VIRGINIA TECH NEWS

Community members invited to shape future of parking and transportation

Virginia Tech students, employees, and community members are invited to a town-hall style meeting Monday, Oct. 26, to learn and share feedback about the ongoing initiative to develop a new parking and transportation master plan.

The meeting, from 4-6 p.m. at Squires Student Center in the Brush Mountain room, will begin with a brief presentation about the parking and transportation master plan, after which participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and talk with university parking and transportation professionals.

Representatives from Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB), the company Virginia Tech has hired to develop the master plan, will also be available to talk with attendees.

Registration is not required and individuals are encouraged to come and go as their schedules allow.

Virginia Tech is looking at how it can enhance parking and transportation to better accommodate increased demand fueled by increasing student enrollment and the need for more faculty and staff to support that growth. The goal of the new master plan is to anticipate and prepare for the growth expected through 2025.

In addition to the October 26 event, community feedback is being collected via:
-- Stakeholder workshops in November and February 2016
-- An online comment form at www.vt-ptmp.com/.
-- The Virginia Tech MOVES app that allows bicyclists and pedestrians to track their trip routes and provide that feedback to the university.
-- The Parking and Transportation Master Plan Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Virginia-Tech-Parking-Transportation-Master-Plan-1642164159401899/timeline/.

The project is expected to wrap up in spring 2016 with the publication of a plan that addresses traffic service, parking conditions and alternative transportation, and fully integrates and accommodates the needs of vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit traffic.

For more information, contact Steve Mouras, director of transportation planning and sustainability at 540-231-7912.

Disability Alliance will advocate for individuals with disabilities

A small group of Virginia Tech students and employees who identify as disabled have formed the university's first Disability Alliance.

The Disability Alliance is a space for disabled community members and their allies to come together and engage in community building, mutual support, and advocacy. The group is not limited to those with physical disabilities.

"We welcome people with any kind of disability, including mental illnesses, learning disabilities, chronic illnesses, and/or other hidden disabilities," said Haley Burgess, president of the alliance. Burgess is a junior from Roanoke, Virginia, studying sociology in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences.

The group wants disabled voices to be heard and represented on campus and hopes to address cultural prejudices and dismantle systemic barriers to full participation in university life.

Any student or employee who identifies as disabled, or is interested in supporting the cause, is invited to join. The group will meet monthly.

For information on membership or to provide input, email the caucus at disabilityalliancevt@gmail.com or visit the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/disabilityalliancevt.

Lisa Wilkes named associate vice president for administration

Lisa Wilkes, Virginia Tech's assistant vice president for business services, has been named associate vice president for administration effective today.

In her new assignment, Wilkes will oversee several functional areas within human resources to further improve services and support to university employees. Those administrative areas include Human Resources Operations, University Organizational and Professional Development, and Equity and Access.

Wilkes will retain responsibility for her current administrative areas, including Air Transportation, Alternative Transportation, Fleet Services, Mail Services, Parking and Transportation, Printing Services, Information Technology for Administrative Services, and Business Operations Management Consulting.

Hal Irvin, who had led Human Resources since 2008, recently accepted a position at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute to support the growth of the university's health sciences initiative.

"In response to the increasingly diverse and dynamic needs of our university, we want to provide additional help and support to our employees as our university becomes a global leader in higher education," said Sherwood G. Wilson, vice president for administration. "Lisa has tremendous experience at Virginia Tech, supporting institutional growth in many ways. She will help us take that next step forward."

Wilkes began her career at Virginia Tech as a graduate student intern in 1995. She has held multiple positions during her 20 year tenure with the university.

She has been in her current role as the assistant vice president for business services since 2012. In this role, she is charged with oversight for eight university departments with more than 100 employees and a combined annual budget of more than $29 million.

At Virginia Tech, Wilkes has served on multiple committees, some of which include the Optional Retirement Plan Oversight Committee, Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs, A/P Faculty Task Force, and University Strategic Plan Committee. She has a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from Radford University and a Ph.D. from Virginia Tech.

InclusiveVT publishes annual report

Virginia Tech's InclusiveVT has published its annual report, which highlights inclusion and diversity efforts during the initiative's first year. The 2014-2015 report can be found online at www.blogs.lt.vt.edu/diversity/inclusivevt-initiative/2014-2015-report-on-inclusion-and-diversity/.

"We've made good progress over the past year," President Timothy D. Sands wrote in the report's introduction. "This status report reflects a great deal of work by many individuals across our university community."

The report includes information from a range of contributors, including students, caucuses, administrators, faculty, and inclusion coordinators. Data from the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness also is featured in the report, which was compiled by Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education Karen P. DePauw.

InclusiveVT is a university-wide effort to advance inclusion and diversity initiatives on all campuses. It was adopted by Sands in July 2014 following unanimous recommendations by the Task Force on Inclusive Excellence.

Sands has called the initiative a framework for students, administrators, faculty, and staff to "advance a bold and reinvigorated inclusion agenda" that affirms the university's Principles of Community and 2013-2018 Diversity Strategic Plan. The university's complete Principles of Community can be found on the InclusiveVT website at www.inclusive.vt.edu/vtpoc/index.html, and the university's Diversity Strategic Plan can be found at www.inclusive.vt.edu/resources/dsp/index.html.

InclusiveVT is led by the President's Inclusion and Diversity Executive Council, the inclusion coordinators, the advisory community, and the senior advisor to the president and vice provost for inclusion and diversity.

The annual report is presented in three main sections: the current status of inclusion and diversity; facts and figures about diversity; and an analysis of InclusiveVT initiatives and recommendations for 2015-2016. A summary of progress on the 86 original initiatives proposed by the university's colleges and units during the first year, also is included in the report.

The report ends with a look forward at action planned for the program's second year, dubbed InclusiveVT 2.0, stating Virginia Tech will "move very intentionally toward inclusion and university transformation." Next steps identified in the report include continuing progress on the first year's initiatives, which have been updated; encouraging new efforts or initiatives; establishing university-wide efforts and collaborations; and establishing processes for securing financial support for initiatives.

To find out more about InclusiveVT and how to get involved in new and ongoing inclusion and diversity efforts across the university campuses, visit www.inclusive.vt.edu/get-involved/index.html.

Virginia Tech welcomes largest-ever incoming class of international students

Virginia Tech welcomed its largest-ever population of new international students this semester — 549 new undergraduate and 590 new graduate students.

Overall, total international student enrollment jumped 17 percent from 3,041 in fall of 2014 to 3,573 in fall of 2015.

The enrollment numbers indicate a 46 percent increase in new international undergraduate students, according to data from Cranwell International Center, The Graduate School reported a 40 percent increase in new international graduate students.

"What an awesome opportunity to engage with students from around the world without ever leaving Blacksburg," said David Clubb, director of Cranwell International Center. "International students help prepare American students to live and work in a world that now demands a global perspective and an ability to work across cultures."

Undergraduate and graduate international students have come to Virginia Tech from more than 90 different countries. The most — 1,590 — hail from China; India is the second most-represented country, with 586 students.

The top major for international undergraduate students is general engineering, and the top department for graduate students is electrical engineering. However, Monika Gibson, director of student services for the Graduate School, noted that the students are in programs across the university's colleges.

Gibson said international students have made up about 30 percent of graduate school enrollment for more than 10 years, but this year's bump was a surprise.

Clubb noted that Cranwell is particularly committed to Virginia Tech's globalization initiatives and serves as one of the primary support services for the international community at the university. Cranwell also works in partnership with International Graduate Student Services to ensure institutional compliance with a wide range of federal policies and regulations that govern the university's ability to enroll international students.

Cranwell and the Graduate School help students integrate into the campus community, and student organizations reach out to international students to engage them in academic and social activities.

Clubb and Gibson said throughout the semester, Cranwell, the Graduate School, and members of the larger university community will discuss and explore the challenges and opportunities that come with increased international student enrollment. Their goal is to develop a comprehensive plan to support and celebrate international students while promoting greater engagement and inclusion across the entire university student population.

For more information call 540-231-6527.

Hokie Wellness to host Weight Watchers Open House

Hokie Wellness invites employees looking for a healthy way to lose weight to attend the Weight Watchers Open House on Wednesday, October 14.

Virginia Tech employees who participated in the Weight Watchers at Work program last academic year lost more than 401 pounds. The Open House is from 11:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. in room 3600 at the North End Center. In addition to an informational meeting, the event will include door prizes and the opportunity to stay for the regular Weight Watchers meeting that will follow at 12:15 p.m.

The Weight Watchers program offers a reduced monthly rate to employees and holds a weekly lunchtime meeting on campus in the North End Center. Students are welcome to attend if they have purchased a Weight Watchers pass. Ample parking is available in the attached parking garage for employees with a valid parking permit. Employees who are eligible to enroll in a state health plan, such as COVA Care, are eligible for the 50 percent reimbursement as long as participation criteria are met.

For more information call 540-231-9331.