



## A message from President Tim Sands at the end of the 2017 fall semester

Dear Members of the Virginia Tech Community,

It's finals time and the next few days will be busy for all of us. For those of you preparing to take exams, be sure to rest, eat well, and take care of yourself as you study. 2017 is rapidly coming to a close, we've seen our first snowfall on the Drillfield, and we have much for which we are thankful.

The research performed by Virginia Tech faculty and students has never been more impactful, from protecting the water supplies in our communities, to leading the nation in the research needed to safely integrate autonomous vehicles and unmanned aerial vehicles into our transportation systems. Our researchers are helping communities use data to improve services, and we are assembling our talent in neuroscience, nutrition science, and public health toward solutions to the scourge of opioid addiction.

Virginia Tech is leading the way toward a 21st century model for the engaged land-grant institution that we have collectively envisioned through Beyond Boundaries. In support of that vision, our endowment has surpassed \$1 billion, the rate of philanthropic giving has doubled over the past two years, and applications for the first-year class are up yet again; we will set the fourth applications record in a row for the class of 2022. We have received our highest U.S. rankings ever, including a top-10 "public good" ranking among public universities from Washington Monthly. And in the category of "students love their school," Princeton Review has us at #1 in the country. We are headed to our 25th bowl game in a row, an active NCAA record. It has been a great year for Virginia Tech.

While we have many achievements that deserve recognition, I am most thankful for the character of the Virginia Tech community and the individuals — you included — who make Virginia Tech the strongest and most resilient academic community in the country.

Our shared commitment to *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), our focus on improving the human condition, and the purposeful work we have undertaken to strive to become ever more inclusive of the talent and ideas that enrich our lives, all create a place that Laura and I are honored to call home.

As you depart from the normal routine of the academic calendar, I hope you have ample opportunity to be with family and friends, to pursue a passion that has been on hold, or to simply rest and relax. Be safe, and we will see you back in January.

Tim Sands  
President, Virginia Tech

## Prepare for the "Diverging Diamond" on U.S. Route 460

The new interchange on U.S. Route 460 near Southgate Drive is scheduled to open this week. A new and innovative design, the diverging diamond interchange increases safety and moves a higher volume of vehicles without increasing the number of lanes. A diverging diamond interchange:

- Reduces congestion by allowing traffic to keep moving through an intersection.
- Improves safety by allowing free flowing turns when entering or exiting the roadway, eliminating left turns against oncoming traffic and reducing the number of traffic signal phases.
- Provides better sight distance at turns and fewer chances to conflict with other vehicles, which results in fewer crashes.

When driving through the interchange, drivers will travel temporarily to the left side of the road. Drivers should:

- Proceed through the traffic signal at the entrance to the interchange and follow their lane to the opposite side of the roadway.
- Pay close attention and follow signs and pavement markings that will guide them through the interchange.
- Be patient with other drivers in the area.

Resources for drivers, including graphics and videos, are available on VDOT's website at [www.virginia.gov/vdot](http://www.virginia.gov/vdot).

**NOTE:** *Southgate Drive from the new traffic circle to U.S. 460 will close permanently at 6:30 p.m. on Wed., Dec. 13.*

## Give to the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign today!

*The following is an open letter to Virginia Tech employees from Kelly Oaks, assistant vice president for Equity and Accessibility. Oaks is the honorary chair of the 2017 Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign.*

Dear colleagues,

After last week's update, the Virginia Tech community has raised more than **\$302,000** for this Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign. That's an increase of more than \$30,000 in just one week's time!

This week, I would like to especially recognize our retirees who have contributed to this year's campaign. Their generosity has put us more than \$6,500 closer to our university-wide goal of \$350,000. Thank you!

As a reminder, **this year's campaign ends on Thurs., Dec. 20** and, by working together in the spirit of our

motto, *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), I know we will exceed that goal! For example, if every employee that has not made a gift yet gave \$8 dollars to the campaign, we would beat that goal by several thousand dollars.

Be sure to visit the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign web page for more information on the more than 1,000 charities you can choose to help with your gift. You can make your tax-deductible donation through payroll deduction or paper pledge form using the resources on the webpage.

Finally, **our last prize drawing for this year's campaign will be held next Monday, December 18!** This final prize will be a **football autographed by both Virginia Tech former head coach Frank Beamer and head coach Justin Fuente.** The winner will be drawn from all those who have given to the campaign through the end of the day on December 17, so be sure to get your name in the hat today!

Once again, during this season of giving, my heart is overwhelmed with the generosity of our many employees who are serving others and changing lives in our community. Thank you again for your support of this year's Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign.

For more information and a list of charities you can give to, visit [www.cvc.hr.vt.edu](http://www.cvc.hr.vt.edu).

## College of Science lab instructor Craig Tollin fulfills lifelong dream with appearance on 'Jeopardy!'

Craig Tollin, a lab instructor with the Virginia Tech College of Science's Academy of Integrated Sciences, will appear as a contestant on the game show, **airing Thurs., Dec. 14.** Locally, the show will air on WDBJ 7 at 7:30 p.m.

How did he do? Tollin's not saying. Spoilers! And, of course, contractual obligation.

To read the full story written by Jessie Rogers, of Suffolk, Virginia, a senior in the Department of English, part of the College Liberal Arts and Human Sciences visit [www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2017/12/Science-craig-tollin\\_jeopardy\\_compete](http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2017/12/Science-craig-tollin_jeopardy_compete)

## IRS announces voluntary retirement plan contribution limits for 2018

Virginia Tech employees have many retirement plan options, including voluntary plans such as the university's Deferred Savings Program (the "403(b) Plan") and the Commonwealth of Virginia's Deferred Compensation Plan (the "457(b) Plan").

All Virginia Tech employees are eligible to participate in one or both of these voluntary plans, which give you additional ways to save money toward retirement. Contributions can be made through pre-tax or after-tax (also called Roth) payroll deductions and you are always 100 percent vested in your 403(b) and 457(b) Plan contributions.

For 2018, the IRS has announced increases to the maximum annual contribution limits that can be made to a 403(b) Plan and a 457(b) Plan. The 2018 annual contribution limits are:

- Under age 50: \$18,500
- Age 50 or older: \$24,500

If you wish to enroll in the plans, or if you are currently participating and wish to take advantage of the increased 2018 contribution limits, **contact the Human Resources Service Center at 540-231-9331** for information and instructions.

**NOTE:** *Individuals with 15 years or more of service to the university may also be eligible to contribute an additional \$3,000 in catch up contributions per year, not to exceed \$15,000 in a lifetime. This option will require special review by your vendor to determine eligibility.*

## Hokies Head to Camping Bowl on Dec. 28

The Hokies will face off against Oklahoma State on **Dec. 28 at 5:15 p.m. at the Camping World Stadium in Orlando, FL** so be sure to tune in! Tickets are on sale now; visit [www.hokietickets.com](http://www.hokietickets.com) to purchase tickets.

## Faculty/Staff can claim complimentary tickets to select basketball games

Virginia Tech faculty/staff members are able to claim a limited number of complimentary tickets to the following select men's and women's basketball home games.

- Thurs., Dec. 28: MBB vs. North Carolina A&T (4 p.m. game)
- Sun., Dec. 31: WBB vs. Boston College (2 p.m. game)
- Thurs., Jan. 11: WBB vs. Pitt (7 p.m. game)

Faculty/Staff members must show their Virginia Tech ID at the Cassell Coliseum ticket office to claim tickets. Each Virginia Tech ID warrants two (2) tickets; members may bring up to 4 Virginia Tech IDs. The Cassell ticket office opens two hours prior to game time.

## Reminder: Register for Advancing Diversity at Virginia Tech workshop by Dec. 20

The 15th annual Advancing Diversity at Virginia Tech workshop will be held on **Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2018, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center.** This event is open to members of the university community at no charge. Please register no later than Dec. 20 at [www.advance.vt.edu](http://www.advance.vt.edu).

For more information, contact Peggy Layne, assistant provost for faculty development, at [playne@vt.edu](mailto:playne@vt.edu) or 540-231-9948.

## Holiday and winter closing schedule

Please visit the Holiday and Winter Closing Schedule page at [www.hr.vt.edu/benefits/leave/holiday-closing-schedule](http://www.hr.vt.edu/benefits/leave/holiday-closing-schedule) to view upcoming holidays and the winter closing schedule.

Employees will need to use three leave days for the 2017 Winter Closing period.

-----  
**Virginia Tech News** is published weekly during fall and spring semester and bimonthly during the summer sessions, by the Division of Human Resources and the Office of University Relations as a service to university employees who do not have computer access on campus. For more information, or to discuss submission of items call 540-231-4387.