

December 21, 2011

Dear Colleagues:

As 2011 draws to a close, I want to extend my thanks to all of you for helping Virginia Tech continue to make progress on so many fronts.

This fall we celebrated the conclusion of the \$1B Campaign for Virginia Tech. Faculty and students for generations will benefit from the generosity demonstrated by this great philanthropic support. Although there will be a sustained break before the next big campaign, we will continue to build on success and seek ongoing support for targeted goals.

Major activity is focused on the development of the new university strategic plan. The 2006-2012 strategic plan has served us very well during a period of unanticipated budget challenges and we are well positioned to make good decisions for the future. Under the leadership of University Distinguished Professor Paul Knox, the long range planning committee has worked hard to catalyze discussions across campus and they are now preparing to make recommendations that will guide the creation of an overarching plan and associated college-level and administrative unit plans. If you want to influence the process, now is the time to read the available documents on the blog site and provide comments and suggestions. Access to the blog site is available at the following web link:

<http://blogs.is.vt.edu/longrangeplan/2011/04/13/hello-world/>

Last Friday, our undergraduate and graduate commencement ceremonies provided a wonderful opportunity for family and friends to share in the excitement associated with completing degrees at Virginia Tech. Dr. Ed Spencer and Professor Jaan Holt gave eloquent speeches that rank among the best I have heard among hundreds of commencement addresses. When Ed retires from his position this coming summer, he leaves behind a 42-year legacy of outstanding service as a student affairs professional. Jaan has created highly successful architecture programs in Alexandria that serve Virginia Tech students and students from around the world through partnerships.

The day prior to the on-campus commencement ceremonies, a delegation of university personnel led by Rachel Holloway, associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, and Tom Brown, dean of students, traveled to Fredericksburg to represent the Virginia Tech community at the special graduation of Dennis Hundley. The video of the ceremony is very touching and provides even further evidence of the unique and caring community of which we are a part:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkg_AAk2wpl&feature=youtu.be. I am confident that Dennis' family will never forget this moment just days before his passing.

In terms of inventing the future, our new research building in Arlington represents a major commitment by Virginia Tech to further enhance the impact of our research and scholarship in one of the world's

Invent the Future

most dynamic regions. The elegance of the building is matched by the quality and intensity of the research.

On the Blacksburg campus, cranes have been sprouting up all over. The new and renovated buildings will greatly strengthen our ability to enrich our academic programs, and they begin to address our continuing need for quality space designed to meet today's and tomorrow's research and teaching needs. We still have a long list of unmet capital needs, and we will continue to seek both state and private support to ensure the long-term health of the university's infrastructure. The Center for the Arts project is advancing in a dramatic fashion and we are all looking forward to the 2013 opening.

This year is providing us with a welcome opportunity to make progress in rebuilding our faculty. We have authorized more than 100 faculty searches. Combined with last year's recruitment of 104 new faculty, we are making substantial progress in growing the faculty. As calculated by the state's formulas, we still have a long way to go to achieve a faculty and staff size that fully meets our needs. The quality of applicant pools for faculty and staff positions are outstanding and we appear to be in a stronger competitive position than most of our peers based on Virginia's relatively good economy and the high priority placed on higher education by Governor McDonnell. The governor's proposed biennial budget is being analyzed by Vice President Dwight Shelton and his staff and we can expect to receive a detailed report soon.

I am in the midst of visiting every academic department and I hope to be substantially finished by the end of spring semester. The meetings have been extraordinarily helpful in gaining specific insights into the aspirations and challenges that are important to our faculty and staff. I am confident that we can make progress on the most critical needs expressed so clearly by our colleagues in the departments. This spring we will be interviewing candidates for two key vice presidential positions: Outreach and International Affairs and Student Affairs. I encourage you to make nominations and to participate as much as possible in the process. Please visit www.provost.vt.edu to see the announcements. The review of applications for Outreach and International Affairs will begin on January 13 and Student Affairs on February 10.

The shooting incident on December 8 took a valuable member of our community from us. The outpouring of support for Deriek Crouse's family and for his fellow police officers reflects the compassion and strength of our faculty, staff, and students. The effectiveness of the alert systems serves as a continuing reminder of the efforts we continue to make to strengthen our safety and security measures. For many of us, the incident reawakened feelings connected to April 16, 2007. As each person processes his/her own experiences, please consider taking advantage of the support services available.

On a personal note, I wish to share a recent experience that has its roots in April 16 and has affected my life. Carole and I attended the joyous wedding of Derek O'Dell and Laura Jones last Saturday in Roanoke. Derek was one of our injured students and he is currently a student here in veterinary medicine. Laura graduated from Virginia Tech with a master's degree in education and she is a teacher in the Roanoke City Public Schools. They are a wonderful couple with a hope-filled future ahead of them. Derek's dad, Roger, and I discovered after the tragedy that we were both Class of 1968 graduates of MIT. We have become good friends and share a special lunch together each month. We led the efforts to create a local MIT alumni chapter. As part of MIT's 150th anniversary celebration, we arranged to officially

memorialize Mount Rogers (Virginia's tallest mountain) named after William Barton Rogers, the Virginian geologist who later founded MIT. Last year, Roger was diagnosed with acute leukemia and he has been waging a heroic and largely successful effort to live each day to its fullest. Tragedies create unexpected new connections, and I treasure the opportunity to know Roger and his incredibly loving family.

As we all prepare for a change of pace over the holidays, I hope we will take time to reflect on the good things for which we can be thankful. I am looking forward to the New Year and the new semester with excitement and confidence in our shared future.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark G. McNamee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark G. McNamee
Senior Vice President and Provost