

## TRANSFORMATIONS

FEBRUARY 2008

## EVENT CALENDAR : SPRING 2008

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### Negotiating Academic Job Offers

Wednesday, February 20, 2008

noon—1:30 pm  
219 Squires

Department heads Joe Merola and Ken Ball will provide tips and techniques to assist you with negotiating employment packages at colleges and universities. Please register at [www.advance.vt.edu](http://www.advance.vt.edu).

### Your First Year as a Professor

Monday, March 17, 2008

noon—1:30 pm  
Graduate Life Center,  
Room F

Join Professors Daniela Cimini, Biological Sciences, Lou Madsen, Chemistry,

and Padma Rajagopalan, Chemical Engineering, for their reflections on their first year as a faculty member. Please register at [www.advance.vt.edu](http://www.advance.vt.edu).

### Faculty Leadership Development Lunch

Monday, February 25, 2008

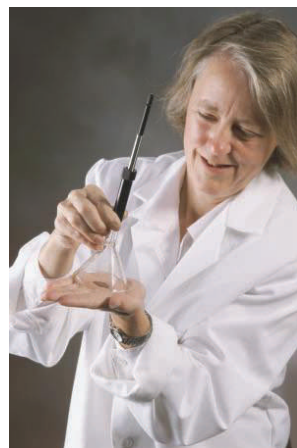
noon—1:30 pm  
Old Guard Room, The Inn

AdvanceVT welcomes faculty and university administrators to participate in our Leadership Development luncheon! The luncheon will include a panel discussion with department heads Beate Schmittmann, Physics, Rachel Holloway, Communications, and Beth Grabau, Plant Pathology,

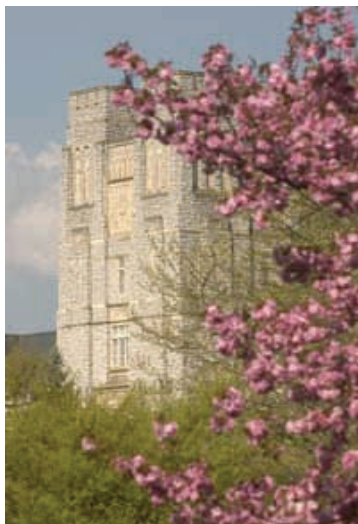
Physiology, and Weed Science, covering topics such as career paths, leadership skills, and other issues women faculty face. Please register at

[www.advance.vt.edu](http://www.advance.vt.edu).

Stay tuned for more AdvanceVT events for Spring '08!



Andrea Dietrich, Professor, Civil & Environmental Engineering



## ADVANCEVT FINAL ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

As the ADVANCE grant comes to a close this summer, we at AdvanceVT will be conducting a variety of assessment activities to measure the impact of the grant on the university. We will be organizing evaluations of leadership programs, pipeline activities, faculty recruitment and institutional change. Much of this evaluation will require surveys, interviews and short reports from program participants and grant recipients. We ask for your participation in this process as we document our efforts and measure the outcomes. Thank you!

## PRE-TENURE FACULTY CONCERNS



At the recent “Advancing Diversity at Virginia Tech” conference, a workshop was held with pre-tenure faculty to address concerns regarding tenure, research and work/life issues at the departmental, college and university levels. Participants (about 45 pre-tenure faculty members) were asked to address the question “What actions could the University and/or departments take to help make a successful faculty member? These can be things that are already working well for you, or things that you don’t have but feel you need.” After a few minutes of silently generating ideas and writing them on post-it notes, participants were asked to clarify their items and group the items into themes, then prioritize the top three or four actions and report back to the group.

### Several common themes emerged:

- Resources in general, including both personnel and funding, are needed
- More structured and accountable mentoring
- Specific and balanced feedback on performance (not just negative feedback)
- Supporting the whole person: Work-life balance issues, spousal support
- More supportive campus climate in terms of diversity, especially regarding race and gender.

An open discussion of these themes re-

vealed that faculty are concerned with clarity and communication, retention, collegiality, mentoring and diversity.

### Clarity:

-Theme of clarity, all the way through the system, clarity of policies

### Retention:

- “I’m tired of watching all my friends leave.”
- University needs to make every effort to keep colleagues, be explicit about wanting to keep people.
- If we want to retain our young colleagues, we need a culture that supports that. It needs to be put down in black and white.
- Faculty stay where they are respected and valued as a whole person.

### Collegiality:

- A positive result of 4/16: increased collegiality
- Faculty perceive more collegiality at university level
- Most immediate interface for junior faculty is at the department level, need for senior faculty to take the lead on developing relationships

### Diversity:

- Support at the university level for departments to focus on diversity
- Attention at the department and university levels is needed
- Need clear support from the university to support departmental climate initiatives.

Faculty members present at the workshop also identified issues specific to individual colleges.

- The College of Liberal Arts and Human

Science faculty members noted that climate, getting tenure, research support and mentoring were of particular concern to the college.

- The faculty members from the Colleges of Science and Engineering identified that a climate for diversity is important for long term success, a need for clear and in-depth feedback/mentoring, and continued work/life and family support.
- Faculty from the Colleges of Agriculture, Natural Resources and VetMed noted a need for consistent and clear feedback, expectations and evaluation of performance, support of faculty research, spousal and childcare support, improved mentoring, and increased collegiality and collaboration among junior and senior faculty members.

*“Those six or seven probationary years seem fraught with worry. Untenured professors, regardless of their accomplishments, seem uniformly terrified until they hold in their hands that official letter conferring tenure. I have even known colleagues who had received congratulatory letters from both the provost and president but who refused to stop living in dread until they had received confirmation of their appointment from the trustees.*”

*Faculty members deserve a culture of support, not neglect, during those crucial formative years, and institutions bear much of the responsibility for creating one.*

*The tenure system is a creature of our own making. It can be flexible, supple, and responsive to the diverse needs and life situations of faculty members, or it can be rigid, uncompromising, and so focused on the trees that it cannot see the forest.”*

-Olson, G. (2007). A creature of our own making. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 53(29). p.C3.

TRACKING WORK/LIFE POLICY SUITE UTILIZATION: STOP-THE-CLOCK

Research university policies are evolving in order to accommodate the personal needs of faculty members. The goals of these policies are to create a welcoming and supportive environment for all faculty members so they can succeed and are not required to make unacceptable choices between family and career. Retention of a talented faculty workforce requires not only good start-up packages and opportunities for professional development, but policies that allow faculty members the flexibility to manage family and personal needs throughout their careers. These policies, referred to as work/life policies, include tenure clock extension, modified duties, part-time employment, and dual career hiring assistance. A priority for the *AdvanceVT* program at Virginia Tech has been institutionalizing a suite of work/life policies that facilitate the career trajectory of all faculty members and increase faculty retention at the university. This article presents data on utilization of these policies to date and impact on faculty career progression.

The **stop-the-clock** policy, a university policy used to allow tenure track faculty to suspend the tenure process temporarily in order to manage personal obligations, at Virginia Tech is not new, but it was revised in June 2005. The revised policy has resulted in increased usage that can be attributed to several reasons:

-The newly revised policy makes clear that male, as well as female, faculty members may stop-the-clock at the time of childbirth and adoption, and there was a significant upsurge in male requests in 2006 - 2007 illustrating that many male faculty members are now using the policy for that purpose.

-Virginia Tech has appointed many new junior faculty members in the past few years, at least a third of whom are women, and the policy serves their needs as they start their families.

-The stop-the-clock policy also accommodates faculty members with other special circumstances.

A long-time faculty member at Virginia Tech and patron of the stop-the-clock policy remarked, "These new policies are helping us retain outstanding faculty who now feel that they can work at the institution they love and still take care of the people they love."

Figure 1 illustrates that the most common reason for stopping the tenure clock is childbirth or adoption. However, Virginia Tech has a fair number of requests

for a halt in the tenure clock because of extenuating personal health reasons, or extraordinary professional circumstances not of the faculty member's own making. Virginia Tech's policy is somewhat unusual in allowing extensions for professional reasons. However, it has worked well in assisting faculty members to be successful when they have encountered difficulties with access to promised laboratories or equipment, or their assignments have been dramatically altered during their probationary period.

Figure 2 shows the tenure outcomes for those faculty members who stopped the clock for childbirth or dependent care reasons only. *AdvanceVT* continues to monitor whether using the policy assists faculty members to successfully achieve tenure.

Figure 1: Reasons for tenure clock extension, by gender, 1996-2007

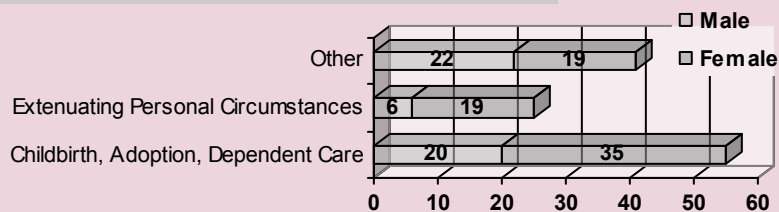
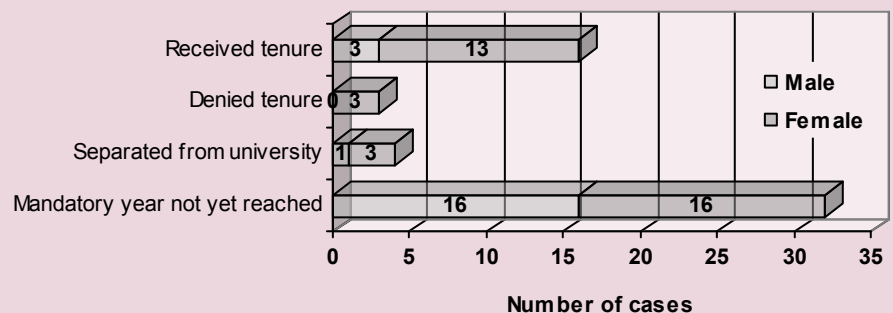


Figure 2: Outcomes for faculty who stopped the tenure clock, childbirth and dependent care cases only, 1996-2007



## 2008 ADVANCING DIVERSITY AT VIRGINIA TECH: TENURED & TENURE TRACK FACULTY EVALUATIONS

On January 8 & 9, 2008, *AdvanceVT* and the Office of Multicultural Affairs conducted the fifth annual “Advancing” conference. This year the theme was “Advancing Diversity at Virginia Tech” and featured speakers who addressed an inclusive excellence model for institutional transformation and career concerns of pre-tenure faculty. Workshop sessions also focused on recruiting a diverse faculty and creating department climates that encourage faculty success. Of the 191 participants who registered for the conference, 56 attendees completed conference evaluations forms, indicating a 29% response rate by participants. Of the responses received, 25 were from tenured or tenure-track faculty, 13 from administrators, 2 from department heads, and 16 from other/did not report. The conference presentations may be accessed at [www.advance.vt.edu](http://www.advance.vt.edu).

### Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Responses



Attendees were asked to rate all of day 1 conference activities on a Likert scale (1 = not valuable, 2 = somewhat valuable, 3 = neutral, 4 = valuable, 5 = extremely valuable). The majority of responses from tenured (11) and tenure track faculty (14) (overall n=25) rated the conference, overall, as valuable (4) (4.3 overall average of all activities). Among the workshop activities, participants rated the inclusive excellence the highest. The interactive theater workshop was rated the highest among the general sessions and was indicated consistently by participants as the highlight of the day.

#### Highlights: *What was the highlight of the day for you?*

The highlights of the day, according to an overwhelming majority of responses, included Kathy Trower’s keynote, Damon William’s keynote and the interactive theater presentation. Faculty also noted the status report for its comical aspects, networking opportunities the conference presented, conversations between sessions, and the discussion following the theater presentation. Several also noted the improving department climate workshop in the highlights comment section.

#### Surprises: *Did you learn anything today that surprised you?*

*“Yes, I’m thinking about how I can set the stage for more effective peer mentoring, among other asst. professors, as we are not getting the mentoring we need from senior faculty.”*

*“Some of the comments by participants about instances of discouraging diversity.”*

*“Yes. The number of apparently dysfunctional search committees on campus.”*

#### Doing things differently: *What, if anything, will you do differently as a result of your participation today?*

*“Relax more, be more observant and sensitive to others views and concerns.”*

*“Be a more visible advocate for change.”*

*“Work on identifying concrete actions to improve my department.”*

#### Future Events: *What type of future AdvanceVT or OMA events would you like to see?*

- Expanding definitions of diversity – campus too heteronormative
- More small group interaction
- Annual updates
- Events focused on social sciences/humanities
- Required programs for faculty and department heads
- Action-oriented sessions (i.e. start or continue actions, not just talk)
- More receptions
- Arts-based collaboration for learning and engagement
- Mid-career faculty events (i.e. post-elementary childcare, bridge funding)

*AdvanceVT* is a comprehensive program to promote and enhance the careers of women in academic science and engineering at Virginia Tech through institutional transformation. Elements of *AdvanceVT* include:

**Pipeline:** Advancing Women into Faculty Careers

**Recruitment:** Increasing the Representation of Women

**Leadership:** Empowering Women as Leaders and Scholars

**Institutional Change:** Updating Policies and Changing Culture

Go to [www.advance.vt.edu](http://www.advance.vt.edu) to learn more about the initiative.

