

outbursts

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spotlight on globalization

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Three key points about Virginia Tech's international agenda

By Guru Ghosh

The university community is focused on strengthening Virginia Tech's global presence and initiatives. In his installation speech, President Timothy D. Sands made clear the importance of the university's role in addressing four global challenges: security, resilience, health, and sustainability.

Many across the university are already contributing to solutions in these arenas, and commitments are being made every day as faculty and staff collaborate in new ways to address the vexing problems confronting humanity in the next two decades.

1 Outreach and International Affairs plays a major part in advancing the university's international agenda.

The Language and Culture Institute, which has experienced phenomenal growth (and has recently opened a center in Radford as well as an expanded center in Northern Virginia), recruits international students from around the world. The institute is responsible for many new admits to the university by enabling these students to become proficient enough to study in English at the university level.

The Global Education Office spearheads the study abroad program for Virginia Tech that will continue to elevate its profile under its new director, Theresa Johansson. Virginia Tech offers over

200 programs in more than 60 countries. More than 20 percent of each graduating class has a study abroad experience. Notably, a larger percentage of our students participate in study-abroad experiences compared with many public universities – and this number will grow.

International Support Services manages the university's memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with foreign government entities and other universities abroad. The staff also provides immigration documents for programs such as the J-1 visa for visiting researchers, the H-1B work visa and permanent residency or "green cards" for international employees. In addition to immigration processing, the office handles crises that can crop up for faculty and staff from foreign countries and with visiting dignitaries from our partners across the globe.

Outreach and International Affairs gives voice in many venues to the value of international students at Virginia Tech. This involves articulating the richness that they bring – not just their estimated economic impact of \$55 million to \$60 million annually – but also in the ways their presence adds value to the educational experience of all Virginia Tech students.

Outreach and International Affairs administers the university's centers abroad, with a major emphasis in the past year on VT, India (full name: the VT,



Environmental sciences student Jacqueline Boissoneault visits the Tiputini Biodiversity Station in Ecuador to learn about the Amazon's fragile ecosystem.

India Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science Innovation Center). The advice of Virginia Tech alumni who have returned to their home countries has made a major impact in Chennai and in other places where Virginia Tech's international campuses are situated.

In Outreach and International Affairs, more than 60 full-time faculty and staff work on advancing the university's global agenda.

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2 International research is a big part of advancing Virginia Tech's global reputation and rankings in the coming years.

Virginia Tech is one of an elite group of 15 universities that host and direct Feed the Future Innovation Labs funded by USAID. The Office of International Research, Education, and Development (OIRE) leads the effort with its decades-long track record of performing vital research throughout the world – amounting to a \$100 million portfolio.

International education is the biggest growth industry within American higher education, and this education is inextricably intertwined with international research. That's one reason Virginia Tech recently celebrated: USAID announced continuation of the work of the Innovation Lab with an \$18 million grant – a huge vote of confidence in our global research enterprise.

3 The university's international agenda involves more than undergraduate students.

Internationalizing the curriculum and providing study-abroad experiences are two key ways undergraduate students are impacted by a university's agenda, but other constituents are also key to the university's global mission.

Faculty: The Office of the Provost and Outreach and International Affairs underwrite an International Faculty Development program focused on junior faculty members' professional development through research and collaborations. For example, Kathy Hosig, associate professor of population health sciences, shared strategies with Malaysian counterparts for reaching rural populations with health-education materials, especially those dealing with chronic diseases. Similarly, her colleagues Robert Weiss of the College of Science and Yang Zhang of the College of Architecture and Urban Studies have intensified their studies of post-disaster community resilience after forging relationships with colleagues in Singapore and China.

Grad students: There are almost 7,000 graduate students at Virginia Tech, and 2,500 of them are international students. In OIRE, graduate students are key to

international fieldwork on federally funded research grants.

International scholars: These visiting experts add a richness to the experience of both Virginia Tech faculty and students, especially at a time when the university is internationalizing its curriculum and putting emphasis on global experiences and studies.



Students on their first field excursion in Antarctica.



At a zoological park in Chennai, India, students from the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine learn to handle and examine elephants. Without sedating the animal, the caretaker gets the elephant to lie down using only a voice command.



Kathy Hosig, right, goes over health education materials with colleagues in Malaysia.

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