

Destination Area and Strategic Growth Area Quarterly Update

**Compiled by the Office of the Vice Provost for
Learning Systems Innovation and Effectiveness (LSIE)**

November 2018

In an effort to communicate the achievements and ongoing work of Virginia Tech's Transdisciplinary Research and Education Communities, the Office of the Vice Provost for Learning Systems Innovation and Effectiveness (LSIE) circulates a quarterly update to the Virginia Tech community. Further information about the DA/SGAs can be found at:

https://www.provost.vt.edu/destination_areas.html

Cross-DA/SGA-Institute Seed Grant Initiative - In order to foster greater transdisciplinary research among junior and senior faculty members, the four Institutes and eight DA/SGAs sponsored two seed grant initiatives on Rural Health and Infectious Disease. Awards totaling \$130,000 were awarded in October to eight research teams. Recipients will have an opportunity to participate in workshops during the spring semester that are designed to further build and leverage their transdisciplinary capacities. Awardees will also present their preliminary findings and plans for securing additional funding at an open symposium in May 2019.

Department Head Meeting on Cluster Hiring – Participants were asked to consider what the departmental goals are for DA/SGA cluster hires and how DA/SGA clusters can benefit their departments. Two key areas of discussion were explored: 1) Expand the traditional areas of research and exploration; 2) Open up possibilities in newer or emergent areas for curriculum and research. In order to facilitate these goals, department heads felt that it would be helpful to clearly articulate the problem areas/themes/teams that cluster hires can engage with. While cluster hire engagement in curriculum is anticipated, department heads felt that university support for collegiate faculty to lead transdisciplinary curriculum would better serve university needs. The LSIE Office will communicate how to engage with efforts of the DA/SGAs to cluster hires and department heads on a regular basis in order to continue to facilitate connections with the research and curricular initiatives underway.

DA/SGA sponsored Seed Grants – Several individual DA/SGA seed grant funding initiatives were launched this fall that reflect the specific research thematic of these groups. This includes the Adaptive Brain and Behavior (ABB) DA, Data and Decisions (DD) DA, and the Freshwater Systems concept group, which is part of Global Systems Science (GSS) DA. Additionally, the Policy SGA created a +Policy Fellowship program that aims to integrate policy experts into ongoing research projects.

Return on Investment (ROI): The LSIE Office encourages all seed grant recipients to aim for a 4:1 ROI. That said, our office recognizes that qualitative forms of assessment are needed to fully capture additional kinds of ROI that are generated through the unique partnerships and collaborations being facilitated by the DA/SGAs. Efforts are underway to identify further instrumentation that captures Virginia Tech's quickly expanding transdisciplinary portfolio. The LSIE Office will also continue to evaluate and share the work currently being done through the nine transdisciplinary communities (i.e. DA/SGAs). This includes a recent analysis that highlights the efforts that leverage collective strengths, such as those featured on the website:

https://www.provost.vt.edu/destination_areas/solutions_to_complex_problems.html

Oak Ridge National Lab Partnership - Virginia Tech is one of the Oak Ridge National Lab's (ORNL) core university partners. This partnership has been in place for 15 years and offers many opportunities for VT faculty and students. In an effort to strengthen this partnership, the Economical and Sustainable Materials SGA (ESM) recently partnered with other DA/SGAs and the Associate VP for Research Computing to organize a trip to ORNL in order to meet with scientists and administrators there to develop further collaborations. This included 25 Virginia Tech faculty and graduate students who participated in nine break out discussions facilitated by ORNL scientists and administrators. These discussions allowed participants to have focused discussions (and in some cases go on tours) about specific topical areas. Additionally, the SGA has agreed to fund two undergraduate research internships at ORNL for summer 2019 and ORNL Materials Research Division will fund two Virginia Tech undergraduate students. Read the VT News article at <https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2018/11/materials-sga-ornl-visit.html>.

Communication Update – Several news articles highlighting faculty, students, and staff working on DA/SGA-related and/or transdisciplinary collaborations were published. They include, but are not limited to:

- [House of the future and team that built it head to international competition](#)
- [Coastal@VT hosted Rotating Resilience Roundtables to address issues of coastal resilience in Virginia](#)
- [With the right resources at the right time, research institute accelerates discovery](#)
- [Virginia Tech researchers using brain-inspired methods to improve wireless communications](#)
- [Virtual reality brings dog's anatomy to life for veterinary students](#)
- [New opportunities for transdisciplinary collaboration are the focus of upcoming event](#)

A [new video](#) was produced to provide a high-level overview of DA/SGAs and transdisciplinary communities collaborating on advancing areas of strength for Virginia Tech and addressing broad societal issues. The video was shown at the September DA/SGA Fall Symposium and was shared shortly after via social media and the DA/SGA website.

DA/SGA Pathway Minor Update – LSIE has been working with the Office of Advisement to promote current DA/SGA course offerings and identify future strategies for promoting DA/SGA Pathway Minors. This includes an upcoming DA/SGA curricular leads meeting facilitated by Kim Smith from University Advising. The LSIE office anticipates that five new transdisciplinary Pathway Minors will be launched by fall 2018, including the already approved Innovation Pathway Minor (C+I), the Adaptive Brain and Behavior Pathway Minor (in governance), and the Data and Decision Pathway Minor (in governance).

Infrastructure: The Integrated Security (IS) DA, in partnership with Hume, has been working to promote the interim Integrated Security Education and Research Center (ISERP) classroom. The classroom is fully functional and has recently been showcased to Pamplin College of Business alumni. A design charrette was also hosted this fall by the Intelligent Infrastructure for Human-Centered Communities (IIHCC) DA and Creativity and Innovation (C+I) SGA. The charrette explored possible designs for the planned HITT Hall and Intelligent Infrastructure Complex.

DA/SGA Programming – Throughout the fall, the DA/SGAs have held a number of events focused on cultivating cross-disciplinary collaborations. This includes the Data and Decisions Research Blitz that gave new cluster hires an opportunity to share their research interests and learn about the work of senior scholars involved in the DA. The Integrated Security (IS) DA held a workshop in October called *Information, Trust and Society*. The event featured speakers from industry and academia, and breakout sessions for encouraging research collaborations and joint grant-writing ventures. Additionally, Coastal@VT held a state-wide roundtable discussion at Virginia Tech that brought together researchers from Old Dominion University, William and Mary, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Wetlands Watch NGO, University of Virginia and Virginia Tech to discuss coastal resilience in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Finally, the Virtual Learning Lab concept group (sponsored by GSS) brought in a delegation from Mzuzu University to decide on a plan for their new library that is being designed by the College of Architecture. The designs for this facility include a virtual learning lab that can be used for research and education on health and water. To find out about future events please visit the events page on the Destination Areas website:

https://www.provost.vt.edu/destination_areas/da_upcoming_events.html

Spring Lecture series - The LSIE office is launching a Brown Bag Lecture Series during the spring semester. This series highlights the ongoing work of the DA/SGAs by inviting stakeholders to reflect on their experiences working on Destination Area initiated projects. Unlike a formal lecture series, this series focuses on critical reflections about what is involved in the building of transdisciplinary communities at Virginia Tech. The spring semester speakers include Sudipta Sarangi, Patty Raun and Daniel Bird Tobin, Aaron Brantly and Anne Khademian. Further information about these lectures can be found the Destination Areas website:

https://www.provost.vt.edu/destination_areas/da_upcoming_events.html

Brown Bag Lecture Series: Building Transdisciplinary Communities

This series will highlight the ongoing work of the Destination Areas and Strategic Growth Areas by inviting stakeholders to reflect on their experiences working on inter-/transdisciplinary projects and activities. Unlike a formal lecture series, this series aims to explore through critical reflection and dialogue, what it means to build transdisciplinary communities at Virginia Tech. In this way, the lecture series seeks to share stories about the inner workings and experiences of doing transdisciplinary work, while also reflecting on how these collaborations may not have otherwise been possible without the support of the DA/SGAs.



- JAN 30 **Sudipta Sarangi**
Data and Decisions Destination Area and
Department of Economics
12:00-1:00 pm, Kelly Hall 210
- FEB 20 **Patty Raun and Daniel Bird Tobin**
Center for Communicating Science and
School of Performance Arts
12:00-1:00 pm, Kelly 310
- MAR 20 **Aaron Brantly**
Integrated Security Destination Area and
Department of Political Science
12:00-1:00 pm, Kelly Hall 210
- APR 17 **Anne Khademian**
Policy Strategic Growth Area and School
of Public and International Affairs
12:00-1:00 pm, Kelly Hall 210

*Presented by the Provost's office
for Learning Systems Innovation and
Effectiveness (LSIE)*

Find more information about this
and other related activities:
www.provost.vt.edu/destination_areas

For further information please contact Todd
Nicewonger, Project Director for Destination
Areas at toddn@vt.edu