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Visit AtlanticUnionBank.com or a branch near you.

#GoHokies
#VirginiasBank
TUNNEL VISION

Once a picturesque village in France, Vauquois became a World War I battleground. Soldiers from both sides dug tunnels in an attempt to destroy their enemies with underground explosives. Virginia Tech’s Vauquois Experience Exhibit uses virtual technology and a physical replica to enable participants, like student Dillon Cutaiar, to learn more about the experiences of the soldiers who lived and fought in the tunnels. Turn to page 34 to read about the immersive exhibit.

This collaborative project is an example of the research that is supported in Virginia Tech’s Creativity and Innovation District, which is featured on page 24.
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

A PIPELINE FOR TALENT

I recently had the privilege of addressing the Class of 2019 during our spring commencement ceremony. The rain didn’t dampen their enthusiasm or appreciation for our commencement speaker, Coach Frank Beamer. These graduates have a lot to be excited about, as they go into the world with tools and experiences that will help them be successful in their careers and life in general.

As members of our newest alumni class plan their post-graduation future, another group of students, the Class of 2023, is preparing to begin their first year as Hokies in the fall. The skills and experiences they will need to be ready for the world in four years are already changing, and Virginia Tech will adapt to support them.

This is one of higher education’s greatest challenges: anticipating the future, staying ahead of the curve, and developing the world with tools and experiences that will help them be successful in their careers and life in general. As members of our newest alumni class plan their post-graduation future, another group of students, the Class of 2023, is preparing to begin their first year as Hokies in the fall. The skills and experiences they will need to be ready for the world in four years are already changing, and Virginia Tech will adapt to support them.

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SEVENTEEN VIRGINIA TECH STUDENTS SPENT A PORTION of winter break learning firsthand about South Africa as part of a College of Agriculture and Life Sciences study abroad course on food security, wildlife, and conservation. Over the course of two weeks, the students journeyed through South African agriculture, history, economics, politics, culture, and society.

“Whether it is talking about race and the challenges of re-appropriating farms in the wake of apartheid, or it is examining conservation agricultural practices in an arid country with issues of food inequality, many of the challenges that make South Africa so interesting and dynamic are connected to agriculture. Agriculture is a common thread that unites us all,” said Mark Reiter, an associate professor in the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences and Extension specialist at the Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center. He was one of two leaders on the trip.
Satellite built by Virginia Tech undergraduates travels to space

In a giant leap for Virginia Tech, the first satellite built by undergraduate students has launched into space.

The students delivered their small satellite to Houston to be incorporated into NanoRacks’ commercially developed Cubesat deployer. Virginia Tech’s satellite, along with two satellites from other Virginia universities, launched on the payload section of Northrop Grumman’s Antares rocket, headed to the International Space Station.

The project’s mission: Obtain measurements of the Earth’s atmosphere in low Earth orbit. As the satellites’ orbits decay due to atmospheric drag, the satellite instruments will quantify atmospheric density.

The initiative began in June 2016 as part of the Virginia Cubesat Constellation, a collaborative effort between the Virginia Space Grant Consortium and four of its member universities—Virginia Tech, Old Dominion University, University of Virginia, and Hampton University.

The project has provided students studying aerospace engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical and computer engineering, computer science, and physics with crucial hands-on experience in both spacecraft design and manufacturing.

The project’s mission: Obtain measurements of the Earth’s atmosphere in low Earth orbit. As the satellites’ orbits decay due to atmospheric drag, the satellite instruments will quantify atmospheric density.

For the past several years, an interdisciplinary team of 50 undergraduate students from the College of Engineering and the College of Science developed CubeSat at the Center for Space Science and Engineering Research at Virginia Tech, known as Space@VT.

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The initiative began in June 2016 as part of the Virginia Cubesat Constellation, a collaborative effort between the Virginia Space Grant Consortium and four of its member universities—Virginia Tech, Old Dominion University, University of Virginia, and Hampton University.

All three of the university-built Cubesats deployed simultaneously into orbit by astronauts aboard the International Space Station, where they will function as a constellation.

Moose, Therapy Dog and ‘True Animal Hero’

Moose’s greatest superpower

is his unconditional love.

During the past five years, the 7-year-old therapy dog has partnered with Trent Davis (pictured above), his owner and a counselor and coordinator of Virginia Tech’s Animal Assisted Therapy at Cook Counseling Center, in more than 5,000 individual and group counseling sessions. Moose also has been part of countless hours of outreach. He has become one of Virginia Tech’s most beloved celebrities.

In February, Moose was named the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association’s 2019 Animal Hero. The annual award is given to an animal that has performed a heroic act of service or provides daily outstanding service for humans. Moose not only embodies those qualities, but also highlights the association’s increased emphasis on mental wellness.

“Moose loves you if you’re super smart, and he loves you if you got an A or a B or if you didn’t get into college… That’s got a magic to it,” Davis said.

Virginia Tech to freeze undergraduate tuition, increase minimum starting pay for staff

TWO RECENT UNIVERSITY MOVES will benefit undergraduates and full-time staff employees.

In April, the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors voted to freeze tuition for undergraduates for the 2019-20 academic year. Tuition will remain at $11,420 annually for resident students.

Also, to further support low- and middle-income families seeking a Virginia Tech education, the university will allocate approximately $5 million in additional resources—the largest one-year increase in its history for the second year in a row—toward financial aid programs next year. This raises total institutional support for student financial aid to more than $55 million for 2019-20.

In July, Virginia Tech will increase its minimum starting pay for full-time, benefits-eligible staff employees to $12 per hour. The new pay rate will take effect July 10. Virginia Tech’s current minimum starting pay for full-time, benefits-eligible staff is $10.25 per hour and was last adjusted in May 2018.

This increase will raise the annual salary of approximately 225 employees who currently make less than $12 per hour. Approximately 312 employees who make between $12 and $13.50 per hour will also receive a salary increase.

University leaders shared plans and fielded questions about Virginia Tech’s new Innovation Campus and the commonwealth’s tech-talent pipeline during a town hall in April for the Blacksburg campus community.

Students, faculty, staff, and community members gathered in Haymarket Theatre inside Squires Student Center for the hour-long public event. Questions from the audience ranged from the enrollment timeline and location specifics to details about how the Innovation Campus will benefit students in disciplines other than computer science.

The university expects to begin offering Innovation Campus courses in start-up space in Alexandria beginning in fall 2020. But as part of an agreement with the state to fulfill a critical tech-talent shortage, Virginia Tech will expand some existing programs at its Falls Church campus this fall, according to Cyril Clarke, executive vice president and provost.

“Construction on the Innovation Campus will happen within the next two to five years, though the full scale of programs will unfold over eight years,” said Brandy Salmon, who is founding managing director of the Innovation Campus.

In April, David Baker was hired as assistant director of governmental and community affairs, based in Alexandria.

In Blacksburg, Virginia Tech expects to add at least 2,000 more undergraduate students studying computer science, computer engineering, and related disciplines over the next five years, along with 140 new faculty members.

Virginia Tech leaders hold Blacksburg town hall about Innovation Campus

Virginia Tech leaders, including Brandy Salmon, founding managing director of the new Virginia Tech Innovation Campus, discuss the future campus during a town hall in Blacksburg.
TRANSFORMATIONAL RESEARCH: Sharon Landesman Ramey, professor and distinguished research scholar at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC, is co-leading the nation's first clinical trial for infant stroke victims.

RESEARCH SCHOLAR CO-LEADS NATION’S FIRST CLINICAL TRIAL FOR REHABILITATING INFANT STROKE VICTIMS

STROKES ARE DEVASTATING EVENTS often associated with people over 65. But large numbers of infants have strokes, too. In the nation’s first multicenter pediatric stroke recovery trial, researchers and clinicians from 12 sites across the U.S. will evaluate an innovative therapeutic approach to help 8-month-old to 24-month-old infants who have been diagnosed with strokes.

Sharon Landesman Ramey, a professor and distinguished research scholar at Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC, is one of two lead principal investigators for a five-year, $13.5 million grant to conduct the trial, called IAC-QUIRE. The grant was awarded by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke of the National Institutes of Health.

The Phase III trial will examine the effectiveness of pediatric therapy to increase upper extremity skills, gross motor development, and cognition in 240 children nationwide who experienced strokes when they were younger than 4 weeks old.

Findings from the trial have the potential to transform clinical rehabilitation for more than 3,000 newly diagnosed infants in the United States.

IN OTTER NEWS

A RIVER OTTER BECAME VIRGINIA Tech’s social media sensation after it was spotted swimming in the Duck Pond in March.

Jim Parkhurst, wildlife Extension specialist in the College of Natural Resources and Environment, said that otters have been observed elsewhere in the Stroubles Creek and Tom’s Creek systems.

“I predict that it’s a young otter who could soon try to find a mate and start a family in the area around the pond,” Parkhurst said.

The otter quickly became an online star. A photo on the university’s Instagram account became its top post in the five years since the account was created. A photo on Tech’s Facebook page resulted in more than 6,000 reactions, plus more than 1,100 comments and 1,400 shares.

Virginia Tech asked Hokies for name suggestions, resulting in a list that included Ot Prosim (That I May Serve) in the spirit of community, diversity, and excellence. Virginia Tech recognized Indigenous Peoples Day for the first time on Oct. 4, 2018.

IT’S OFFICIAL—VIRGINIA TECH WILL observe Indigenous Peoples Day on the second Monday of October each year. As part of the university’s ongoing commitment to InclusiveVT, University Council approved a resolution to observe this annual celebration of Native Americans to honor their place in history and culture. InclusiveVT is the university’s institutional and individual commitment to Ut Prosim (That I May Serve) in the spirit of community, diversity, and excellence.


THE CALL WENT OUT AND HOKIES joined forces around the globe to answer in resounding fashion.

More than 6,600 people gave during Virginia Tech’s Giving Day, which began at noon on March 19 and ran through noon on March 20. The joint effort far surpassed last year’s participation total of 4,617 people and topped this year’s goal—5,500—by more than 20 percent.

The landmark participation during the second-annual 24-hour fundraising campaign resulted in $2.8 million given to more than 500 areas across the university.

The Giving Day effort included more than 340 ambassadors, who not only loved to give but encouraged others to join in, and nearly 120 matching or challenge gifts, roughly triple the 2018 total. Those gifts spanned 22 colleges and programs.

MORE THAN 6,600 HOKIES DONATED $2.8 MILLION ON GIVING DAY


THIRD-YEAR MEDICAL STUDENT EARS MBA THROUGH NEW PROGRAM

LAST YEAR, MERCEDES ROBINSON, A third-year student at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, set her white coat aside and picked up a briefcase to pursue an MBA through Virginia Tech’s Pamplin College of Business.

Robinson took advantage of a program, developed by both schools, to help future physicians attain skills needed to navigate their career path. She has taken掉了 9-12 credits per semester and completed the remaining coursework online.

Earning an MBA really opened up an entire new world for me,” Robinson said. “I came away with more foundational business skills and a better understanding of how organizations operate.”

The combined program enabled her to earn her degree in one year, including a few courses she took the summer prior to starting her fall semester. Classes met one weekend per month and rotated meeting locations between Blacksburg, Roanoke, and Richmond.

Robinson said one person who had a particular influence on her decision to do the program was Cynda Johnson, founding dean of the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, who has both M.D. and MBA degrees. “Seeing how successful she’s been and the career path she has taken was definitely inspiring for me,” Robinson said.

“Jurassic Park”—has been discovered in countless books and films, including “Jurassic Park”—has been discovered in countless books and films, including “Jurassic Park”—has been discovered in countless books and films, including “Jurassic Park”—has been discovered in countless books and films, including

DIG IT: Sterling Nesbitt, an assistant professor, discovered a new relative of the Tyrannosaurus rex.

T. REX HAS A 3-FOOT-TALL RELATIVE

A NEW RELATIVE OF THE TYRANNOSAURUS REX—much smaller than the huge, ferocious dinosaur made famous in countless books and films, including “Jurassic Park”—has been discovered and named by a Virginia Tech paleontologist and an international team of scientists.

The newly named tyrannosaurid dinosaur—Suskityrannus hazelae—stood roughly 3 feet tall at the hip and was about 9 feet in length, the entire animal only marginally longer than the skull of a fully grown T. rex, according to Sterling Nesbitt, an assistant professor with the Department of Geosciences in the Virginia Tech College of Science.

In all, Suskityrannus hazelae is believed to have weighed between 45 and 90 pounds, compared with a roughly 9-ton T. rex size. Its diet likely consisted of the same as its larger meat-eating counterpart.

Nesbitt found the fossil at age 16 as a high school student participating in a dig expedition in New Mexico in 1998. Nesbitt and Doug Wolfe, who led the expedition, authored the paper, which was published in Nature Ecology & Evolution.

FELINE OBESITY STUDY

“Fat cats” and their owners participated in a study conducted at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech to discover how owners’ perceptions of their cats’ quality of life were influenced by adding food toys to the cats’ weight-loss regimen.

LAURA BELMONTE NAMED DEAN

FOLLOWING A NATIONAL SEARCH, Virginia Tech Executive Vice President and Provost Cyril Clarke has appointed Laura Belmonte as dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. Belmonte will begin at Virginia Tech on Aug. 1.

“Laura’s strong record of scholarship, leadership, and achievement made her the ideal candidate to lead our College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences,” Clarke said.

Belmonte currently serves as associate dean for instruction and personnel at Oklahoma State University.

“I am honored to lead a college with a remarkable legacy of outstanding research and innovative teaching addressing all facets of the human experience,” Belmonte said. “I’m thrilled to support Virginia Tech’s visionary leadership and world-class partners and people in advancing knowledge, improving society, and celebrating diversity.”

Rosemary Biswasner, Alumni Distinguished Professor of Human Development, has served as dean of the college since 2017 and will be returning to the faculty in the fall.

Belmonte holds a bachelor’s degree in human development from the University of Georgia and a master of arts and Ph.D. from the University of Virginia.

ACCELERATE FESTIVAL 2019

Virginia Tech and the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History held the ACCele rate: ACC Smithsonian Creativity and Innovation Festival on April 5-7 in Washington, D.C., which showcased research in science, engineering, arts, and design.

BREAKING THROUGH ADVERSITY: ANDREW YOUNG’S INSTRUMENTAL INSPIRATION

Andrew Young, a junior at Virginia Tech, was born without a left arm from the elbow down. He taught himself how to play guitar. Now he’s in a band and performs solo.
YOUR GIVING HELPS our students get ready
to make their mark. Support the hands-on
learning that prepares them to excel. Make
a difference for students with your gift today.

GIVE BY JUNE 30 ➔ VT.EDU/GIVE ➔ 1-800-533-1144
CREATIVE CAPS

GRADUATION CAPS ARE MORE THAN JUST HEADPIECES THAT COMPLETE THE TRADITIONAL REGALIA.

FOR MANY HOKIES, THE CAPS ARE WINDOWS THAT OFFER A GLIMPSE OF THE WEARER’S PERSONAL STYLE.

STUDENTS DECORATE MORTARBOARDS WITH MESSAGES THANKING MOM AND DAD, DECLARING FUTURE PLANS, SHOWCASING HOKIE PRIDE, OR FEATURING ANY NUMBER OF CREATIVE INSPIRATIONS.

JB

CAPPING IT OFF

For photos and video from spring commencement 2019, go to vtmag.vt.edu.
PREPARING TO PRONOUNCE THOUSANDS OF GRADUATES’ NAMES

WHY IS PRONOUNCING A GRADUATE’S NAME CORRECTLY SO IMPORTANT?

MEROLO: “They’ve worked hard. For international students, their families will have come from all over the world. The worst thing that could happen to them is if you mess up their name, their moment in the sun. Their time on stage is fleetingly small.”

HOW DO YOU PREPARE TO PROPERLY PRONOUNCE SO MANY NAMES?

MYERS: “I have the students call me on my office phone and leave a voicemail of their pronunciation if they think that it will be mispronounced. I then will go through the cards [with graduates’ names on them], and if I think their name will be mispronounced, I email them and have them call me. I will go back and listen to it [voicemail] five or six times. Also, on the day of graduation, I get their attention, and I say, ‘I am reading your name, and if you haven’t called me or emailed me, let’s get it done now.’

WHAT TIPS DO YOU TRY TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU ARE ANNOUNCING NAMES?

MEROLO: “You don’t want to get too monotonous. There’s a real problem because you’re doing name after name after name. You really do want to find a way to make that student special, and so you try to pronounce it [the name] with confidence, properly, and maybe if I can manage it, with a little twinkle in my voice.”

WELLS: “You’ve just got to go with what comes out. You can’t try to go back. Just say it and say it with confidence. Say it once; say it loudly and with conviction.”

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT YOUR COMMENCEMENT ROLE?

MEROLO: “Over the years of being here, opportunities that I’ve been given to serve, I cherish, I really enjoy. In this case, I just love doing it, and that term labor of love is really true. As long as I don’t screw up, I know that I’m helping and contributing to the day, which is a very big day for some people.”

AFTER A CO-OP EXPERIENCE AT WALT DISNEY WORLD her sophomore year, Amelia Griese ’19 realized she’d be in Blacksburg for five years to finish her major in mechanical engineering and minors in classical studies and art history, so she looked for ways to get more actively involved on campus.

She settled on sport clubs. And she picked one she had never played—rugby. “Only two on our team had played rugby before college, so everybody comes in at the same level,” Griese said.

As a senior, Griese helped lead the team to a spot in the national club rugby championship game (they lost to Brigham Young) while serving as one of four co-captains and the match secretary, a position that required her to schedule matches and arrange all travel logistics.

“It falls on the four of us to make this team work, which can be a handful when we’re full-time students and we’re trying to play the game,” Griese said.

The skills she honed helped her land a job after graduation as a production supervisor for Anheuser-Busch.

“It’s easy to fix a machine, but people are more dynamic,” Griese said. “Rugby’s given me great experience dealing with people. It also gave me a lot of real-world challenges learning to manage my time and prioritize. It’s a lot of work, but it’s very rewarding.”

Julie Rhoads, Virginia Tech assistant director for sport clubs, and Megan Hughes, associate director for administrative services in Recreational Sports, see those rewards every day. Their office helps with guidance and logistics, but it’s the 1,100 student-athletes who participate on one of the 29 different teams at Virginia Tech who make the decisions and run the teams.

“We know that people who are involved in activities like sport clubs have a better sense of belonging at the university, and they feel more supported,” Hughes said.

“The grittiness required can translate to other areas, like in the academic realm.”

Rhoads points out that the women’s field hockey team won a national championship in 2018, and 18 of 29 clubs went to their respective national tournaments. And athletes in lesser known sports, such as rugby, fencing, and cricket, get a kick out of just introducing more people to their passion.

“What I was looking for in team sports is accountability to other people and building relationships,” Griese said. “I can walk on campus and there’s at least 50 people I know really well.”

“I know really well.”

By

BONUS POINTS: Amelia Griese (right) was one of four captains for the rugby team.
First-year students at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech are getting an up-close and rare look at what is inside a dog’s body. Virtual reality (VR) makes it possible.

Last fall, aspiring veterinarians who were enrolled in a physical exam and clinical skills course taught by Michael Nappier, an assistant professor of community practice, began using VR equipment during their lab time to help them visualize a mid-sized dog’s body parts. The 3D moving picture of a dog standing on all fours was the brainchild of Thomas Tucker, an associate professor in Virginia Tech’s School of Visual Arts and a fellow with the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology.

Tucker and five graduate and undergraduate students, crafted the images using CT scans. The project team also worked with Bonnie Smith, an associate professor of anatomy in the college’s Department of Biomedical Sciences and Pathobiology, to identify the bones in a dog’s body and to position them correctly.

“I literally stood inside the rib cage,” said veterinary student Sara Farthing, after she donned the VR glasses and followed the dog’s image floating virtually in front of her.

VR technology creates an immersive experience, and related applications are enhancing education throughout the university. Veterinary students have access to the anatomical VR technology through the college’s library for use as they study. But the veterinary VR doesn’t stop with dogs. Tucker is leading a group of students and veterinary school faculty who are creating a VR cow for instructional use. They hope to complete it by the summer’s end.

And look for a VR horse in the future.

WHAT’S IN IT?
VIRTUAL REALITY
TECHNOLOGY THAT’S GONE TO THE DOGS

Unreal Engine, a software used by video game developers, powers the technology. By wearing VR glasses, clicking a button, and moving around, students can navigate through layers of tissue, zoom in on specific organs, and step into parts of a virtual dog’s body. There also is a specialized section that allows for a deeper view into the dog’s skull.

IF YOU SPOT A BRIGHT ORANGE TENT while strolling across Virginia Tech’s campus this summer, step inside.

You may find pennants hanging along the tent’s edge, an alumnus’s World War II uniform, or candid photos from the days when Lane Hall was still the cadet barracks. You might even see yourself staring back from one of the photos.

The Corps of Cadets’ Pop-Up Museum started two years ago as a way to evoke memories and showcase a few of the items from the Corps of Cadets Museum.

The traveling mini-exhibition celebrates alumni, veterans, and history. The goal is to provide the community with an opportunity to learn about the corps and university history through artifacts that date from as far back as 1872, when Addison Caldwell enrolled as the first student.

Educational programming is the cornerstone of museum curation, and the pop-up museum creates spontaneous opportunities for the curator and cadet historians to talk with visitors about the corps’ history and its foundational ties to the university.

A permanent museum space will be housed within the Corps Leadership and Military Science Building, the third building planned in the revitalization project that brought two new residence halls to the Upper Quad. Pearson Hall opened in 2015, and New Cadet Hall opened in 2017. These buildings surround Lane Hall, the original barracks, which is now on the Commonwealth and federal lists of historic buildings.

Meanwhile, corps artifacts are on exhibit on the fourth floor of Newman Library. Although space is limited in Newman, there are acres of campus on which to expand the museum—if only for a few hours—through the pop-up museum.

Samantha Riggin is the Corps of Cadets’ museum curator.

WHAT’S IN IT? | DRILLFIELD | 21
Other-Focused

Saket Bikmal, a rising sophomore

Studying computational neuroscience, Bikmal is living a life focused on others.

Inspired by his younger brother, Himal Bikmal, who was diagnosed with low-functioning autism at an early age, and the corresponding challenges his family faced trying to secure treatments and needed accommodations, Bikmal has developed a commitment to helping individuals affected by the disability.

Although Himal Bikmal cannot do many things for himself, he can paint. His art led Saket Bikmal and their father, Harish Bikmal, to co-found Zenaviv, a business that helps artists with special needs sell their work. According to the company’s website, “The name Zenaviv is derived from the Japanese word ‘zen,’ meaning enlightenment, and the Hebrew word ‘aviv,’ meaning spring, or colors of spring.” More than 66 percent of the profits from the art sales go directly to the artists, with the rest going back into the company to continue their mission. Zenaviv’s clients include businesses and homeowners.

Bikmal’s education at Virginia Tech is a step toward his long-term goal to synthesize business and scientific research. "It’s a way to help people," he said. "I want to use the best of both worlds to help others.”

Increasing awareness of spectrum disorders like autism. His goal is to emphasize each individual’s unique abilities and skills, so that they are not overlooked in the broader context of the disability.

“There’s a lot of talent out there in kids with special needs,” said Bikmal. "They shouldn’t be discredited.”

Bikmal was drawn to Virginia Tech’s specialized neuroscience program and the opportunities to explore relationships between computers, the brain, and disease pathology. As a first-year student, he was involved with Bioactivity, a biomedical design team, as well as the Neuroscience Club. While he was still in high school, Bikmal researched synthetic neurochemistry with the National Institutes of Health and tested drug effects on non-small cell lung cancer with the Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. In addition to continuing work with Zenaviv, Bikmal has set his sights on medical school and starting his own company.

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As a child, Bikmal couldn’t do many things for himself, he can paint. His art led Saket Bikmal and their father, Harish Bikmal, co-found Zenaviv, a business that helps artists with special needs sell their work. According to the company’s website, “The name Zenaviv is derived from the Japanese word ‘zen,’ meaning enlightenment, and the Hebrew word ‘aviv,’ meaning spring, or colors of spring.” More than 66 percent of the profits from the art sales go directly to the artists, with the rest going back into the company to continue their mission. Zenaviv’s clients include businesses and homeowners.

Bikmal’s education at Virginia Tech is a step toward his long-term goal to synthesize business and scientific research. “It’s a way to help people,” he said. “I want to use the best of both worlds to help others.”

Increasing awareness of spectrum disorders like autism. His goal is to emphasize each individual’s unique abilities and skills, so that they are not overlooked in the broader context of the disability.

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In addition to continuing work with Zenaviv, Bikmal has set his sights on medical school and starting his own company. Whatever the future may hold, Bikmal’s desire to serve is fueling his direction.

“Even if I fail at one thing, I can always find another way to help people,” he said. Grace Baggett was a student intern with Virginia Tech Magazine.

Debbie Tillotson ’78 was looking for a way to support the Corps of Cadets and engage her son and daughter-in-law in the family tradition of giving back to Virginia Tech. She found it by becoming the first Hokie to take advantage of the Virginia Tech Foundation Donor-Advised Fund, a new way to structure gifts to the university.

“Working with the university’s Office of Gift Planning was quick and easy, and my donor-advised fund and stock transfer were handled efficiently,” Tillotson said. Donor-advised funds allow people to receive immediate tax benefits from a making a gift and still take their time to decide which causes to support. Over the course of this decade, their popularity has grown dramatically. Across the nation, they accounted for 4.4 percent of charitable giving by individuals in 2010. By 2017, that had grown to 10.2 percent, according to the National Philanthropic Trust.

Tillotson has used her fund to support several programs in the Corps of Cadets, including an Emerging Leader Scholarship and the Corps Leadership and Military Science Building project. Her son Ian ’15 and daughter-in-law Allison ’15, both serving in the Air Force, used the fund to establish a Giving Day challenge to help motivate other corps alumni and cadets to make gifts, too.

The donor-advised fund also proved an ideal way for Minoka Gunesekera ’13 to structure a gift of real estate to support the Cranwell International Center. Gunesekera’s parents moved from Sri Lanka to Blacksburg in 1984 so her mother could earn a Ph.D. in biochemistry. They were among those cheering when the Cranwell International Center opened in 1986, and Gunesekera remembers finding a sense of community through that center as a child. Now, the Bhadra and Chrys Gunesekera Memorial Excellence Fund helps others feel equally at home.

“I caught the ‘giving bug’ and hope to inspire others,” Gunesekera said. “The process was easier than I expected, and someone walked me through it. There was this journey of thinking about what it means to leave a legacy and serve others.”
On the eastern edge of Virginia Tech’s Blacksburg campus, where the university intersects with downtown, the view of the future is clear.

Here, the university is mapping out a playground for the innovators, inventors, and makers who will build the world of tomorrow. Finding solutions for complex problems that range from water conservation and food supply chains to energy demands and transportation congestion will require expertise from many sources. For a global community, there is no one-size-fits-all strategy. By creating spaces that bring together poets and scientists, engineers and artists, and chemists and historians, Virginia Tech is leveling the field, advancing cross-cultural research and development, and emphasizing the combined strengths of science, technology, business, and the humanities.

The $250 million Creativity and Innovation District capitalizes on existing programs and facilities while creating new spaces and making large-scale changes to others. The goal: to galvanize innovation, from conception to commercialization.
Virginia Tech’s landmark district will be anchored by the Moss Arts Center; the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT), which includes the Center for Human-Computer Interaction and the Center for Research on SEAD Education; the School of Performing Arts, including Theatre 101; and the School of Visual Arts, including the Armory Gallery.

Squires Student Center, Newman Library, the Graduate Life Center at Donaldson Brown, and the Media Building will round out the district. Several will retain their traditional functions while offering enhanced spaces to foster creativity and innovation. The Media Building, however, will undergo a comprehensive renovation to support the initiative.

“We created aspirational plans where the Creativity and Innovation District would become a key feeder of innovation talent for the metropolitan D.C. area, and the partnerships and resources that would develop in metropolitan D.C. would significantly support the district in Blacksburg,” Rikakis said.

With a proven track record for projects that transcend traditional boundaries, ICAT stands as an example of how connections provide value for university researchers, students, and private partners. The institute fosters creativity and critical reflection in a living illustration of Sands’ Beyond Boundaries vision.

“[The district] engages students in tackling broad problems that span disciplines. It’s important for students to get exposure working with people who think differently, who communicate differently, because they’re going to be part of diverse teams throughout their working lives,” Ribbens said.

According to Cal Ribbens, head of the Department of Computer Science, “identifying a particular region of campus and intentionally creating space for this kind of learning will create more opportunities and a bigger impact that will affect entrepreneurship, partnerships with the private sector, and recruitment of talented students, staff, and faculty.

“[The district] is designed to tackle broad problems that span disciplines. It’s important for students to get exposure working with people who think differently, who communicate differently, because they’re going to be part of diverse teams throughout their working lives,” Ribbens said.

Although the Creativity and Innovation District exists in a defined location on campus, the environment supports technology and other features that reach far beyond Blacksburg.

“Bridge spaces” will allow companies, students, faculty, and other scholars to work in close proximity to create, incubate, and bridge ideas into viable businesses. The collaborations will connect to existing initiatives in Blacksburg, Roanoke, and Northern Virginia.

“It’s not a district that says, ‘We’re going to do this particular project,’” said Knapp. “Instead, we’re saying, ‘If you’re interested in the creative process, from imagination to innovation, this is where you come to work with a like-minded community, no matter what your disciplinary origin.’

The district was conceived by Thanassis Rikakis, professor of bioengineering and performing arts and former provost, as a way to keep in touch with her artistic interests even as she pursued a science degree. Davis said the blend of students pushes her to communicate more effectively about her scientific work and has helped her better understand how concepts transcend disciplines.

“I sometimes talk about the geome-try of rock beds and faults uses the same words an architecture student might when talking about the geometry of their designs, but we mean two completely different things.”

The new residence hall will boast 30,000 square feet of public space devoted to artistic, performance, and research-based experiences to support engagement and meaningful connections within the district, Blacksburg, and the world.

Plans for the facility include apartments for residential faculty. The special living arrangement, which exists in other environments across campus, will allow instructors to be fully immersed and to engage with students in ways that will enrich the community.

While the eastern side of campus is abuzz with construction and planning activities associated with the developing district, Virginia Tech leaders, faculty, and researchers are already recognizing the value of these creative collisions. The resulting projects and their outcomes will define and describe success for the district.
SHAKESPEARE’S GARDEN

This theatre installation, created by a team of faculty from the School of Performing Arts, the School of Visual Arts, and ICAT, used the spatial audio capabilities of the Cube to create a specialized immersive sound and visual experience. Participants meander along a path through the virtual space, listening to Shakespearean texts performed by Virginia Tech students.

HONEYBEE DANCES

Two assistant professors and their teams decoded the language of honeybees in a way that allows scientists around the world to interpret the insects’ highly sophisticated and complex communications. The researchers discovered a universal calibration that translates honeybee communications across sub-species and landscapes. By deciphering the messages encoded in the insects’ movements, called waggle dances, the teams hope to better understand the insects’ preferred forages and the locations of these food sources.

BELLEIVR

An ICAT grant funded the creation of BelleIIVR, which allows the study of subatomic particle physics using virtual reality. The team used the Cube to create a virtual supercollider that allowed an unheeded, locomotive virtual-reality exploration of particle physics. Now, the team has created a computer version and is working on one for mobile devices.

PROSTHETIC SENSORS

A Virginia Tech professor and a team of undergraduate student researchers have made inroads in integrating electronic sensors with personalized 3D-printed prosthetics, which could one day lead to more affordable electric-powered prosthetics.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Learn more about the projects, events, and classes in the Creativity and Innovation District at vtmag.vt.edu.

Ruth Waalkes, Associate Provost for the Arts and Executive Director of the Moss Arts Center

“Anything you can do to take classic work like Shakespeare and thrust it into the future here in the Cube is really dynamic. That is something that’s going to happen only here at Virginia Tech.”

THE CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION DISTRICT BRINGS TOGETHER SCIENTISTS AND ARTISTS COMMITTED TO EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE. THESE RESEARCHERS MAY EMPLOY NEW METHODS OR INTERPRET RESULTS THROUGH SEEMINGLY DISPARATE LENSES.
ACCELERATE: ACC SMITHSONIAN CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION FESTIVAL

ACCElerate, a partnership between Virginia Tech and the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History that was first launched in 2017, celebrates creative exploration and research at the nexus of science, engineering, arts, and design. At the 2019 festival, which featured research projects from universities across the Atlantic Coast Conference, nearly 62,000 visitors interacted with innovators and experienced new technologies.

VIRGINIA TECH SCIENCE FESTIVAL

Since 2014, the Virginia Tech Science Festival has offered dozens of free hands-on, minds-on learning interactive booths and activities to showcase physics, space, engineering, communication, geology, health and medicine, history, transportation, computers, chemistry, and more. Nearly 5,000 visitors of all ages attend the festival each year. The university funds transportation to enable school children from underserved areas to attend the festival.

ICAT CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION DAY

ICAT Creativity and Innovation Day demonstrates Virginia Tech’s latest innovations combining science, engineering, arts, and design through dozens of experiences, performances, demonstrations, expo-style exhibits, and a panel discussion.

CUBE FEST

Cube Fest features spatial music, immersive aural experiences, and 3D audio technology. The annual festival brings together international audio technology experts, computer engineers, music technology experts, musicians, and composers who present lectures, conduct workshops, and perform original compositions specifically created for high-density loudspeaker arrays.

“IT’S NOT A DISTRICT THAT SAYS, ‘WE’RE GOING TO DO THIS PARTICULAR PROJECT.’ INSTEAD, WE’RE SAYING: ‘IF YOU’RE INTERESTED IN THE CREATIVE PROCESS, FROM IMAGINATION TO INNOVATION, THIS IS WHERE YOU COME TO WORK WITH A LIKE-MINDED COMMUNITY, NO MATTER WHAT YOUR DISCIPLINARY ORIGINS.’”

BEN KNAPP, FOUNDED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE FOR CREATIVITY, ARTS, AND TECHNOLOGY

THROUGH SPECIAL EVENTS, CAMPS, AND PERFORMANCES, THE CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION DISTRICT REACHES PEOPLE OF ALL AGES FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE. THESE EXPERIENCES CONNECT EDUCATORS AND SCIENTISTS WITH STUDENTS, BUSINESS LEADERS, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS.
SERVICE/USER EXPERIENCE CLASS

A demonstration of Virginia Tech’s Beyond Boundaries initiative, this class brings together students in industrial design, computer science, and business, and is co-taught by faculty from each discipline. Teams of students create projects to solve problems related to disability and aging. The class emphasizes Virginia Tech’s motto, Ut Prosim (That I May Serve).

USING HIGH-PERFORMANCE COMPUTING TO BOOST STUDENT CREATIVITY

A partnership between the Division of Information Technology, the School of Visual Arts, and ICAT, this advanced rendering class blends architecture, industrial design, and interior design. Students boost their technology skills, learning advanced techniques to create complex animations.

DIGITAL STUDIOS

Students use the Digital Arts and Animation Studio, located in the library, to access high-end tools used in the production of digital film, web design, and animation. In the Digital Interactive Sound and Intermedia Studio, researchers and students merge contemporary technology with traditional performance to pursue new forms of artistic expression and multimedia art.

THE SANDBOX

The Sandbox is an idea incubator. Teams meet to brainstorm, discuss visions, and roll up their sleeves to start projects. The flexible meeting space encourages collaborative creativity with moveable furniture, dry-erase boards, and a projection array.

MEDIA BUILDING

The former school building is being transformed through a process in which architecture students and faculty members are embarking on their own “living lab adventure.” The students and faculty are creating spaces to meet their own needs.

THE CUBE

The Cube is a highly adaptable space for multidisciplinary, collaborative research and experimentation. Both a state-of-the-art theatre and a high-tech laboratory, the four-story Cube offers visualization, motion tracking, and immersive 3D audio. Users can experience total immersion in virtual realities. Researchers have developed immersive environments in the Cube that allow them to interact with anything in the world in real time, from the smallest subatomic particle to the largest building. The Cube is home to one of the largest multichannel audio systems in the world, with 150 independently operating loudspeakers.
World War I marked a great juncture in history, ending the Gilded Age and making way for the modern era. The conflict forever altered the nature of warfare, with industrialization producing changes of scale in weapons, tactics, and casualties.

The Great War left an enduring mark on Virginia Tech, too. The early university emphasized military education, so many students and graduates served on fields of battle. On the Blacksburg campus, three iconic landmarks memorialize their wartime sacrifices: The Rock, which stands on the Upper Quad; War Memorial Gym, which was dedicated to Hokies who served; and the Brotherhood Pylon, which bears the names of those who died in the line of duty.

World War I transformed Virginia Tech in more subtle but influential ways as well, prompting decisions that changed the school’s direction and established a solid foundation for the future.

As Virginia Tech evolves, a simple prevailing ideal connects the global-facing university of today to its pre-war iteration as a military-focused institution—the spirit of Ut Prosim (That I May Serve).
Later, Williams led an assault at Belleau Wood. Although the mission routed the Germans, the lead Marine unit was devastated; only one of the 10 officers and 16 of the 250 enlisted men survived. Again, Williams ignored advice to retreat. During the skirmish, he was gassed and injured by shrapnel, but refused treatment. "Don't bother with me," Williams was heard telling medics. "Take care of my good men." Williams died when a shell exploded as he was being evacuated from the battlefield. He was posthumously promoted to major and received three Silver Star citations and a Purple Heart.

Many Virginia Tech alumni saw combat during the final two years of World War I. Twenty-six Hokies died in service, and another 26 were wounded.

"It is important to understand that more than one-half of American deaths in World War I were caused by disease, not by front line combat, and almost all of these deaths by disease came in the final three months of the war during the Spanish influenza epidemic," said Tom Ewing, a history professor and associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. "These proportions are slightly different for Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI) men. Approximately one-fifth of the names on the Pylon for World War I were men whose deaths were attributed to disease, including several men who died in Virginia before they ever left for service. Eleven of these men were killed in action or died from wounds on the front lines. The remaining deaths were due to accidents or from an unknown cause. At the time, all of these deaths were classified as war-related deaths. As we think about the meaning of military service, it is important to continue to think holistically about the costs of war.

Although the men experienced untold hardships and bore witness to war's grim realities, for some, resilience was manifested by retaining a positive perspective and even a sense of humor. In a survey after the war, Leonard Gaines, Class of 1917, who served as first lieutenant in the Army, noted his impressions of the fighting: "It was good fun until you were hit."

On July 2, 1919, Virginia Tech President Joseph Eggleston delivered his final commencement address. That same day, the Class of 1919 unveiled a stone memorial dedicated to "Our Dead Heroes Over There." Known as The Rock, the memorial includes the names of 11 alumni who were killed in action and stands in honor of all graduates who lost their lives during World War I. According to the corps guidebook, "while not dedicated so, [The Rock] is also a symbol to all former VTCC graduates who have died in conflict.

From that day forward, as cadets pass The Rock, they salute if in uniform or place their hands over their hearts if in civilian clothes. That tradition was established by an editorial in the June 12, 1919, edition of The Virginia Tech student newspaper: "This thought, though simple, has a meaning which should always stand before our eyes, and it 'tis this: The memorial (not a monument) will be unveiled during Finals, and from that day hence every student of V. P. I. salute or uncover to the memory of eleven brave warriors, and respect the small space it covers with the respect due the King of England, always being proud of V. P. I., her records, and her son."

"The Rock's creation introduced a distinction between combat deaths in France and deaths in other places from causes such as disease, training accidents, and deaths at sea," said Ewing.

"At least two names seem to be missing from the Rock," said Daniel Newcomb '13, M.S. '17, an alumnus and advisor who oversees "VPI in World War I," a research project connected to Virginia Tech's experiences in the war. " Lt. Harry Clay Williams and Priv. Maury Lake both died and are buried in France. It's possible they weren't listed because they hadn't graduated or because their deaths were yet unknown at the time of The Rock's dedication.

"If one includes those who died in training, the total number of Hokies who died from causes related to World War I is at least 26," Newcomb said. "However, a definitive number may never be known, due to the deaths of students who left Virginia Tech in the midst of their undergraduate studies to serve in the war."
Newcomb collaborated with Ewing to design a project to research the life stories of Virginia Tech alumni and students who served in the war. The resulting database incorporates information from official records and historical letters, along with personal accounts from the family members and descendants of those who fought.

“Studying the experiences of VPI men in the war raised important questions about why Americans go to war, how and why the U.S. government becomes involved in international conflicts, and how these experiences are remembered,” Ewing said. “Studying VPI in World War I has shaped my thinking about the ways that veterans today are regarded, how we remember wars that we have fought recently and are still fighting, and what kinds of questions must be asked about potential involvement in military conflicts.”

First-year history students in 2016 and 2017 aided the effort. By participating in the data collection, the students learned firsthand about techniques for documenting history. The 2017 class drilled down into the letters of Joseph Ware Sr., Class of 1903. Ware was a professor and commandant of the Corps of Cadets from 1911 to 1914, as well as the father of the flight test engineer for whom the Joseph F. Ware Jr. Advanced Engineering Laboratory is named. The students each transcribed a letter written by Ware that had been stored in an archive in Special Collections. They collaborated on tricky or challenging excerpts. The transcriptions are now available in Special Collections.

“We wanted students to recognize that they have a responsibility to preserve history as much as the (upperclassmen),” said Trudy Harrington Becker, senior instructor in the Department of History.

Students in the first-year experience class traced Ware’s journey to Europe through his letters to his future wife, learning about techniques for preserving history by performing them.

“They didn’t learn to walk down about World War I as a military endeavor,” Becker said. “What they learned was absolutely from the bottom: What’s going on with this individual and his colleagues and his friends and who he is serving with? We came from the bottom up.”

Liv Wisnewski, a rising junior majoring in history and theater, read two of Ware’s letters in which “he talked to his wife about their kids, their finances, how he hoped to come home soon, and what he did and didn’t like about being overseas.” Wisnewski continued her study of Ware with an independent project. She examined Ware’s life after the war, including the disintegration of his first marriage, his extended time in Europe, and his eventual return to the U.S.

“To read the letters of someone who lived such a different life from me—what brought him joy, what brought him pain, what made him feel worthless, which he wrote several times—was interesting,” Wisnewski said. “It reinforced what I already enjoyed about history: The idea that people have always been people and have always had concerns and small happinesses, and other things they experience differently than anyone else.”

The class and project developed Wisnewski’s skills as a historian and deepened her appreciation for Virginia Tech.

“Now when I walk past [The Rock], I have a sense of respect and a new sense of pride for it,” Wisnewski said. The inscriptions now represent more than just a list of names. “These people existed and went to school here and weren’t just figures in history who went off to war.”

Funded by a grant from the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology, Virginia Tech researchers visited Vauquois in 2016. Using laser scanning and photogrammetry, the team re-created the underground passages in a virtual reality environment, then constructed a mock shaft complete with era artifacts.

“All of this is rolled together to create an immersive environment that allows people to learn what it was like to be there at Vauquois before and during the war,” said Todd Ogle, University Libraries executive director of applied research in immersive environments and simulations, who worked with colleagues from the VT Visualizing History Team to develop the virtual experience.

“It’s really an activity that typifies the sort of research and development that can happen in [Virginia Tech’s] Creativity and Innovation District and brings together faculty and students from a number of disciplines,” Ogle said. “You had people from computer science, education, libraries, visual arts, and performing arts all working together to create this virtual experience.”
MOLLY HUNT TILTS A DRIP TORCH. INSIDE THE CANISTER, A LIQUID MIXTURE OF GASOLINE AND DIESEL FUEL SHIFTS FORWARD AND SIPHONS DOWN, MAKING A FULL CIRCLE AROUND THE FUEL TRAP LOOP BEFORE REACHING THE LIT WICK. HUNT, A FORESTRY MAJOR IN THE COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT, BEGINS TO POUR FIRE.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIDGE, FORESTRY MAJOR EMILY NEWCOMBE LIGHTS A PARALLEL LINE. THE RADIO ON NEWCOMBE’S SHOULDER CHIRPS AS VOICES DIRECT HER MOVEMENTS. AT THE PERIMETER OF THE BURN, STUDENTS AND MEMBERS OF THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY STAND GUARD, READY TO PREVENT ANY WAYWARD SPARKS FROM CROSSING THE FIRE LINE.

THE FIRE STARTS SMALL. AS THE FLAMES GROW, THEY BURN BRANCHES AND SINGE THE LOWER BARK OF TREES. EVENTUALLY, FLAMES CLIMB 10, THEN 20 FEET HIGH.

THIS IS A WORK DAY FOR STUDENTS IN VIRGINIA TECH’S WILDLAND FIRE: ECOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT COURSE. TODAY’S ASSIGNMENT: A PRESCRIBED BURN.

BY DAVID FLEMING

ADAM COATES
A HISTORY OF FIRE

Fire has always played a role in the forest ecology of southwestern Virginia.

“If you look back on the history of our forests, fire has been a natural part of a forest’s life,” said Adam Coates, assistant professor of forest fire ecology and management in the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation. “Wildfires may have ignited when a lightning strike occurred during drier conditions. The fire would move and meander until precipitation extinguished it, a stream or water body created a boundary to contain it, or it ran into fuels that would not ignite. We also know that Native Americans used fire to clear land for agriculture or to maintain wildlife habitat. ‘Many older trees have been harvested to expose their annual growth rings,’” he continued. “Often, you can see in the rings when fire events happened, and you can tell that some of the fire events were occurring when the trees were dormant during cold months, when forest fires from lightning strikes would be unlikely to occur. So we’re in an area that was once dominated by repeated and frequent fires, both naturally occurring and man-made.”

The rise of development, and particularly the movement toward urban living over the past century, has led to efforts designed to prevent naturally occurring fires in order to protect people and property.

“As a result, we have forests in Virginia that have large accumulations of fuel in places where a long time ago fire would have burned off that excess,” Coates said. “Controlled burns allow us to return the forests to a balance that once occurred naturally, while making sure that wildfire can’t reach where people live.”

The forests of Appalachia, less studied than drier landscapes where wildfires are a more prevalent occurrence, present compelling new areas of research related to fire use and prevention.

“We’ve gone so long without fire being prevalent on the landscape that it’s really hard to put fire back and expect it to do what we think it did a long time ago,” Coates said. “To some degree, we have novel forests now. We took fire away, and in doing that we’ve changed the dynamics of our forests. So trying to put it back is a complicated and challenging process. But it’s also pretty interesting.”

For Molly Hunt, working in forestry has always been an ambition. “I grew up in the woods,” said Hunt, a May 2019 graduate. “I have a huge passion for conserving the land and protecting the woods, and I came to Virginia Tech to learn how to do that.”

The wildland fire course inspired Hunt to join the New River Valley Wildland Fire Crew. Monthly training activities sponsored by the group helped her work toward an Incident Qualification Card, a requirement for fire crews working on federal lands.

PREPARING TO LIGHT

Prescribed fires are not appropriate for every portion of our current landscapes. Some areas have gone extended periods without fire, and other management activities might be needed before prescribed fire can be considered as an option. Careful consideration and planning are necessary for prescribed fire, long before anyone can ignite fuel on the landscape.

On the day of the burn, the first stage of prescribed fire implementation on the ground typically involves shovels and rakes, but—if one is lucky and terrain permits it—preparations might include a bulldozer.

“Once we determine the general area we want to burn, we construct a boundary around it,” Coates said. “The key is to remove any potential fuel from the line so the fire can’t cross.”

For the 11-acre burn conducted on Virginia Tech’s Fishburn Forest to enhance wildlife habitat, the crew used heavy machinery to dig a portion of the fire break, a perimeter around the burn area where the ground is cleared to bare soil. Students completed the circle using metal rakes and leaf blowers. Personal protective equipment includes fire-resistant clothing, work gloves, fire-resistant boots with 8-inch tops and Vibram-soles, and hard hats.

The fire burns with surprising speed, the dormant fuel of the forest quickly exhausted. When it is out, the students march onto the blackened landscape, using steel rakes to check the ash layer for dormant hotspots and taking measurements of the depth of the burn in the layers of soil.

The students also study the movement of the smoke and monitor the perimeter to confirm no sparks have crossed the divide into the wider forest. They check tree stumps and pour cold ash and dirt over the heat to fully exhaust the fire.

In one corner, a stand of pitch pines has survived. The trees will grow new shoots from epicormic buds activated by the heat. New branches will grow at angles, developing layers of bark that protect inner layers from future fires. In spring, the trees will drop their cones onto the ash and rich soil, and seeds will emerge from these cones.

I GROW UP IN THE WOODS. I HAVE A HUGE PASSION FOR CONSERVING THE LAND AND PROTECTING THE WOODS, AND I CAME TO VIRGINIA TECH TO LEARN HOW TO DO THAT.

Molly Hunt ’19
Conducting a burn with the Virginia Department of Forestry gives students one-on-one time with professionals, transfers classroom learning to the field, and creates an experience that helps bring a new generation of foresters to the field.

“We ask the students to tell us what they’re seeing as the burn is happening,” Coates explained. “Afterwards, they’ll start to make inferences from the experience. And because each fire is such a unique event, we’re asking them to be the scientists of the event, to be the ones asking the questions and working out the answers.

“It’s perfect on-the-job training,” he continued. “The work of conducting a burn briefing, laying out the objectives, and doing the preparation is what the students are going to wind up leading at some point, and that’s when you know they’re hooked.”

“THAT’S WHEN YOU KNOW YOU GOT ‘EM”

Across the U.S., few universities employ professors dedicated to teaching and researching fire ecology. Coates’ position reflects Virginia Tech’s commitment to studying the role that fire plays as a tool for foresters and as a naturally occurring event that demands preparedness. The availability of a fire expert on campus also broadens research opportunities.

“We have some really terrific, highly specialized faculty here,” Coates said, “and having a designated ‘fire guy’ like me, someone who can put fire on the ground and study the energy being produced by it, really creates unique opportunities for collaboration. We can better understand how fire might affect soil or water, for example. This helps us fit both prescribed fires and unplanned wildfires into the broader context of forest management.”

According to Coates, climate change has increased the urgency for studying forest fires. He cites the spate of wildfires in North Carolina, Georgia, and eastern Tennessee in late 2016 as a precursor to what Appalachia could face in coming years.

“Only three ingredients are needed to create flames: heat, oxygen, and fuel. If you consider weather patterns and how they affect fire, you have to think about periods of wetting and drying and how they affect vegetation. In the context of fire, living and dead vegetation become fuel. When we receive abundant rainfall, vegetation responds with new growth. If we have extended periods of dry weather after that abundant new growth has occurred, that vegetation becomes dry and easier to ignite,” Coates said.

“Under these conditions, all it takes is one major wind or storm event, or someone being careless or malicious with fire, and the results are these seemingly anomalous wildfires. We’re seeing rising temperatures and changes in the dynamics of moisture, and we’ve got to get a grasp on how these events occur so we can make efforts to prevent them, or at least minimize potential damage for people and their property.”

Education is also essential. Coates intends to work with communities across the region through the Firewise USA program, aimed at educating residents in suburban and developing areas on how to build houses and maintain properties in ways that reduce fire risk.

Coates also hopes to develop a designated center for fire research.

“I have an infrared camera and numerous devices that measure heat, and we’re able to use all of these tools to conduct research in the field,” Coates explained, “but we don’t have a centralized burning chamber or table experiment space to take smaller amounts of material and run research. It’d be great to be able to manipulate variables in a controlled setting, to create certain types of fires with specific vegetation under specific environments and measure how they burn. We’ve talked about developing a facility where we could do that type of research with a high level of accuracy. That’s the next step.”

David Fleming is a staff writer for the College of Natural Resources and Environment.
ON EACH AFTERNOON’S COMMUTE, MORGAN BLACKWOOD PATEL CRITICIZED THE PROGRESS ON A BARBECUE RESTAURANT UNDER CONSTRUCTION ALONG THE MIDLOTHIAN TURNPIKE IN THE RICHMOND AREA.

Mind you, she was riding home from daycare, because she was a toddler.

Her early curiosity has served her well. Blackwood Patel, a 2003 industrial and systems engineering (ISE) graduate, is now regarded as one of the most prominent women in commercial real estate in the mid-Atlantic, according to Spencer Stouffer, vice chairman at the Cushman & Wakefield brokerage firm.

From 2015 to 2018, as a vice president for The Meridian Group, a private equity firm and one of the region’s premier developers, Blackwood Patel helped to shape The Boro District, a mixed-use development in Tysons Corner, Virginia, that blends residential, office, retail, dining, and entertainment spaces across about a dozen new and repositioned properties and 25 acres.

Real estate is a traditionally siloed industry—a property is routed from the acquisitions team to the designers and architects to the developers to the brokers to the landlords and property managers—but Blackwood Patel thinks less about a single asset and more about managing the brand of an entire development. That thinking is evident across The Boro District, where she focused on offering a unified experience for tenants, making eight repositioned office buildings feel right at home amid the new assets.
EMBRACING

In the evening hours, Willis P. Blackwood '72 would often spread out blueprints on the sunroom floor at home, red pen in hand, to evaluate the progress of his development company's shopping-center projects. And his daughter Morgan, after some explanation, began taking the under-construction drawings. "She got into the business, tangentially, pretty early," Blackwood said. "She had an affinity for it at an early age."

Drawn to drafting classes and architecture in high school, Blackwood Patel found industrial and systems engineering to be a perfect fit. In her first year at Virginia Tech, she earned top marks in a course in which students disassembled and assembled such objects as lawnmowers and disposable cameras. And there was no question she would become a Hokie. Her father and mother, Mary Nolen Blackwood '72 and Manish Patel, are now even more motivated to develop document-management software--a work she has been a champion for, as a graduate student in leadership and philanthropy.

"When everybody gives $25, it really adds up," Blackwood Patel said. "You have a direct impact on people. It's not some nebulous thing."

HOSTING

Blackwood Patel, who served for years on the Women in Leadership and Philanthropy Council and the Alumni Association Board of Directors, is now one of three chairs for Virginia Tech's upcoming capital campaign, alongside Lynne Doughite '85 and Horacio Valenzuela '80. Her decision to step into the role makes sense in the context of her favorite undergraduate memory: standing up on many Fridays in Professor Brian Klein's senior design class and inviting 100 classmates to her house for a barbecue.

The campaign will emphasize not only philanthropy but also engagement. Philanthropy drives Virginia Tech's excellence, because state funds and tuition can't finance the full costs of empowering students and faculty to solve world-scale problems. And engagement means building and strengthening Hokie bonds--reconnecting with classmates, alumni mentoring students, and much, much more.

"There's never a time when you can't help someone," said Blackwood Patel. "It is looking internally and asking, 'How can I make a difference?' My company could host an intern. I can take phone calls from students. I can welcome a new graduate into the area and broaden his network by introducing him to people."
The alumni relations office hosted a Hokies in LA networking event March 19 at the Netflix headquarters. The event, which drew about 140 Hokies to the streaming giant’s headquarters, fell on the university’s second annual Giving Day and served as a West Coast hub.

During the event, Michelle Kruseic ’95, Adam Abrahamson, ’06, David Silberstein ’10, and Tom Bagamane ’83 participated in a panel discussion moderated by Senior Associate Vice President for Alumni Relations Matt Winston ’90. (Participants are pictured in image at bottom right.) Kruseic is an accomplished actress best known for her roles on “Hawaii Five-O,” “Community,” “ER,” “Star Trek Deep Space Nine,” “General Hospital,” and more. Abrahamson is currently the director of digital content for the “The Late Late Show with James Corden.” Silberstein is the co-founder of Megahouse music and is an accomplished music producer and manager for some of the biggest hits like “Moves Like Jagger” by Maroon 5. Bagamane founded The Giving Spirit, a nonprofit that provides the homeless with survival assistance.

HOKIES IN LA NETWORKING EVENT

CLASS NOTES

Alumni, we want to hear what you’ve been doing. Mail career, wedding, birth, and death news to Class Notes, Virginia Tech Alumni Association, Holtzman Alumni Center, 901 Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg, VA 24061; email the information to classnotes@vt.edu; or submit the news online at vtmag.vt.edu/submit-classnote.php, where photos may also be uploaded for consideration. For assistance, call 540-231-6285.

’55
George E. Keller II, Charleston, W.Va., received the 2017 Distinguished West Virginia Award.

’64
R. Bradley Chewning, Harrisonburg, Va., was named to the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering Academy of Distinguished Alumni at Virginia Tech.

’68
Martin Peter Asala, Baltimore, Md., was featured in an interview series by Sara Connell, a best-selling author and writing coach.

’70
Raleigh ‘Tige’ Milton Fulton III, South Boston, Va., assumed pastoral leadership for Boynton United Methodist Church.

’73
Jerry B. Mitchell, Columbus, Maine, retired as technical director of the National Association of Animal Breeders.

’74
Elizabeth ‘Ann’ Dunstange, Blacksburg, Va., was honored with awards by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors.

Edward Phillip Hickman Jr., Harrisonburg, Va., is serving a one-year term as chairman of Potatoes USA, the marketing and promotions board of the U.S. potato industry. He is the first chairman from Virginia.

Steve Allen Drumoff, Bloomfield, Colo., is CEO of Canalis Pharmaceuticals, a subsidiary of Tawnyet Life Sciences.

George Todd Wright, Hilton Head Island, S.C., received the Order of the Palmetto from South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster.

’75
John Robert Lawson II, Newport News, Va., was named Virginia Business Person of the Year.


’76
Muriel E. Byram, Alexandria, Va., is president of the Virginia State Bar.

John Thomas Patton, Bloomington, Ind., was elected as a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

A TIMELESS TRADITION

A lot can change in 80 years, but many would say Virginia Teske Smith’s favorite aspect of Virginia Tech has stood the test of time.

“When you’d come back several years later and walk the campus and everyone greeted you, it was just such an overwhelming experience.”

Having just celebrated her 100th birthday, Virginia Smith returned to Blacksburg to celebrate her 80th reunion in May. Accompanied by her son, Henry B. Smith III ’69, she was acknowledged as a Virginia Tech Centenarian and awarded a piece of Hokie Stone by the Old Guard Society of Golden Alumni during their annual celebration.

A lot can change in 80 years, but many would say Virginia Teske Smith’s favorite aspect of Virginia Tech has stood the test of time.

“Every person on campus spoke to a stranger, every stranger. They just said hello or something,” said Smith, a member of the Class of 1939. “When you’d come back several years later and walk the campus and everyone greeted you, it was just such an overwhelming experience.”

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Robert Alan Rapaport, Virginia Beach, Va., was inducted as a Class of 2018 Fellow of the Order of the American College of Physicians’ Compensation Lawyers.

Yale F. Nettles, N.C., was named chief human resources officer of Shatterproof Arabia on 2/4/19.

William Ronald Amorim Jr., Denton, N.C., is director of the Center for Food Processing Innovation Center.


Paul Alan Graehal, Port Saint Lucie, Fla., retired from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars where he was the audiovisual and media services specialist.

Martin Styer Frankenhoefer, Berli- n, is the national director of American Express’s youth in-person program.

Randall David Houdek, Remsen, N.Y., was named to the Diamond Key Security Advisory Council.

Brian R. Murphy, New Castle, Del., was honored with an awards name by Virginia Tech.

Joseph Clinton Eiverson, Savannah, Ga., is the vice chairman of the National Chicken Council for 2018-19.

Robert Christopher Kraushold, Edgewood, Md., joined Vali Advisors as a partner.

Janis Pinchkez Turner, Centreville, Va., was named to the Warner TV Davis Edward Dunn’s Chair and appointed dean of the Tulke College of Engineering at the University of Tennessee.

Kathleen Blomstedt Timm, Inver Grove Heights, Minn., is an associate professor of the University of Minnesota’s College of Science and College of Education and Social Sciences. She worked with students to improve their understanding of human development.

Carole Wilbur, New York City, is a human resources professional at Women’s Health.

Robert T. Davis, Jr., is dean of the Tickle College of Engineering at the University of Tennessee.

Morgan Conservation Work, Orlando, Fla., is executive vice president and chief financial officer with Vulcan Materials Co.

Suzanne Hall Wood, Minneapolis, N.C., is senior vice president and chief financial officer of KEMET Corp.

Rachel Lynn Johnson, Columbia, Md., is executive vice president and chief financial officer of the American Humane’s farm program.

Dale T. Davis Endowed Chair and Founding Director, is senior executive director of the National University of Ireland, Galway.

Robert L. Richter Jr., Alexandria, Va., was elected to the board of directors of the Virginia Bankers Association.

Robert Lee Richter Jr., Abingdon, Va., was elected to a circuit court judgeship in the 4th Circuit Court of the Commonwealth.

Michael Wayne Clarke, Virginia Beach, Va., is senior executive director of the Virginia Department of Transportation. He was named to the board of directors of the Virginia Bankers Association.

Gary Keith Morrill and Kristin Roustow Sholl, Blacksburg, Va., were named Virginia Tech 2019 Family of the Year.

Suzan Mohseni Shahi, Vibe Ionic, N.J., is a manager managing director at Asia and Technology.

Linda North, Minnesota, is the executive director of the University of Minnesota’s Alumni Association.

Douglas Keyes Wilcox, Fairview, Tenn., is director of the University of Tennessee’s Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice.

Michael Wayne Clarke, Virginia Beach, Va., is named director of the University of Virginia’s Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice.

Vivian Lara, Texas, is executive vice president and chief financial officer of Zillow Group.

Michael Wayne Clarke, Virginia Beach, Va., was named senior vice president and chief financial officer of Zillow Group.

Rich-
FOR YEARS, WASHINGTON, D.C., WAS a big sports city without a championship team. So, in 2018, when the Washington Capitals won the Stanley Cup, the city went wild. But nowhere was the excitement more palpable than at Monumental Sports and Entertainment, which owns and operates the Capitals.

Six Virginia Tech alumni, Darren Montgomery ’95, Grog Turner ’94, Ryan Shapiro ’00, Megan Garmer ’10, Travis Lucent ’15, and Lauren Zavala ’17, were working for Monumental in sales and marketing at the time. (Lucent has since taken a position with a different employer.) They compared the feeling to game days at Lane Stadium.

“You almost felt like you were in Blacksburg at a Hokies football game because everybody in D.C. was rocking the red, as we say,” said Montgomery, a former Virginia Tech athletic administrator in Prince George County.

Thomas Peter Fabrick, Richmond, Va., is chief financial officer at INGGRICO, a renewable energy company.

Soon Taylor Geardon, Richmond, Va., was named interim dean of the Douglass Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. She is a recipient of the YWCA Richmond’s 2019 Outstanding Woman Award.

Michael P. Maxwell, Hartford, Wis., was named an assistant faculty lecturer by the School of Business, Carroll University.

Anne Michelle Golden Johnson, Seattle, Wash., was named Chief Marketing Officer with Zillow Group Inc.

Ralph Allen Trinter, Jrrm, S.C., is vice-president of field operations with McCarney Construction.

PUT A RING ON IT: (above) Tech alumni sport their championship rings. (below) Six Virginia Tech alumni (lined in the above story) were employed by Monumental Sports when the Washington Capitals brought home the Stanley Cup in 2018.

“Ringing in the Stanley Cup”

Colin Brooks Winchemer, Lancaster, S.C., was named Fitness Manager at Facilities in Charlotte, North Carolina.

CAREER: Cynthia Ann Arnold, Long Lake, Minn., was appointed to the Citrine Informatics board of directors.

Timothy Albert Bost, York, N.Y., performed in “Mamma Mia” at Mid Mountain Theatre.

Shirley Elizabeth Winfield Dover, West Virginia was a deputy executive administrator in Prince George County.

CAREER: Jay Allen Altizer, Dublin, Texas, is president of North America for G2S.

Paul Chaudak III, West Milford, N.J., is executive vice president-generation with American Electric Power.

James Harvey Jerrett, Baltimore, Md., was appointed chief revenue officer for VUI Global Solutions.


CAREER: Ralph Allen Trinter, Jrrm, S.C., is vice-president of field operations with McCarney Construction.

CAREER: Jeffrey Brian Deibel, Glen Allen, Va., is vice-president of finance and accounting at Charlottesville Federal Credit Union.


Tamar A. Khnacki Nelson, Bloomington, Ill., is executive director of the Minnesota AgriGrowth Council.

Angela Carver Bamboe, Dahlah, Ga., is director of planning and development for the City of Georgetown, South Carolina.

CAREER: James R. Daniel II, Amelia Court House, Va., received the Virginia Forge and Grassland Council’s Herlina White Distinguished Service Award.

Barry Irvin Macbeth, Richmond, Va., was named to lead a new energy development entity to promote 11 Southeastern Mountain counties.

Kelly “Kathleen” McNany Gorman, Cranford, N.J., is principal with Norcross and Company LLP.

Edward V. McAndrew, Machan- koville, Va., is chief operating officer with AllSprint.

Andrew Ferguson Wu, Blacksburg, Va., is the Town of Christiansburg’s assistant town manager.

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transitional background in language arts into a more visual craft. He studied the trade under an older designer in what Seffik referred to as a “Devil Wears Prada” experience. Just two years later, Seffik emerged with a successful business and many lessons to share on design.

**WHAT ARE YOU FOLLOWING CURRENTLY IN DESIGN?**

“The magazines I read, they keep me updated on trends. I go toward magazines like Elle Decor, Architectural Digest; that’s the aesthetic that I like. It’s a bit more exciting, bold, more daring. One thing that I’ve done in my house is lacquer, which is super-high-shine paint, and you’ll see it in New York, in D.C. in Europe. A lot. At night, when the lights are on, it’s an amazing effect.”

**WORDs TO WALLS**

**MASTErINg THE ELEMENTS OF STyLE**

**how do you work with a budget, as you did when you first started?**

“It does constrain you, but paint is still cheap. You can take something, simply add paint to it, a small piece of art that you found at an antique mall and really change a room just by being bold. The trend today is to put everything is grey or white and that’s pretty, but take a risk. People will be saying, ‘Wow, that looks great.’

**how do people figure out their own style?**

“It takes time for people to figure out their own style. Usually, it is really a gut thing. If you’re in a store, and you see something you love, if it’s a gut feeling, go for it. If you like it immediately when you see it, you’ll love it for a long time. On a basic level, buy the magazines—it is so important to be able to rip the pages out and put them on a board. Read them, look at what’s exciting to you, rip them out—that’s how you learn what you like, what you don’t like, what your style is.”

**WHAT about the holidays? how do you keep your decorations fresh and exciting?**

“I mixed it up this year—I usually do a lot of fresh greenery, which is really beautiful and a traditional thing that you see all over Europe, see it at the Baltimore Museum in North Carolina, but it does dry out quickly. This year, I did a different feel, where I used mammoth garland. That was all flocked, which is when they have the fake white snow on them. There’s more of a modern feel to it as opposed to simple greenery.”

Brendan Coffey, a junior majoring in communication, has intern with Virginia Tech Magazine.
For more information about Alumni
HOKIE NATION    |    CLASS NOTES
CAREER
Transportation, Insurance, and Civil joined Gentry Locke as a partner in the South, PLLC.
formed a family law firm, DeBoer-
Applications International Corp.
Robert David Ritchie, by DeLaval.
pilot farm for a new design for milking
Glade
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Buchanan, Va.,
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Virginia Beach,
lyn, N.Y., is principal with Oak Hill
D.C., office as an associate in the Con-
joined Blank Rome LLP's Washington,
Gainesville, Va.,
Namrata Loomba,
is one of Engineering News Record
Forest, Va., is vice president of Scott
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Washington,
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and a daughter, 01/10/19.
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virginia tech magazine

in roanoke, virginia, students and faculty filed into the virginia heights elementary school gym.

“We thought [the school] was being recognized, but then [the speakers] started talking about how one teacher would be recognized with $25,000,” said caroline eschenbach, a third-grade literacy teacher. “i thought, ‘no way’—then they called my name.”

eschenbach, a 2010 virginia tech graduate, and now, a milken educator award winner, was ushered to the front of the room, which was roaring.

for 30 years, the milken educator awards, often called the oscars or grammys of teaching, have rewarded and inspired excellence in education. the awards target early-to-mid career educators and professional substances that make it difficult to have a more even playing field in terms of testing.”

despite these challenges, the reading scores for eschenbach’s students have been phenomenal, thanks to her hands-on, relationship-building style.

“rhymes, rhythms, dances, and whatever it may take to make more of an impact” are all classroom standards, according to eschenbach. “you build rapport first and have academics second.”

brendan coffey, a junior majoring in communication, is an intern with virginia tech magazine.

in the classroom, eschenbach emphasizes literacy and critical thinking. she exposes her students to reading materials that range from books to news articles and creatively reinforces their learning.

according to eschenbach, third grade is an often transformational, yet tumultuous year for students.

“We are a school that receives Title I funding and has a diverse population of students,” said Eschenbach. “a lot of these kids come from more challenging experiences that make it difficult to have a more even playing field in terms of testing.”

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Brendan Coffey, a junior majoring in communication, is an intern with Virginia Tech Magazine.
As President of the Virginia Tech Alumni Association’s Board of Directors, I have the honor of speaking at commencement each spring. There’s little that compares to the feeling in Lane Stadium on graduation day.

Recently, I asked the Class of 2019 to reflect on their time at Virginia Tech. I asked our newest group of alumni to think about what makes our university special and to always show their Hokie pride.

This year, as my time as board president ends, I find myself also thinking back on my time at Virginia Tech. As a four-term member of the Alumni Association board, I’ve seen our university move and advance in exciting ways.

Like those new grads in Lane Stadium, I’m nostalgic about the past AND enthusiastic about what’s next.

During my time as president, Virginia Tech made an impact in many ways, including the announcement of the Innovation Campus in Northern Virginia, and made history when the Fralin family in Roanoke made the largest gift our university has ever received. We also started new traditions—Giving Day and Reunion Weekend—and committed ourselves to storied legacies, such as the Old Guard Society of Golden Alumni.

We watched our student athletes excel in ways that make all of us Hokies proud. The men’s basketball team advanced to the Sweet 16 in the NCAA tournament; we celebrated a national champion in young Mekhi Lewis, who earned that prize in wrestling as a freshman; and the women’s softball team won the ACC regular season title, while the indoor track and field team claimed the conference championship. And, of course, our football team retained the Commonwealth Cup for the 15th consecutive year after defeating that school from Charlottesville.

These successes, and many more, are examples of how Virginia Tech continues to grow and have relevance in lives and communities across the state, region, country, and globe. What I’ve observed during my time as board president is a university prepared for the future and poised to change the world.

In July, Deseria Creighton Barney will become our leader of the association board. She has been an active member of the Hokie alumni community, and I am excited about her leadership and the great work she will do representing you. I hope you’ll join me in congratulating Deseria.

It has been an honor beyond measure to serve our beloved alma mater in this particular role. I hope I’ve had a fraction of the impact on our alumni community as that same community has had on me.

Go Hokies!

Mark S. Lawrence ’80 is vice president of governmental and external affairs at Carilion Clinic and president of the Virginia Tech Alumni Association Board of Directors.

Denim Day Do-Over

Virginia Tech held its first Denim Day 40 years ago, and although participants might suggest the event was less than successful, denying the existence of the LGBTQ+ community at Virginia Tech became nearly impossible.

“You cannot say that people in 1979 did not know that there were gay students at Virginia Tech,” said Nancy Kelly ’81. Then co-president of the university’s Gay Student Alliance, Kelly helped lead the event that asked Hokies to sport denim in support of gay rights and resulted in a flurry of animosity that lingered for decades.

Last summer, Kelly returned to campus for the first time since her graduation and was surprised by the university’s efforts to be more inclusive.

“I started looking around and seeing all these little rainbow things. I was blown away there was an LGBTQ+ Center,” Kelly said. The visit was the first step in launching this year’s “Denim Day Do-Over,” an event that recognized the 40th anniversary of the original day and was held in conjunction with Pride Week, April 1-8. The celebration marked the first return to campus for many LGBTQ+ alums and for many solidified the importance of what they endured four decades earlier.

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Denim Day Do-Over
“We are proud to introduce our future Hokie, Rowan Denise Spinetto, Class of 2040.” — Ashley Rood Spinetto ’07, Herndon, Va., who along with Jonathan Spinetto ’07, welcomed a daughter, Rowan Denise, 11/15/18.

“Our Hokie marriage began with a wedding on a perfect fall day.” — Alicia Everette Lunsford ’15, M.S. ’16, Cincinnati, Ohio, who married Demetrius Lunsford ’16, 11/10/18.

“We are happy to share the news of our new arrival with our fellow Hokies.” — Christi Santora ’08, Chesterfield, Va., who along with Jason Santora ’09, welcomed a daughter, Avery Ruth, 12/6/18.

“Just married and ready to shout the happy news to everyone.” — Emily Reed Wesson ’11, Fairfax, Va., who married William Wesson, 10/20/18.

“Evelyn Anne looks forward to her arrival in Blacksburg with the Class of 2040 as a fourth-generation Hokie. Her alumni family includes aunt Sarah Woodford Bratton ’14, uncle Paul Bratton ’13, grandparents Howard and Linda Woodford ’82, and great-grandfather Howard “Winston” Woodford ’50.” — Anna Clark Woodford Seibert ’09, Beaver Creek, Ohio, who along with Matthew Thomas Seibert ’07, welcomed a daughter, Evelyn Anne, 4/23/18.

“We got married on the roof of War Memorial Chapel and took photographs on the Drill Field.” — Hayley Nixon McCord ’17, Henrico, Virginia, who married Nick McCord ’17, 10/13/18.

“Hokies past and future: Adam Pace snuggles with his grandmother, Catherine G. Fletcher ’69.” — Lisa Fletcher Pace ’00, Houston, Texas, who welcomed a son, Adam James, 8/7/18.

“Another little Hokie came into this world as Oliver Dewey Hicks.” — Emily Hicks ’10, Arlington, Va., who along with Alan Hicks ’11, welcomed a son, Oliver Dewey, 4/4/18.

“We met at Virginia Tech in 2013 and got married at a rooftop venue in Roanoke, Va., surrounded by friends, family, and the Blue Ridge Mountains.” — Chandler Eagleston ’15, Brandon, Fla., who married Kyle Kromaric ’18, 8/10/18.
IN MEMORIAM

Listing includes notices shared with the university Oct. 1 through Dec. 31, 2018.

Allentown, Pa., 12/10/18.

Charlottesville, Va., 7/12/18.

Richmond, Va., 10/13/18.


Monterey, Calif., 7/27/18.

Atlanta, Ga., 5/10/18.

Raleigh, N.C., 11/24/18.

Ralph Rollins Scholarship, NoVa, 6/20/18.


Lombardy, Va., 8/1/18.

New York, N.Y., 11/18/18.


Fairfax, Va., 4/27/18.

Roanoke, Va., 9/10/18.


Oxford, Miss., 5/18/18.

New York, N.Y., 9/18/18.

University of Virginia, 8/10/18.

Williamsburg, Va., 8/8/18.

Virginia Beach, Va., 7/25/18.


Williamsburg, Va., 10/11/18.

Winston-Salem, N.C., 11/22/18.

Hillsboro, Ore., 8/5/18.

Kansas City, Mo., 7/15/18.

Malone, Maine, 8/5/18.

St. Louis, Mo., 7/10/18.

Sumter, S.C., 8/20/18.

Albany, Ga., 10/11/18.

Hillsboro, Ore., 8/5/18.

Falklands, 8/20/18.

Pensacola, Fla., 7/26/18.

New York, N.Y., 10/13/18.

New York, N.Y., 10/14/18.

New York, N.Y., 10/15/18.

Wake Forest University, 8/28/18.

Rollins College, 8/28/18.

Richard B. Bickford Jr., Lombard, Va., 8/1/18.

New York, N.Y., 9/18/18.

Richmond, Va., 8/28/18.

New York, N.Y., 9/18/18.

Manchester, N.H., 8/10/18.

Manchester, N.H., 8/10/18.

Manchester, N.H., 8/10/18.
OBITUARIES

FACULTY/STAFF

Edward R. Clayton, professor emeritus of business information technology, died Feb. 10.

Charley "Jack" Dudley, an associate professor of sociology who later served as director of the University Honors program, died March 25.

Richard Eiser, a professor in the Department of Psychology since 1977, died April 23.

William H. Mason ‘71, M.S. ’72, Ph.D. ’75, professor emeritus of aerospace and ocean engineering in the College of Engineering, died March 27.

Timothy Mills, who served on Virginia Tech’s Tech and grounds team for 30 years, died March 10.

J. Donald Rimstidt, professor emeritus of geochimistry and former department head in the College of Science’s Department of Geosciences, died March 24.

Robert James Tracy, a longtime professor of geology and a former chair of the Department of Geosciences in the College of Science, died Jan. 6.

ALUMNI LEADERS

Robert Barnes Delano ’44, of Warsaw, Virginia, died Dec. 5, 2017. Delano’s career included dairy and grain farming as well as serving as president of both the Virginia and American Farm Bureau federations. He was a member of the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors from 1994-1998 and was inducted into the William Preston Society in 2002, serving as president from 2008 through 2010. Delano received a Virginia Tech Distinguished Achievement Award in 1991 and an Alumni Distinguished Service Award in 2000.

Thomas L. Phillips ’47, M.S. ’47, Weston, Massachusetts, died Jan. 9. The former chairman and CEO of Raytheon, Phillips was recognized with the University Distinguished Alumni Award in 1987.

Susan Layne Redinger Hart, Dun- done, Va., 10/17/18.

Kenneth J. Robertson, Williams- burg, Va., 7/11/18.

Barbara Elizabeth Elder, Blacksburg, Va., 8/16/18.

Kevin Warren Rager, Virginia Beach, Va., 8/8/18.

Terry Lee Kibler, Woodstock, Va., 12/3/18.


John Barry Hall, Chilhowie, Va., 7/14/18.


Andrea G. Coles, Williamsburg, Va., 11/10/18.


Brian Patrick Clark, Midlothian, Va., 7/15/18.


Debra Snee Smorich, Longs, SC, 7/10/18.

John Bryan Hodges, Blacksburg, Va., 11/14/18.

Gary Scott Sauder, Madison Heights, Va., 11/27/18.

Michael Earle Grandstaff II, Virginia Beach, Va., 8/26/18.

Jennifer H. Sunnucks White, Gloucester, Va., 10/7/18.


Rebecca Kay Davidson, Denver, Colo., 12/15/18.


Marcus Clyde Croxton, Research triangle Park, N.C., 10/9/18.

Richard Howard Kugler, Stafford, Va., 7/22/18.


Amy Campbell Burneck, Over- land Park, Kan., 7/12/18.


Justin D. Upkikes, Washington, Va., 11/12/18.


Amy Brendan E. Hart, Canton, Va., 11/18/18.

Justin Rance Marianetti, Huntersville, N.C., 8/27/18.

Brenda Elizabeth McIntyre-Daum, Newport News, Va., 11/12/18.

Matthew P. Vautrinu, Wood- bridge, Va., 9/10/18.


Jennifer R. Sorenson White, Chesapeake, Va., 10/24/18.

John Barry Hall, Ashburn, Va., 10/8/18.


Richard Jay Bon, Norfolk, Va., 12/27/17.

Timothy Alan Nagle, Knoxville, Tenn., 7/14/18.

David Wayne Jennings, Falls Church, Va., 12/29/17.


Randy Richard Andrew Provan, Los Alamitos, N.M., 10/30/14.

Hannah Gold Doud, Warrenton, Va., 12/18/17.

Sigmund Andrew Maichak, War- renton, Va., 11/11/18.

Mary A. H. Hubble, Fredericksburg, Va., 7/20/18.

Marc A. Houle, Pineville, N.C., 8/21/18.


Janice Brumfield, Overland Park, Kan., 7/12/18.

Eric Leonard Ellis, Ashburn, Va., 10/8/18.

Robert Albert Ackerman, Hazard, Ky., 4/13/18.


Jennifer R. Sorenson White, Chesapeake, Va., 10/24/18.


John Bryan Hodges, Blacksburg, Va., 11/10/18.

Rebecca Kay Davidson, Denver, Colo., 12/15/18.

Sigmund Andrew Maichak, War- renton, Va., 11/11/18.


Justin Rance Marianetti, Huntersville, N.C., 8/27/18.


Robert Albert Ackerman, Hazard, Ky., 4/13/18.


John Bryan Hodges, Blacksburg, Va., 11/10/18.


John Bryan Hodges, Christiansburg, Va., 11/11/18.


John Bryan Hodges, Christiansburg, Va., 11/11/18.

Through the Looking Glass: Virginia Tech’s main greenhouse range, which is associated with the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, is located on the corner of Washington Street between the Hahn Horticulture Garden and McComas Hall. The 51,000 square feet of space includes the Keck Greenhouse Range and the Jacob P. Lutz Teaching Greenhouses. Many departments and programs use the greenhouses for teaching, research, and Extension activities.
Standing at an Inflection Point in History

WE FACE A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD

that’s more global and more diverse than the one I graduated into. Our graduates today will enter a world that’s moving more quickly than we can imagine. It’s imperative that we change as a university as well.

We’re seeing that change in Alexandria, where Virginia Tech will build its Innovation Campus as the Commonwealth of Virginia ramps up its efforts to increase the tech-talent pipeline to support the growing tech sector, including Amazon’s second headquarters. This is an amazing opportunity to expand our presence in the greater Washington, D.C., area, which will soon become one of the great digital economies of the world. We’re going to be right in the middle of it, which will give our students and faculty tremendous opportunities—not just in Northern Virginia but in Roanoke, Blacksburg, and throughout Virginia.

In Roanoke, we’re making tremendous advances at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC and the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. Over the past decade, Virginia Tech has expanded its research and academic portfolio by adding a medical component, an element that’s a must for any comprehensive university. These enterprises have turned out to be game-changers for the university, for Roanoke, and for Virginia.

Layer in the countless research projects through which Virginia Tech is tackling the complicated problems of our world. The ambitious Global Business and Analytics Complex intersects with the future of data analytics and data science. The university’s groundbreaking work with brain research has implications for everything from sports to vehicle safety. The university’s partnerships with business and the corporate world to develop autonomous vehicles and intelligent infrastructure are changing the way we see roads.

When you consider these and the many other projects in motion, it’s clear that Virginia Tech is positioned like no other university in the world. This is truly our moment.

To make this leap forward, though, one thing is clear: Today’s best universities thrive because of private giving from their proud alumni. We’re thankful for the funding that tuition and state support provide, but philanthropy is the sustenance that we need to boost our efforts.

The beginning of the upcoming capital campaign, which we’ll launch in October, is a pivotal moment. Building upon our rich history and broad reach, the vision for tomorrow’s Virginia Tech represents an opportunity for not only alumni, but friends, foundations, and corporations to invest in something quite significant. Through the campaign, we will ensure that Virginia Tech emerges as one of the most respected and premier institutions in the world. That’s not hyperbole. But it will take our collective leadership and participation. It will be difficult, and it won’t happen overnight. It will take the $10 gifts and the $10 million gifts. It will take mentoring students and helping faculty commercialize their inventions. It will take all of us deciding to invest in Virginia Tech graduates who will change the world.

This campaign will take a monumental effort to succeed. I’m excited by the opportunity to meet the challenge, especially as we approach the institution’s sesquicentennial—our 150th anniversary—in 2022. And just as importantly, I’m optimistic.

This moment is happening because of our dedication to our motto, Ut Prosim (That I May Serve). Your expertise, hard work, and commitment to serve have gotten us to this point. And I believe to my core that those same values, paired with our sustained investment in the future, will transform this university. The world needs Virginia Tech and its commitment to serve. We need you to help us get there.

Charlie Phlegar is the vice president for advancement at Virginia Tech.
This is home.
REUNION WEEKEND 2020

Virginia Tech is home. Reconnect with friends, family, and campus during our four-day summer reunion.

Enjoy dinner on the Drillfield, behind-the-scenes campus tours, children’s activities, happy hours, presentations from university leaders, and more.

SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 4-7, 2020

STAY CONNECTED

MAKE SURE THE UNIVERSITY HAS YOUR UP-TO-DATE MAILING AND CONTACT INFORMATION. USE YOUR VIRGINIA TECH PID AND PASSWORD TO VIEW AND MAKE CORRECTIONS TO YOUR MAILING ADDRESS, EMAIL ADDRESS, AND OTHER INFORMATION. YOU CAN INSPECT AND UPDATE YOUR ALUMNI PROFILE ANYTIME, FROM ANYWHERE.

IT’S EASY TO UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION AND EMAIL ADDRESS AT ALUMNI.VT.EDU.

- CLICK “UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION”
- LOGIN WITH YOUR VT PID AND PASSWORD
- CHOOSE “HOKIE PLUS”
- THEN CHOOSE “UPDATE ADDRESS(ES) AND PHONE(ES)” OR “UPDATE ALUMNI EMAIL ADDRESS(ES)”

YOU CAN ALSO EMAIL YOUR UPDATES TO ALUMNIDATA@VT.EDU. MAKE SURE YOU INCLUDE YOUR FULL NAME AND CLASS YEAR IN THE EMAIL.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Virginia Tech’s history is rooted in agricultural education and research. Today, advances in technology are transforming the future of farming in the U.S. and around the world. Virginia Tech research and education are helping farmers provide for the growing needs of an expanding population and are promoting safe and healthy harvests.

How does growth affect campus transportation? From bicycles and buses to skateboards and scooters, students, faculty, and staff are exploring alternative ways to move around campus quickly and safely.

You’ll find stories about these topics and many more in the fall issue of Virginia Tech Magazine.

Visit us online to read even more stories about your fellow Hokies, find links to events and campus activities, and stay up-to-date on university news.

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SANDRA WORLEY ’78
GARY M. WORLEY ’78, ’94, ’99
SARAH WORLEY MCDearis ’08 ’15
ADALINE MCDearis 2040

This is home.

1986

2019