



March 5, 2010

Dear Colleagues:

Spring break is upon us and I want to update you on a number of issues affecting the university.

The onsite visit by SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) will take place March 16-18. We are approaching the final stages of our ten-year accreditation process, an important step in the ongoing operations of the university. The proposed Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is a major focus for discussion during the visit. I want to thank everyone who has been involved in various aspects of preparing for the SACS review over the past four years.

The budget situation in the commonwealth continues to be challenging. Most of the permanent reductions proposed by former Governor Kaine for the next biennium have been retained in the current budget bills under consideration. Neither the House nor the Senate proposed further major reductions to instructional programs. However, the House budget imposes significant additional cuts to cooperative extension and there are several issues involving retirement plans, furloughs, etc., that still need to be resolved. Once the budget is finalized, we will move forward to implement the plans that we have been developing during the past year. We believe our strategy does as good a job as possible in striking a balance between painful reductions while continuing to meet the needs of our students, faculty, and staff.

In partnership with Carilion Clinic, we are moving forward with the next phase of launching the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute. The inaugural class of 42 students is being recruited. The quality of the applicants is very impressive and many of the accepted students already have significant research experience. This week we announced the recruitment of the new executive director of the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute, Dr. Michael Friedlander from Baylor College of Medicine. Mike is an outstanding scientist and educator who will provide strong leadership to our growing efforts in biomedical and translational research.

The recent conference on pedagogy drew more than five hundred participants to The Inn at Virginia Tech last month. The commitment of our faculty and graduate students to create a quality learning environment is impressive and inspiring. Vice President and Dean Daniel Wubah has assembled a task force to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for undergraduate education. The plan will provide a strong foundation for our ongoing investments in educational programs and will provide a good starting point for the next phase of university strategic planning. Dr. Bevelee Watford from the College of Engineering is chairing the task force.

Once again our students spontaneously mobilized as *Hokies United* in response to the earthquake in Haiti. Virginia Tech has strong involvement in multiple projects in Haiti and the outpouring of support sends a strong signal of our commitment. The recent earthquake in Chile

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provides an additional reminder of the unpredictable events that continue to challenge the world community.

At the upcoming Board of Visitors meeting, we will be presenting a summary of the mid-term strategic plan review. We will also be presenting a complete draft of the new Diversity Strategic Plan for full review and discussion. Under the leadership of Interim Vice President Karen Sanders, the plan provides a solid framework for us to move forward with a focus on inclusive excellence. The recent reorganization of the Office of Equity and Inclusion provides an excellent opportunity to focus attention on the education, outreach, advocacy, and accountability activities that are critical to our success. With the shift of the equal opportunity, affirmative action, compliance, disability, and mediation elements to Human Resources, the office will be renamed the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Additionally, the executive search for the re-titled Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion is underway and we encourage nominations to be sent to Vice President Ed Spencer who is chairing the search committee.

We are making great strides in efforts to build the new Center for the Arts. The new performance and gallery space will be co-located with the Center for Creative Technologies in the Arts. This ambitious program is a key part of our effort to bring the arts to K-12 schools throughout southwestern Virginia. We believe that the arts play a role in developing the critical thinking and creative skills that are an integral part of a successful educational experience. University Distinguished Professor Paul Knox is chairing a strategic planning effort designed to lay out a long-term vision for the continued development of the "Arts at Virginia Tech."

There are many more projects and activities I will talk about in my next letter, including our international partnerships, our off-campus programs, and our continued enhancements in graduate education. On a personal level, I am continuing to make a steady recovery from shoulder surgery. I have gained a great deal of respect for the physical therapists of the world and I have learned that physical therapy facilities are a popular gathering spot for so many of us.

Best wishes for a brief, but much needed change of pace next week. Hopefully, the snow will be gone when classes resume.

Sincerely,



Mark McNamee
Senior Vice President and Provost