

## Spring letter from Senior Vice President and Provost Mark G. McNamee to the university community

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BLACKSBURG, Va., Feb. 4, 2015 – *The following is an open letter from Senior Vice President and Provost Mark G. McNamee to the university community.*

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the start of a new semester. The winter session has come to a successful conclusion and we can look forward to a promising spring that continues the momentum created this past fall.

Our academic programs continue to attract outstanding students and the faculty are continually enhancing and creating curricular offerings that are challenging, progressive, and highly effective. The ongoing plans to revitalize and redefine our general education program are proceeding through governance, and I am confident that the final plan will reflect the wisdom, vision and aspirations of our faculty and students.

A major focus this fall was the launch of InclusiveVT, our new approach to inclusion and diversity. The distributed responsibility and accountability model recommended by last year's task force has been implemented and I am very encouraged by the enthusiasm, progress, and tangible benefits of the new model.

President Tim Sands has embraced a leadership role in advancing our efforts across the entire university. The new initiatives proposed by each senior manager offer a wide array of achievable action items that complement and strengthen many of the programs and practices already in place. The six inclusion coordinators are fully engaged in facilitating the implementation and evaluation phase of our efforts.

The recent Advancing Diversity Conference provided another forum at which more than 350 participants had a chance to obtain additional information about our efforts and contribute to our progress.

During the next few weeks, we will be organizing and empowering the "Advisory Community," the broad network of organizations, programs, committees, and individuals who are actively engaged in advancing inclusion and diversity both within Virginia Tech and beyond. The Advisory Community is an essential component of the overall InclusiveVT initiative.

Later this spring, we will launch a search for a vice provost for inclusion and diversity. We will be seeking an individual who can work within the provost's office to provide overall coordination, advice, and advocacy. Please view the [InclusiveVT website](#)<sup>[2]</sup> for detailed information about all aspects of our inclusion and diversity initiatives.

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*Invent the Future*

We have launched a search for a new vice president for research and innovation. We will be interviewing candidates this spring in anticipation of Dr. Robert Walters' planned retirement in September.

The transition period is allowing Bob to become engaged in some new research ventures and Dr. Dennis Dean has graciously agreed to serve as the interim vice president until the search is completed. We welcome nominations for the position and hope that everyone will find an opportunity to learn more about the candidates as the search develops. Ongoing updates can be found on the [search website](#)<sup>[3]</sup>.

I now come to a part of this letter where I want to share my own plans. You probably know by now that I have decided to step aside from my current role as senior vice president and provost later this year.

I am in my 40th year in higher education, a career that began with my appointment as an assistant professor of biochemistry at UC Davis in August 1975. A faculty career is one of the greatest opportunities an individual can have, and I look forward to becoming a biochemist once again.

The past 14 years as provost at Virginia Tech have been incredibly rewarding and I will forever treasure the great experiences I continue to have with so many colleagues. We are building upon the strengths of Virginia Tech and setting the stage for continued growth and development as one of America's preeminent and fastest-moving universities.

The expansion of the research enterprise, in terms of size, quality, breadth, and impact was a leading driver of the vision advanced by former President Charles Steger in 2000. I shared the belief that an expansion of research would enable us to attract and retain the very best scholars across all disciplines. The faculty and staff would then drive an expansion of the quality and scope of graduate education programs with an emphasis on Ph.D. programs and emerging areas of interdisciplinary opportunity.

As core and new strengths developed, I anticipated that the faculty would then lead the effort to expand and enhance the undergraduate curriculum in innovative ways.

Throughout this process, our students would be well served in the present and in the future. With the impending adoption of the new general education framework, we have come full circle in strengthening every aspect of Virginia Tech's academic enterprise. I view the new general education pathways program as a legacy program to cap off my years as provost.

In all of these ventures, we have used a strategic planning process to set priorities and establish benchmarks for progress.

In parallel, we have made dramatic progress in building strong connections and collaborations among student affairs and academic affairs, and finance and academic affairs. Additionally, our state-wide and global presence is more fully developed. Throughout this period, we have all been inspired by the deep commitment to our motto *Ut Prosim* (That I may serve), the Principles of Community, the "hands-on, minds-on" educational philosophy, and the aspiration to create an inclusive and diverse community.

My decision to step aside is made easier by my confidence in the leadership provided by President Sands. He is fully committed to the success of the academic enterprise in both quality and integrity, and he has the experience and vision to build upon what we have already accomplished. The transition to new leadership this past year has gone very smoothly and I look forward to a positive and productive 2015.

A search for a new provost will begin soon and I have indicated to the president that I am prepared to

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step aside whenever the new provost is ready to assume the position. I am confident that Virginia Tech will attract outstanding candidates and I will do everything I can to facilitate the transition. The shared investment we all have in Virginia Tech's future will always be a source of pride for me.

Mark G. McNamee  
Senior Vice President and Provost

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## Related Links

- [President's Inclusion and Diversity Executive Council receives 86 InclusiveVT initiatives](#)<sup>[4]</sup>

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## Links

[1]. <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/media-contact/owczarski-mark-res.html>

[2]. <http://www.inclusive.vt.edu/>

[3]. [http://www.provost.vt.edu/faculty\\_affairs/leadership\\_development/Senior\\_Searches/Senior\\_Search.html](http://www.provost.vt.edu/faculty_affairs/leadership_development/Senior_Searches/Senior_Search.html)

[4]. <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2014/12/120314-president-initiatives.html>