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OIAconnect

HOME EDITION

A message to the OIA community

This week, the university released plans for the Fall 2020 semester, which I [encourage you to review](#). The Outreach and International Affairs leadership team is reviewing these plans and will be following up in the near future to provide operational details and seek feedback.

The health and wellness of our employees and their families will be the driving determinant of OIA's reopening strategy. Cooperation, coordination, compassion, and a community of the willing will be the underlying themes of our efforts moving forward.

Telework status will continue to be encouraged until face coverings, hand sanitizers, enhanced cleaning services, plexiglass barriers, and PPE are made available and distributed widely by the university. We will continue to refine our guidelines for remote work options to enable members of the OIA community to be professionally productive while safeguarding their health and that of their families.

We are also consulting various public health guidelines and evaluating safety considerations regarding fall study abroad programs and activities at our international locations. We will provide additional updates about study abroad next week.

Through the rest of the summer, we will communicate regularly about planning for the fall. Please stay in touch with the latest university updates by checking vt.edu/ready. Of course, if you have immediate questions or concerns, feel free to [contact me](#).

Regards,

AROUND OIA

Roanoke Center bids farewell to Lesa Hanlin

Lesa Hanlin, executive director of Roanoke Regional Initiatives since 2018, is stepping down to get married and pursue other opportunities in Northern Virginia. Before coming to Roanoke, Hanlin led the Richmond and Hampton Roads centers.

On both sides of the commonwealth, she brought out the best in her colleagues – creating teams that can only be described as, well, “absurdly awesome.”

As the story goes, the Roanoke Center motto has its origins in a prank and a bean-bag box.

One day, when program manager **Robyn Smyth** was out of town, her colleagues decided to surprise her by constructing a cardboard castle in her office. To build the royal abode, the merry jesters transformed boxes that had contained bean-bag chairs for the center’s Thinkabit Lab. Above the castle’s gate, surrounded by lights, was a phrase from one of the boxes: “Absurdly Awesome.”

“It was an almost perfect description of what we were all about and what we strive for: absurdly awesome programming, absurdly awesome service, and absurdly awesome outreach in the community,” said senior program manager **Don Pizzullo**.

Hanlin praised the support she found at OIA for piloting initiatives. “I don’t take that for granted,” she said. “Most of all, I will miss all my colleagues — from the ones who were with me in Richmond and Hampton Roads at the beginning, to



my Roanoke team, **Susan** and **Guru**, and all with whom I have worked in Outreach and International Affairs. I know these relationships will transcend this turn of events.”

Colleagues said Hanlin was genuinely invested in seeing them succeed. “She sought to give each of us opportunities to try new things and work outside of our comfort zone,” Pizzullo said. “She was always there to listen and mentor us when we had questions. She shared in our successes as we shared in hers.”

Program coordinator **Leigh Anne Stover** said Hanlin took time to really get to know her teammates. “She’s one of the most genuine people I’ve ever met, and she supported all of our ideas, while creating some of the most amazing ones herself. She’s leaving some big (high-heeled!) shoes to be filled at the Roanoke Center.”

“Wherever she ends up,” Pizzullo said, “she will bring ‘awesome’ to the world around her.”

Hanlin looks forward to staying connected on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and email at Lesa.Hanlin@outlook.com.

Scott Weimer, former director of Continuing and Professional Education and interim director of strategic partnerships and program development in the Office of Engagement, will assume leadership of the Roanoke Regional Initiatives effective June 15.

OIA mourns loss of longtime TRIO Programs director

Tom Wilson, who worked passionately for more than 30 years with the Upward Bound and Talent Search programs to help provide educational opportunities for all students, died peacefully at his Blacksburg home on June 6.



A native of Marion, Virginia, Wilson received a bachelor’s degree in music education from Concord University and a master’s degree in educational administration from Virginia Tech.

While earning his master’s degree, he started working with the university's Upward Bound and Talent Search programs, serving as counselor, assistant

director, and, starting in 1998, director. Although he retired from Virginia Tech in 2012, he returned to work as a driver for Blacksburg Transit, then as a tour bus driver for Undergraduate Admissions until earlier this year.

According to his obituary, Wilson was passionate about educational opportunities for all students and worked to ensure that low-income and first-generation students in southwest and central Virginia had the opportunity to attend college.

"It was a blessing to work alongside of and learn from Tom throughout his tenure as director of TRIO Programs. He was well respected by his colleagues and, more important, by the students he served," said **Susan E. Short**, associate vice president for engagement. "He was a master putter (you always wanted him on your captain's choice golf team), gifted church musician (he served as choir director at Luther Memorial for 30 years), supporter of Virginia Tech and Concord athletes (I would find him in the stands for a VT ice hockey club game, VT wrestling match, or critiquing the officials of a Concord women's basketball game), and a forever friend. It brings me great joy that my heart is filled with so many fond memories of Tom and that our paths were able to cross during our time together at Virginia Tech. I join his family, work colleagues, and friends in grieving his passing."

[Read his full obituary...](#)

SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Donations may be made to the Upward Bound/Talent Search scholarship fund in Tom Wilson's memory. To contribute online, [click this link](#) and then:

- Select an area: Choose "University"
- Select a fund: Choose "Other"
- Designation: Type "**Fund 874404**"
- Search for an area to support: Leave blank

Wafa Al-Daily honored as President's Award nominee

Wafa Al-Daily, associate director for global initiatives at the Language and Culture Institute, was one of 27 nominees for this year's

[President's Award for Excellence](#).

Established in 1990, the award is an annual recognition of full-time staff and administrative and professional faculty for their outstanding contributions and consistently excellent performance.



According to her nomination letter, Al-Daily's work at the LCI has "touched and influenced many networks of individuals abroad who will never forget how their careers and lives were bettered through their associations with Virginia Tech."

She successfully managed three Teaching Excellence and Achievement programs over the past two years in cooperation with the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan. Implemented with the cooperation of the School of Education and Montgomery County Public Schools, these programs served more than 70 K-12 teachers. Many of these professionals work in overcrowded, underfunded schools in poorer regions of Pakistan. TEA introduced participants to more student-centered teaching techniques and use of technology in the classroom.

"We often overlook the good that the university serves globally through work like Wafa's. Over time, thousands of students in Pakistan will benefit from the experience of TEA participants. In addition to exposing our local schools and students to these delightful Pakistani teachers, the programs have generally enhanced Virginia Tech's reputation in that country," LCI Director **Don Back** said.

Al-Daily finished her Ph.D. from the School of Public and International Affairs in 2013. She joined CIRED as coordinator of Middle East and North Africa initiatives in 2015 and moved to the LCI in 2017.

Collaboration leads to success against invasive weed

Because of the combined efforts of two Virginia land-grant universities, natural vegetation is flourishing anew and farmer access to fertile lands is increasing where a destructive weed once ruled in East Africa.

Virginia Tech's [Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Integrated Pest](#)

[Management](#) and [Virginia State University](#) have collaborated since 2005 to mitigate the spread of parthenium in Ethiopia and Uganda. The teams implement biocontrol, or the release of insects that are natural enemies of the weed, to combat it safely and economically.

[Read more...](#)

— Sara Hendery

Taking a global approach to curriculum-building

Though limited for now by the confines of virtual classrooms, Virginia Tech faculty continue to think beyond boundaries and connect students to different parts of the world. In courses with topics as diverse as water resources, food security, and women and gender studies, students are exploring global issues and perspectives.



Supported by Curriculum Globalization Grants, these courses are the result of an initiative offered by OIA and the Global Education Office. The grant opportunity encourages faculty to create or revise undergraduate courses by integrating lessons in cross-cultural concepts and global engagement. Grants are \$3,500 for modifying an existing course and \$5,000 for creating a new one.

[Read more...](#)

— Rommelyn Coffren

UNFINISHED CONVERSATIONS



OIA survey aims to further discussions about race

On Friday, Menah Pratt-Clarke, vice president for strategic affairs and diversity, and Michelle Deramo, assistant provost for diversity education, led an online discussion with the campus community about understanding and combating racism in America.

“There’s very little grace right now,” Pratt-Clarke said, referring to the unjust deaths of black men and women in the past few weeks. “It is as if many feel that America has had 400 years to care, to get it right. Yet I know, as many of us do know, that we must struggle together to get there.”

She and Deramo offered advice about how to be advocates and take action to transform the national and university culture. You can watch a [recording of the Unfinished Conversations on Race discussion](#) online.

We’d like to ask you to fill out an anonymous survey to get some ideas from folks throughout OIA on how they are feeling about the current historical moment and on how we can move forward with anti-racist action as an organization.

Please take a few minutes to take [this survey](#) before the end of the week.

VIRTUAL TEACH-IN

The Department of Religion and Culture will host a webinar, [“Teach-In on Anti-Black State Violence.”](#) from 2:30–4 p.m. today.

To register for the free virtual event, visit the [webinar registration page](#).

NEWS TO USE

Latest from Virginia Tech

- **VIRTUAL TOWN HALL:** Last New River Public Health Task Force [COVID-19 online meeting](#) is at 6 p.m. today.
- **COVID-19 PREVENTION:** Facilities Department establishes [multifaceted approach](#).
- **LEE HALL:** President's statement about [renaming the campus building](#).
- **PLANS FOR FALL 2020:** You can find the latest information from the university on [the Ready site](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Forum focuses on Virginia's economic recovery

President Tim Sands, Executive Vice President and Provost Cyril Clarke, and Vice President for Outreach and International Affairs **Guru Ghosh** will be among the speakers kicking off the Vibrant Virginia online conference series.

The first virtual forum is open to the public and will take place from 10 a.m. to noon on Friday, June 12. It will include two panels focused on Virginia's economic recovery post-pandemic as well as higher education's response and role in that recovery.

[Read more...](#)

Register by June 12 for Global @ Home webinar

The Global Education Office and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning is offering the [Global @ Home: Bringing Global Perspective to the Classroom](#) webinar at 10 a.m. Thursday, June 18.

The program is designed to support faculty and staff with infusing their courses

with intercultural content, exploring virtual exchanges, and accessing internationalization resources.

[Please register](#) by June 12.

5 QUESTIONS FOR ...

Laurie Bond

Laurie Bond is a senior sales manager at The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center.

Are you binge-watching any shows on TV?

Just finished “The Crown.” Now I'm watching “Longmire.”

What book is on your nightstand?

A historical book about the area where I was born and raised on the Northern Neck of Virginia. It is called “Tides That Bind: Weems, Virginia.”

What is one small thing that makes your day better?

Teresa Hughes' infectious laugh.

What was your first job?

Pumping gas at my father's gas station. The best things about it were that I could be outside, wear shorts, and be with my dad. The worst part was having to find the gas caps on all of the different cars in the '70s.

What is your most prized possession?

An 8 mm movie reel with footage of my family from when I was a child.



— Isaac Rife

Margaret Cowell

Margaret (Maggie) Cowell is an

associate professor of urban affairs and planning. She is a long-standing collaborator with the Office of Economic Development and Vibrant Virginia.

What's your favorite way to start the day?

Before quarantine, I was an early morning gym-goer. These days, I've been waking up before everyone else in my family to try and get some things done before my 3-year-old and 5-year-old sons come and sit with me. I like checking things off my long list of to-dos, but I love our morning chats, too.



Do you have a favorite place to spend time off?

We split our summer downtime between Cross Lake in upstate New York and Hull, Massachusetts. Both places are on the water and ensure that we get concentrated family time mixed with lots of swimming, sailing, and other outdoor activities.

What's the best advice you've ever received?

My dissertation advisor knew that running brings me mental calm, so he told me early on in my studies to make sure that I scheduled time to exercise regularly. I laugh now when I think about being on an early morning run in Ithaca and seeing him out walking his dog, with a headlamp on his forehead and a newspaper in his hand. Nearly 15 years later, I give my advisees the same advice. Regrettably, I have neither the dog nor the headlamp.

Why did you decide to do the work you are doing now?

I do a lot of research and outreach focused on community resilience in response to various economic challenges. One of the main goals of my research has always been to increase our understanding of why some regions perform better than others in the wake of a crisis. I started out doing this work because I strongly identified with the changes I saw happening all around me while growing up in upstate New York. In many ways, it's unfortunate to think that this type of work continues to be relevant, perhaps increasingly so as we begin to pick up the pieces after COVID-19.

I've also been working with my colleagues in the Office of Economic Development on a book related to the [Vibrant Virginia](#) initiative, which encompasses a variety of efforts to advance community development, foster economic competitiveness, and improve the quality of life for populations in Virginia cities, rural areas, and many places in between. What I like most about this work is that I am learning more about the commonwealth and all of the important work being done at VT, as well as other colleges and universities in Virginia, and the many local partners with which we all regularly collaborate.

In your free time, what hobbies do you participate in?

We do a lot of hikes as a family. I also coach soccer and T-ball, try to go skiing every winter, and fit in a little sailing during the summer. I'm not the best at it, but I also have a lot of fun cooking and baking with my sons.

— Julia Kell



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