hinder recruitment and hiring.

President Steger, Provost Mark McNamee, Executive Vice President Minnis Ridenour, Dixon, and Director of Development for Multicultural Affairs Tysus Jackson expressed their commitment to diversity. They presented an update on diversity initiatives and a list of 10 action items to be completed by year's end (See 'Action agenda' on page 2).

Later, Peddrew and many others wore a button that read, "We Won't Go Back."

At the dedication of Peddrew-Yates Residence Hall, which followed the meeting, a tent was set up to provide shelter from weather — in this instance, brilliant sun and temperatures in the low 70s. But the event was so crowded that the sides were removed from the shelter.

"What a great feeling," says Dixon. "We knew it was an historic event."

President Steger told the 600 people in attendance at the banquet Saturday night, "Though laws may change, Virginia Tech's commitment to diversity will remain steadfast."

Also speaking at the banquet, Calvin Jamison, '77, now Richmond city manager, recalled the 1980s, when he and assistant director of admissions Glenn Valentine were charged with student recruitment. A show of hands by those they had recruited reflected the success of their efforts. "Even though the actions of the board of visitors reminds us that there is still resistance to progress by people of color, we cannot let it discourage us," said Jamison. "It's not the action, but the message it sends. But we are going to turn it around."

In fact, the board of visitors did rescind their resolutions in an 8-5 vote a week later, on April 6. (The board also created a committee to help draft "narrowly tailored" race-conscious policies that do not violate state or federal law. And they approved a plan that would guarantee time to review future proposals, according to the April 7 Roanoke Times page 1 story, "Tech board reverses decision on affirmative action.")

Most of all, the Black Alumni Reunion and Golden Anniversary was an enriching, unifying event.

Alums met former classmates, sorority sisters, fraternity brothers, and — at the reception Saturday — former teachers, who were glad to see their one-time students again. There was so much news to exchange and so many memories to share that the banquet room was in constant motion and the evenings' speakers usually had to start their remarks twice. But it was okay — because one of the strongest messages of the weekend was, "Share your experiences." A video shared the experience of the first Black women. Alumni were invited to have their stories video taped and their pictures, from their years as Tech students, scanned for the university archives.

Charles Johnson, a local barber for the past 50 years, recalled when the Black cadets had to get their hair cut before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m. — until he declared that Black students would show up with the rest of the cadets. Johnson shared experiences from the close relationships that developed between the Black students and the local minority community.

"I encourage you to speak to each other as we try to make this climate a good place — to make this world a good place," said Dean of Students Barbara Pendergrass. "We do belong to each other."

"Pass on your experiences to a willing mind ... If we all make this effort to enlighten our community, we will be enriched," said Black Organizations Council chair Myron McClees. He asked the alums to talk to today's students. The opportunity to do so was provided Sunday morning at a networking breakfast for students and alums who braved heavy, wet snow that eventually reached eight inches.

The 50th anniversary of Blacks at Virginia Tech will be celebrated throughout the year. Chief Justice Leroy Hassell Sr. — the first African American chief justice in Virginia history — is to be the Commencement speaker this year. Other events will be announced on the university's homepage.



Friday reunion



Yates at the dedication



Peddrew sang Friday night.



'Remembering the Past, Creating the Future'
Saturday morning there was tension and commitment to the future; Saturday afternoon and evening there was 'remember when...' and recommitment.



Peddrew-Yates Residence Hall dedication: "We knew it was an historic event."

Charles Johnson, a local barber for the past 50 years, recalled when the Black cadets had to get their hair cut before 8 a.m. or after 6 p.m. — until he declared that Black students would show up with the rest of the cadets. He extended a 'welcome back' from the community.



'Reflections over the decades' at the Saturday luncheon recalled some good times.

Photos by John McCormick

Alumni reflect on reunion, 50th anniversary of first Black student at Virginia Tech

by Barbara Pendergrass, Dean of Students

Black Alumni who attended the 50th anniversary were provided with a questionnaire in their packets on which they were invited to share their thoughts on the weekend and what it meant to them to be a Virginia Tech graduate. The quotes below represent typical responses to the questions.

What does it mean to you that the university is celebrating the golden anniversary of the first African American students at Virginia Tech?

It is a wonderful thing because without Peddrew and Yates I would not be here today as an alum of VT. I hope we continue to have a presence of Blacks on campus, administration and student body.

Tekisha Everette, '98

It means that we have come a long way, however, in light of the BOV's recent actions we have a long way to go.

Bart Butler, '84

This is an awesome experience! I am so glad and excited that Tech has finally opened a dorm that recognizes someone of African American descent.

Jeryl Payne

What does it mean to you to have attended Virginia Tech?

I am proud to have attended this school. The experience was very positive for me. I did have some difficulties based on people not appreciating Virginia Tech's efforts to be more diverse. Those experiences prepared me to work in corporate settings.

Annette Turlington, '84

The greatest accomplishment of my life, despite many business accolades and financial success, is graduating from VPI.

Bart Butler

Virginia Tech was few years of my life. The school was challenging the Black people were nice and I have made life-long friends.

Tekisha Everette

Tech was a wonderful experience for me! I did have many obstacles but overall I loved my time here and recruit people everyday.

Jeryl Payne

What does it mean to you that the university has named a building after two African Americans?

The current administration values the contribution(s) of Black students to the history and development of Virginia Tech. The university can look at its past, though cloudy and short-term and make even greater strides.

Wayne "Eric" Miles, '75

COLORS

My skin is kind of brownish
Pinkish yellowish white.
My eyes are greyish blueish green
But I'm told they look orange in the
night.

My hair is reddish blondish brown,
But it's silver when it's wet.
And all the colors I am inside
Have not been invented yet.

Shel Silverstein

Appeared in The Campus Diversity Report, May/June 2000.
Reprinted with permission of PaperClip Communications.

'We are all pioneers' Reunion provided insight on the college experience

A letter from Eric Glover, '88, March 29, 2003

To all the organizers of the Black Alumni Reunion weekend for the year 2003, I say thank you. This weekend taught me so much about my stay at Virginia Tech some 15 years ago. At the dedication, when (Irv) Peddrew and (Charlie) Yates spoke, much of the personal pain that I endured, and I am sure that many others endured very similar pain, was explained.

Peddrew started Virginia Tech in 1953, I started in 1983; Yates graduated in 1958, I graduated in 1988. Thirty years is a very short time when you really stop to think about it. We are continuing a progress that started when Peddrew first entered Tech — the integration of a formerly all white, all male, very racist institution. We are all pioneers, Peddrew and Yates are the major pioneers; but they passed the torch to us. At the time, we did not realize the impact of what we were doing would have on us personally or the institution or the greater USA as a whole. When Peddrew spoke, I could barely hold back my tears; we were looking at the man who entered Virginia Tech amidst all its naked ugliness towards people of color. Then he passed the baton and we — at the time, unwittingly — accepted the challenge and rose to the occasion. For many of us, it was a very painful experience.

But we must now stop, and ask three questions:

1. Did Jackie Robinson enjoy integrating baseball? I don't think so; Jackie Robinson probably did not enjoy the death threats he received, or the ridicule and name-calling he received. But he no doubt knew that what he was doing was bigger than he; just like us. We could easily have gone to HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) and had a much better college experience. But then Virginia Tech's legal integration would be on paper only. Blacks could "legally" go to Tech, but had Peddrew not shown up at the door one day in September, "practically," Blacks would not have been able to come. It took him enduring that pain, to open the door for us; it took us enduring our pain, to open the doors for the next generation.

2. Was our suffering in vain? I am a firm believer that everything happens for a reason, and that all things work for those who believe in God. Our suffering was not vain. Firstly, we received a solid education. Secondly, we opened the door just a little bit wider for the next generation. Virginia Tech is a federal land grant university. The money to establish and maintain this school came from our ancestors just as much as it came from theirs. We and our posterity have every right to attend and graduate from this school. Our suffering was instrumental in keeping the dream alive.

3. Where do we go from here? I think the most important thing we can focus on is the current Black undergraduate population and the future population. For the current group, I think we need to help them tie themselves to history. They need to hear our stories, so that they will know that they are not suffering alone, and that a support system exists for them. They need to be conscience of the fact that they are now carrying the baton that started with Peddrew. They need to know and understand their place in history.

For future Black students at Virginia Tech — those currently in high school, we need to reach out to them as well. Let us, say, start in the eighth grade. We need to help them prepare better for the rigors of Virginia Tech life. Let's consider getting with the deans of each college and preparing a high school curriculum that will better support the students. Then let's work with the various principals and guidance counselors throughout the commonwealth and beyond, particularly focusing on magnet schools and trying to get our high school curriculums adopted in these high schools. Let's also build relationships with these high school students before they ever arrive. That way, when they get here and the pain begins, they will already have an alumni link for support.

Contact Glover at eric.glover@atlanta-airport.com

Students reflect on Black alumni reunion, celebration

What does it mean to you that the university is celebrating the golden anniversary of the first African American students at VT?

I think it is a good thing. It probably took a lot of courage for those students to be the first African American students at the university. We are remembering the inequality of the past and what it took to get past that and create an environment where people of all ages, races, and beliefs can go to school together.

Traci Carol Wilmoth

2002 Pamplin Leader award recipient

To me this means that I am celebrating Virginia Tech's first step to becoming a diversified university. I must say that I am elated and impressed that the African American community of VT, in correlation with the Alumni, can come together and celebrate this milestone. It is an important one because it shows that we are moving towards breaking down those barriers and, even though the process might be slow, I do believe that one day VT can (be) just as diversified as many of the other institutions in the US. Hopefully before I graduate I can make an impact on these things so that future students have even greater things to celebrate.

Selene Willis, Biology

It reassures me that Virginia Tech does care about the African Americans who graduate.

Julian C. Richards Jr., Mechanical Engineering

What does it mean to you to be a student at VT?

Being a student at VT means that I am working to better my education and myself. I am working towards a common goal along with many other students. And while I am here, it is

my duty to contribute to the learning atmosphere and the community in any way possible.

Traci Carol Wilmoth

To be a Virginia Tech student is to uphold everything that VT stands for. Tech's motto *Ut Prosim*, "That I may serve," is one of truth for me. I want to get an education and I do want to serve not only my fellow students but also the communities. As a minority student, I do think that I serve a purpose here at Tech. Not just only adding diversity but more so bringing my cultural experiences to share with other students who are not from my background. I think even getting good grades has an impact on what it means to be here. All these things are reflected by the group of students that graduate each year, with these new experiences. To be a Tech student is to be a part of its legacies as well as the journey of VT to be a better institution.

Selene Willis

It means that I have the same opportunity as everyone else here to gain an equal education that will hopefully enable me to be a hot commodity in pursuing my career.

Julian Richards Jr.

What does it mean to you that the university has named a building after two African Americans?

I think it is good. The buildings have to be named something and this way they are commemorating something worthwhile.

Traci Carol Wilmoth

This shows that the university's recognizes the contributions these African American have left behind.

Julian C. Richards Jr.