



Four President's Award for Excellence winners announced

The President's Award for Excellence, established in 1990 by President James D. McComas, is an annual recognition of full-time staff for their outstanding contributions and consistently excellent performance for Virginia Tech.

Twenty-six employees with a collective 277 years of service were nominated for the 2022 President's Award for Excellence. These employees were recognized during a ceremony on April 12, where President Tim Sands announced the winners. Each winner receives a letter of commendation from the president, a certificate, and a \$2,000 pre-tax award.

This year's event is part of Virginia Tech's sesquicentennial, celebrating 150 years of impact and engagement.

"The President's Award for Excellence recognizes outstanding performance, extraordinary contributions, and the highest dedication to the mission and vision of Virginia Tech," Sands said. "The determination and creativity of these individuals are an example to all of us, and we deeply appreciate their service to the university."

The 2022 President's Award recipients are:

LaTawnya Bureson, advancement associate senior in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences (CLAHS) dean's office, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2012. Holly Kobia, assistant dean of advancement in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, wrote in her letter of nomination: "LaTawnya has served in the college as president of the CLAHS Staff Association, in which she helped acknowledge and elevate staff roles throughout the college by implementing a CLAHS Staff Member of the Year Award. She has also provided significant leadership to the university on Staff Senate. As a senator for nine years, LaTawnya has served and advanced important initiatives on numerous committees including the Virginia Tech Appalachian Caucus, Energy and Sustainability Commission, and the Committee on Equal Opportunity and Diversity."

Julie Carlson, administrative support specialist for Hokie Wellness, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2018. Joshua Redding, assistant director for Hokie Wellness, wrote in a letter of nomination: "During the pandemic, Julie has really stepped up and made sure that the university is responding to its employees and students with certainty and compassion. Julie has made sacrifices by altering her work schedule, making time to verify vaccination statuses, work at vaccination clinics, and continually

answering questions about the ever-changing pandemic landscape. She has been one of the many frontline folks that have helped the university weather this storm with success."

Connie "Lynn" Heffron, laboratory specialist senior for the Meng Lab of Molecular Virology at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2003. X.J. Meng, University Distinguished Professor and interim executive director of the Fralin Life Sciences Institute, wrote in a letter of nomination: "As a lab specialist, Lynn displays creative problem-solving ability and has helped countless students and postdocs with their research projects by performing various experiments. Since joining the virology lab in 2012, Lynn has co-authored more than 25 scientific publications, including a co-first author paper. Such a high level of contributions to scholarly activities is rare for a lab specialist. Lynn is an exceptional staff member, and Virginia Tech is so lucky to have such a dedicated and loyal employee."

Max Ofsa, 3D Design Studio manager for University Libraries, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2013. Jonathan Bradley, head of studios and innovative technologies for University Libraries, wrote in a letter of nomination: "Max has been in the process of brainstorming the growth of one of the University Libraries' most popular services, the 3D Design Studio. The space, which provided free 3D printing for all of campus, enabled numerous projects and hands-on experience with additive manufacturing technologies to students from all majors at Virginia Tech. Max's proposal provided a strong groundwork for the space, and University Libraries acted on building it. During this time, Max was involved with all the steps of seeing the space come to fruition, including service design, tool selection, space construction consultation, staff hiring and training, and, finally, the actual opening and management of the space."

In addition to this year's winners, congratulations to the following nominees:

Dawn "Lee" Bishop, business manager in the College of Engineering dean's office, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2002.

Stephanie Breeding, financial aid advisor in the Office of University Scholarships and Financial Aid, has worked for Virginia Tech since 1998.

Michael Carlson, sign shop supervisor for facilities and operations, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2015.

Richard "Rich" Charles, technical lead for the

Department of Computer Science, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2008.

Sheila Crowe, senior fiscal and program technician in the Department of Biomedical Engineering and Mechanics (BEAM), has worked for Virginia Tech since 1995.

Andrew Davis, farm manager at the Alson H. Smith (AHS) Jr. Agricultural Research and Extension Center (AREC), has worked for Virginia Tech since 2019.

Kathleen Enos, executive assistant for the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2021.

Cheri Fleeman, floor care supervisor for the housekeeping department, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2006.

Christopher "Chris" Henley, housekeeping supervisor for facilities operations, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2016.

Deidra "Dee" Hopkins, student advisor/recruiter for the School of Performing Arts, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2014.

Julia "Susie" Kuliasha, executive assistant to the executive director of the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative (CCI), has worked for Virginia Tech since 2020.

Phillip "Phil" Lampert, helpdesk manager for the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI), has worked for Virginia Tech since 2007.

Darrell Link, laboratory instrument maker for the College of Engineering's Department of Biomedical Engineering and Mechanics (BEAM), has worked for Virginia Tech since 2000.

Michael "Mike" Lucas, grounds lead worker for facilities operations, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2018.

Katelyn Muldoon, water resources specialist for campus planning, infrastructure, and facilities, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2018.

Akiko Nakata, senior program technician for the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2016.

Jessica Pharis, program coordinator for human resources, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2018.

Stacey Poertner, systems administrator and training analyst for Human Resources, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2004.

Hilda Reynolds, accountant for Wireless @ Virginia Tech (W@VT), has worked for Virginia Tech since 1996.

Ann Thornhill, office and administrative manager for the Division of Scholarly Integrity and Research Compliance (SIRC), has worked for Virginia Tech since 2018.

Johnny Underwood, director of facilities and equipment for

the Department of Mechanical Engineering, has worked for Virginia Tech since 2016.

Mark Vaughn, research specialist senior for Eastern Virginia Agricultural Research and Extension Center (AREC), has worked for Virginia Tech since 1995.

For more information about the President's Award, visit <https://www.hr.vt.edu/our-workplace/awards-recognition/awards/presidents-award.html>.

Two generations share President's Award for Excellence

Virginia Tech has touched the lives of many families. And many families have made an indelible impact on Virginia Tech. One of these is Charles "Chuck" Shorter and his daughter, Amy Epperley. Both received Virginia Tech's President's Award for Excellence, Shorter in 1997 and Epperley in 2021.

Established in 1990 by Virginia Tech President James D. McComas, the President's Award is an annual recognition of full-time staff for their outstanding contributions and excellence in the performance of their jobs. The award previously included administrative and professional faculty until this year, when an Administrative and Professional Faculty Award was established.

Commenting on the dual awards, Epperley, senior director of Hokie Wellness, said, "That was the most amazing thing. I knew what an honor this was from my dad's recognition." Epperley joined Virginia Tech in 2014, after working as a community health educator for Carilion Clinic. She received the President's Award in recognition for her work during the COVID-19 response.

"Wellness has never been more critical to our university community than through the COVID-19 crisis. Thanks to Amy's leadership, resilience, and call to service, Virginia Tech students and our valuable faculty and staff have received the support they deserve," Bryan Garey, vice president for human resources, wrote in Amy's 2021 letter of nomination.

Epperley considers taking the job at Virginia Tech "the best career decision I ever made." Her father was pleased when she took the position, too. "He always encouraged me to pursue growth opportunities." Shorter was farm manager at Kentland Farm. Epperley remembers visiting the farm with him when she was a child. "I loved getting to visit him at work. We would get to see the baby calves."

Shorter began working as crop production manager for the dairy science department in 1974 and his job grew from there, until he was taking care of close to 3,600 acres. While working at Virginia Tech, he continued to farm at home at night. "That's part of where the kids get their work ethic," he said.

Read more: <https://vtx.vt.edu/articles/2022/04/hr-2022-presidents-award-all-in-the-family.html>

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