

Fall letter from Senior Vice President and Provost Mark G. McNamee to university community

Contact:

- [Mark Owczarski](#)^[1]
- 540-231-5223
- maowczar@vt.edu

BLACKSBURG, Va., Sept. 26, 2014 – *The following is a letter to the university community from Senior Vice President and Provost Mark G. McNamee.*

Dear Colleagues,

The fall equinox marks the official beginning of one of the most beautiful seasons in Virginia. We are well into our fall semester and, by all reports, our students are fully immersed in curricular and co-curricular activities.

The official enrollment census took place on Sept. 22. Our total enrollment this fall is at a record high 31,224 students across all campuses. We are already planning for the admission of next year's entering class with a heightened awareness of the critical importance of enrollment planning combined with active and engaged recruitment across all of our program areas. Our [newly approved majors and degrees](#)^[2] complement our existing array of comprehensive offerings and we want Virginia Tech to be the school of choice for students from Virginia, the nation, and the world.

A major new initiative this year is the [reorganization and revitalization of our inclusion and diversity activities](#)^[3]. We have adopted a decentralized approach that promotes responsibility and accountability throughout the university. The most innovative and successful programs originate at the unit-level and we have highly skilled professionals who can help us create an inclusive climate at Virginia Tech that attracts and retains faculty, staff, and students from diverse backgrounds.

President Sands and I are fully committed to the success of our new approach and we look forward to sustained progress in the short- and long-term. An [open forum is scheduled on Monday, Sept. 29](#)^[4] from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Latham Ballroom at the Inn at Virginia Tech. Please join us to learn more about the new model and help shape the agenda for progress. We will also be reaffirming our Principles of Community at this meeting and we are proud that we can include the Board of Visitors approved addition of gender identity and gender expression to our strong statement of non-discrimination.

Our faculty and students are continuing to make remarkable progress on plans to create a revised general education program. "[A Plan for New Horizon](#)^[5]" challenged us to move forward with a new model and the proposed "[Pathways to General Education](#)^[6]" has engaged hundreds of faculty members in the planning activities.

The new model provides an opportunity for depth and breadth with options that should provide meaningful and highly-valued learning outcomes for all students. We have embraced computational thinking as one of the core pieces of the new curriculum along with an increased emphasis on design

Invent the Future

and the arts.

New and existing minors will play a significant role in adding focus to the curriculum. A specific plan for governance review and approval is being developed by the University Curriculum Committee for Liberal Education. To [learn more about the ongoing developments](#)^[7], please visit the website.

We are also fortunate to have Dr. Debra Humphries, vice president of communications, policy, and public engagement, for the Association of American Colleges and Universities on campus to lead a discussion focused on the civic and economic justification for general education on Thursday, Oct. 2, from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Inn at Virginia Tech. The event is open to the university community. [Register online](#)^[8].

You have probably noticed two new additions to the senior leadership team. President Timothy Sands has assumed his position with enthusiasm and impressive energy. He is fully immersed in learning about the university as he sets the course for our ongoing progress. We are fortunate that the transition from Charles Steger's remarkable 14 years as president has gone so smoothly and productively.

In July, Dr. Elizabeth Spiller joined us from Florida State University as dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. She will be leading the college to new heights in teaching, research, and outreach. Our future as a comprehensive land grant research university requires that we promote strengths within disciplines and across areas for interdisciplinary collaboration. Faculty in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and education continue to play an essential role in many of the university's ongoing initiatives.

Although budgets are tight and we are absorbing a reduction mandated by the state, we are continuing to focus on our highest strategic priorities and we do not anticipate any disruptions in this year's academic programs or faculty merit and recruitment plans. We will spend time this year looking at effective ways to accommodate the reductions for next year and we welcome suggestions as we enter the budget planning period for the 2105-16 fiscal year.

Last year we celebrated the opening of the Moss Arts Center and the incredible array of programs sponsored by the Center for the Arts and the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology. This second year of operation builds upon the momentum from last year and establishes Virginia Tech as a first-rate venue for artistic expression and community engagement. More information about the [2014-15 performance schedule](#)^[9] can be found online.

Virginia Tech and the Science Museum of Western Virginia are co-organizing the first science festival in Virginia during the week of Oct. 4 through 11. Our Blacksburg campus is the site for a broad array of entertaining and educational exhibits and lectures and Roanoke will host additional activities at various venues throughout the city. I hope that you, your friends, and family members will have an opportunity to join in the festivities. Science festivals have taken place in major cities around the country and we are excited to be the first Virginia hosts for the programs. Visit the [Virginia Science Festival website for full details and schedules](#)^[10].

I feel very fortunate to be in the midst of my 14th year as provost at Virginia Tech and I look forward to another great academic year. Thank you for all you do to make Virginia Tech the welcoming and caring community it should be for our students, faculty, and staff.

Mark G. McNamee
Senior Vice President and Provost

Invent the Future

Related Links

- [New academic opportunities for students in 2014-15](#)^[11]
 - [Welcome to the Class of 2018: A snapshot of the newest undergraduate students](#)^[12]
-

Links

- [1]. <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/media-contact/owczarski-mark-res.html>
- [2]. <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2014/08/081814-uged-newacademics.html>
- [3]. <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2014/06/063014-provost-inclusion.html>
- [4]. <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2014/09/091214-president-forum.html>
- [5]. <http://www.president.vt.edu/strategic-plan/2012-plan/2012-strategic-plan.pdf>
- [6]. <http://www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/>
- [7]. <http://www.cle.prov.vt.edu/>
- [8]. <http://tinyurl.com/RSPV-CaseforGenEd-Event>
- [9]. <https://www.artscenter.vt.edu/Online/default.asp>
- [10]. <http://virginiasciencefestival.org/>
- [11]. <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2014/08/081814-uged-newacademics.html>
- [12]. <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2014/08/082014-uged-snapshot.html>