



President's Perspective

By Marquea D. King

Greetings Fellow Colleagues:

Alas, another semester has come and gone! I hope everyone did great taking final exams, finishing up thesis and dissertation work (like myself), and wish the best to those of you just beginning to get a real taste of graduate education and its many splendors.



Moreover, for those of you who have found yourself unable to attend the monthly Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) meetings, I would like to point out to you some of the "goings on" that surround graduate education here at Virginia Tech. Primarily, the strategic plan of the University has been developed with several diverse areas in mind, but it focuses immensely on the graduate student population. I urge you to browse the following website, as it is informative, yet brief. It gives descriptions of some very real depictions of education at Virginia Tech and its role as a leading institution of higher education (www.unirel.vt.edu/stratplan).

In concert with this plan is the search for the Dean of the Graduate School (a newly developed position)...which is in full swing and following its original timeline (as previously published, www.unirel.vt.edu/spectrum/09-14-01/st2.html). The desire is to choose someone of impressive caliber with great experience and profound vision, who is overflowing with energy and an eagerness to influence the coming transitions of graduate education. On October 25, 2001 an open forum was held in order to solicit ideas from the graduate student community with particular regard to this search. I applaud all of you who took the time to be a part of the stimulating discussion. Comments, concerns, and feedback that you may have regarding this process are welcome and should be directed to Sue Magliaro (sumags@vt.edu), Chair of the Search Committee for the Dean of the Graduate School.

Now that were installing a "new" Dean for the Graduate School, one would think that ground breaking for an additional "new" building would also be underway – No, not yet. But, after returning for the Spring semester from the holiday eating and New Year celebrations – don't worry about the added pounds, since parking at Virginia Tech will suffer yet another ill fate. Apparently beyond our control, parking is being sacrificed in exchange for progress in the building of new facilities.

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Graduate Student Of The Month

October: No applications were received; cash prize was donated to the Montgomery Co. Red Cross

November: Jeffery S. Hickman, Psychology

Profile on Page Four

Interview with Tim Copeland, Part Two

Questions by: Chris S. Dula

Tim Copeland is a graduate student in the department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences at Virginia Tech. In May of 2000, he was diagnosed with chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML). The following are excerpts from an email interview conducted with him recently.



How has being a member of the VT community helped you? The folks in my department have been great. I was given a lot of time and understanding to prepare for the transplant. In particular, I would like to thank Scott Klopfer and Melanie Culver. They spearheaded an effort to raise funds for the transplant (over \$50,000). Anyway, the folks in the FIW department tapped into the alumni and the rest of the university. I received a lot of donations and, even better, many cards and letters. I tried to reply to everyone, so I'm sorry if I missed you! The result was peace of mind, so I was able to concentrate on getting well, knowing that others were concerned about me. Things like that have renewed my faith in humanity's potential for good.

When do you hope to return to being a full-time graduate student? I am planning on resuming full-time status next January. But we'll see. I was hoping to be back this fall but my GVHD complications changed that. The docs say to take it easy and increase my activity level a little bit at a time.

What are your career goals? My immediate goal is to return to my studies and finish my Ph.D. After that, I want to use my knowledge to apply research to the conservation and management of fish and our other aquatic resources. I'm pretty flexible whether that will be in academia or a government agency, as long as it lands me in a nice place to live. I also feel the need to give back to people somehow. I have a few ideas but I want to think it through a bit more.

Do you have a message for VT graduate students? I tried to go into this with a positive attitude, that this would be a learning experience for me. That I had cancer, but it didn't have me. I've learned a lot and am still figuring some things out. So I don't have a good coherent message that could cover all that I've learned. Perhaps the main thing would be that a good mental attitude is at least 50% of survival, for cancer or life in general.

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From the Desk of the Dean

By Dr. Joseph Merola

As we come to the end of an academic semester and the end of a calendar year (can it be the start of 2002 already?), I am looking back on the past 11 months that I have been Acting Dean of the Graduate School. There is much that I would like to say and limited space in which to say it. This has been an exciting time for me and I am grateful for the interactions that I have had with the graduate student community. One thing that I would like to share with you, thanks to the great folks who work at the Graduate School (especially Pat Goodrich), is some information from a survey of new graduate students.



For several years the Graduate School has conducted a survey of incoming graduate students during Graduate Orientation. In Fall 2001, when asked how students heard about Virginia Tech, over 17 percent listed a faculty member as the primary recruiter, and 18 percent mentioned a Virginia Tech alumnus. Individual faculty members were also listed as the primary reason to attend Virginia Tech for 11.5 percent of the students and another 50 percent ranked the quality of the program as their first choice.

These are welcome indicators of being a top-notch school. The Graduate School Web Pages got the "very useful" ranking from 54 percent of students, compared to 38 percent in 1999, and the "nearly useless" web page response dropped from 0.4 to 0.3. Fall 2001 also marked a large increase in the number of students who indicated "very preferable" to the question about having access to an on-line or downloadable Graduate School application, from 45.7 percent in 1998, to 63.6 percent in 2001. That number will probably increase even more next year as the Graduate School's work with CollegeNet to make its application more user friendly comes online.

However, it is true that the online "hate it" responders grew from 1.7 in 1998 to 1.8 in 2001. While this is not a huge percentage, it is a clear indication to me of our responsibility to offer service and access to ALL students, not just *most* students. We are also pleased to report that satisfaction with Graduate School staff continues to be notably positive for 97 percent of the students. Thanks to the nearly 400 new graduate students who took time to complete the survey this year.

This time of year also saw the recent end of a holiday season for many faiths and cultures. Regardless of your religion or country of origin, there is a wish I believe that we all can endorse: "Peace on Earth and goodwill to all." Hope you had a great break.

Be the Next Graduate Student of the Month!

The purpose of the Award is to recognize outstanding graduate students at Virginia Tech. You only need to be a full or part-time graduate student on the Blacksburg campus. Any graduate student can apply and self-nominations are encouraged! Multiple submissions are accepted, so if at first you don't succeed, try again!

Applications must be submitted 10 days (by 5:00 pm) before the GSA Monthly Meeting to the GSA office in 309 Squires Student Center. The winner will be announced at the following GSA monthly meeting and will receive \$75 and a certificate of recognition. The application and all further instructions may be obtained at: <http://gsa.uusa.vt.edu/>

Copeland Interview Continued

And if anyone thinks they can benefit from my experience, I would be glad to talk to them. Contact me at tcopelan@vt.edu. I encourage anyone to give blood and consider registering to become a marrow donor. It is truly the gift of life.

Also, my case should be a good plug for a decent group health insurance policy for graduate students. Upon arrival at this university, I deemed the available insurance worthless, so I didn't get any. And it wouldn't have helped with CML treatment even if I did have it. So I applaud the GSA's quest for graduate student health insurance. Step it up and keep at it until the job is done!

Is there anything else you'd like to say in general? Thanks for the open-ended opportunity for a shameless plug! So here goes: during my confinement I found out that Sandra Steingraber, ecologist and cancer survivor, was speaking here in Blacksburg. I was unable to attend but I did read her book, "Living Downstream." It was very sobering and I recommend it for anyone. She documents the concurrent increases of incidence of cancer and the use of artificial chemicals in our environment, to the point that every adult in this country has detectable amounts of dioxin, a carcinogen, in their body. I already had suspected that something like this caused my CML. Not that I am totally against the chemical industry; after all, I have been kept alive for the last year-and-a-half by artificial substances. But I believe we need to re-think how such things are applied and to be more conservative with things like that which can have subtle, but far-reaching effects on our environment and eventually ourselves. So, sermon over. Thanks for listening!

President's Perspective Continued

This Spring, the erection of a new Chemistry/Physics Building will have begun in a rather large area of the Pamplin/Derring parking lot. The Capital Design and Construction Department has details on this project (www.cdcd.vt.edu). The designation of the Faculty/Staff (F/S) and Commuter/Graduate (C/G) spaces in the B-Lot will "change to address the significant loss of spaces." Now you can wipe your brow and feel at ease – Wrong! "This change will replace *all* the F/S spaces lost to the construction project" by taking over C/G spaces in the adjacent lot. Increasing the number of C/G spaces is referred to by way of a mention of "several projects ...being scheduled for summer 2002 ... to replace those lost spaces." By this time of course, spaces will be more plentiful anyway – as many commuter students will no longer be occupying them as they do during a full semester.

Now that I have vented for both myself and on behalf of my constituents, my hope is that our cause and our concerns do not fall on deaf ears. Administratively speaking, much needs to be heard in the way of graduate and undergraduate student parking issues.

I thank you for your time and attention and I hope to have you visit our website (www.uusa.gsa.vt.edu) and drop by our monthly delegate meetings to keep up with the activities within the GSA. I also implore you to send us any feedback, ideas, or comments that you feel will help to uplift and promote graduate education at Virginia Tech.

Yours in Service,
Marquea D. King

Recipients of Travel Funding and Graduate Research Development Funding

The Travel Fund Program (TFP) provides Virginia Tech graduate students with funding for travel, accommodation, and meal expenses so that they may present their research at professional conferences, symposiums, and other similar events. Any graduate student who has a research paper or poster accepted for presentation or such an event is eligible to apply for the funding. The maximum award a student can receive is \$300.

The Graduate Research Development Project (GRDP) is a program administered by the GSA, which provides monetary support for degree contingent research conducted by graduate students. The applications are judged in a blind review by a panel of faculty members representing each college. Up to \$300 may be awarded for selected masters proposals and \$500 for doctoral proposals.

Funding for TFP and GRDP is distributed during two cycles per year. The next TFP deadline is Jan. 28th and the next GRDP deadline is Feb 4th. Further information and applications can be obtained on the web at: <http://gsa.usa.vt.edu/>

Travel Fund Recipients Include:

Michelle Barthet, Jeannemarie Beiseigel, Sarah Berry, Edward Boone, Denine Rachelle Bowman, Jennifer Brown, Jennifer Burleigh, Robert Capra, Jie Chen, Hsu-Kuang Ching, Ed Christopher, Seth Clark, Benjamin Cohen, Jennifer Cook, Christopher Dana, Theresa Dellinger, Can Eristi, Raquel Ferreira, Twzen-Shang Geng, Jacob George, Lawton Grinter, Anya Hawthorn, Erin Holden, Karen Joest, Paula Johnson, Nicholas Kiersey, Kyungmi Kim, Sook-Hyun Kim, Suk Won Kim, Ashley Lamb, Jennifer Lambert-Shute, Matthew Lear, Peng Li, Junghwa Lim, Marco Lopes, Amber Mace, Carmen Marino, Kasey Martin, Brahim Medjahed, Larry Miller, Erik Olsen, Daniel Owens, Rachael Perrott, Tina Marie Peterson, Olga Pierrakos, Stephen Poulson, Matthew Powers, Ramya Ramanath, Jason Reed, David Rodland, Mark Russell, Tracey Slotta, George Sousa, Michael Spinney, Jennifer Stempien, Suzanne Stevens, Joel Stitzel, Lois Swoboda, Kimberly Tabor, Scott Thomson, Yanping Wang, Megan Waterman, Saami Yazdani, Gabriella Zilahi-Balogh.

Of the 76 TFP applications, a total of 64 were funded. Of the \$18,576.98 requested, \$14,951.39 was awarded.

Graduate Research Development Fund Recipients Include:

College of Architecture and Urban Planning

Wei Huang (MS), Sarah Nienow (PhD),
Alyson Peek (PhD), Jun Xu (PhD)

College of Arts and Sciences

Chris Burcher (PhD), Kenneth Cook (MS), Chris Dula (PhD), Stean Earl (PhD), Michiyo Hirai (PhD), Jeffrey Hickman (MS), Matthew Hull (MS), Rebecca Kavage (MS), Angela Mae Kron (MS), Olyssa Starry (PhD), Pia Strunk (PhD)

Pamplin College of Business

Zheng Zhou (PhD)

College of Engineering

Miranda Capra (MS), Lakshmi Pathange (MS),
Suzanne Stevens (PhD)

College of Human Resources and Development

Clarice Evans (PhD), Benjamas Kutintara (PhD),
Carmen Marino (PhD), Katherine Walker (PhD)

Veterinary College of Medicine

Marco Lopes (PhD)

Of the 27 GRDP applications, a total of 24 were funded. Masters students received \$300 each and Ph.D. students received \$500 each. Total funding amount = \$10,400.

Board Of Visitors Representative Point-of-View

Dear Graduate Students,

Last semester I had the opportunity to visit the Northern Virginia Graduate Center (NVGC) in Falls Church together with Marquee King, the GSA president and Melinda Pomeroy, a GSA vice-president. From the meeting with some of their graduate students we got an impression of how students on this extended campus feel and what concerns they have. They were satisfied with their facilities and felt that the Interlibrary Loan with Newman Library here in Blacksburg works well.



Nonetheless, an important general point was that there was a lack of communication and “community spirit” with the main campus in Blacksburg. Improvements to the information flow are being made, including for example, that a representative from their campus would soon attend meetings of the GSA in Blacksburg and serve as a liaison. I will keep in contact with the students in the NVGC to stay involved in their issues and follow up on their concerns. I also intend to visit other extended campus locations soon.

An idea that arose out of a discussion with Dr. Merola from the Graduate School, as well as from talking with the students in Northern Virginia was to make it possible for students at extended campus locations to establish their own student organizations and programming. I initiated a meeting with Dr. Merola, the Dean of Students, the General Counsel, other administrators, and student representatives to pursue this issue further. Together with my colleague Ryan Hartman, the chair of the Commission on Student Affairs (CSA), we are working on a draft to add a policy on Extended Campus Student Organizations.

Directly after the events of September 11, International students including myself gathered at the Cranwell International Center and wrote a letter to the university community expressing our heartfelt sympathy with the American people, and emphasizing our appreciation of the wonderful, peaceful togetherness here have at Virginia Tech and in Blacksburg. The letter was published in the Collegiate Times. At this point I would also like to mention how well, in my opinion, the university is taking care of its students in such trying times, through setting up counseling and support centers directly after the events and keeping students and the university community well informed. From my experience, Virginia Tech is a very safe environment for studies.

Recently, the Council of International Student Organizations, of which I am a member, held the traditional “Dance of Nations” event in Squires Student Center. This event promotes understanding of a variety of cultures through music and dance performances, where audience participation is encouraged. I am pleased to report that this was a very successful event with a huge turnout and much positive feedback from our American and International students.

Other recent Board Of Visitor activities of mine included attending the public hearing of Blacksburg Transit on possible service adjustments, a topic that received considerable interest from our students. Furthermore I have been representing the graduate students in a Town of Blacksburg workshop on e-government. Currently, I am serving on the organization committee of the Graduate School for the second annual Graduate Student Appreciation week, which is planned to take place in early April of next year and will include a research symposium. During this event, the research work of graduate students from all colleges will be presented. Please feel free to contact me by email, gunnar@vt.edu, with any questions, concerns, or ideas that you might have on issues that affect your life as a graduate student.

Sincerely,

Gunnar Lucko

Graduate Student Representative to the Board of Visitors, 2001-2002

2002 Graduate Student Assembly Research Symposium

The Graduate Student Assembly is proud to host a symposium in order to provide graduate and advanced undergraduate students an opportunity to showcase their achievements in research. Students may participate in the Symposium by submitting an abstract describing their research and presenting a poster display. A team of judges representing the eight colleges will evaluate the posters. Cash Prizes will be awarded to the top three presenters in each category described below. First place winners will be awarded \$300, second place winners \$200, and third place winners \$100. Posters will be judged on abstract and title, experimental design, content and clarity, originality and style.

Posters are to be submitted to one of the following categories,
Agriculture and Animal Sciences; Natural and Biological Sciences;
Social Sciences and Humanities; Physical Sciences; Engineering;
Virtual Category; Undergraduate

Registration deadline: 2/22/02
Abstract Submission Deadline: 3/15/02
Symposium Date: 4/2/02

For further details, contact Selen Olgun, Co-Chair (solgun@vt.edu),
Shireen Hafez, Co-Chair (shafez@vt.edu) or Melinda Pomeroy,
Vice-President, Programs (mpomeroy@vt.edu).

Graduate Student of the Month Profile

October Winner: No applications were received for October and the cash prize for the month was donated to the Montgomery County Red Cross.

November Winner: Jeffrey S. Hickman, Psychology. Mr. Hickman has demonstrated notable performance in his research endeavors since coming to Virginia Tech. His research is intended to increase the safe work practices of employees in industrial settings. As a first year graduate student he received a 15-hour graduate research assistantship working on a NIH-funded grant to increase safe working behaviors in above/underground mining operations. That same year, he also assisted his major professor in writing a NIH grant submission for increasing safe driving behaviors of short-haul truck drivers using safety self-management strategies. As a second year graduate student, Mr. Hickman continued to work on several research projects, including increasing safe work behaviors in mining operations and using safety self-management strategies to increase safe-driving behaviors with short-haul truck drivers (his thesis proposal). Presently, Mr. Hickman is still conducting research with short-haul truck drivers, but has also been working at the Virginia Tech Quarry, located in Blacksburg, VA, using safety self-management strategies to increase safe work practices.

Mr. Hickman also mentors 8-12 undergraduate research assistants each semester. He holds weekly meetings that provide valuable learning experiences on how to conduct applied research, such as data observation techniques, data collection techniques, data entry and validation, data analysis, and also explains the relevant theories and principles of the research.

Additionally, Mr. Hickman has assisted in writing two other grant submissions in the Center for Applied Behavior Systems. He has been first author on five paper presentations and one poster presentation at professional conferences last year, including second author on one article. This year Jeff has a fifteen-hour assistantship where he was chosen as a member of the Adult Assessment Team at the Psychological Services Center. His responsibilities include administering 6 hours of standardized tests to each client, scoring and interpreting the tests, writing the final report, and holding feedback sessions.

Graduate Student Assembly 2001-2002

GSA Officers

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GSA Delegate Meetings

January 31 at 5:30 pm, Yorktown Room, Squires

February 28th at 5:30, in Yorktown Room, Squires

March 28th at 5:30, in 341/345, Squires

April 25th at 5:30, in 341/345, Squires

Meetings are open to all interested parties and free food and soda are served at each meeting.

For More Information, Contact the GSA

Office: 309 Squires Student Center, 231-7919

<http://gsa.uusa.vt.edu>

Upcoming Events

Mon., Jan. 14, Classes begin

Sat., Mar. 2, Spring break begins

Sun., Mar. 10, Spring break ends

Mon., Apr. 1 thru Fri., Apr. 5,
Graduate Student Appreciation Week

Tue., Apr. 2, GSA Research Symposium

Wed., May 1, Classes end

Thur., May 2, Reading Day

Fri., May 3, Exams begin

Wed., May 8, Exams end