
Reunion Weekend is an exciting new tradition that alumni look forward to all year long. We are planning our largest gathering yet for 2021.

Get ready for next summer!

THE COUNTDOWN IS ON.

Visit alumni.vt.edu/reunion2021 to learn more.
It is heartening to witness how Hokies have also stepped up to support one another in the face of a new normal. You have made gifts to our university to provide aid to students and assist with faculty research. This generosity has the power to change lives.

The Hokie Nation is a collective, powerful force that has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to help provide for the needs of our great institution. With your help, we have achieved yet another year of record giving, which is especially remarkable amid uncertainty on so many fronts. Giving is the highest it has ever been to the university. And leading by example, the university’s leadership and many of our volunteer advisory boards have achieved 100 percent philanthropic participation over the past fiscal year.

Since the COVID-19 crisis began, an unprecedented number of students have come forward asking for help, suddenly facing financial hardship and personal turmoil. Generous Hokies gave and so far have helped more than 200 students through the Student Emergency Fund, in addition to providing numerous current-use scholarships through the Beyond Boundaries scholarship initiative with $1 million dollars raised in the past fiscal year. Virginia Tech researchers have also answered the call to explore the science behind COVID-19, which will hopefully lead to more knowledge and help save lives.

One bright spot during these challenging times has been the opportunities to come together online to find friendship, fun, and support. So much has changed in the world, including how we now connect. We have a renewed emphasis on engagement to remain connected as an energetic body of alumni, students, and friends. From online networking events and town halls, virtual committee meetings and happy hours, and even Zoom game rooms, we continue to innovatively explore ways to safely work and play together.

Even though we have not been able to gather in person, we can still stay in touch, strengthen our community, and share information about Virginia Tech’s role in the world. Through our virtual offerings, Hokies anywhere can come together. This is an opportunity for more of us to gather more frequently, keeping our bonds strong.

While you manage your personal priorities amid our changing world in the months ahead, let us continue to support one another, maintain our Hokie pride, and stay connected. Let us know how you are doing, what your alma mater can do for you, and any feedback you wish to share.

Thank you for all that you do for Virginia Tech—and continue to be well.

Charlie Phlegar ’78, M.A.Ed. ’87 is the vice president for advancement at Virginia Tech.
ON THE COVER: During the spring and summer of 2020, computer screens filled with squares from which the faces of family, friends, teachers, and colleagues invited us to connect virtually, became the norm. Although Hokies, who were encouraged to stay safe at home, lived in a variety of rural and urban locations around the globe, they shared many similar experiences, such as empty grocery store shelves, drive-by celebrations, mask wear, and traffic-free streets.

FEATURES

22 2020 VISION
Examinations are administered to measure students’ progress. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided such a test for the university’s vision, revealing strengths, identifying opportunities for growth, and advancing momentum toward the future.

36 WE’VE BEEN HERE BEFORE
When the Spanish Flu struck the U.S. in 1918, Virginia Tech responded by canceling classes and offering support to communities in need. Current students studied the historic challenge to identify differences and similarities to the coronavirus pandemic of 2020.

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64 END NOTE
I hope this summer message finds you safe and well. As the challenges of 2020 have unfolded, the Hokie community across the country and around the world is never far from my mind. Our thoughts are with those who have suffered loss, and we are grateful to all the essential workers who are putting the needs of others first and demonstrating their commitment to our motto, Ut Prosim (That I May Serve).

Since early spring, we have all been adapting continuously to a steady flow of information, directives, challenges, and opportunities. Virginia Tech is a microcosm of the world when it comes to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of racism—past and present, systemic and overt.

The pandemic initiated a rapid move to remote online teaching and learning in mid-March, a forced experiment that was more resilient than many institutions, but we know that we will face substantial financial challenges moving forward.

And even as we manage our response to the pandemic, our community, like others across our nation, is grappling with events that stand in opposition to our ideals of freedom, justice, and equality. From the disparities in COVID-19 outcomes across racial, ethnic, and economic divides to the unrelenting burden of racism, we fall short of what we say we are all about. This moment offers an unprecedented opportunity to transform our ideals into realities. At Virginia Tech, we have anchored that aspiration in our Principles of Community, but principles become meaningful only if they are acted upon.

It is reasonable to assume that we will be living with COVID-19 for the foreseeable future, and we know that the change needed to meaningfully move toward real equality will not happen quickly. During this time, we must rely on each other. We know that the world needs Hokies now more than ever, and Virginia Tech needs you. In the months to come, we look forward to sharing more about Virginia Tech’s efforts to improve health, equity, and inclusion in our communities and in higher education. We invite you to partner with us. Those of us who enjoy privilege cannot remain on the sidelines; our vision for the future and the spirit of Ut Prosim call us to action.  ■

Tim Sands is Virginia Tech’s 16th president.
A CAPITAL PROJECT: In April, Virginia Tech unveiled architectural renderings for an Innovation Campus building in the greater Washington, D.C., metro area.

Building Design to Feature Sustainable Spaces, Hokie Stone

Plans for a New Virginia Tech Innovation Campus building released in April feature a design centered on the principles of sustainability, green and social spaces, accessibility, integrated technology, and, of course, Hokie Stone.

Architectural renderings of the building—designed by SmithGroup, one of the world’s preeminent integrated design firms—showcase a 300,000-square-foot academic building that incorporates daylight while addressing solar heat gain, glare, and comfort. Occupants will have access to nature through connection to open space and parks in the district and within the building via multiple terraces. The building will be capped by a solar array, and photovoltaics will be incorporated into the glass of the facade.

The Innovation Campus will include three buildings on about four acres at the northern end of phase 1, near Alexandria’s border with Arlington County.

SmithGroup is taking inspiration from Virginia Tech’s Blacksburg campus by including dolomite limestone (Hokie Stone) in the landscape. Together with the university’s staff, the company is exploring special use of the stone at the base of the building to balance the glass and metal facades with the warmth and solidity of natural stone.
HAPPILY EVER AFTER: About a quarter of the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine Class of 2020 scheduled weddings between April and June. Although the spread of the coronavirus altered the plans for many of the “I do’s,” some couples kept their original dates, incorporating creative remakes for their ceremonies. Pictured (left) Lena Turkheimer and Mark Owen, (middle) Quinn Weinberg and Stephen Owen, (right) Cody Roberts and Abby Winn.

THE TIME BETWEEN MATCH DAY, when graduating medical students find out where they are headed for residency, and the actual start of the residency typically is filled with numerous celebrations. There is graduation, preparation for residencies—and for some, weddings.

Almost a quarter of the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine’s (VTCSOM) 2020 graduating class planned to marry between April and June. Many postponed their nuptials because of the pandemic, while others planned to marry between April and June. Although the spread of the coronavirus altered the plans for many of the “I do’s,” some couples kept their original dates, incorporating creative remakes for their ceremonies. Pictured (left) Lena Turkheimer and Mark Owen, (middle) Quinn Weinberg and Stephen Owen, (right) Cody Roberts and Abby Winn.

LOVE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

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IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE PROGRAM INTRODUCES STUDENTS TO FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRIES

SIX VIRGINIA TECH UNDERGRADUATES stepped onto the trading floor at Rich mond International Forest Products earlier this year. Wearing headsets that allowed them to listen to negotiations in real time, the students followed along as traders for the company worked with sawmills and purchasers to negotiate prices for spruce, pine, and other forest materials.

A few days earlier, two other students visited the Richmond branch of LandCare, a commercial landscaping company. Following a field crew to job sites, students were introduced to some of the challenges of caring for and maintaining outdoor spaces. These day-in-the-life experiences, the first in the College of Natural Resources and Environment’s new immersive experience program, were exactly what John Freeborn envisioned when he took on the role of the college’s director of employer relations last year.

“The experience we’re looking to provide hits a really important spot between a company tour and an internship,” he said. “We’re giving students the ability to get to know an organization and a career path in a nontraditional, somewhat informal setting.”

The concept for the day-in-the-life experiences was the brainchild of alumna Megan Schnitzer, a trader for Richmond International Forest Products who received a geography degree from Virginia Tech in 2012.

“I hope that the students will raise awareness of the lumber industry, that what we do here is a real thing, and that it’s a great job opportunity for graduates,” she said.

NEW SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION SLATED FOR FALL

A NEW VIRGINIA TECH SCHOOL of Communication has received official approval from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. The school, which will supersede the current Department of Communication, will be hosted within the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences beginning this fall.

“The school is expected to magnify our already vibrant programs, enabling students to use the latest technologies to provide storytelling across platforms,” said Robert Denton, who heads the communication department and will serve as the director of the new school.

Denton expects additional majors to be developed within the school, with possible expansions into digital media production, advertising, and professional communication.

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WHAT’S THAT NOISE?

THE CICADAS CAME BACK.

This year, that alien-like wail of the insect world was even more pronounced, as millions of cicadas emerged after 17 years underground in parts of Virginia, North Carolina, and West Virginia.

“Communities and farms with large numbers of cicadas emerging at once may have had a substantial noise issue,” said Eric Day, Virginia Cooperative Extension entomologist in Virginia Tech’s Department of Entomology in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. “Hopefully, any annoyance at the disturbance was tempered by just how infrequent—and amazing—this event was.”

Cicadas—large, clear-winged insects with bulbous eyes—occur either annually (every year) or periodically (every 13 or 17 years) depending on the species.

The scale of these events is astounding, with as many as 1.5 million cicadas emerging per acre. Each periodical cicada brood covers a specific geographical region, with some areas overlapping. The reason for this 13- or 17-year cycle is one of the great mysteries of the insect world.

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COVID-19 leads to memorable final project

Brent Bailey planned to create a robotic hand for industrial use as his senior mechanical engineering project. But Bailey found a new project when he secured state and federal approval of the COVID-19 pandemic. Bailey has been working on ventilators to treat COVID-19 patients.

In their look at homemade mask materials, Marr’s team found that the respirators retained their ability to filter particles after up to 10 cycles of sterilization. In their look at homemade mask materials, Marr’s team found that the respirators retained their ability to filter particles after up to 10 cycles of sterilization. Marr and her team found that the respirators retained their ability to filter particles after up to 10 cycles of sterilization.

Lindsey Marr, a professor of civil and environmental engineering, has captured national media attention during the pandemic for her expertise in airborne disease transmission. Marr has been interviewed about everything from the distance requirement for running outside to how virus particles may or may not land on a person’s clothes or other surfaces.

Since March, Marr has been testing the efficacy of sterilized N95 respirators and alternative mask materials in filtering out particles. Marr and her team found that the respirators retained their ability to filter particles after up to 10 cycles of sterilization.

In their look at homemade mask materials, Marr’s team tested items that have emerged in the public eye in recent months. Microfiber cloth filtered out at least 80 percent of particles under optimal conditions, while a heavyweight cotton T-shirt, a shop towel, and a shop rag filtered out only about 10 percent of the hardest particles to remove and about 50 percent of the larger ones.

Hokies@Home project preserves experiences during COVID-19

The University Libraries’ Special Collections and University Archives are collecting and preserving the extraordinary experiences of members of the Hokie Nation during COVID-19. Leaders of the Hokies@Home: Documenting COVID-19 at Virginia Tech project are gathering oral histories, audio recordings, written stories, diary and journal entries, photographs, videos, art, and other documentation for inclusion in its publicly available digital collections.

“We’re particularly interested in the documentation of experiences as they relate to Virginia Tech and how individual and community-university experiences were affected by the pandemic,” said Anthony Wright de Hernandez, University Libraries’ community collections archivist.

Digital materials can be submitted through a donation form on the Hokies@Home website found at guides.lib.vt.edu/HokiesatHome.

Professor evaluates N95 respirators, mask materials

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VIRGINIA TECH RESEARCHERS DEVELOP COVID-19 TESTS

Virginia Tech scientists are supporting local health systems and health departments by offering new COVID-19 tests. After securing state and federal approvals in April, faculty research leaders and their teams, led primarily by Carla Finkielstein at the Fralin Life Sciences Institute in Blacksburg and Harold Sontheimer at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC in Roanoke, began testing COVID-19 samples.

The testing lab, formally known as the Virginia Tech Schiffert Health Center COVID-19 Lab, has analyzed almost 6,000 samples from April 24, 2020 through July 4, 2020.

All sample analysis operations are now being integrated into a single facility at the Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory, headed by Finkielstein, at the new Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at 4 Riverside Circle on the Health Sciences and Technology campus in Roanoke.

HOKIES@HOME PROJECT PRESERVES EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19

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VIRGINIA TECH VIDEOGRAPHERS HAVE BEEN HARD AT WORK CAPTURING THE UNIVERSITY’S NEWS AND EVENTS. WATCH THESE VIDEOS AND MANY OTHERS AT VIDEO.VT.EDU.

CLASS OF 2020 HOKIEBIRDS REVEALED

Virginia Tech’s two graduating HokieBirds, London Hughes and Charlotte Powell, revealed their identities during the university’s May 15 online commencement ceremony.

STUDENT CARES FOR WILDLIFE FROM HOME

Hanaleah Hoyt cared for furry patients from the Southwest Virginia Wildlife Center in Roanoke at her home after Virginia issued a stay-at-home order in March.

RUN IN REMEMBRANCE GOES VIRTUAL FOR 2020

In April, Hokies around the world came together virtually for the annual Run in Remembrance.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE FOR CAMPUS

Virginia Tech is prepared for the fall semester after procurement teams sprang into action in March to stock personal protective equipment (PPE) for faculty, staff, students, and visitors.

EXTRA, EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT.

For additional details, images, and videos related to the stories featured in Drillfield, go to vtmag.vt.edu.

VA | DRILLFIELD | NEWS
CADET SETS SIGHTS ON SPACE

COLLEEN PRAMENKO ALWAYS KNEW she would follow her parents into the U.S. Air Force.

“Watching them helping others was a large part of my childhood,” she said. “They instilled a sense of service to others in me, which made the Air Force an easy choice for me.”

In May, Pramenko graduated from Virginia Tech with a degree in meteorology in the College of Natural Resources and Environment and commissioned as an Air Force second lieutenant. In June, she was assigned to Fujian Air Force Base in South Carolina.

Her goal is to become a launch weather officer supporting the new U.S. Space Force, established in December 2019. Col. Eric Dorminey, commander of Virginia Tech’s Air Force ROTC program, noted that Pramenko will make an exceptional officer.

“She has credibility built on a solid intellect informed by natural curiosity and personal reflection,” Dorminey said. “And she has a friendly engaging personality and is willing to share her perspective and mentor those she leads.”

Pramenko chose Virginia Tech in part because her father worked for Dee Dodson Morris ’76, who graduated with the first group of women in the corps. At age 9, Pramenko went to work with her father and was awed by the cadet saber hanging in Morris’s office.

“Throughout my cadet career, I held the memory of meeting Dee Morris during that Take Your Daughter to Work Day close to heart,” Pramenko said. “It was a constant reminder that I was part of something greater than myself. I was responsible to help continue the legacy and opportunities the corps provided me.”

Shay Barnhart is the Corps of Cadets’ communications director.

CONFIDENT LEADERSHIP: Colleen Pramenko served as the Corps of Cadets’ regimental commander, the highest rank a cadet can achieve, during the spring 2019 semester.

BOB MARTIN’S NEW LEASE ON LIFE began with an eye-catching T-shirt at FloydFest, a summer music festival in Floyd, Virginia.

“It [the shirt] said, ‘Hi my name is Bob. I need a type O kidney,’” said Rick Trenary. “I said, ‘Bob, you’re sitting beside a type O kidney. Why didn’t you let me know this?’”

In August 2019, Trenary donated one of his kidneys to his former Virginia Tech fraternity brother. Martin and Trenary met when the latter pledged the Tau Delta fraternity in 1973. A lifelong friendship was forged between the two.

“Bob was a big brother when I was pledging, and we became friends,” Trenary said. “There’s eight to 10 of us that have stayed together ever since. We’ve vacationed together; we still go to bowl games together. It’s just been a part of my life.”

Following his graduation in 1975, Martin taught high school for a year before pursuing what would become a 30-plus-year career in manufacturing and property management. He retired to Blacksburg in 2008. Trenary entered the workforce in 1976 and moved to Hilton Head, South Carolina, where he remains today.

About 15 years ago, Martin was diagnosed with focal segmental glomerulosclerosis, a rare disease that attacks the kidney’s filtering units. When his kidney function dropped below 20 percent, Martin registered for a transplant at the Emory University Transplant Center.

“I had been on the transplant list for 12 years or so, but I didn’t start looking really hard for a kidney until about two years ago,” Martin said.

At that point, his daughter, Elizabeth, and her three siblings, Joanna, Emily, and Robbie, helped get the word out via a webpage, social media, bumper stickers, and the aforementioned T-shirt.

“It was a no-brainer,” said Trenary. “More so, Bob’s kids needed it. They had already lost their mother to breast cancer, and I didn’t want to see them lose their dad, too.”

Following about 10 months of extensive testing, the men learned Trenary’s kidney was a match.

“It’s pretty amazing how it all occurred,” Martin said. “It was a match made in heaven.”

Martin advises fellow Hokies in need to “find an advocate to help you market your need and don’t be afraid to ask for help. You never know where the ultimate act of Ut Prosim will come from.”
DAVID CUNNINGHAM HOPED THE 2020 ACC Men’s basketball tournament would be an opportunity to witness history in the making, but he never expected the off-court story that would dominate the experience.

“All of a sudden the clock at the arena just stops, and everyone in the media gets the same email,” said Cunningham, a rising senior at Virginia Tech, as he recounted the events that unfolded during the tournament in Greensboro, North Carolina. “It [the email] said, ‘The ACC is canceling the tournament, and Florida State has been named the champion.’”

Cunningham, who is majoring in sports media and analytics, was one of six Virginia Tech students who were granted unprecedented access to cover the 14 games of the tournament for 3304 Sports, a student-led, multimedia journalism platform, as a part of the university’s Topics in Sports Communications course.

“When we launched 3304 Sports, one of our goals was to get our students to cover the ACC Tournament and experience one of the great events in sports,” said Bill Roth, professor of practice in the Department of Communication. “The conference was terrific in granting credentials to our student broadcasters. They got to call the games and ask questions in post-game pressers, as well as produce podcasts, record stand-ups on the court, and interact with national and regional media members.”

The students were scheduled to be on-site for the duration of the five-day event, but on March 12, following the first two days of the basketball competition, the ACC joined the growing number of collegiate and professional sports organizations sidelining their athletic activities. Florida State, the conference regular season champion, was declared the winner of the tournament’s automatic bid to the NCAA tournament just minutes prior to their tipoff against Clemson.

“It was absolutely mind-boggling,” said Liam Sment, a senior sports media and analytics major who was serving as the graphics and photography director for 3304 Sports. It was the type of moment the students never imagined, yet were prepared to handle thanks to their work with 3304 Sports.

Roth, the former long-time, legendary Voice of the Hokies, said the unexpected circumstances actually provided the students with an excellent real-world learning opportunity.

“The conference was terrific in granting credentials to our student broadcasters. They got to call the games and ask questions in post-game pressers, as well as produce podcasts, record stand-ups on the court, and interact with national and regional media members.”

For Sment, the experience meant hustling to different positions in the arena, including climbing into the stands, to ensure that he got the best visuals as the news broke.

“I never expected to be at center of the sports world as it was falling down around itself and to be one of a couple hundred people there covering it,” Sment said. “[ACC Commissioner John] Swofford came out onto the court. He handed the trophy to FSU and there’s not a single player smiling. It was such a weird and unexpected scenario.”

As a broadcaster, Cunningham said he pulled from the many lessons he’d learned throughout the major, including the value of being right about information over being the first to deliver it. He believes that the experience will continue to affect how he approaches his craft and life in general.

“It’s just not taking anything for granted and soaking up every moment,” Cunningham said. “I’m going to make sure that I’m making the most of my time here.”

Launched in March 2019, 3304 Sports is a student-led extension of the sports media and analytics major, which is a part of the Department of Communication housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. The media platform provides students with the opportunity to hone their journalism skills in a real-world environment by working with the Virginia Tech Athletics Department to cover NCAA Division I events.

“We’re just really grateful to have them work with us,” said Cunningham, editor-in-chief for 3304 Sports. “Ten years ago, we wouldn’t have been able to do this.”
FACE SHIELDS, FACE MASKS, PPE—since March, these terms have become common elements of everyday pandemic vocabulary. The items to which they refer remained in short supply for months because of continuing demand due to COVID-19.

A group of faculty and students at Virginia Tech led a massive effort to produce thousands of face shields for nurses, doctors, and first responders in the Roanoke and New River valleys who are on the pandemic’s front lines.

First, researchers worked closely with local health care professionals, who approved the designs and helped ensure that the finished product would meet stringent infection-control requirements.

Then, the team solicited volunteers throughout the region who had access to 3D printers, which are necessary for creating one version of the shield’s headpiece. A second version of the shields uses a foam headpiece rather than a 3D-printed band. A laser cutter is required for cutting sheets of plastic.

Liam Chapin, a computer science student, cut the majority of the shields using a laser cutter in the Field and Space Experimental Robotics Laboratory on Virginia Tech’s Blacksburg campus. Other university units, including the Honors College, pitched in with their own laser cutters.

As of mid-May, the group had produced and distributed at least 4,400 shields to employees at Carilion Clinic and Lewis-Gale facilities, as well as other health and emergency professionals, said Alex Leonessa, a mechanical engineering professor who is leading the project.

“As long as we can keep the materials going, we will keep making them,” he said. ■ JKB

Here is a peek into the parts that comprise the two face shield designs:

3D-PRINTED VERSION:
Headpiece or Frame - A plastic headband produced using a 3D printer. It rests on the forehead and is secured with rubber bands.

Shield - A long piece of clear polyester film that snaps onto the headband and folds to cover the face, the top of the forehead, and the sides of the head at the temples.

FOAM VERSION:
Foam head block - A foam headpiece with adhesive on one side that sits on the forehead.

Elastic and Clip - Fasten the shield to the head.

Shield - Laser-cut polyester film attaches with adhesive to the foam headpiece.

As members of the community, we pledge to care for the health and well-being of others by personally adopting our Community Wellness Commitment:

• We will affirm our commitment to the safety, health, and well-being of our campuses and local communities.
• We will affirm that we will support the mental well-being of all community members.
• We will wear face coverings/masks in public areas.
• We will practice physical distancing by maintaining at least 6 feet of distance from others.
• We will practice good hygiene, including frequent handwashing and covering coughs or sneezes.
• We will stay home and avoid public spaces when not feeling well.
• We will contact our health care provider or an urgent care facility if we believe we are sick or have been exposed to the coronavirus.
• We will support but avoid contact with those who are sick.
• We will follow public health guidelines and medical recommendations to be tested and self-isolate as necessary.
• We will make a list of all others with whom we have had close contact, if necessary, to aid in contact-tracing efforts.
TREE MANAGEMENT IS LIKE ALL OTHER types of management: First, you’ve got to know what you have. Then you need to determine your goals: On campus those goals include healthy trees, a larger canopy, and safe trees.

Initially, the university arborist assesses the tree population, getting to know the different areas where there are high densities, trees of a certain age that require more care, or those that may be affected by compaction or future campus development. A detailed plan for maintaining the trees is then drafted.

A big part of the inventory involves comparing species’ relative abundance. For example, Virginia Tech has numerous sugar maples. Sugar maples are susceptible to an invasive pest called Asian longhorn beetle. Developing a plan to mitigate that problem, should it arise, is essential.

As the university grows and new buildings are constructed, some trees will be lost. It’s important to plan for their replacement and also provide for the maintenance of the new trees as part of the capital investment of the larger projects. As people walk, picnic, hang out with friends, or study nearby, the soil underneath the trees around the Drillfield or at other gathering places on campus gets compacted, and that can be detrimental to tree health.

Another consideration is age. As a tree gets older, it starts to consolidate resources and retrench. As a result, portions of the tree may begin to deteriorate. When you see dead wood in the top of the tree, it could be a result of retrenchment. MA

HAPPY LITTLE TREES

THE ARBORIST

In fall 2019, Virginia Tech hired its first full-time arborist.

Jamie King, an alumnus of Virginia Tech with a bachelor’s in natural resources conservation and minors in urban forestry and forestry, previously worked as the city arborist for the City of Roanoke.

King is responsible for overall planting, health care, safety, and general maintenance of trees on campus.

THE MERRY OAK
NEAR SMITHFIELD PLANTATION

There are many legacy trees on campus. One is known as the Merry Oak. The Merry Oak sat in a cornfield owned by Virginia Tech and is intimately connected to the Smithfield Plantation.

The Merry Oak was claimed by a storm on May 19. The site on which it stood will be preserved. King and others are exploring the potential reseeding of the Merry Oak and how best to utilize its wood for memorial and academic activities.

WHY TREES MATTER

Trees have quantifiable values, which include the dollar value of ecological services, real estate values, and canopy benefits, such as aesthetics, shade, storm water mitigation, air quality improvements, animal habitat, and more. The inventoried trees at Virginia Tech have an estimated value of $30.6 million dollars as a capital asset. The number is based on replacement value of the trees, but the dollar figure is only part of the story. When you come to Virginia Tech, you may be able to touch the same tree that your grandfather or grandmother did when they were students, and eventually your grandkids may repeat that action, while thinking of you. So, that tree becomes another connection to the university and to Hokies past, present, and future.

BY THE NUMBERS

10,077 campus trees have been inventoried, not counting trees beyond the core campus, such as in Center Woods, located between Plantation Road and the Huckleberry Trail on the south side of U.S. 460.

69% native to Virginia.

57% are large stature species.

225 tree species present on campus.

85% classified as young or immature.

6% Sugar maple

5% Eastern white pine

4% Red maple

4% Northern red oak

3% Serviceberry

57% are large stature species.

69% native to Virginia.

225 tree species present on campus.

85% classified as young or immature.
WHEN THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC upended the spring semester, scattering students and shutting down the Virginia Tech campuses to all except essential employees, university leaders made the difficult, but necessary, decision to cancel the Lane Stadium spring graduation event. As faculty scrambled to move classes online and students and their families adjusted to an unwelcome new reality, university representatives were also considering alternative options for recognizing the Class of 2020. Although the proposed event would not replace an in-person experience, the organizers hoped to preserve some of the traditions that inspire generation after generation of Hokie alums.

On May 15, appearing only on computer screens and mobile devices across the globe for the first time ever, Virginia Tech leaders, celebrity alumni, a sports icon, and a dancing HokieBird joined forces to confer degrees and salute the Class of 2020 virtually.

President Tim Sands opened the online event by addressing the graduates from a podium in an otherwise empty Lane Stadium, the traditional location for Virginia Tech’s spring commencement ceremony. “You’ve already overcome one global challenge, and you haven’t even moved your tassels yet,” Sands said. “Now, you are ready to go out and confront the emerging challenges of a rapidly changing world—and the world needs you.”

Viewers watched the ceremony, which was available on YouTube and streamed on the Virginia Tech website. Families, friends, and Hokie alumni from near and far congratulated graduates through pre-recorded video messages prior to the start of the official event.

The Class of 2020 celebrated from wherever they were—many from their homes alongside close family members, hosting watch parties and even conducting their own personal commencement ceremonies. Approximately 5,602 Hokies graduated with bachelor’s degrees and 62 earned associate degrees. Also, 1,247 graduate students were recognized, including those from the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine and the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine in Roanoke.

Additionally, each college posted a special video message from its dean, along with a recorded reading of graduates’ names. One of the highlights of the ceremony was a surprise video message from Hoda Kotb, a Virginia Tech alumna and co-host and co-anchor of “TODAY,” an NBC News morning show. Kotb encouraged the graduates to stay strong and resilient.

“’The Class of Twenty Twenty has been gracious and brave,” Giovanni said. #HOKIEGRAD
WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE, CHALLENGES ARISE, AND CALLS FOR ASSISTANCE GO OUT, VIRGINIA TECH LEANS INTO ITS MOTTO, UT PROSIM (THAT I MAY SERVE).

THE EMERGENCE OF THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS HAS PRESENTED SUCH AN OCCASION. THE PANDEMIC REQUIRED A PIVOT FROM NORMS, THE ACCELERATION OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS, AND A LEVEL OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY THAT HAS SURPASSED ANYTHING MOST AMERICANS HAVE PREVIOUSLY EXPERIENCED.

THE VIRGINIA TECH COMMUNITY IS RESPONDING TO THIS MOMENT IN QUINTESSENTIAL HOKIE FASHION, CONFIRMING THE REAL-WORLD BENEFITS OF THE UNIVERSITY’S HANDS-ON APPROACH TO LEARNING, AS WELL AS THE STEADFAST NATURE OF THE HOKIE BOND—AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY TO COLLECTIVELY LIVE OUT OUR MOTTO.
A member of Virginia Tech’s Class of 2020, the mechanical engineering major donned his official university cap and gown, and as the notes of “Pomp and Circumstance” began to play, took the first steps of a long-anticipated graduation march.

Korabik’s path led down a driveway and up a short flight of stairs to the neighbor’s front porch, which was now doubling as a stage.

“There, in a yard in Cary, North Carolina, neighborhood, friends and family gathered at a safe distance for the heartfelt, makeshift ceremony that lasted less than five minutes.

“It was a wonderful way to celebrate in a nontraditional way, in what’s not a normal year for graduations,” said Cindy Korabik, Bryce’s mom.

Across Hokie Nation, such creative celebrations became the norm following a semester that had been upended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly after spring break, all Virginia Tech coursework, most research, and a semblance of social life shifted to virtual platforms as students, faculty, and the broader university community took steps to comply with guidelines intended to mitigate the virus.

Members of the junior class would miss their long-awaited ring dance, and for seniors, Virginia Tech’s restrictions on gatherings would upset traditional graduation events, up to and including the Lane Stadium commencement ceremony.

“Crisis is an extraordinarily authentic test. As the novel coronavirus spread, the pandemic resulted in an unanticipated examination that elevated strengths, revealed weaknesses, and served as a compass for directing change or reinforcing the trajectory of an already established vision.

Responding to the virus demanded the best of people, and as a global land-grant university dedicated to the ethos of Responding to COVID-19 affirmed the real-world benefits of Virginia Tech’s team-oriented, experiential approach to learning, as well as confirming the steadfast nature of the Hokie bond. The unprecedented moment presented another chance to do what Hokies do best: to serve our communities, our nations, and our world.

“There are many examples of how the Virginia Tech community stepped up when needed,” said President Tim Sands during one of multiple virtual town halls held since March to keep the Hokie community informed. “The contributions of essential employees who remained on campus, the application of Virginia Tech’s world-class expertise to help the public better understand this disease, and the care for each other that sustained us through these difficult months make us proud to be Hokies.”

EARLY CHALLENGES

As university groups began meeting to consider the potential implications of COVID-19 in late January, global travel was among the primary concerns. About 400 students and faculty members were abroad at the time, and as they returned home, and the virus spread, the university’s focus shifted to domestic issues.

The university’s Incident Management Team (IMT) scheduled a quick briefing on the topic for the first week in March, but the rapidly evolving situation prompted the group to shift from discussion to action. On March 11, President Sands announced a six-day spring break extension to facilitate the move to online learning for the remainder of the semester.

That online pivot required a monumental, rapid transition to remote study led by Virginia Tech faculty and staff, some of whom had never before taught online classes.

“Our faculty’s hard work, collaborative spirit, and relentless innovation enabled it to overcome this difficult challenge,” said Executive Vice President and Provost Cyril Clarke. “Their efforts enabled Virginia Tech to protect the health and safety of our community, while sustaining our core educational, research, and outreach programs. This was clearly not what we thought we would be doing at the start of the semester, but I’ve been impressed by our faculty’s resilience and ability to thrive even under challenging circumstances.”

The move to online education, the transition to telework for most university offices, and later decisions that would necessitate a shift to essential services prompted significant operational changes as well.

“The people who carry out the work of Virginia Tech responded nobly in the face of an uncertain situation,” said Dwayne Pinkney, senior vice president and chief business officer. “Their perseverance and steadfast commitment to our shared mission enabled the university to respond quickly and efficiently during a trying time.”

Virginia Tech’s IMT, which consists of about 25 representatives from academics and athletics to law enforcement and human resources who train regularly to handle large-scale campus emergencies, essentially steered the ship as the university navigated unknown waters. The team has worked together consistently since March—the longest span it’s ever been activated—to ensure faculty, staff, and students remain safe, education and research continue, and Ut Prosim is at the forefront of every decision.

“The team is made of those who are the doers,” said Michael Mulhare, Virginia Tech’s assistant vice president for emergency management. “We’re tasked with making policy decisions operational.”

The IMT credited the quick and efficient transition to remote learning in part to technology, specifically noting the use of a software that had been under development for about six years that included a variety of enhanced features, such as shareable dashboards with real-time metrics.

As the university scaled back operations, the IMT was tasked with transitioning a variety of critical services and reorganizing the responsibilities of dedicated essential employees, including those in mail services, which faced a handful of special challenges. Because buildings were locked, commercial drivers delivered departmental packages to a centralized location. With about 600 packages arriving each week, mail services employee worked alongside security personnel to access buildings for mail distribution about twice weekly.

Steve Vantine, interim director of mail services, said employees normally assigned to other departments, such as parking services, migrated over to increase the total workforce to about 25 people. The team worked in two separate shifts to mitigate the potential for an outbreak of the virus.
“The whole operation goes down if one person comes down with COVID,” Vantine said.

The mail team needed to develop processes to manage not only the high quantity of deliveries, but also those requiring special care, such as packages containing perishables or those needing refrigeration, as well as rerouting items that had been shipped to students who were no longer on campus. For the latter, Vantine said the university covered the expense to forward the packages.

The once-bustling campus, now devoid of students, faculty, and staff, resembled the setting for a dystopian novel where time simply stopped. Although for most, the quiet grounds appeared to mourn the missing students and faculty, for some, the now-empty buildings created opportunities to get a head start on year-end tasks. The university’s facilities department, for example, initiated their detailed cleaning of high-traffic areas and added touch-free dispensers for soap and paper towels, as well as 2,000 new hand-sanitizer stations and several misting machines in 65-plus buildings, said Jarrod Alls, facilities quality control assistant.

Because the group was able to check off certain cleaning tasks in preparation for the return of students, “once everything is back up and running, our goal will be to stay focused on and increase the cleaning frequency of high-touch areas,” said Alls.

REMOTE LEARNING

Meanwhile, Virginia Tech’s Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies (TLOS) team focused on the massive task of moving classes online. Building on two decades of advancements in distance learning, it took the group less than two weeks to facilitate the academic transition, enabling more than 2,400 instructors to teach about 4,500 sections of content remotely.

“The focus was on Virginia Tech students and faculty located in various cities around the world,” said TLOS Executive Director and Associate Provost Dale Pike. “Because very little was known about what would happen, we considered many scenarios, including the possibility that we’d need to provide instruction to students who were in quarantine or support faculty who needed to teach from quarantine.”

Quinn Warnick, TLOS interim deputy executive director, credited the agile shift in part to existing online teaching tools, such
as Canvas, Zoom, and Kaltura, and the faculty’s commitment to deepening their knowledge to maximize these resources.

Facing a daunting task, Virginia Tech’s faculty and students picked up the tools available and went to work.

“We had faith that faculty of varying levels of experience with these tools would be able to successfully adjust their instruction. The other part of the equation was the commitment we had to our students,” said LuJean Baab, senior director, Learning Experience Design. “Everyone involved was willing to put in the extra effort to best benefit the students.”

Across the university, instructors not only maintained their scheduled lessons, but explored ways to apply the technology to enhance their students’ experiences. Advanced instructor of painting and drawing Betsy Bannan provided practical advice to help students create makeshift art studios in their homes. Professor of biochemistry Glenda Gillaspy turned a course’s focus to the molecular biology of SARS/COV-2, and Paolo Scardina recorded lectures from waterways around campus, using real-world examples to illustrate specific concepts and theories.

“With online education, we can now do some of the stuff that we weren’t able to do before,” said Scardina, an assistant professor of practice who teaches courses in fluid mechanics and water resources engineering. “Now I can make the classroom wherever I want.”

These are just a sample of the many innovative ways Virginia Tech’s faculty members raised the bar in continuing to provide a world-class education and an exemplary student experience during one of the university’s most challenging times.

Students took notice of that extraordinary effort, according to Madelynn Todd, a rising senior and the 2019-20 undergraduate student representative to Virginia Tech’s Board of Visitors.

“They are really great people who took the input of the students very seriously,” said Todd of the university’s pandemic response. “I think it really speaks volumes about our administration.” As Canvas, Zoom, and Kaltura, and the faculty’s commitment to deepening their knowledge to maximize these resources.

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“They are really great people who took the input of the students very seriously,” said Todd of the university’s pandemic response. “I think it really speaks volumes about our administration.”

As the board representative, Todd, who is studying animal and poultry science, often heard student concerns, and she fielded dozens during the spring semester.

COVID-19 affected not only academics, but every facet of student life. For some Virginia Tech athletes, the pandemic delayed their last opportunity to reach new heights as Hokies. This included point guard Taja Cole, who helped move the women’s basketball team to its best record in 14 years, at 21-4, before the NCAA Tournament was canceled, and four-time All-American wrestler David McFadden, who had a national title in his sights.

Though disappointed, McFadden said he saw the missed opportunity as simply doing his part to fight the spread of the virus.

“You know, there’s a lot worse things than missing a party or something, and this thing is really serious,” McFadden said. “But I have a feeling that something good is going to eventually come out of all this. It just has to.”

Echoing Virginia Tech’s core mission of service, that type of response was common among students, even through the tension of the nontraditional semester, according to Todd.

“During this time, I think Ut Prosim was at its highest, even though we weren’t all together,” she said. “We weren’t going to let this crisis break this community.”

CONNECTED VIRTUALLY

There is perhaps no more visual example of the resilience of the Virginia Tech community than the annual 3.2-Mile Run in Remembrance, an event held to recognize the 32 individuals who lost their lives on April 16, 2007. Each April, thousands of Hokies trek to Blacksburg to join with the Hokie community for the solemn occasion.

By mid-March, organizers and participants alike knew that the traditional annual Blacksburg event would need to be modified to control the spread of the coronavirus. In true Hokie form, the Virginia Tech community created an inspirational alternative.

The run, which typically begins and ends around the Drillfield, was swiftly converted into a virtual event, and Hokies around the globe were invited to join via the Stridekick app. Participants accessed the app to log their Run in Remembrance miles.

“I have a feeling that something good is going to come out of all this. It just has to,” said McFadden.
According to the official statistics recorded over a three-day period, more than 11,500 participants from four continents logged more than 81,000 virtual miles.

The run was just one of a myriad of online events that encouraged Hokies to come together, lean on one another, and interact with the university community even though face-to-face interactions were restricted.

Virginia Tech stepped up to keep the university community across the country and around the globe informed not just of campus updates, but of evolving state and federal guidelines via electronic communications, PSAs, social media posts, news releases, and other media. Faculty experts from a wide range of departments shared their perspectives via newspaper stories and appearances on network and cable news shows. University and regional leaders conducted a series of town halls to answer questions, dispel misinformation, and convey the most up-to-date data available regarding a variety of COVID-19-related topics. And previously scheduled events moved online to accommodate the physically distanced landscape embraced by much of the world.

“As Hokies, it’s our community that sets us apart, and it’s during these unprecedented times that we need each other more than ever,” said Charlie Phlegar ’78, M.A.Ed. ’87, vice president for advancement at Virginia Tech. “At a time when getting together in-person wasn’t possible, it was important for us to keep Hokies around the globe informed and united by staying connected.”

Student Affairs, Human Resources, and other departments partnered with University Relations to publish information related to health, economics, and general life during a pandemic. Virginia Tech mental health professionals and support groups used a total of 132 secured Zoom accounts to provide an average of 250 hours per day of counseling and other services.

Hokies around the world boosted outreach efforts and worked hard to keep people connected. Student organizations moved meetings and events online. The annual student-led Relay for Life expanded from a 24-hour event to a week full of informational and social programming that set the bar for virtual relays held at colleges and universities across the nation. Parents, alumni, and other volunteers even transformed University Libraries’ Cheesy Nights—a service project turned-Blackburg campus-tradition that distributes grilled cheese sandwiches and other treats during finals week—into a virtual, at-home event.
As soon as they [the students] heard the music, every single one of them started singing, "Enter Sandman" through a Bluetooth speaker.

Enterprising students and employees used their skills and resources—grilled cheese kits—containing items for sandwiches, hot chocolate, and more—to students living in and around Winchester, Virginia. During finals week, Stoltzfus and a group of volunteers, including fellow student mothers Amy Stock and Nancy Vining, made 15 deliveries within a 70-mile area. The volunteers, who are members of the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), also donated the event to the next level, delivering DIY grilled cheese kits—containing items for sandwiches, hot chocolate, and more—to students living in and around Winchester, Virginia. During finals week, Stoltzfus and a group of volunteers, including fellow student mothers Amy Stock and Nancy Vining, made 15 deliveries within a 70-mile area. The volunteers, who are members of the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), also donated

"Extension is here to serve the commonwealth at all times, and we're working to address the new challenges in our communities by providing convenient and powerful resources for them, wherever they may be," said Ed Jones, director of Virginia Cooperative Extension. "Our agents are incredible resources who continually work to be beacons of light for communities across the commonwealth."

VCE also held its annual Southwest Virginia Bull Test Program virtually. The auction routinely brings more than $500,000 in total. The auction is a popular event for farmers across the state.

With fewer people on campus, the university's Dining Services scaled back operations; however, Campus Kitchen at Virginia Tech, which typically preserves unserved food for nonprofit agencies, continued to help fight hunger in the New River Valley, delivering more than 10,000 pounds of food to community organizations during March, April, and May. Across the country, Virginia Tech alumni stepped up, serving on the front lines of the medical field, helping educators navigate alternative treatment methods, and support the efforts of public health officials in their regions.

The Virginia Tech research community worked tirelessly to develop and implement testing (above), make personal protective equipment, alleviate shortages of supplies and medical devices, find alternative treatment methods, and support the efforts of public health officials in their regions. Ryan Pierson (top right), an associate college professor who teaches and oversees the workshop facilities at Virginia Tech’s Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center, created an open-source design, which is available online at no charge, for a tool (top left) to assist with opening doors and pushing buttons.

THAT WE MAY SERVE

As a public land-grant university, Virginia Tech prioritizes teaching, research, and outreach that meet the needs of our surrounding localities, state, nation, and world. The university’s dedication to that mission has perhaps never been more evident than during the COVID-19 pandemic. Virginia Tech researchers and scientists responded to the dire need for rapid testing by developing a new test and securing government approvals to process samples in Blacksburg and Roanoke. Enterprising students and employees used their skills to create thousands of face shields and implement projects to fund and secure resources to address shortages of critical equipment and supplies. The Blackburg campus hosted a federal personal protective equipment (PPE) decontamination site, one of only three in Virginia.

With offices in 108 counties and cities across the commonwealth, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) often stands at the forefront of education and service outreach. When the pandemic and resulting shutdown began to disrupt life, VCE disseminated a wide range of information on topics, ranging from health and safety to grocery shopping, food planning and recipes, and stress management. Later, Extension agents produced online embryology courses, virtual cooking contests, and livestock showcases.

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RISING TO THE MOMENT

Virginia Tech’s Roanoke campus continues to provide critical support in responding to the coronavirus pandemic. The Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC led an effort with the Fralin Life Sciences Institute to conduct COVID-19 testing in Roanoke and Blacksburg, providing consistent, reliable results at a time when Virginia was struggling to deploy more tests across the state.

A professor of medicine at the Virginia Tech Carillon School of Medicine partnered with Carilion Clinic and Virginia Tech engineers to upgrade bilevel positive airway pressure (BiPAP) machines, commonly used for sleep apnea, into makeshift ventilators, helping to relieve potential ventilator shortages. The medical school has also committed volunteer support for contact-tracing with the Medical Reserve Corps in Virginia.

And, just a few hours away, in the greater Washington, D.C., metro area, the pandemic is shaping the still-emerging Innovation Campus.

When the outbreaks escalated in early March, Lance Collins had recently been named as the Innovation Campus’s inaugural executive director. Rather than preparing for his move to Alexandria, he found himself scrambling at Cornell University, where he was wrapping up a decade-long stint as dean of its College of Engineering.

Now, as he prepares to lead Virginia Tech’s newest campus, Collins feels that the university’s mission in the world has become even more relevant and urgent than it was just a few months ago. “Virginia Tech’s dedication to service and its emphasis on interdisciplinary teams put it in an ideal position to effectively respond to this pandemic, to adapt to changing conditions, and to build upon the lessons that we’re learning during the process,” Collins said. “The Innovation Campus is taking shape during this historic moment, and will no doubt be influenced by the pandemic and our response for decades to come.”

The pandemic is an encompassing crisis that demands the best of us. But then again, Hokies have always risen to challenges.
Fourteen students in a general chemistry course created and filmed kid-friendly science projects in their kitchens to help Wonder Universe, a nonprofit children’s museum in Christiansburg, Virginia.

While live-streaming, Kevin Hamed, an assistant professor in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation, collected fish in a nearby stream so that students could see the process of catching and identifying fish.

In a four-part video series, the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute provided virtual demonstrations of its Sharing the Road with Trucks safety program to high school students throughout the mid-Atlantic region.

Undergraduates who participated in University Libraries data programs created tools and studied patterns in COVID-19 research data. This was a response to a request from the White House Office of Technology.

Students in a Department of Sociology feminist activism class held an online auction and raised $1,150 for Aarti for Girls, a home for abandoned children in Kadapa, India.

Without a whiteboard at home, Mike Ellerbrock, a professor in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, used Zoom, blank paper, and Word documents to walk students through solving economics problems.

Students in instructor Elizabeth McLain’s History and Analytics of Musical Style class each were assigned a vocabulary word to teach to the class—by creating a 60-second TikTok video.
FALL 1918 AT VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE WAS ALREADY A TIME OF CONFUSION AND CHAOS.

With World War I raging in Europe, the U.S. War Department had turned the Blacksburg campus into a Students’ Army Training Corps site. Prospective students—some of whom were underage or not academically prepared—came and went throughout September amid mass confusion about who would be eligible to attend. Battles raged over what would be taught, ultimately resulting in all of VPI’s four-year courses of study being ditched in favor of two-year courses.
On Oct. 1, 1918, according to the 1919 Bugle, more than 600 students wearing khaki and olive drab instead of the usual blue and gray were finally sworn in.

But just when the environment seemed to be settling into a positive routine, a new threat emerged in Blacksburg, creating even more chaos.

“Just as the confused turmoil of September was fading into memory and instruction in the new program was getting under-way, influenza hit the campus and spread like wildfire,” according to Lyle Kinnear’s “The First 100 Years: A History of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.”

All instruction except outdoor drills was suspended. The Field Polytechnic Institute and State University.

The Staunton News Leader also said that Jesse M. Jones, director of Extension work in Virginia, told agents, “Serve your people to the best of your ability in the present epidemic,” including opening soup kitchens for temporary hospitals and clinics. According to the paper, “In many of the counties there is an appalling lack of doctors and nurses, and the agents are being called upon to take their places. … In counties and towns where there are no hospitals, the agents will go from house to house helping any and every way they can.”

Some agents went to great lengths. The Nov. 20, 1918, edition of the Big Stone Gap Post reported that “one young woman agent left her car at the foot of the mountain and walked four miles to the home, carrying a basket laden with food and such medicine as she could secure in the village where she has her office. … It is no exaggeration to say that the death rate would have been much higher but for the work of the agents.”

At VPI, students returned to class on Nov. 3, only to be disrupted days later,” according to Kinnear. Interest in studying waned even further amid rumors of impending demobilization, followed by an exodus of the “boy soldiers” between Dec. 5 and 12.

Faculty members gamely continued offering classes through the semester, but in late December gave it up and decided to start the semester all over again Dec. 31.

The first VPI death was reported by the Roanoke World News on Oct. 9: 18-year-old Anthony V. Clarkson, of Claremont, Virginia. The Oct. 19 edition of the paper reported that “authori-...
BUSINESS CLASS
LYNNE DOUGHTIE ’85 ACHIEVED PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS, BREAKING BARRIERS IN BUSINESS ALONG THE WAY.

In 2015, she became the first female top executive at KPMG LLP, one of the world’s leading professional service firms. In June, she retired as the company’s U.S. chairman and CEO. Throughout her career, Doughtie regularly was named one of Fortune Magazine’s Most Powerful Women in Business.

Doughtie has remained involved with Virginia Tech as a member of both the Pamplin College of Business Advisory Council and the Accounting and Information Systems Advisory Board. She is currently serving alongside Morgan Blackwood-Patel ’03 and Horacio Valeiras ’80 as a tri-chair of Boundless Impact: The Campaign for Virginia Tech. In 2018, Doughtie was awarded Virginia Tech’s University Distinguished Achievement Award.

Doughtie recently shared her thoughts on her career, her alma mater, and the direction of higher education.

Why did you pursue a career in professional services?
“Growing up I watched my parents build businesses and, from an early age, they allowed me to ‘help.’ I recall summers as a young girl, sitting with my mother and her teaching me to post accounts receivable and make deposits. Their drive sparked my desire to pursue a business career. Eventually, I made what felt like a natural choice to major in accounting at Virginia Tech.”
“As the first in my family to go to college, it was important to me to find a university, and later a place to work, with a nurturing, supportive culture. I found that at Virginia Tech and at KPMG.

“When I was looking at what was next after graduation, I met recruiters from what was then the Big 8 accounting firms, and the recruiter from KPMG was a woman. That was unusual in 1984. She was impressive, articulate, and kind, and I walked away from that conversation thinking that KPMG would be a good fit for me.”

Each turn of your career has involved additional responsibilities and a widened scope of influence. What prepared you for these transitions?

“The foundation I had was strong. My parents instilled in my sister and me the confidence that we could achieve anything. I also had great mentors and sponsors at Virginia Tech and at KPMG who invested their time in me and supported me in career growth opportunities.”

What was the most unexpected turn in your career?

“When you’ve been at it as long as I have, you’re definitely going to have times when things don’t go as you expect. In the late 1990s, I was up for partner at KPMG and feeling confident I would be promoted that year. And then, market forces and client consolidation impacted my promotion that year.

“I was really upset about it. It seemed unfair because it wasn’t anything I did wrong; there were external factors beyond my control. It was a time when I was disappointed and upset, but it actually led to a much bigger opportunity for me. I joined a different part of our business. It was a brand-new area for me where I learned so much, and it gave me a different experience to be a more successful leader down the road. I’m not sure I would have become chairman and CEO of KPMG if I hadn’t taken some risks, gotten out of my comfort-zone, and tried new things.”

By a number of measures, KPMG is regarded as a great place to work. Why do you feel this is the case?

“Our caring and inclusive culture is what stands out the most to me. It attracts extraordinary people who want to work and build their careers here. Culture is something that can’t be replicated. To ensure it remains the cornerstone for years to come, I’ve led initiatives that further strengthened the firm’s culture and accentuated our values, while also continuing to advance diversity and inclusion within our firm and the marketplace.”

Describe the principles that govern your life, professionally and personally.

“It starts with integrity and your character and ensuring that doing what’s right is front and center. Also important to me is authenticity—being true to who you are and not trying to be something you are not. In our family, we value humility and hard work. We are all here for a purpose and have a responsibility to help others—in other words, Ut Prosim (That I May Serve).

“Professionally, I truly value my guides to me, especially when making tough decisions. I focus on leading with my head, my heart, and my gut. Leading with your head is getting the facts and using your intellect to get to the truth. Leading with your heart—caring about others and being empathetic—is important, too. Leaders who care get to the right decisions. And leading with your gut means sometimes you have to do the really hard thing because it’s for the greater good. I put decisions through the head, heart, and gut check and move forward with courage to do what is right. It goes back to the core value of integrity.”

Why have you continued to serve on the Pamplin advisory board and the accounting and information systems board?

“Virginia Tech had a huge impact on my life. My husband, son, and daughter are all alumni, too. I graduated with the educational foundation and the confidence to launch my career. I want to make sure tomorrow’s Hokies can build on their experience, just like I did, and I want them to know their horizons are only limited by their imagination, attitude, and willingness to work hard. Virginia Tech invested so much in me, and I want to pay it forward by serving and investing in future business leaders and Virginia Tech graduates.

“Ut Prosim lives on in me, and I will continue to do what I can to support Virginia Tech.”

What are your thoughts about Virginia Tech’s momentum and direction?

“Graduates today must be skilled in their disciplines but also be able to work together in teams, problem-solve, think critically, and function professionally. At KPMG, for example, leaders must inspire trust, deliver impact, and seek growth—for themselves, and their teams. We look for individuals with the requisite skills and experience. And leading with your gut means sometimes you have to do the really hard thing because it’s for the greater good. I put decisions through the head, heart, and gut check and move forward with courage to do what is right. It goes back to the core value of integrity.”

As you think about the top-rate talent needed for a successful business, what is higher education doing well, and where can it improve?

“Higher education has evolved in its approach to how students learn, particularly by using technology, inside and outside the classroom. The university’s focus on bringing students together from different disciplines to tackle challenges, with a curriculum that gives students the opportunity to work on real-world, multifaceted problems that require people with different mindsets and skills, really prepares students for a working world where diversity of thought and experience is the norm.

“And, importantly, Virginia Tech should continue making investments like it has in its Innovation Campus. Not only will this investment drive economic growth in Virginia, but it affords Virginia Tech students the unique opportunity to be at the forefront of the expansion of technology and education in this country, where they will learn the critical skills businesses are looking for in hiring.”

Virginia Tech modified its fund-raising efforts so that members of the Hokie community could focus on their personal, business, and community responses to the pandemic. What would you say to Hokies about taking care of the needs closest to them, while also considering how they might someday continue giving to Virginia Tech to help students and faculty?

“This unprecedented crisis has thrust us into an uncertain world. We are navigating many unknowns, and it is more important than ever that we focus on those closest to us—our families, neighbors, colleagues, and communities.

“We have seen tremendous acts of kindness during this time, and I am certain that my fellow Hokies are amongst those who are doing their part in this crisis. Virginia Tech has given us so much, and we are a strong and resilient community. This will pass, and we will find ourselves in a new normal. When that happens, I encourage the Hokie community to continue supporting Virginia Tech.”

Virginia Tech will name the KPMG/Lynne and Ben Doughtie Undergraduate Programs Suite, within its planned Global Business and Analytics Complex, in recognition of $2.5 million that was recently committed toward the project.

“[The naming] will highlight the positive impact on the university made by Lynne Doughtie ’85, her family, and KPMG, the firm for which she served as U.S. chairman and CEO from July 2015 through June 2020.

“We are extremely grateful to the Doughties, KPMG LLP partners, and the KPMG U.S. Foundation Inc., for this generous gift, which brings our Global Business and Analytics Complex one step closer to completion,” said Virginia Tech President Tim Sands. “This facility will provide tomorrow’s leaders with the skills they need to analyze complex data and help solve problems faced by businesses and communities around the world.”

The Global Business and Analytics Complex, which will add four buildings to Virginia Tech’s Blacksburg campus, is part of the university’s push to build on its expertise in data analytics and decision sciences.

Joining Lynne and Ben Doughtie in making the gift were several alumni who are KPMG partners, including Chris Yestra ’84, through the KPMG Foundation Matching Gift Program.

“I know I speak for all KPMG Hokies when I say that I am extremely proud that Lynne Doughtie, a fellow Hokie, rose to the top of our firm and served us as chairman and CEO,” Yestra said. “We are equally proud to join with Lynne in making this commitment in support of Virginia Tech’s Global Business and Analytics Complex.”
UNPRECEDENTED NEED

STUDENT EMERGENCY FUND HELPS ADDRESS

HELPING VIRGINIA TECH STUDENTS

who face sudden and unexpected financial hardships is one part of Anthony Scott’s job as an associate dean of students.

It’s never been a bigger part. Since mid-March, widespread disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic have led to an unprecedented number of requests for help from students struggling to afford basic necessities, such as food, rent, or internet access to continue their educations remotely.

Emergency federal assistance has allowed the university to help many of the more than 2,000 students who have reached out. But in numerous instances the university was only able to help thanks to donor gifts to Virginia Tech’s Student Emergency Fund by generous alumni, friends, university employees, and parents of current or former students.

“We made 27 grants from the Student Emergency Fund during all of the spring 2019 semester,” said Scott, who administers the program. “Since mid-March, the program is ongoing. Scott said he was in the process of reviewing nearly 100 additional student applications for support, and he expected many more would continue to come his way. The amount each student receives varies, but is typically a few hundred dollars.

“We look at this as a way that we can at least assist with a rent payment, food, utilities, or something important,” Scott said. “A lot of students are now in a position where they just don’t have options. Because of the pandemic, summer internships have been canceled and opportunities for summer work are gone.”

While roughly seven-times as many students have been assisted compared to last year, the program has always served an important function. By providing critical help for students at tough points in their lives, the fund has helped make it possible for many Hokies to stay on track toward earning their degrees.

During his senior year, Dustin Dorph was carrying 18 credits, serving as Student Government Association president, and working at Jimmy John’s to help support himself. It became too much to juggle. After falling behind on bills and having a hold placed on his university account, Dorph was referred to the Office of the Dean of Students. He received a grant from the Student Emergency Fund. The aid, along with other support, helped Dorph resolve his financial situation. He completed his bachelor’s in civil engineering in 2013, and is now a development director with Manifold, a real estate development firm based in Austin, Texas.

Dorph said he makes a point of donating to the Student Emergency Fund and also serves on the Student Affairs Young Alumni Advisory Board because “Virginia Tech threw me a life raft when I needed it as a student. I’m forever grateful for that and for the people who made such a significant impact on my life. I want to make sure that all students can have that kind of help when they need it. So it was never if I was going to give back, but when and how. I always knew I wanted to pay it forward and help students who found themselves in a pinch financially, like I did my senior year.”

It’s been nearly three decades since Tom and Martha Murdock’s daughter, Beverly Murdock, earned two degrees at Virginia Tech. Nevertheless, the Leesburg, Virginia, couple said the thought of today’s students having to worry about basic necessities while also juggling challenging coursework inspired them to step forward and give.

“Our daughter had a wonderful experience at Virginia Tech, and we believe in expressing the frustrations and anxieties of financial hardship—to worry about how to pay rent or for food while keeping grades up and meeting other obligations at the same time. For students in need, don’t be afraid to ask for help. There’s a community that’s around to support you getting to a better spot.” — Martha Murdock

College can be a very stressful time, and we want students to be able to focus on what they should be concentrating on—like classes and career opportunities—instead of where their next meal or rent payment will come from,” said Martha Murdock.

Bryon Hughes, Virginia Tech’s dean of students, said the generosity of donors to the Student Emergency Fund has been particularly inspiring as he and colleagues in Student Affairs seek to help students navigate the unprecedented situation caused by the pandemic.

“The scope of need among students has grown and remains a challenge to address, but having our alumni, employees, friends, and parents step forward to support the Student Emergency Fund makes a big difference,” Hughes said. “We are incredibly grateful to all who have given, or will.”

Thinking back on his uncertain situation as a student, Dorph said: “It’s hard to express the frustrations and anxieties of financial hardship—to worry about how to pay rent or for food while keeping grades up and meeting other obligations at the same time. For students in need, don’t be afraid to ask for help. There’s a community that’s around to support you getting to a better spot.” — Dustin Dorph

Martha Murdock
IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

HURRICANES, TORNADOS, Floods, disease outbreaks, and more—Jeff Stern has seen it all. At age 18, Stern was drawn to protecting the public good, so he became a volunteer firefighter and paramedic in Montgomery County, Maryland.

“What I enjoyed doing as an avocation as a volunteer was directly helping people,” said the Virginia Tech alumnus, who holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from the university’s Center for Public Administration and Policy, housed in the School of Public and International Affairs. Stern ultimately turned that passion into a career as a professional firefighter and paramedic in Arlington, Virginia, and later in Colorado.

As leader of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), Stern was at the forefront of the commonwealth’s response to COVID-19. VDEM is responsible for carrying out preparedness and emergency response functions on behalf of Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam, buying personal protective equipment, and managing and distributing supplies across the commonwealth.

As soon as the pandemic began, a small group, including Stern, his employees, and representatives from 40 state agencies, manned the commonwealth’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Stern recently transitioned to a new role as superintendent of FEMA’s Emergency Management Institute.

What has been the hardest decision during the pandemic?

STERN: At the governor’s level, the hardest decision was to shut down the economy. Additionally, virtualizing the EOC structure early on was a critical choice. In those first four weeks, we had to be transparent with local governments about our limitations. We couldn’t necessarily come to their aid with equipment the way we normally would in a hurricane or tornado. Supplies are limited. Orders for things like PPE [personal protective equipment] are being processed, but it takes two to three weeks to get them to our warehouse.

Our logistics team did an amazing job building a warehouse hub and distribution system in partnership with the Virginia National Guard and Estes Express, a Virginia trucking and logistics company.

How can Virginians stay positive?

STERN: The most important thing is to have hope and believe that this, too, will end. Other generations have gone through crises that have lasted for months and years. Also, understand that it’s okay to have mixed feelings and fears. There are a lot of resources in the communities. The meaning of ‘commonwealth’ is so paramount right now.

Q & A

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

You have dealt with about 50 emergencies in Virginia. How is this one different?

STERN: The first difference is the need to distance. We can’t physically be together other than that small staff in the Emergency Operations Center. About 1,000 people are working virtually or out in the field. It’s a very big scale and doing it remotely is a new challenge.

Another major difference is that normally when there is an event, you can quickly build out an estimated timeline of how long it will last, an arc of the event from preparation to response to recovery. With this, there is not an easily designed end stage, because there is the uncertainty of the disease.

The third difference involves our engagement with the private sector. We have over 1,000 private companies that have offered to assist in some way.

Q What is the hardest decision during the pandemic?

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FOR THE CLASS OF 2020, THE Virginia Tech experience came to an abrupt halt during the spring semester. The coronavirus pandemic would interfere with the final weeks of class, exams, and goodbyes. The move online would culminate with a virtual commencement ceremony filmed in an empty Lane Stadium.

And yet, the Class of 2020 marched resolutely onward.

Although this was not the way that students or the university would have chosen to close the academic year, the weeks between March 7 and May 15 did not fully define the Class of 2020. From move-in day in the fall of 2016 through mid-semester in the spring of 2020, these students experienced all of the traditions and activities that connect Hokies generation to generation.

As individuals they learned and grew and planned for the future. And now, they take their spots as the newest Virginia Tech alumni.
MORE THAN 170 GRADUATE PROGRAMS are offered across Virginia Tech’s nine colleges. Students in the university’s graduate programs learn to apply their speciality to the real world through interdisciplinary research, teacher training, and professional development.

In May, degrees were conferred to 1,247 Virginia Tech graduate students, including those in the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine and the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine in Roanoke.

Members of the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine’s Class of 2020 will go into programs representing 14 specialties in 16 states. The most represented specialties in the class include emergency medicine, internal medicine, and general surgery.

Recognized in the veterinary college community as trailblazers, members of the Class of 2020 were the first cohort to participate in the college’s newly designed curricula. While 63 percent of the class secured work in private clinical practice, 22 percent are pursuing clinical internships or residencies, and 11 percent are serving in government, corporate, or military sectors, including three grads who were commissioned into the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps as captains.
I join-----in gentle sadness and silent tears the pride of the class
of Twenty Twenty in accepting their duty

I join-----the unheard steps across the stage
And the shouts when that diploma is put in their hands

I join-----the bravery of the class of Twenty Twenty in understanding:
some gave their health; some gave their lives; some gave their possibility
of kindness because of the selfishness of others

I join-----the understanding of forgiveness

I join-----my students in writing about their first kiss and

I join-----them in the heartbreak when he is gone

I join-----the laughter after a winning football game
And the pouts when UVA finally almost evened the score

I join-----our parents who struggled to make this day a possibility that is not
possible that will always be possible because The Hokie Nation is the possibility

I join-----us all in the struggle to be a better nation through the betterment
of ourselves

I join-----those who hope our campus will find room for a monument to
celebrate these youngsters. Most of our monuments honor those who cannot
know how we praise them.

I join-----those who praise the living

I join-----all of the Hokie family who welcome the newest Hokie members
Who one day will bring their grandchildren to show “See? I was a different soldier
in a different war”

I join-----the pride we take in the Hokie family
The Class of Twenty Twenty has been gracious and brave

I join-----all of us all over the globe who applaud their sacrifice

I join-----the sun shining for your warmth and the rain for quenching your thirst
Spring will come and winter will be embraced

I join-----all people of goodwill wishing you congratulations

*Nikki Giovanni was a guest speaker who read this poem at the Class of 2020 commencement ceremony in May 2020.*
Virginia Tech opened its first drone park.

Freshman Orientation

Virginia Tech extends spring break, moves classes online for the remainder of the spring semester, in response to COVID-19.

The Big Plan: Hokies planted 6,000 trees on campus and throughout Blacksburg.

Your graduation is a milestone. Your journey with Virginia Tech is just getting started. Here’s how you can stay connected.

- Update your contact information so you don’t miss news and updates.
- Attend an event online with fellow alums.
- Find your local chapter so you can connect with Hokies wherever you are.
- Check out the Hokie Club Recent Graduate Program for discounted game tickets and more.
- Get career help with our Hokies job board and virtual networking opportunities.

Find it all online at alumni.vt.edu/youngalumni.
You have attained something you can never lose, something upon which you will stand to reach your dreams—your Virginia Tech education. While your last semester was not what any of us expected, nothing can diminish your achievement, and you’ve proven that nothing will stand in your way. For every obstacle you overcame to reach this goal, we congratulate you. For every sacrifice you and your family made to get you here, we applaud you. For the spirit of Ut Prosim (That I May Serve) you will carry with you always, we commend you. Class of 2020, you will forever hold a special place in our hearts and minds.

We celebrate you now and always.

-President Tim Sands

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Joe Burnett and John Irvin began what would become a lifelong friendship when they attended each other’s first birthday parties in Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1945. The pair attended church school and high school together before eventually enrolling at Virginia Tech. Both served in the Corps of Cadets: Burnett was a platoon leader in L Company, and Irvin was the drum major of the Highty-Tighties.

After graduating from the university in 1967, Burnett and Irvin were initially assigned to Fort Bliss as second lieutenants.

"At Fort Bliss we were both assigned to the same command," said Irvin. "We just couldn’t seem to get away from each other."

The friends, who now live in Georgia, meet every few weeks. And they still find time to celebrate their birthdays and the friendship that began over cake and ice cream.
As the novel coronavirus spread this spring, Virginia Tech alumni wasted no time finding ways to put Ut Pros im (That I May Serve) into action. From fashioning face masks to serving on the front lines of the health professions, our alums worked hard to offer support and help curb the spread.

Although it would be impossible to quantify the names and actions of everyone who stepped up to help, we appreciate the efforts of each and every alum who generously gave of their time, talent, and resources to keep our communities safe and healthy. These next few pages highlight some of the simple and extraordinary contributions of Virginia Tech graduates across the nation and the globe. These individuals represent the resilience, character, and service that are central to true Hokie Spirit.

Thank you, Hokies.
BRIAN CONNOR M.D. ’19
Brian Connor, an internal medicine resident at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington, found himself on the front lines of the pandemic in its early stages. “Being one of the initial ‘hot spots’ for the pandemic in this country certainly came with its share of anxiety—personally, professionally, and socially,” Connor said.

Some of Connor’s residency learning experiences had to be canceled, and staffing shifted to acute and intensive care units.

“At first, it was disappointing,” Connor said. “But it was inspiring how tirelessly and selflessly my co-residents volunteered to staff some of the most affected and time-consuming services, including the medical intensive care unit. The sense of camaraderie and selflessness was pervasive and infectious. The desire to serve the community and support one another outweighed my personal trepidation.”

JOHN ROSS ’99
John Ross realized that the pandemic would affect not only universities, but also K-12 schools. As an instructional design consultant and author, he knew his expertise could help others. Ross joined Jeff Mann and Jane Ross, his wife, and children in his home state of Ohio.

“Eric Parlette, a Navy reservist and doctor at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington, found himself on the front lines of the battle against COVID-19. Parlette and other crew members dropped anchor near New York City on March 30 to aid the city’s hospitals, which were overwhelmed with patients infected with the coronavirus. The crew spent the next month caring for various types of patients, including those who had been diagnosed with COVID-19.

While on the Comfort, Parlette served as one of four physicians in the Medical Operations Center, which was responsible for communications with surrounding medical facilities and for coordinating logistics, admissions, and discharges of patients on and off the ship. From the dock in Manhattan, they could see the tops of the buildings in Times Square and feel the eeriness of the city’s situation. Parlette said that his sense of duty was cultivated in Blacksburg.

“It was fundamental, the culture at Tech, reshaping around the motto Ut Prosim. I think the mindset of community comes with a sense of humility, which is incredibly important and produces the best kind of leaders,” Parlette said.

JENNIFER MCQUISTON DVM ’97 AND CAITLIN COSSABOOM ’10, MPH ’14, DVM ’15, PH.D. ’15
On Feb. 1, Jennifer McQuiston, deputy director, Division of High Consequence Pathogens and Pathology, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, was called to serve the Centers for Disease Control in the field. McQuiston was deployed to Lackland Air Force Base in Texas to oversee a team coordinating the repatriation of U.S. citizens being evacuated from Wuhan, China. The team was responsible for safely managing the personal and medical needs of 91 Americans, who would be quarantined at the base for at least 14 days. Later, additional staff added to manage the volume of the work included Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine grad Caitlin Cossaboom.

“Members of the team coordinated access to meals, monitored health, and managed all other aspects of care for those quarantined. Of the 91 citizens, only one tested positive for COVID-19,” McQuiston said.

Upon returning to the CDC from the field, McQuiston helped coordinate a field team deployed to respond to newly identified community transmission efforts in California. Then from March-May, McQuiston served as principal deputy incident manager for the CDC’s COVID-19 response.

“I describe myself in this role as being like a border collie herding sheep,” said McQuiston. In that role, she worked to coordinate the tasks across various scientific areas and other COVID-related work to ensure goals are achieved and to avoid duplication of services and maximize efficiency. McQuiston noted that the CDC response was an “all hands on deck” effort, which the anticipated would continue until there is a vaccine.

EDMUNS BROTHERS
Terrell ’17, Trey ’15, and Tremaine Edmunds all played football at Dan River High School and then Virginia Tech. They’re all now in the NFL. On March 25, the trio returned to Danville to distribute nearly 1,000 lunches to their community following the grim announcement of the massive spread of coronavirus in the United States. The Drive-Thru Service was sponsored by the Danville chapter of The Links Inc., a national service organization.

“It’s everything,” Terrell said. “Just putting a smile on people’s faces by coming to grab some lunch and enjoying a good time through all the bad that’s going on in the world. Just knowing it’s a tough time, but we’re tougher people and we’re going to get through it. It’s amazing being out here, helping out, putting it on everyone, seeing big smiles around the city.”

JACK ’12 AND ALLEY ’13 DUFOUR
Jack and Alley Dufour, Blacksburg, Virginia, president of the Virginia Tech alumni chapter of the Jack and Alley Dufour, Blacksburg, Virginia, president of the Virginia Tech alumni chapter of the Jack and Alley Dufour, Blacksburg, Virginia, president of the Virginia Tech alumni chapter of the Jack and Alley Dufour, Blacksburg, Virginia, president of the Virginia Tech alumni chapter of the Danville chapter of The Links Inc., a national service organization.
A NOTE ABOUT OUR EVENTS

All Hokies are eager to be together again so we can celebrate our special community.

We’ve seen the novel coronavirus change the world we live in, and together we are all adapting to the uncertainty.

While we’re looking forward to the time when we’re together again, we are also closely monitoring the effects of COVID-19. Right now, we are exploring what Virginia Tech events on campus and in your communities would look like and when they could resume.

We will communicate with you regularly about our future plans and the virtual events we are planning.

Even if we must be physically distant, we can still remain close.

For more information, visit alumni.vt.edu/events.
Retro

When John “Dr. Jack” Hutcheson became president in 1945, he began to plan for a campus that could accommodate 10,000 students. The plan included an entire new campus that was named as The Mall. The plan did not sit well with alumni, students. The plan included an entrance mall now if the people will give me the credit for it when they view it twenty-five years from now.”

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“We are very happy to introduce the newest member of the Virginia Tech Class of 2042.” —Douglas Alistair Lindsey ’13, Webster, Texas, who welcomed a son, Davis Alistair, 4/7/20.

“Celebrating One Love in paradise required one special day.” —Courtney Marielle Lantier ’10, Stafford, Virginia, who married Adam Lantier, 2/29/20.


“My wife, Olivia Sandown, and I welcomed a new little girl into the world in February.” —Brian Rock ’07, Norman, Oklahoma, who welcomed a daughter, Gloria Valentina, 2/19/20.

“A perfect day at Clover Forest Plantation in Goochland, Virginia, was just the beginning.” —Benjamin Galen Wilson ’14, Ashland, Virginia, who married Mackenzie May Cary, 9/21/19.

“Never too young to start cheering on the Hokies!” —Kristin Moreno Westover ’08, Fairfax Station, Virginia, who welcomed a daughter, Caroline Parker, 8/17/19, just in time for Hokie football season.

“The Patrick Henry Ballroom in Roanoke was the setting for our special day.” —Emily Sue White ’13, Blacksburg, Virginia, who married Eric Alton White, 2/20/20.

“We welcomed our son, Neil, with a big Hokie Hokie Hi.” —Lauren Lemieux Firey ’13, Arlington, Virginia, who along with Peter Firey ’12, welcomed a son, Neil, 6/24/19.

“We are very happy to introduce the newest member of the Virginia Tech Class of 2042.” —Brittany Hardesty Tomblin ’04, Stephens City, Virginia, who welcomed a daughter, Ryann Elizabeth, 9/28/19.
IN MEMORIAM

These listings include notices shared with the university between June 1, 2017, and Sept. 30, 2017. The next edition will include those received between Oct. 1, 2017, and Dec. 31, 2017.
OBITUARIES

FACULTY/STAFF

Fred Donald ‘Don’ Blos, a longtime professor with the Department of Geosciences and the first professor at Virginia Tech to be appointed as an Alumni Distinguished Professor, died April 22, a month shy of his 100th birthday.

Raymond Desy, professor emeritus of chemistry in the Virginia Tech College of Science known for his mentoring of graduate and undergraduate students, died March 17.

Douglas K. Lindner, associate professor emeritus of electrical and computer engineering in the College of Engineering, died Feb. 1.

Raymond ‘Ray’ Harold Myers ‘59, M.S. ’61, Ph.D. ’63, a faculty member with the Department of Statistics, died March 26.

Cheryl Anne ‘Mira’ Peterson, executive director of the Office of the President, died July 1.

Beverly Huston Spro M.S.73, Ph.D.90, former Virginia Tech dean of students, Board of Visitors member, and secretary of education of the Commonwealth of Virginia, died March 13.

Thomas Carl Ward, a professor emeritus in the Department of Chemistry in the College of Science, died Feb. 28.
WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO OUR WORLD during the last few months has led to changes in our perspectives and our work.

The global COVID-19 pandemic and the ways it has affected all of us are unprecedented. The reckoning with race relations in America is a turning point generations in the making. I have found myself rethinking priorities and having difficult conversations with family, friends, and colleagues.

In this moment, we are all witnesses to history. Together, we find ourselves at a crossroads. The directions we each choose will determine our individual paths forward. While these times are challenging, I am continually seeking ways to learn and how to make my community better.

Our alma mater is dedicated to a course that drives positive change, and the role of Virginia Tech has never been more important. I am honored to be part of the leadership team at our university. Led by President Tim Sands, we are acknowledging our challenges, uniting to do and be better, and committing to being living examples of our Principles of Community.
It is heartening to witness how Hokies have also stepped up to support one another in the face of a new normal. You have made gifts to our university to provide aid to students and assist with faculty research. This generosity has the power to change lives.

The Hokie Nation is a collective, powerful force that has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to help provide for the needs of our great institution. With your help, we have achieved yet another year of record giving, which is especially remarkable amid uncertainty on so many fronts. Giving is the highest it has ever been to the university. And leading by example, the university’s leadership and many of our volunteer advisory boards have achieved 100 percent philanthropic participation over the past fiscal year.

Since the COVID-19 crisis began, an unprecedented number of students have come forward asking for help, suddenly facing financial hardship and personal turmoil. Generous Hokies gave and so far have helped more than 200 students through the Student Emergency Fund, in addition to providing numerous current-use scholarships through the Beyond Boundaries scholarship initiative with $1 million dollars raised in the past fiscal year. Virginia Tech researchers have also answered the call to explore the science behind COVID-19, which will hopefully lead to more knowledge and help save lives.

One bright spot during these challenging times has been the opportunities to come together online to find friendship, fun, and support. So much has changed in the world, including how we now connect. We have a renewed emphasis on engagement to remain connected as an energetic body of alumni, students, and friends. From online networking events and town halls, virtual committee meetings and happy hours, and even Zoom game rooms, we continue to innovatively explore ways to safely work and play together.

Even though we have not been able to gather in person, we can still stay in touch, strengthen our community, and share information about Virginia Tech’s role in the world. Through our virtual offerings, Hokies anywhere can come together. This is an opportunity for more of us to gather more frequently, keeping our bonds strong.

While you manage your personal priorities amid our changing world in the months ahead, let us continue to support one another, maintain our Hokie pride, and stay connected. Let us know how you are doing, what your alma mater can do for you, and any feedback you wish to share.

Thank you for all that you do for Virginia Tech—and continue to be well.

Charlie Phlegar ’78, M.A.Ed. ’87 is the vice president for advancement at Virginia Tech.

Reunion Weekend is an exciting new tradition that alumni look forward to all year long. We are planning our largest gathering yet for 2021. Get ready for next summer! THE COUNTDOWN IS ON.

Visit alumni.vt.edu/reunion2021 to learn more.