

A special edition
featuring VT's
influence on
all FRONTS!

Valley Business

FRONT

FOR THE UP AND COMING
AND ALREADY ARRIVED

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The IMPACT of Virginia Tech

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WELCOME to the FRONT

Virginia Tech's value to this region—at every level—is undeniable, but most of us are not aware of just how wide and deep the big research university's reach is. That's why we have dedicated just about all of this issue to exploring what Tech is, why it's important and how it touches you directly.

This is the second issue in our two-plus years of publication that has been dedicated to a single topic. A few months ago, we turned the magazine over to immigrants, a huge and misunderstood group that is a significant contributor in both positive and negative ways to our culture. In the case of Virginia Tech, there's not much argument that its contribution to our lives is overwhelmingly positive (try to convince a Hokie of that after a football loss to, say, James Madison University).

Tech provides thousands of top-level jobs, research that has created thousands of others, leaders who help shape our communities, a first-rate education for our children, an international reputation that serves us all well and inventions that help shape our society. We're lucky to have the university in our midst.



Tom Field



Dan Smith



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Biographies and contact information on each contributor are provided on Page 68.

Editorial Advisory Board

Valley Business FRONT has organized an Editorial Advisory Board in order to help direct coverage. FRONT selected a group of 16 diverse business professionals, who will serve as a sounding board throughout the 18 month rotational term that will turn over every year and a half.

The board will be given the task of helping FRONT understand the issues and develop coverage. "We're journalists," says Editor Dan Smith, "and not business experts. This group of distinguished business professionals—whose range in age, experience, level and specialty is impressive—will give us a solid handle on how business runs and what the primary issues and key players are in this region. My guess is that our coverage of business will be especially useful because of this group of people."

CONTRIBUTORS



Donna Dilley



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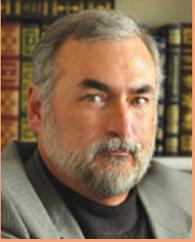
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Greg Vaughn



Alison Weaver

2010 / 11 Members

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- Warner Dalhouse** Retired (Seniors)
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- Mary Miller** IDD (Tech/Industry)
- Ed Murphy** Carilion (Wellness)
- Ed Walker** Regeneration Partners (Development)
- John Williamson** RGC (Tech/Industry)

You will note that the Board is comprised of experts in many different business / industry "fronts." This is intentional, as we are reporting on all the areas that affect our regional economy and are important to you. In keeping with our policy of being "the voice of business in the valleys" we ask each reader to join us as an editorial partner by calling or e-mailing us your ideas. You know more than we know about your business—or you certainly should—and that inside knowledge shared with our readers will make us all better at what we do.



If you have
an idea,
don't write
it down,
go build it

— Page 33

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Blog: morefront.blogspot.com
Editor's blog: editordan.blogspot.com



Greg Vaughn Photography

Ron Cronise is a Virginia Tech fan. Could you tell? "I don't really paint my face up and all," he told us, prior to his selection as our FRONTcover model this edition. But once he got into character at the studio—he turned into a wild lunatic. Like the real deal. John Garland of Spectrum Design recommended Ron for the gig because "he's the biggest VT fan I know," and before the photoshoot was over, Ron, president of RAC Construction Company in Roanoke, was screaming and jumping up and down to the point of having the building evacuated. Who needs a current college student? Thanks, Ron, ol' sport. You can keep the air horn.

Tech's high impact >

Executive Summary:
The tentacles of Virginia Tech's influence on nearly every aspect of life in our region are long and deep. They are also growing around the world.

by Alison Weaver

The IMPACT of Virginia Tech

Virginia Tech isn't content with a Hokie Nation. The sprawling land-grant university has its eye on creating a Hokie World.

Tech's mission statement boldly affirms its dedication to serving not just Virginia and the nation, but the entire globe. Such an audacious statement would seem like posturing—except it's happening.

In addition to Blacksburg, Tech has campuses in Richmond, Hampton Roads, Roanoke, Northern Virginia and Abingdon. International sites include Switzerland, the Dominican Republic and a proposed campus in southeast India.

It's increasingly difficult to find a Virginia municipality without a Tech facility. Research centers dot the entire state. In partnership with Virginia State University, Tech operates Virginia Cooperative Extension offices in 106 cities and counties across the state, plus 12 agricultural research and extension centers and six 4-H centers.

In short, Tech has emerged as the economic development engine of Southwestern Virginia, a massive influence on virtually every economic sector, encompassing the retail, construction, medical, hotel and restaurant, and transportation industries. Extracting Tech's active role in dozens of spinoffs is virtually impossible; many area companies rely on Tech for research staff, expertise and partial funding. Students perform free marketing studies and make forward-looking architectural proposals. Businesses get one-on-one consultations in a wide variety of areas, often free of cost and loaded with value.

"There are many ways Virginia Tech contributes to the region's economic growth," says Beth Doughty, executive director of the Roanoke Regional Partnership. "Obviously they make purchases for goods and services, and they invest in infrastructure such as buildings. Tech's economic impact from football and basketball alone are tremendous and benefit the entire region.

"In a broader sense (less immediate dollars), it develops talent and sprouts new businesses. Also, it is a cultural and educational resource that brings attention to the region and makes it a desirable place to live, work and invest."



Virginia Tech's Swiss facility

Virginia Tech

Consider the following:

- A decade-old Economic Impact Study determined that Tech had a \$1.3 billion impact on the Roanoke and New River Valleys. That has almost certainly grown exponentially.
- Tech is the No. 1 user of Roanoke Regional Airport. Two percent of the total departing passenger population cites a Tech connection. (And this excludes charter flights for sports teams, of which there are many.)
- Tech pours some \$400 million into advanced research, making it the largest research university in Virginia.
- Tech funneled \$2.162 billion into construction of new buildings in Blacksburg from 2000 to 2010.
- The university's budget has nearly doubled over the past decade, to more than \$1 billion for FY 2011.
- In 2009, Tech had 7,104 salaried employees and 8,742 full- and part-time employees (including Virginia Tech Foundation).
- One-fourth of all jobs in Montgomery County were Tech-related, according to the Economic Impact Study.
- Tech's Transportation Research Institute (Smart Road) is part of a \$50 million study, paid for by Toyota, into auto safety.
- Tech's payroll in the Roanoke and New River Valleys stood at \$373 million in 2009.



In my opinion, it took a long time for everyone involved to realize the influence Tech could have on the region and we're still figuring out ways to capitalize on it for the prosperity of the institution and the region.

—Beth Doughty,
Executive Director,
Roanoke Regional
Partnership



Virginia Tech's Corporate Research center in Blacksburg

Virginia Tech

Here is some of what makes Tech the pervasive institution it is in our region:

'Making hay'

Located on 120 acres along U.S. 460, the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center is set to have a banner year. Bolstered by winning the Association of University-Related Research Parks' 2010 Outstanding Research Park award, the center has begun Phase II of its plan, which will nearly double its 100,000-square-foot of office and laboratory space spread out over 27 buildings. The park has 2,200 employees and 140 tenants.

CRC President Joe Meredith is banking on the award. "We've got a year to make hay with it. We hope to capitalize on the publicity it generates."

Meredith is agog at the success of the center, which is a wholly-owned, private, for-profit subsidiary of Tech. He jokes that when the center began 16 years ago, its future was anything but certain. "We hoped to stay in the game long enough to see fledgling companies grow."

Meredith attributes much of the park's success to "our approach of developing programs and services that help the companies be successful. We adopted a model of providing service rather than just real estate."

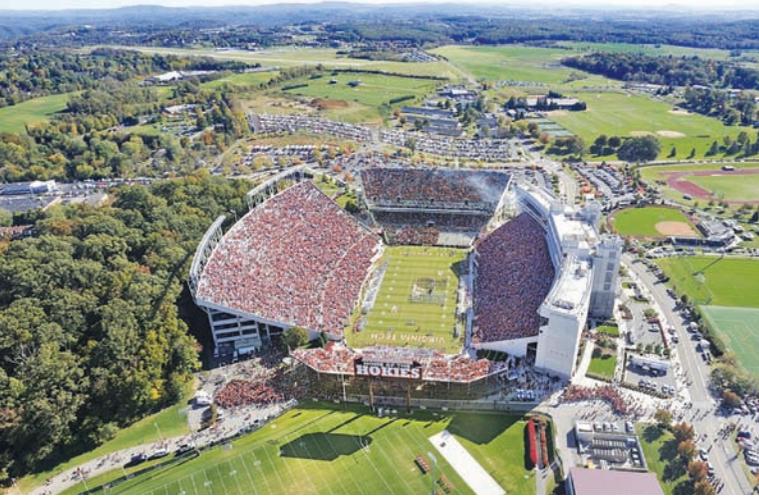
The CRC emphasizes that it is not just an incubator, although it provides assistance to start-ups. Many of its original tenants are still on-site, and the list reads like a Who's Who of high-tech companies: Intrexon, VTLS, TORC Technologies and Techulon, to name a few.

Virginia Tech KnowledgeWorks is a relatively new part of the CRC which serves as an incubator and launch pad in a 45,000-square-foot facility. It provides support and helps match startups with financing.



Most of the companies in the park [Corporate Research Center] are focused on changing the world, enhancing life, rather than being so totally focused on money.

—Joe Meredith,
President, Virginia Tech
Corporate Research
Center



Virginia Tech football: The best view

Virginia Tech

"More than half the people at the park don't have a degree from Tech. This is true economic development," Meredith says. "We are recruiting highly skilled, white-collar workers to the area."

Athletics no cash cow

Although Tech has burst onto the national scene with its ACC championship football team, the sports program doesn't generate any money directly for the university—nor does the university subsidize it.

"Football helps raise our visibility," says Tech President Charles Steger, "and it gives national name recognition."

Of 21 intercollegiate sports teams at Tech, only two—men's basketball and football—generate a profit (about \$3 million and \$9 million a year, respectively). "By the time you pay for all those sports ... it's essentially a break-even," Steger says.

Still, much of the region reaps economic benefits from the athletic programs in terms of revenue from food, lodging, entertainment, gasoline and retail sales.

Most hotels within a 50-mile radius report 100 percent occupancy on home-game weekends, as well as on Parents' Weekend and Commencement Weekend.

Charlene Humphrey, general manager at Quality Inn-West Salem, plans on a full house during special events weekends at Tech, even though her facility is 30 miles from campus. "We double the rates and require a two-night minimum on graduation weekend. We're always booked up."

In fact, the demand for lodging is so high that many area residents have taken to renting out their homes. One Blacksburg businessman asked \$1,200 for a two-day rental during Spring Commencement in 2009; parents of a grad quickly snatched it up.

“ ”

I don't think they'd let me in Tech today.

—Charles Steger,
Virginia Tech president
and graduate, on
increasingly stringent
admission standards



Gerri Tenhet

Realtor Diane Boon



The impact of Virginia Tech on Blacksburg real estate can hardly be overstated.

—Diane Boon,
New River Valley Realtor

'Kiddie condo' market still strong

Tech's influence on the Montgomery County real estate market is nothing new.

Realtor Diane Boon says Tech began having a big impact on housing sales—and construction—as far back as the 1960s when the university began expanding rapidly. "With the influx of students, faculty and staff, there was markedly increased demand on housing in the area."

More recently, Boon says she has seen two primary factors driving sales. "In the early 2000s, the kiddie condo market was hot, coinciding with a nationwide real estate boom. During this time our condo/town home listings were often on the

'We need the train' >

With all of the high-tech offerings in the New River Valley, the primary element often cited as lacking is surprisingly old-fashioned: passenger railway service.

Joe Meredith, whose job as president of Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center involves recruiting businesses to the area, cites a lengthy list of the New River Valley's positives. But when asked about weaknesses, he is quick to say, "The availability of transportation. This area is a challenge to fly in and out of. We need the train."

Meredith notes that many of the CRC's customers are in D.C. region, about 265 miles from Blacksburg. Although the trip is entirely highway and interstate miles, the round trip still sucks up about nine hours by automobile. "So many people in Northern Virginia have said if there were train service, they could work on the train," says Meredith.

Meredith is heartened by the success of passenger service in Lynchburg and hopes that it will extend further to the Roanoke and New River Valleys.

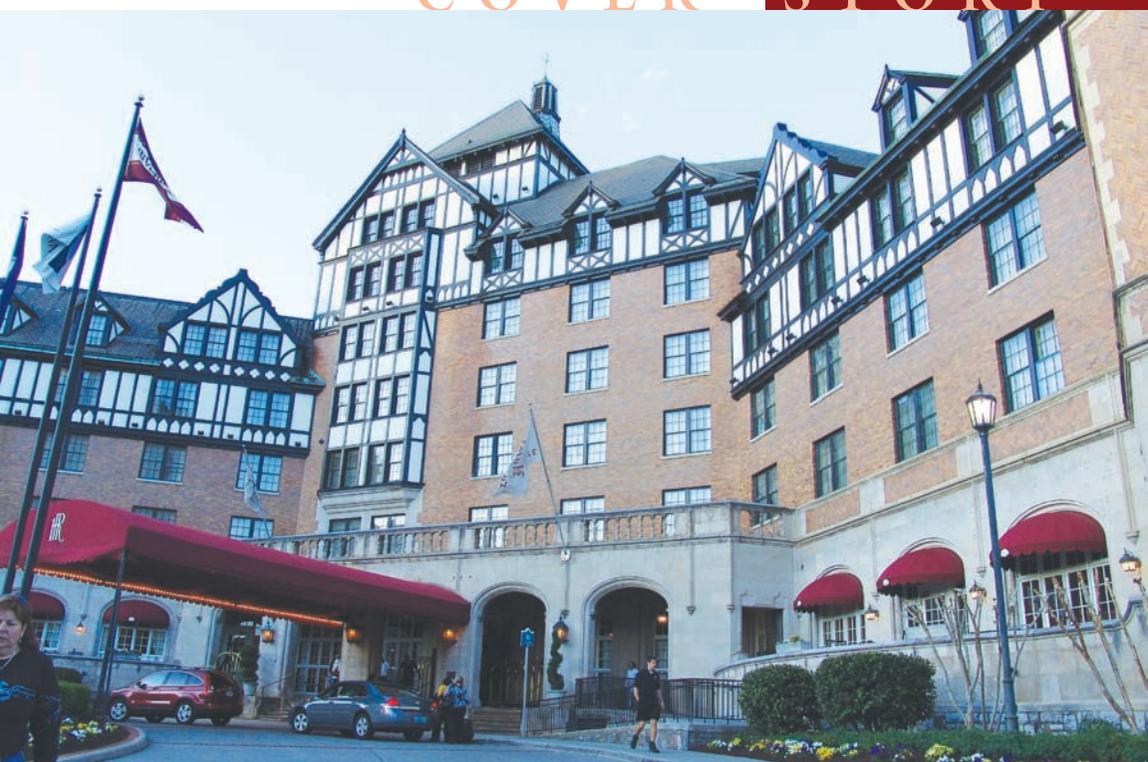
Others mentioned the expense of flying in and out of Roanoke Regional Airport, and say air service is frequently hampered by fog, high winds or snow and ice.

Tech President Charles Steger downplays the transportation issue. "Airport transportation is a problem, but it's balanced by other positives. I have a five-minute commute to work, for example."

Aric Bopp, executive director of New River Valley Economic Development Alliance, says, "There are always questions about air service, and I think most people don't realize what a good regional airport we have [in Roanoke]. As far as passenger rail service [is concerned], we'd love to see that capacity extended throughout Virginia."

In fact, the alliance's board of directors passed a resolution in November 2010, urging the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation "to consider extending rail passenger service to Radford from Lynchburg," noting that the New River Valley already "has infrastructure in place for passenger travel."

—Alison Weaver



Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center

Dan Smith

market for mere hours before we had contracts on them. Parents clamored for condos/town homes for their children who were students at Tech."

The success of Tech's football team helped fuel a different sort of real estate boom, albeit a relatively brief one. "Fans wanted a convenient place to stay for sports weekends," Boon says. "Vistas, Vista Pointe and Clay Court are among properties where some units were purchased by sports fans."

As the real estate market cooled, so did fans' ardor for game-day getaways. "Two high-end communities aimed at sports fans were in development but have since been placed on hold," Boon says.

The presence of the university, its many affiliated entities and various spinoffs have helped the New River Valley weather the downturn in the real estate market. "There is always some turnover in faculty and staff at Virginia Tech. VT-affiliated Corporate Research Center continues to expand, and more and more retirees want to settle in an area with a major university," Boon notes. "I expect the Fine and Performing Arts Center will be another area draw for retirees, and I cannot help thinking the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine will have a local impact, even though the campus is in Roanoke."

Saving a landmark

The 1992 renovation and reopening of the Hotel Roanoke was one of the first, most visible projects that foretold Tech's economic development prowess outside Blacksburg.

“ ”

I recruit people more than companies. If we can get smart, talented people to come here, they'll become investors and company founders.

—Joe Meredith,
President, Virginia Tech
Corporate Research Center



Dan Smith

Nancy Agee at the Virginia Tech Carilion Medical School

The grand Tudor-style hotel, a prominent presence overlooking downtown Roanoke and an eye-catcher for travelers on Interstate 581, had been shut down in 1989. Most of its trademark china, furniture and paintings were sold at a giant yard sale.

Owner Norfolk-Southern Corp. sold the hotel to the Virginia Tech Foundation for \$65,000, and it sat empty for more than three years. The historic landmark seemed destined for the wrecking ball until a group of business people formed Renew Roanoke in and raised \$6 million toward saving the hotel. Under the direction of Chief Operating Officer Ray Smoot, the foundation secured \$28 million in funding and the city kicked in \$14 million to add a conference center.

The hotel reopened in 1995, boasting more than 330 guest rooms and suites and the new 63,000-square-foot conference center. A joint venture of Tech, the City of Roanoke and Hotel Roanoke LLC, the hotel has brought in more than \$18.4 million in tax revenues for the city and more than \$144 million for the local economy. The hotel employs about 300.

Applied research

The newly-established Virginia Tech Applied Research Corporation manages a range of large-scale research projects taking part at the university in fields as varied as intelligence, cyber products, national security, energy and health. It operates autonomously, but works closely with Tech in technical areas to get the most benefit from its expertise.

Thomas M. McNamara Jr., recently of the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, is the new president and chief executive officer. His task will be to "extend the university's fundamental research enterprise to applied, translational, and commercialization projects," according to Robert Walters, vice president for research at Virginia Tech. The goal, says Walters, is for the ARC "to become an agile and respected university affiliated applied research enterprise with an entrepreneurial culture that will deliver products and innovative solutions ready for commercialization to meet a range of opportunities and national challenges."



All across the nation, other land-grant universities are trying to determine their role in the 21st century. In these difficult economic times, universities are getting looked to for lots of answers.

—John Provo,
Interim Director, Virginia
Tech Office of Economic
Development



Tech's new Cultural Arts Center

Virginia Tech

High hopes for medical school

In August, 42 medical students filed into a brand-new building in Roanoke, making history for Virginia Tech, Carilion Clinic and Roanoke.

Few economic development projects have triggered as much interest in the region and state as the newly opened Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute (VTC). And, because it's one of the first M.D. programs established in the U.S. in two decades, the nation is taking interest as well.

Carilion Clinic, a Roanoke-based health care network, operates eight not-for-profit hospitals in Southwestern Virginia. It also helps educate nursing, physician assistant and allied health students at Radford University, Virginia Western Community College and Jefferson College of Health Sciences.

"With our long history of graduate medical education and core training for UVa's medical students, we were wistful for a medical school as well," recalls Carilion COO Nancy Agee. "All this came to a confluence of interests during a dinner that Ed [Murphy, Carilion CEO] and Charlie [Steger, Tech president] were at with then-Governor [Mark] Warner."

VTC's curriculum, modeled after programs at Harvard Medical School and Cleveland Clinic's Lerner College of Medicine, will focus on training physicians who plan to go into research.

VTC anticipates employing between 250 and 350 people, many of them highly paid researchers, when the program is fully up and running.

All the world's a stage

For much of the past 15 years, Tech's focus has been on developing its high-tech, bioscience and engineering programs. Now the university is expanding its cultural offerings.

Construction is under way on the Center for the Arts, an \$89



Working with Virginia Tech has been interesting in that we both have our unique cultures and work styles. ... I think we've done remarkably well working together to develop a medical school so quickly.

—Nancy Agee,
Chief Operating Officer,
Carilion Clinic



Charles Steger: The driving force >

by Alison Weaver

If Virginia Tech is the economic development engine for much of this region of Virginia, then President Charles Steger is driving the train. That's the consensus of various leaders in the Roanoke and New River valleys.

"Charles Steger is a dynamic leader with a global view and an ambitious agenda," says Warner Dalhouse, a retired banker, founder of Valley Bank and Virginia Tech Carilion board member.

Larry Hincker, associate vice president for university relations at Tech, describes Steger as "a visionary, strategic planner. He charted a vision for the future and had a blueprint for growth."

Many credit Steger with a significant role in implementing a plan to expand Tech's life sciences program and research, leading to the founding of Virginia Bioinformatics

Charles Steger: "A smart man and good guy, non-pretentious and not at all self-centered."

Virginia Tech

“”

I shudder to think what the state of Western Virginia might be if Virginia Tech were not here. With coal receding and our population decreasing, Virginia Tech will be the centerpiece of the state for Roanoke and Western Virginia.

—Warner Dalhouse,
founder of Hometown
Bank and Virginia Tech
Carilion board member

million project that will feature a 1,260-seat performance hall with state-of-the-art acoustics, galleries, teaching space and an area for outdoor performances or displays. The completion date is projected at 2013.

"We want to ensure that our graduates leave with a very high competency," says President Charles Steger. "But we want to educate all dimensions of their intellect."

The facility will encompass an existing dining hall and will be near Theatre 101, which opened in 2009. The theater, facing College Avenue, offers a flexible stage and seating arrangement for smaller performances.

Steger says some people wanted the Center for the Arts to be near The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center, but he pushed for it to be closer to the center of town. Having the facility near the downtown area would provide "a richer cultural context for the community," he says.

Keeping an eye on teen drivers

Toyota is teaming up with researchers at Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) and other partners to help keep teen drivers safer. Toyota announced the creation of

Institute in 2000 and the recent opening of the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute (VTC) in Roanoke.

Steger became Tech's 15th president in 2000, but his Hokie ties span nearly four decades. Since arriving as an architecture student—he earned his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees at Tech—Steger has served as a faculty member, academic department head, dean and vice president.

Steger began helping plan Tech's future on a large scale as far back as 1981, when he chaired the Committee on Strategic Planning. As vice president for development and university relations, he directed the most successful fundraising campaign in Tech's history. The drive raised \$337.4 million, shattering the goal of \$250 million.

Steger also helped oversee the establishment of the Center for European Studies & Architecture in Ticino, Switzerland, and the Washington-Alexandria Center for Architecture, two pet projects stemming from his background in architecture and urban studies.

Carilion President and CEO Ed Murphy

describes Steger as "a smart man and good guy, non-pretentious and not at all self-centered." He calls him a visionary who is able to set realistic goals. "You saw that when he declared the intention to become a Top 30 research institute and not Top 25. Top 30 is achievable, and you realize that when you have all the real information."

Nancy Agee, Carilion's chief operating officer, worked closely with Steger on developing VTC. "I don't think we could have achieved the school without his vision and political savvy," she says. "I think Charlie knew the likelihood of achieving a top-tier university was unlikely without a health sciences division and a medical school."

Steger brushes off suggestions that he personally deserves credit for Tech's myriad achievements. He emphasizes that the successes are due to a large group of entities at the university, local, regional and state levels. "We have a unit under John Dooley that works on economic development all the time. It's a constant process."

According to Steger, "I'm probably best able to help by articulating the aspects that Virginia Tech brings to the table." 

Collaborative Safety Research Center in early January, with Tech as one of the partners, and says it will dedicate \$50 million over the next five years to fund the center.

VTTI is perhaps best known for its Smart Road, the world's first controlled, all-weather, test bed facility. It also collects and clears data for the Virginia Department of Transportation's



Director Tom Dingus

Virginia Tech

“““

Budget cuts have slowed the progress of our research programs, as well as academic offerings. The \$72 million cut in 2002 prevented our having 50 million additional [research] dollars because of lost faculty members.

—Charles Steger,
President, Virginia Tech



Virginia Tech

Virginia Tech's Smart Road from the air



Other universities aren't as active in economic development. There isn't a university as proactive as we are.

—Larry Hincker,
Associate Vice President
for University Relations

511 program that provides updates on road conditions.

"Given that newly-licensed teen drivers are three times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than their adult counterparts, Toyota's support of our Driver Coach project is of utmost importance," says VTTI Director Tom Dingus. "Based on our previous teen driving research, we can now determine, with actual video, the kinds of behaviors teens engage in while driving. The next step is to educate the teens and their parents with feedback about unsafe and safe driving behaviors with the ultimate goal of helping teens become better drivers."

VTTI, Tech's largest university-level research center, receives about \$12 million annually for research on truck and bus safety, driver distraction, tire

performance and green highway initiatives. VTTI has about 250 employees, some of whom staff its control center 24 hours a day, monitoring highways and gathering data.

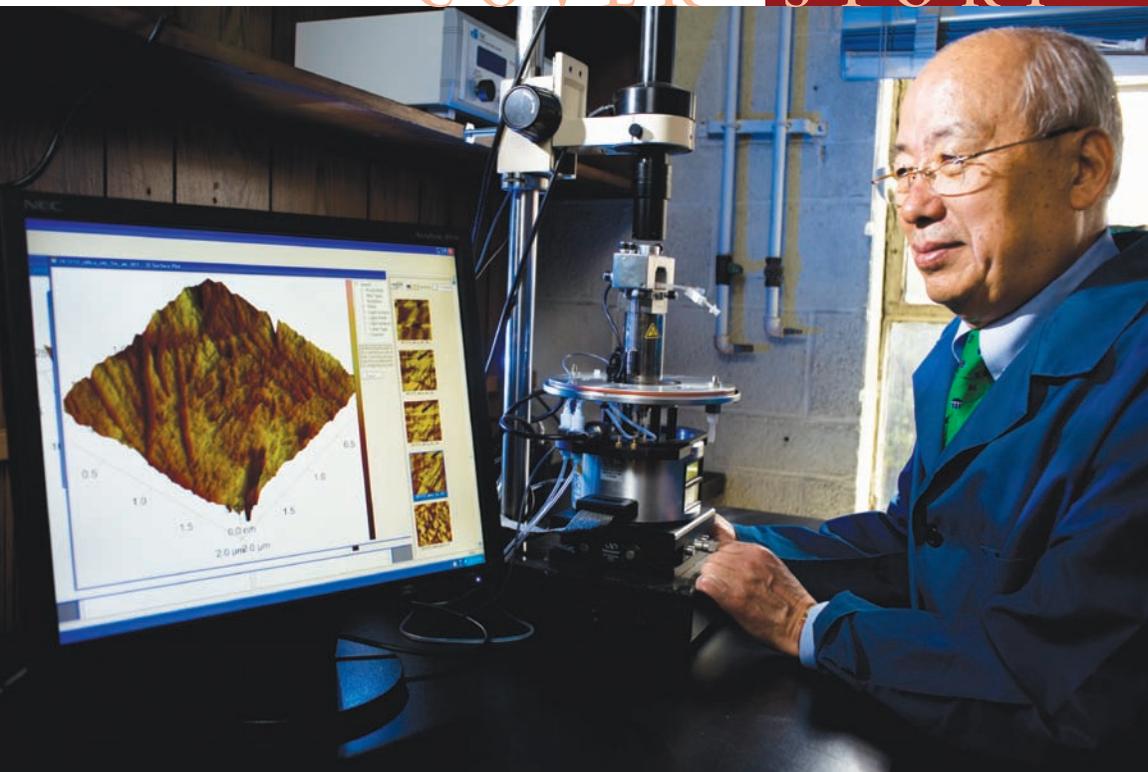
Cleaning coal

If Virginia Tech professor Roe-Hoan Yoon's research pans out, it could generate billions in revenue while helping solve an environmental dilemma that plagues coal-mining states. Yoon, who has spent more than three decades in the College of Engineering's mining and minerals department, is also director of the Center for Advanced Separation Technologies (CAST).

CAST is a consortium that includes Tech, West Virginia University, University of Kentucky, Montana Tech and the University of Utah—all in states where 70 million to 90 million tons of coal refuse get dumped aside each year.

The center is trying to develop technologies that can be used to "clean" the coal, producing solid, liquid and gaseous fuels in an environmentally friendly manner. Yoon and his colleagues have successfully tested a hyperbaric centrifuge that removes water from fine particles of coal. Coal companies dump the coal-and-water slurry into impoundments.

"An estimated 3 billion to 4 billion tons of coal sludge lays in the numerous impoundments in Appalachia and beyond,



Roe-Hoan Yoon of Virginia Tech's Center for Advanced Separation Technologies

Virginia Tech

untapped," Yoon says. He estimates that the technology could recover a billion tons of sludge, creating billions of dollars in revenue and numerous jobs in the region.

Humble beginning

The Virginia Bioinformatics Institute began 10 years ago with a fancy name and only two employees. It's now Tech's second-largest research facility, with 250 employees and operations in Northern Virginia, the Dominican Republic, North Africa and the Middle East. It wrapped up FY 2010 with more than \$120 million in funding.

When it opened, VBI represented a new approach to life sciences research, combining bioinformatics, computational biology and systems biology. Much of the research involves the sequencing of genes in both plants and animals to determine how pathogens affect them.

VBI announces new breakthroughs on an almost weekly basis. In December alone, the institute unveiled new research on irritable bowel syndrome, breast cancer, strawberry genomes and a plant hormone with anti-inflammatory properties.

VBI is also intent on developing future researchers. Its Kids' Tech University program brings students ages 9 to 12 on-campus to learn about science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Up to 450 children attend each semester, coming from a four-hour radius of Blacksburg. Plans call for VBI to double in size by 2020. 



Tech is a major research university on an international scale. Few have more of an economic impact on this region. From research comes a lot of money into the region, bringing in intellectual properties, grants which help employ well-paid educators and researchers.

—Dr. Ed Murphy,
CEO/President Carilion
Clinic



Divorce. Name change. The rules >

Women in the workplace may want to change their names after a divorce is finalized. Business associates and colleagues should be notified of the change in order to assist with proper business introductions.

One simple method to announce a new name is to change one's professional e-mail address reflecting the new name. A simple e-mail reminder sent to all business contacts informing of the new e-mail address should serve as a notice to contacts. Revising business cards to reflect the name change and the new e-mail address as well as updating the Linked In profile page will assist women with establishing their professional identity under a new name.

For the e-mail message, follow these guidelines:

- Limit discussion of your name change announcement to a short message with your new name and any updated contact information. Include a brief reference to your finalized divorce as an explanation for the name change, if you're comfortable with that. Avoid discussion of any personal details.
- Consider the tone of your e-mail to business associates. Use polite, direct wording. An emotional message can affect your professional image.

Handshake 2.0 founder and FRONT Workplace Advice columnist, Anne Giles Clelland shares the following insight: "Like the ABC song, a name has a familiar pattern and rhyme that's hard to change. Rather than correct those kind enough to introduce me incorrectly to others at business events and possibly embarrass them in public, I shake hands, make eye contact with the new acquaintance and say easily, "I'm glad to meet you. I'm 'Clelland' now," then move on to a subject of mutual interest. 'It's who you know' in business means it's important to be known accurately."

Demonstrate respect for appropriate boundaries and don't pry into colleagues' personal lives or private affairs. Janeson Keeley, owner of JTK Web Design and NetFRONT columnist advises: "If you decide what you're going to tell people ahead of time and say it pleasantly and straightforwardly, most people will accept that. To those who continue to press, 'Why do you ask?' is a great rejoinder."

Separate your personal life from the workplace by only discussing your name change and divorce with colleagues while outside the office and only with closer professional contacts when they indicate an interest. 

(Email questions relating to business protocol or customer service to donna.dilley@gmail.com.)

Business Etiquette

By Donna Dilley

Executive Summary:

It's one of those annoying little necessities of life these days. Here's how to do it with minimal fuss.

A nearly impossible response >

Dear Getting a Grip: *When I am traveling on business and am asked by someone where I'm from, I have learned to wait for the inevitable response when I answer, "Blacksburg, Va." and "home of Virginia Tech." I watch dawning recognition. They say, "Oh, I'm so sorry," or "April 16th," or "shootings," or worse, "massacre," then stare at me, waiting for a reply. It's so hard. I don't know what to say.*

Dear Traveling: What does one say about that for which there are no words?

And yet. Southwest Virginians—of which this writer is one—are known for their loyalty, strength of will, and reserve. This ability to take action in times of crisis and to persevere through hardship serves them well in times of trial. It is of less service as life goes on. Silence about pain, grief, sorrow and fear gives those emotions growing dimensions that take up space in the heart, mind and spirit. Paradoxically, silence, whether perceived as on behalf of oneself or others, doesn't lessen trouble to the point of making it go away. Silence magnifies it, pressing out room for hope and joy.

A limited number of boxes fit within the cover graphic of the Dec. 6, 2010 issue of Time Magazine depicting what it considered the most momentous events of the previous decade. "Virginia Tech shootings" fills one of the squares. The world's people will not be silent. It happened to them, too.

Business, with all its laws and principles, theories and formulas, is conducted by people. We experience tragedy, in mass and singly, in public and private, written to our horror on the cover stories of our own lives. We will be asked by someone, somewhere, some time, for a reply that feels beyond bearing.

Getting a Grip: Before we can know what to say to others about our tragedies, we have to have told ourselves the truth about them first. Whether in a journal, to a best friend, or to professional, we have to, in safety, share the enormity of our thoughts and feelings. If we don't, their growth within us will either shut us down and shut out others, or escape us as deal-breaking words or actions in our personal and professional lives.

Once we have told ourselves the wholeness of our experience, with the care we give our mission statements, we can then craft the partial, business-like reply that honors our personal history, our shared history, and expresses our readiness to be right here, right now. 

Need to start "Getting a Grip" on a personal problem at work? E-mail your question to grip@handshake2o.com.



Workplace Advice

By Anne Giles Clelland

Executive Summary:

When you are asked a question whose answer is personal and painful be prepared. Here's how.



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Every year Virginia Tech graduates thousands of students, many of whom earn technical degrees in engineering, whether it is computer, architectural, mechanical, environmental or civil. Tech also boasts a large percentage of graduates with science degrees.

Many of these students remain in the region and find employment with technology companies offering the perk of a casual dress code to lure valuable science and engineering talent into their ranks.

Engineers and scientists seldom wear business suits and often sport the business casual look of an open-collared sport shirt and khakis. This is perfectly acceptable dress considering the hands-on work they perform daily. It does, however, impact on the overall workforce appearance when the majority of employees wear business casual or even jeans to work.

Cory Donovan, executive director of the NewVa Corridor Technology Council (NCTC) has an overview of the varied technology companies in the region. He says, "The reality in today's technology world is that you need the best people to compete. The best technical people have figured out that they are in demand and they want to be comfortable. Virginia Tech helps produce technical people who are valuable to the companies in the region and, to a degree, those companies cater to their desire for casual dress. In Silicon Valley, jeans and a T-shirt, topped by a jacket is acceptable—there's a lot of room between wearing cut-offs with sneakers and a business suit."

While dressing well does not require a business suit and business casual may dominate regionally, it shouldn't look messy or unfashionable. Many local business leaders in technical fields are known to dress well even sans necktie. In April 2009 Bonz Hart, president and founder of Meridium, made our Best-Dressed List. He generally wears a button-down shirt, no tie, loafers and a blazer, for a well-dressed look. Pat Matthews of Rackspace in Blacksburg, manages to look sharp and appropriate wearing an un-collared shirt, jeans, dress shoes and a sports jacket to meetings.

Donovan stresses, "For those folks who dress casually daily, there are still things to pay attention to: dress appropriately for the occasion and consult a wardrobe professional for guidance in business wear. It doesn't take much effort to look sharp, but still be casual and comfortable. Don't be ruled out of a position or company because people perceive that you can't be flexible and dress the part." 



Business Dress

By Kathy Surace

Executive Summary:
Casual dress and the high-end professional. It's the modern way.



Becky Hepler

VTIP's Mark Coburn: "Our mission is to get our people's ideas to the marketplace."

Ideas to the market >

Executive Summary:

VTIP at Virginia Tech helps take those splendid ideas at the university and turn them into something practical and saleable.

By Becky Hepler

Everyone knows that "Eureka" is Greek for "I found it!" But what is the Greek word for

the phrase "Now what?" One good answer is technology transfer, or figuring a way to get the invention to the market, which sums up the responsibility of Virginia Tech Intellectual Properties Inc.

While the *raison d'être* of a university is pure scholarship, Virginia Tech prides itself on a commitment to applied research and looking for practical applications and solutions to common problems and issues. So when the Corporate Research Center was created in 1985, squeezed in among all the other entities was Virginia Tech Intellectual Properties Inc.,

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established to protect and employ intellectual property for the benefit of the university, but a separate entity from the university. To that end, the employees of VTIP pursue commercial applications of discoveries by Tech faculty, staff and students and help to protect those innovations through licenses and patents. The actual legal work is not done by VTIP employees, but through law firms, including NRV IP Law in the CRC.

"It was this commitment and having the infrastructure in place that brought me here," says Mark Coburn, CEO of VTIP since 2006. "Our mission is to get our people's ideas to the marketplace, to disseminate the knowledge." He has returned the favor by ramping up that process, so that in FY 2010, the office received 148 invention disclosures, secured 44 license and option agreements and saw \$3,345,236 in total license revenues.

When Tech employees, in the course of their scholarship or work, come upon an innovation, invention or discovery that they think has possibilities, they can file an invention disclosure with VTIP. The licensing managers evaluate the discovery, search for companies that might have an interest in such a product and bring them together with the inventor. The managers also provide some guidance about the licensing process and help to craft license agreements that protect the inventor and keep the product viable in the case of company failure. The managers also work back the other way, scanning the research that's proceeding on campus to match with company needs of which they are aware.

One reason for the high level of activity is the generosity of the division of money.

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Virginia Tech Intellectual Properties' headquarters building.

Becky Hepler

While most research schools split the license revenues unevenly, granting the inventor only 30 to 35 percent, in this case 50 percent goes to the inventor, 10 percent to the department, and the remaining 40 percent stays at VTIP. It is these revenues that fund the activities of VTIP.

The licensing of intellectual property could seem antithetical to a university's goal of extending knowledge and the "publish or perish" scenario, but Coburn says that when the university and the inventor enter into a licensing agreement,

they preserve the right to do additional research in the area of the technology and, "... most importantly, preserve the absolute freedom to publish results of the faculty member's continuing research. So a license agreement does not have any effect on the freedom to publish or on tenure decisions."

It is also for that reason that VTIP and the university do not deal with trade secrets. "We're in the business of getting ideas out there," says Coburn. "We're promoting ideas, not hiding them." 



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Mike Miller

Chief Counsel Kay Heidbreder: “We have to know about everything from soybeans to cloning pigs.”



The office must review over 3,000 contracts each year, not including those from federal agencies or corporate sponsors that separately result in more than \$350 million for sponsored research.

Tech’s legal eagles >

Executive Summary:

At Virginia Tech, the lawyers representing the university look a whole lot like their corporate counterparts.

By Michael Miller

Virginia Tech may be an institution of higher learning, but from the outside looking in it appears more like a large corporation or even a small city. With 6,800 faculty and staff, almost 30,000 24-hour-a-day live-in “customer” students and an annual budget totaling over a billion dollars, the university could almost qualify for the Fortune 500 list.

A corporation would normally have a whole stable of high-paid attorneys to handle all the legal headaches that attend an operation of this magnitude, but until recently Tech only had two attorneys to handle the load.

Since Tech is a state institution, one might assume that the legal affairs are handled from Richmond, and that is technically accurate. The Code of Virginia requires that the State supply legal representation for all the state-supported schools. But it would be impractical to administer those operations from the capital, so the chief legal counsel provided to each of the larger universities is given an

appointment as an Assistant Attorney General of the Commonwealth. This means that the Virginia Tech chief counsel reports both to the state’s Attorney General and to the president of the university.

Kay Heidbreder joined Tech in 1983 after earning her law degree from Washington University in St. Louis. Her plan was to teach political science for a couple of years and move on. But after being asked to provide some consultation to the current university counsel, her focus began to shift back to law and in 1985 she was brought into the legal department, effectively doubling the staff. Heidbreder immersed herself in the operations of the growing university, and in 2006 was appointed to the post of Chief Counsel.

During her time in the legal department, Heidbreder has seen the university transform itself into one of the major research institutions in the United States. That growth has resulted in a significant increase in demand for associated legal services and has allowed the office to expand to four attorneys and associated support staff.

The scope of legal subjects that must be addressed for the university is staggering. Due to requirements of the Virginia Public Procurement Act, the office must review over 3,000 contracts each year, not including those from federal agencies or corporate sponsors that separately result in more than \$350 million for sponsored research. Her

office provides counsel to both President Steger and the Board of Visitors, but also handles more routine matters such as real estate transactions, utility easement requests, construction programs, and even immigration issues.

While they do get involved in some litigation, it is rare. Criminal matters fall under the purview of the Commonwealth's Attorney, but on occasion the university must go to court. Interestingly, a significant issue often arises when a wealthy donor makes a bequest to the university and the heirs decide to challenge the will.

As the university grows, the scope of legal operations has continued to expand. Recently, Heidbreder's office has been involved in helping to negotiate several important partnership agreements to strengthen the university's position. Heidbreder was involved

in setting up the Virginia Tech-Carilion partnership that manages the new research institute, and her team was also instrumental in working with Rolls Royce and the University of Virginia to establish the new advanced aircraft engine consortium.

To most of us, legal work might seem tedious and boring, but not to Heidbreder's staff. She has populated her department with individuals who are interested in public service, are good listeners and who are flexible. Like most everybody at the university, they spend a lot of time learning many different subjects.

"We have to know about everything from soybeans to cloning pigs," says Heidbreder. "But that's the fun. It's great when we negotiate a deal and get to see excited faculty begin to work on their research programs. Everybody wins." 

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These professionals work with the students volunteering from VTC (from left): Wilton Kennedy, Ava Porter, David Trinkle, Abrina Schnurman-Crook.

Dan Smith

Learning out of class >

Executive Summary:

At VTC, students are being taught leadership by making them an integral part of the community.

By Gene Marrano

Dr. David B. Trinkle is overseeing a student-driven volunteer project that involves 10 community initiatives. He's the assistant

dean for medical education at Carilion Clinic and associate dean for community and culture at the new Virginia Tech-Carilion School of Medicine. He calls his associate dean designation "an outreach position," which aptly describes this new effort.

The 42 students in the inaugural freshman class at the VTC School of Medicine are working with nursing and physician assistant students from nearby Jefferson College of Health Sciences. Ten groups have been formed, close to 100 students in all who will help build homes for lower income families (Habitat for Humanity), work with Roanoke

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City public school students on math and science, offer health screenings at several homeless shelters, even conduct a shoe drive for needy kids.

"We decided to make it more about leadership, as opposed to health care, since it was the first year [for the medical school]," says Trinkle. To that end the Batten Leadership Institute at Hollins University is also involved with the program.

Students from VTC and Jefferson College get together for a class every week where the emphasis is on leadership, communication, conflict resolution and team building.

The curriculum, called Interprofessional Leadership, is modeled on Virginia Tech-Carilion's "problem-based learning," methodology, according to Trinkle. Students from all three disciplines have been together since the beginning of the school year in a classroom. They are putting those skills to the test on one of 10 projects in the field for 15-17 hours. Other students will likely step in to keep certain initiatives going, according to Trinkle.

In late February each group will make a presentation at the medical school on its particular project. This is not just a volunteer effort: students will be graded on the effectiveness of their particular community service project. Trinkle believes the program will help draw VTC students, many from outside the region, closer to the greater

Roanoke community, reducing the "town versus gown" phenomena, as he puts it.

Some will assist the Bradley Free Clinic by providing free medical, dental and pharmacy care to the working uninsured and unemployed; others will volunteer at the Council of Community Services' Drop In Center, developing a health education curriculum centered around the prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. One group will promote health and nutrition at James Madison Middle School, which features an "edible school yard," and an environmental learning track.

Trinkle, the course director, says the volunteer program is unique because it is part of the professional curriculum students must follow. Allowing the VTC medical school class to work with other health care students as part of team allows each group to build respect for related disciplines. "They know when to use others, [they] can listen and communicate with each other," says Trinkle, a practicing Geriatric Psychiatrist.

Trinkle says the VTC student volunteer program is fairly unusual, although some other medical schools are trying to develop a similar curriculum. "Creating a new medical school gives you a whole lot of opportunities," says Trinkle, "things you wouldn't be able to do if you already had a school [with] people used to doing things the same old way. I'm pretty sure there's nothing like this anywhere [else] around." 

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Patrick Collignon: "We were in a negative spiral and it was the last chance to save the plant."

Mike Miller

Forced modernity: Volvo had no choice >

Executive Summary:

Volvo's plant in Dublin was not operating as efficiently as it should and faced the possibility of being closed. Then the cavalry came.

By Michael Miller

When Patrick Collignon took over the management of the Volvo Trucks North America plant in Dublin in December, 2008, he had already been in the automotive manufacturing business for more than 20 years.

Known as an innovator for his success in converting Volvo facilities in Europe to green energy, Collignon was now faced with an almost insurmountable challenge: how to make the 35-year-old manufacturing operation competitive enough to prevent Volvo from closing it down and moving production out of Virginia.

The economic downturn had already cut sales by more than half compared to the 2006 output of over 50,000 trucks; layoffs were imminent; the plant was just recovering from a labor strike; morale was low. In addition, the operation has to compete with

similar plants outside the U.S., where the labor rates are a tenth those in Dublin. "We were in a negative spiral," says Collignon, "and it was the last chance to save the plant."

Collignon knew that to accomplish the necessary turn-around, he had to establish clear direction and provide leadership. "We will be the best truck plant in the United States," he told his management.

They laughed. "Pretty soon you will be the only truck plant in the U.S.," they said. "Maybe you should aim a little higher."

Realizing his real competition was from new manufacturing plants set up south of the border, Collignon expanded his vision to cover all of North America. And that's when he started leading the employees down the "journey of 1,000 steps." "It's hard to come up with one idea that saves \$1,000," he says, "but it's much easier to come up with 1,000 ideas that save one dollar each."

The path back from the brink had two major aspects, what Collignon calls "hardware" and "software."

The hardware aspects relate to the nuts and bolts of manufacturing. Modern processes that revolve around lean manufacturing principles are well known, and routinely taught in industrial engineering classes at nearby Virginia Tech, which has a strong relationship with Volvo. But these principles are often hard to implement due to ingrained culture in a workforce, whose members have always seen their jobs as a sequence of small steps, done "the same way we always did." That's where a shift in the culture, or what Collignon calls the "software" is needed.

Collignon, who lives in Salem with his wife and teenaged sons, was visiting a local

hardware retailer and noticed how many people were purchasing air compressors for their personal use. He did not understand why a typical homeowner would need to use compression tools. He soon learned that many people in this area build things for themselves—things that require complex tools to construct. That is a different culture from what he saw in Europe. “People build things for themselves here,” he says. “We just needed to bring that concept into the factory. If you have an idea, don’t write it down, go build it.”

A major element of culture change has been identification with the brand. “People excel in what they do when they have respect for each other and pride in their work,” says Collignon. “When I first came to the factory, the walls were covered with landscapes. Now they are covered with photos of our workers and our product.”

Collignon seeks assistance through relationships with the local educational institutions to help train his workforce and keep ahead of the curve. In addition to hiring Virginia Tech student interns to help the re-engineering efforts, the Volvo plant has recently contributed \$175,000 to a Virginia Tech managed \$1.65 million Department of Commerce program that will provide assistance to local companies to do more “insourcing” and integration of local supply chains, which should bring significant new satellite businesses to the area.

Collignon and the Volvo plant have taken a giant step back from the precipice, thanks to their new manufacturing culture. “You have to continue to rethink everything,” says Collignon. “If you don’t understand this, you don’t deserve a future, and you won’t have one.” 

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BIT majors
'business ready' >**Executive Summary:**

From Virginia Tech students comes an online guidebook for setting up your business with the Web.

By Janeson Keeley

When the stock market took a nosedive in October of 2008, nine seniors majoring in business information technology at the Virginia Tech Pamplin School of Business made a decision. Rather than panicking about their job prospects after graduation, they chose to actively support American small businesses. From this intention, and funded by their own contributions, the not-for-profit 501(c)3 educational charity The Online Business Guidebook Inc., was born.

According to spring, 2010 guidebook editor-in-chief Andrea Lovett and executive director Damon Silva, the original goal of the foundation was to provide a comprehensive guide "to current and aspiring business owners who wanted to go, and grow, online."

First published in the spring of 2009 with the assistance of a gift from Virginia Tech and numerous corporate sponsors, The Online Business Guidebook (available at www.businessguidebook.org) is a comprehensive tutorial for setting up an online business, detailing everything from setting up a business entity through performance tracking. It has garnered national attention from Small Business Development Centers nationwide, where, according to Alan Abrahams, assistant professor in business information technology, it has reached over 80,000 readers.

Updated twice annually, the development of this guidebook has become an integral part of the business information technology program. Abrahams notes that, "A conference paper

**Janeson Keeley**

Dan Smith

on this pioneering teaching and learning approach was winner of the Best Paper Award at the 27th annual Information Systems Educators Conference in Nashville in October, 2010."

In addition to the assistance that the guidebook provides to small businesses nationwide, BIT seniors help local small businesses by evaluating their current online strategies and making recommendations. "This past year, our BIT senior students have provided personalized advice and recommendations to 40 local small retail businesses," reports Abrahams.

Tasked with helping to develop the company's retail division, five seniors participated in an internship at W.S. Connelly & Co. Inc., in Roanoke during the fall, 2010 semester. According to the Pamplin School of Business web site, 80 percent of the 2008-2009 graduates of its business information technology (BIT) program were employed or had job offers at the time of graduation, with a median starting salary of \$57,500. This is the second highest employment rate and the eighth highest median salary among all of Virginia Tech's majors.

Wally Newton, NewVA Corridor Technology Council treasurer and adjunct instructor at Pamplin, says, "These graduates are business ready." 



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Community Benefit

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Metalsa's plant with U.S. and Mexican flags.



Sean Fleming.

all photos: David Perry

Work Spaces

Working with Tech for a solution >

Executive Summary:

Botetourt County's Metalsa had a problem in converting to produce a lighter product and went to Virginia Tech for some answers.

By David Perry

For many companies, innovations in their manufacturing processes might mean expensive renovations and installation of entirely new production lines, costing the company millions of dollars and countless hours. For Metalsa, innovation means not having to touch a thing.

The Botetourt manufacturer, located on U.S. 11 near Cloverdale but headquartered near Monterrey, Mexico, has made steel siderails for Volvo and Mack trucks since early 1996. Steel makes strong siderails, but it's heavy.

"One of the initiatives for commercial vehicles in North America is 'light-weighting'," says Sean Fleming, VP of technology in the Commercial Vehicle division. "The government is pushing improved mileage and improved efficiencies. What that's done is add about 1,200 pounds of parasitic weight," in fuel-saving equipment.

Adds Fleming, "That's weight that you're not getting paid for—weight that's not going to count toward your payroll."

So Fleming asked himself, "Could we look at possibly doing an aluminum siderail?"

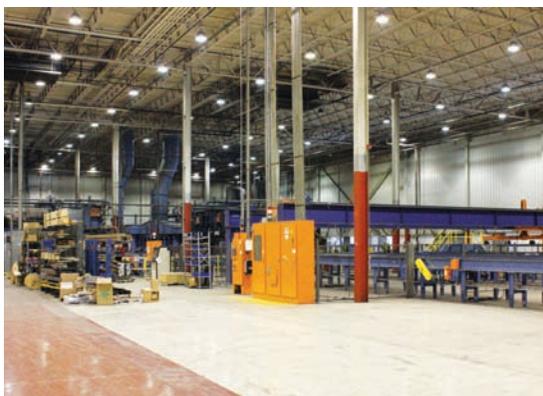
Aluminum is about a third as dense as steel. "One of the benefits there is you can get roughly a 40 percent weight savings, which on a Class 8 chassis is probably 400-500 pounds," says Fleming.

"The first question was, would it be possible or feasible from the manufacturing standpoint?" Fleming says. "Our facility is designed for steel, not aluminum. In the past, typically, aluminum for siderails has been a process using extruders and extrusion dies, which is a lot different than roll forming."

If it were possible, it could mean more orders and more jobs for the company that employs around 200 people in its 250,000 square foot plant.

Fleming identified a formable grade of aluminum and tried it on Metalsa's existing steel production line. "We did a series of manufacturing trials using roll forming, punching holes in it, and aging it to a higher strength level and then offsetting it," he says. "This formable grade of aluminum worked quite well."

What Fleming didn't know was whether the aluminum siderails could perform as well as the steel ones. About the same time, Fleming received an e-mailed request from Virginia Tech for proposals to use some federal grant funding to improve companies'



Empty plant.



Heat-treated steel ready to be cooled.

manufacturing processes or products. He applied in 2008 and received a \$35,000 matching grant.

“One of the things I thought Virginia Tech could help us on is things like effects from the processing like punching,” says Fleming. “What kind of residual stresses play into that? What kinds of negative things are going into the holes, going into the form radii, going into the flanges when we offset it?”

Researchers at Tech's Center for Innovation-based Manufacturing tested Fleming's aluminum siderails from 2009-10 and determined that they could indeed hold up well in the field.

The bottom line: Fleming had come up with a way to produce a lighter siderail—one certain

to be in demand with truck manufacturers fighting to pare every ounce—without making any changes to Metalsa's existing manufacturing line.

Fleming says bulk haul trucks such as fuel tankers can benefit the most from the aluminum siderail. “The payback period is six months to a year for the additional cost of the aluminum,” he says.

The relationship with Virginia Tech continues. “They've also worked on developing a roll-forming and punching model that will simulate the stresses from a virtual standpoint,” says Fleming. “If you know the characteristics of the parent metal properties, you put those into this model and it will predict those stresses. So what we're doing is correlating between the virtual and the actual.”



Rolls of steel ready to be formed.



Steel being cut.



Debra Horn of Gobbler Gear.

David Perry

minor league baseball or Division III championships.

But thanks to one Salemite, there's a new player in town: the Virginia Tech Hokies. Gobbler Gear, a VT apparel and gift store located on the corner of East 4th St. and South College Ave., caters to the needs of local Hokie fans, as well as out-of-towners through the company's Web site, gobblergear.com.

Debra Horn went live with the Web site in January 2007 after a career in the legal profession, which she found hectic and stressful. Horn managed two law firms and was a paralegal as well.

"It was a time for a break," she says, adding she wanted to do something fun. "I told my husband I want to create a Web site." A

Salem native who says she's been a Hokie football fan since the days of oversized quarterback Jim Druckenmiller, Horn decided to investigate selling Hokie gear online.

She knew from her former career in the legal profession that there were copyright and licensing issues that had to be addressed. Horn contacted Virginia Tech's licensing office.

When you think of Salem sports, you think of Spartans football, Roanoke College lacrosse, "They were very easy to deal with," she says. "I had 50 million questions before I even

'Time for a break' >

Executive Summary:

Legal no more, it's all Hokie all the time at Gobbler Gear in Salem.

By David Perry

there are neighborhood markets and then there's Hethwood



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started the Web site.”

The online store operated for about 18 months before Horn opened the 2,000 square foot retail store in a former convenience store across the street from Andrew Lewis Middle School.



Inside the store

David Perry

“This is fun, but this is work,” she says of managing both a brick-and-mortar and online retail operation. “It’s more than people walking in the door wanting to pay for Hokie gear.

“We have learned so much in a year and a half. There has been overwhelming

support from the community.”

Anyone who’s been to a game at Lane Stadium knows that Virginia Tech’s athletic department promotes good sportsmanship during the games. The licensing requirements reflect that.

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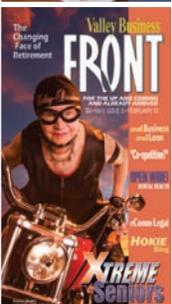
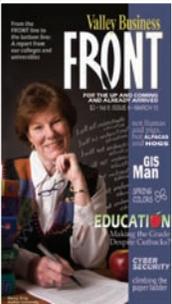
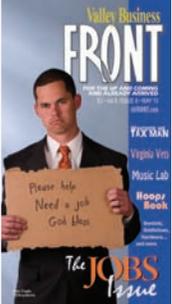
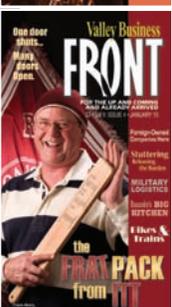
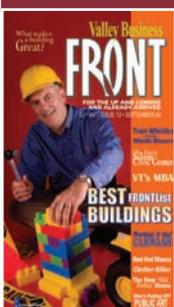
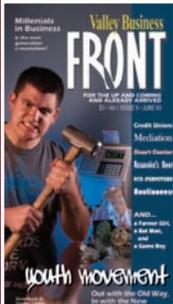
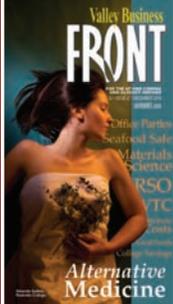
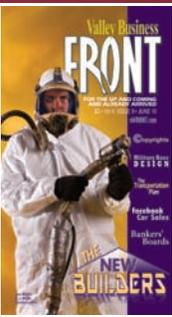
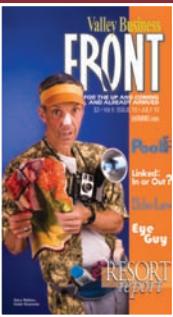
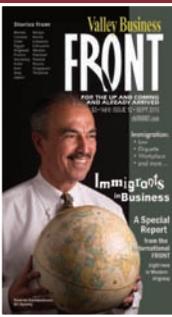
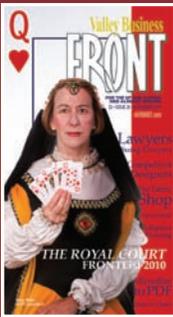
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March 2011

Today's Veterinarian

How's Rover? Your dog, your cat, small and large animals... in a struggling economy, when everyone seems to be prioritizing all expenses, are our animals still being cared for and getting treatment? We grabbed our leashes and talked to area vets. Hear the scooper...er, scoop... right here.

April 2011

Customer Service

Just what exactly is customer service? How do you achieve it? What is its importance to the bottom line? A cover story of utmost importance, we investigate the state of customer service, and then provide examples: the good, the bad, and the really ugly. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll love April FRONT.

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"Tech likes good sportsmanship. It wants you to promote that," Horn says. "[Tech] won't allow you any license on something that's going to be very derogatory toward another program or players."

She adds, "We follow their rules. They ask us to not do something, we're not going to do it. We're not going to push that envelope."

According to the Virginia Tech licensing office's Web site, licensees pay a 10 percent royalty to Virginia Tech. Horn has to submit all items to the licensing office for approval before they can go on sale.

Horn says business has been up during the past two football seasons, but down in the off-season.

"The first year was great," she says. "We

knew there was going to be some downtime from January to August. Honestly, it wasn't as good to us as we would have liked—we didn't anticipate that."

Sales were back up again this fall and during the holiday shopping season.

"The customer base and follow-up customers have tremendously increased," Horn says. "We saw a huge increase this year in online. We quadrupled online sales," which Horn says account for 30 percent of the company's business.

"We're really pleased with where it's going," she says. "The economy's a little bit better. Winning the ACC always helps."

And, of course, there was the third Orange Bowl in four years ... 



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Ray Smoot: "If you're going to need to mumble, that's a clue you shouldn't proceed."

Rachael Garrity

Stability at the Foundation >

Executive Summary:

The Virginia Tech Foundation and Ray Smoot have become almost one in the same over 35 years.

By Rachael Garrity

There aren't very many executives who: (1) have spent their entire professional careers associated in one way or another with the same institution, (2) shoulder the responsibility for \$1 billion in investments, and (3) have only one client.

There is one, though, in Blacksburg. His name is Ray Smoot, and he's the president of the Virginia Tech Foundation.

"Lots of people," he says, "think that because this is a foundation we're in the business of raising money for the university. That's the job of the development department. We're essentially in the asset management and real estate development business. Yes, we're a non-profit operation, but we also have for-profit subsidiaries, the

Corporate Research Center being one very visible example."

A native of Lynchburg, Ray grew up enamored of railroads. Each year on the Saturday closest to his birthday, his dad took him to Roanoke and back. Sometimes the trip included a visit to the Hotel Roanoke, but that was not the highlight. The steam engines then in use gave Ray a clear career goal. He was going to become a railroad engineer.

"Like many of my generation," he remembers, "I was the first in my family to go to college. When I got to Virginia Tech I became swept up in the growth that then-president Marshall Hahn was spearheading. When I entered, there were 7,000 students, almost all male. By the time I was a senior and [Student Government Association] president, we'd added 1,000 students a year, and a good number of women."

Shortly before Ray graduated, Hahn offered him an internship, and it was then that the young man's career goals shifted for good. Aware that if he were to stay in the business of higher education he needed a PhD, he went to Ohio State to earn it and then returned to become the assistant to Vice President for Administration Stewart Castle. That was 35 years ago.

"While it's true that the university is our only client," he explains, "anybody involved in higher education in any way needs to remember that there are very many constituent groups—students, faculty, alumni [more than 200,000]—and, of course, the public at large. When you take on a new initiative, it's a good idea to think of yourself as explaining to all of those constituent groups what happened. If you're going to need to mumble, that's a clue you shouldn't proceed."

The VT Foundation has not suffered the setbacks that many other university endowment funds have faced during the economic downturn. Ray attributes that to the skill and wisdom of the board's investment committee, which opted for a more conservative posture.

He also points out that three different

elements account for the increase in the endowment from the \$10 million that marked 1977, his first year of involvement: the generosity of the alumni, the emphasis on taking on programs that concurrently build assets and focusing on other ways to use the debt judiciously.

"It's all about being able to support the programs or projects for which we choose to incur debt, making sure they meet an identified need and at the same time have the potential to generate revenue," he insists.

While his conversation remains friendly, when he speaks about the importance of building an economically viable region that will attract superior faculty and students, this is who's likely to lose that or any other argument. His animation, enthusiasm and commitment are a potent mixture, and by about any measure, a winning one. 



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Michael Miller

Joe Meredith with his Outstanding Research Park award: "If we can just get good people to come, good things will happen."

Joe Meredith leads the VTCRC to success >

Executive Summary:

Joe Meredith was built for the Corporate Research Center at Tech and it has built-out with his direction.

By Michael Miller

Joe Meredith wasn't aware of it at the time, but he spent years getting ready for the Corporate Research Center.

In 1990, Meredith was well along a successful career path with a major defense contractor. After graduating in 1969 from Virginia Tech with a degree in aerospace engineering, Meredith had gone on to earn a master's degree from Purdue and then began working for Newport News Shipbuilding.

His professional life intersected all the varied elements of a modern high technology firm: research and development, engineering, data processing, integrated logistics support,

and marketing. It was a familiar career story, similar to that of so many Tech engineering grads that pass through Blacksburg on their way to populating the high technology corporations, big and small, that comprise the true Hokie Nation.

And like the careers of so many others, Joe found that something was missing in his life. A homing beacon, subconsciously acquired during college days, began to draw him away from the eastern shores and back to the mountains of western Virginia, back to Blacksburg and Virginia Tech.

In July 1985 the university, though the Virginia Tech Foundation, established the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. In

transforming Virginia Polytechnic Institute into Virginia Tech, the university administration began to increase the focus on research and technology commercialization. Legislation had enabled small businesses and universities to retain ownership of their inventions funded by federal tax dollars, and an explosion of opportunity for high tech startups around university campuses was beginning.

The first business model for the CRC was focused on real estate: if you build it they will come. It was 1988 before the first building was ready to occupy, and the model produced slow growth in the early years. But in 1993, Joe Meredith's resume found its way to the Virginia Tech Foundation, and it was obvious that his background and desire could provide the spark needed for a new growth model for the park.

Under Meredith's hand, the CRC has grown to 27 buildings in the now-full Phase I with 28 more buildings planned for Phase 2, on which ground was broken earlier this year. The park has more than 140 tenants and 2,000 employees. The park houses a wide variety of technology companies: it houses the famous System-X which revolutionized low cost supercomputers; the Via Virginia

College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM); and recently a high-security facility for classified security projects.

Meredith does not measure his success in terms of the number of buildings and tenants, rather by the amount of opportunity the CRC provides for Virginia Tech students. "I spend at least as much time recruiting people to the park as I do recruiting companies," says Meredith. "I believe that if we can just get good people to come, good things will happen."

Attracting good people is where Meredith has departed from the mainstream process of managing research parks. At the VTCRC, he tries to build a community by providing services that enable the companies to succeed using their own skills and creativity. In addition to his leadership in the park, his service on numerous local boards and commissions provides the opportunity for him to build relationships that involve the local community in the growth process.

But most important to the success of the park is Meredith's enthusiasm for the school, the town and the process of helping a new generation of entrepreneurs take the field. "I love to interact with smart young people driven to accomplish something other than just trying to get rich," says Meredith. "Their focus is on making the world a better place, and I love being a part of that. It's exciting to see them hire their first employee, and then to watch

CRC quick facts >

The Association of University Research Parks chose the VTCRC over 225 other U.S. and international parks as the 2010 Outstanding Research Park.

Here are some other important factoids:

- CRC is a for-profit wholly-owned, private subsidiary of the Virginia Tech Foundation, and is, therefore, not a state entity.
- It has developed 120 acres adjacent to the Virginia Tech campus.
- There are 27 buildings in the CRC total approximately one million square feet.
- There are more than 140 private companies and research centers in the CRC that employ 2,200 people.
- Total build-out is planned to be another 28 buildings totaling 950,000 square feet housing 3,000 employees in Phase II.
- The park attracts about 20 new tenant companies per year.
- The incubator program, VT Knowledge Works, is currently working with over 50 start-up companies.
- The private company failure rate is less than three percent per year.

the transition as they grow to maturity."

They could have no better role model than Joe Meredith. 

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Ginny Jarrett (left) and Kandy Elliott: "Our members know where their money is going."

Jill Elswick

they co-founded in 2004. Known colloquially as a "women's giving circle," the RWF is based on a model started in Seattle, Wash., in 1995.

Here's how the giving circle works: Any woman can join who is willing to commit \$2,100 a year to RWF. Of that amount, \$2,000 goes directly to selected recipients of the organization's pooled fund grants. Recipients are non-profit organizations in Roanoke and surrounding areas that represent a diversity of interests: arts and culture, health and human services, education, and the environment.

"One woman, one check, one vote," says Elliott, explaining the organization's funding and distribution process. She describes the RWF as "a sisterhood of

givers." Each member gives no more and no less than any other.

The balloting process is exhaustive. Proposals take months to vet, with a committee scoring each request in a number of categories. This year, the balloting process started in March. RWF members received their ballots in October.

"Our members know where their money is going," says Elliott, who is senior vice president of Friendship Retirement Community.

Membership in RWF is diverse and growing. "We have women in their 20s and in their 80s," says Jarrett, who is first vice president of investments for Davenport & Company. The organization now has 112 members representing women from a variety of professional backgrounds, from doctors and lawyers to young homemakers.

"We're hard workers," says Elliott, who jokes that she herself is a "working schlep."

'A sisterhood of givers' >

Executive Summary:

This women's circle isn't for sewing, it's for spreading money. \$1 million in six years to date to aid in a variety of causes.

By Jill Elswick

They've been good friends since their college days at University of Georgia 30 years ago. Virginia "Ginny" Jarrett was an economics major and Katherine "Kandy" Elliott studied public relations in the school of journalism.

Today, Jarrett and Elliott volunteer their talents and experience in the fields of finance and communications to the Roanoke Women's Foundation (RWF), a philanthropic organization

New membership leads are beginning to come in from RWF's just-launched Facebook page. "The tentacles are spreading," says Jarrett with a smile.

In the past six years, the RWF has awarded more than \$1 million in grants to at least 21 organizations and programs, including a program that helps Roanoke City high school students attend Virginia Western Community College for free and a program by the Mission of Mercy Project to provide dental care to low-income adults.

Elliott says the voting results are always unpredictable: "You never can tell what's going to connect with somebody."

In 2010, RWF's recipients included the Rescue Mission of Roanoke (\$58K), the Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment

and Endowment (\$50K), and Greenvale School Inc. (\$30K).

In prior years, RWF funds have led to the establishment of primary health care facilities in Craig County. The organization's support has helped incarcerated people gain a sense of accomplishment and a marketable skill by learning to train service dogs. These grassroots efforts toward positive social change are gratifying to RWF members, say Elliott and Jarrett.

Elliott recalls the emotional impact of seeing a line of people wrapped around the Roanoke Civic Center to get dental care as part of one of RWF's funded projects. Knowing she helped make it happen?

"There is no better feeling in the world," she says. 

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THE **BLACKSBURG** PARTNERSHIP

Getting by the gatekeeper >

My View

By **Dan Smith**
Editor

BLOG: [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com]

One of the most frustrating, annoying and exasperating pieces of any business day is the effort spent in getting past a gatekeeper. Gatekeepers are in place for a reason and sometimes the reason is to keep you at arm's length, regardless of how valuable you believe what you have to say is.

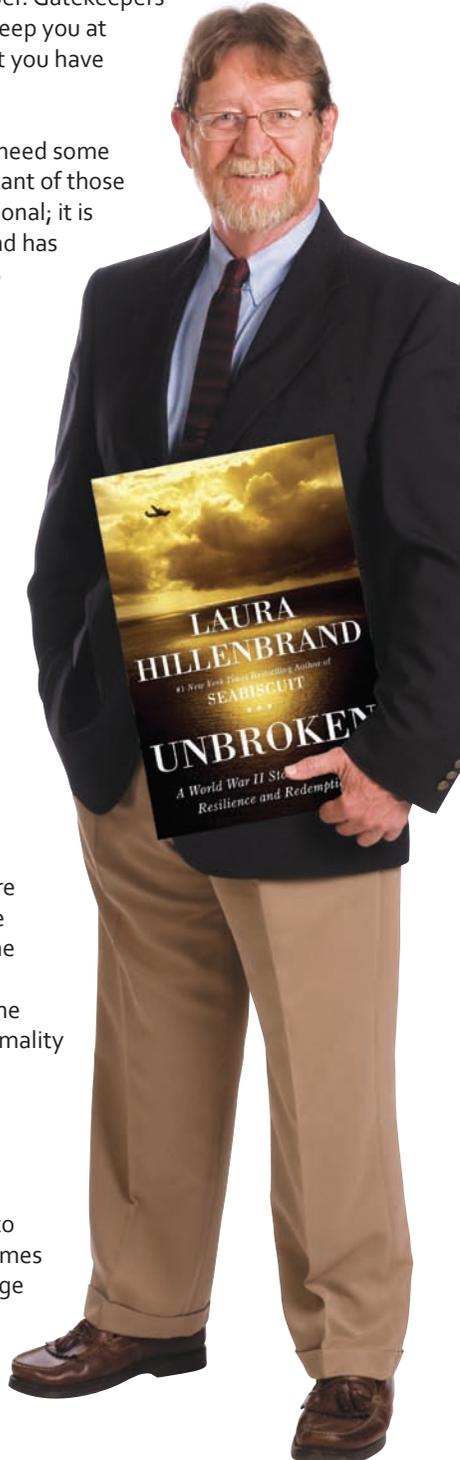
That's the challenge. Those of us storming the castle will need some arrows in our quiver. I think the sharpest and most important of those arrows is the understanding that the exchange is not personal; it is not about me. The gatekeeper has his marching orders and has been given the task of helping make the boss' time use as efficient as possible. It is, therefore, up to me to establish that what I have to say, sell, teach or offer is in the boss' best interest and in order to do that, I must first convince this first line of defense.

I'll have to take time to get to know the gatekeeper on a personal level to the extent possible. I will want to ask about his kids, his hobbies, his job, his interests and pay attention to what I learn. It helps if I care, though sometimes that might be difficult. Gatekeepers can be insufferably self-important for low-level functionaries, so I have to suck it up, smile and listen to what the gatekeeper says he's looking for in a person who'll get past his picket. (It won't hurt my case to remember birthdays, anniversaries, awards or anything special, with a small gift—and make it small; bribes are not a good thing in the US of A).

There are times when going around the gatekeeper is the only way to be successful with your message, but be aware that when that's done, a bridge is burned, so it'd better be important and you'd better make a killer impression on the boss. My tendency is to go straight to the boss if I have a personal relationship with him. Sometimes I get sent to the gatekeeper after I've said my piece, but that is often a formality and a courtesy. (Rule of thumb: if you know the boss and the boss likes you, skirt the gatekeeper. A lot of business consultants and coaches will tell you not to do that. I give you permission.)

If you're dealing with the gatekeeper, you're likely going to have to be patient in getting a message returned. Sometimes you'll have to play little games, establishing who's in charge here and it might be required that you grovel a bit. Some of us won't do that, but if you do, you'll probably take a step closer to the boss.

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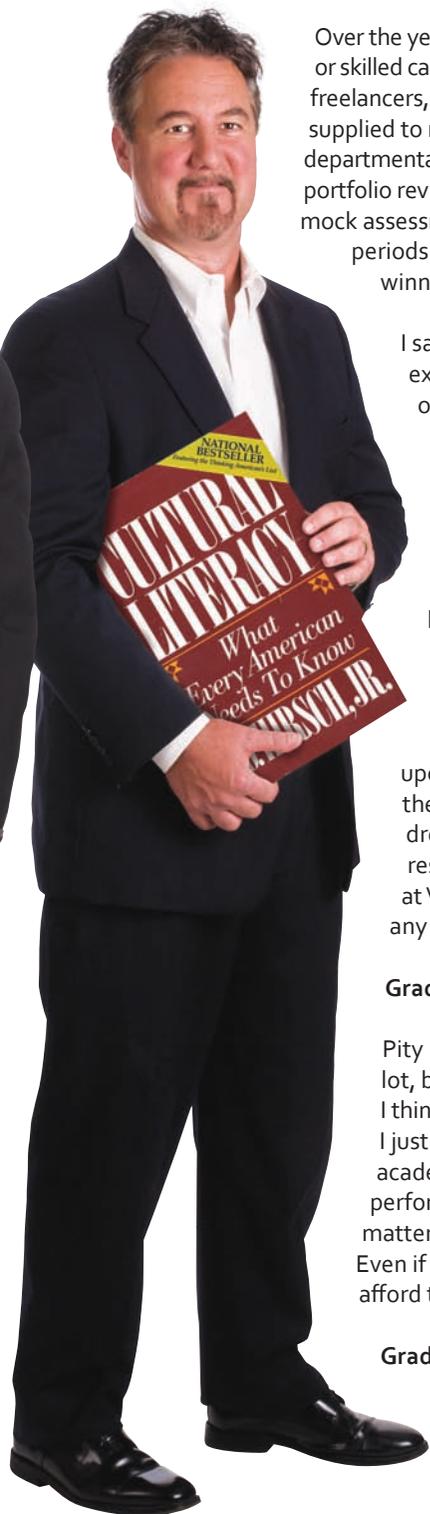


A graduate's hope >

By Tom Field
Publisher

On Tap from the Pub

BLOG: [ontapfrompub.blogspot.com]



Over the years I have hired just under 20 people in a full time professional or skilled capacity (not counting the myriad contractors, subcontractors, freelancers, temporary or part time staffing). I've also received applicants supplied to me by employment agencies and corporate human relations departmental screenings. I've conducted casual interviews, I've performed portfolio reviews, I've administered comprehensive qualifications testing, mock assessment projects, conditional assignments and contractual trial periods. Once, I even stooped so low as to host a contest, when the winner won—a job!

I say all this merely to offer perspective. I'm no employment expert. Like so many corporate managers and small business owners, I've seen my fair share of resumes. Thousands of pages and application packets that eventually blend together like colored marbles in a bubble gum machine.

A recent excursion to a career fair at Virginia Tech reminded me (smacked me in the face, in fact), that there are only four individuals graduating from college today. One, who has virtually no chance at a sought-after position—and one who has the very best chance. (Remember, we are currently at near 10 percent unemployment.)

To begin, there is actually a fifth person who seeks a vocation upon graduation who has a zero chance of getting hired. He is the slob or sap who simply does everything wrong. He stinks, dresses inappropriately, or can't even speak or hold any resemblance of a normal conversation. I saw none of that at VT. These were some sharp kids. On looks alone, I'd hire any one of them. Or all of them.

Graduate #1: 0—25 percent chance

Pity hands me her resume. She's nice. Sweet. She doesn't say a lot, but boy does she have a pretty smile. Her GPA is impressive. I think there really is a possibility of potential. But you know what? I just don't know. I can't know for sure, because her paper is all academic. There is simply no measure. No real proof that she can perform for my business. Because a classroom is not real life (no matter how much work it incurred). Any experience would help. Even if she must embellish some menial activity. I'm sorry. I can't afford to give her a chance right now. What a pity.

Graduate #2: 25—50 percent chance

Charisma's resume is underwhelming. Not bad, just nothing to distinguish it from ordinary. But I quickly set

continued to Page 52

Smith / My View

from Page 50

Build your case with the gatekeeper in mind. You might need another approach for the boss, but you're not talking to the boss yet and you won't if you don't have a good case to make to the gatekeeper. Probably not a good idea at this point to get mad and slug the gatekeeper or to call him a "self-important, pompous ass." Be charming.

Follow instructions. That's a good rule of thumb in anything, but it's especially important here. Don't point out how stupid the instructions are. Don't mention how stupid the gatekeeper is. It is rare that people we have called "dumber than a pro wrestling fan" become our allies.

Be persistent and creative. If all else fails, burn the bridge and look for another way to get around the gatekeeper. If you succeed, wink at him on the way out, contract in hand. 

Field / On Tap

from Page 51

it aside. Why? Because Charisma is engaging. He's got my attention. He keeps eye contact, he smiles. Was that a funny statement or a quip of wit he slipped into the conversation? He's human. There are people who can go a long way by having a personality. They show interest, they exude energy. Of all the qualified people I see today, this one has half a chance of securing an interview just on his attitude and presentation alone. Such charisma.

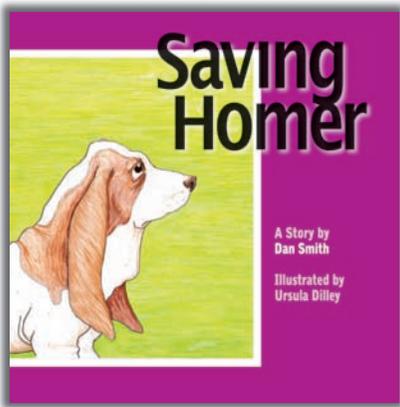
Graduate #3: 50—75 percent chance

Experience gets my attention. Always. His resume includes his nickname: Streetwise. If he doesn't have Pity's smile or Charisma's charm, those attributes might not matter as much, I think (as much as I prefer them). His paper shows academic (no duh, that's what college is), but my eye is drawn to the extracurricular. He's managed things, served in organizations, and performed tasks. He's got at least some level of skills, because the activities he did prove it. Real jobs or not—I see real life. Streetwise wants or has the ability to move forward. Someone else may beat him on the final decision, but he has convinced me of the merit for an interview. That's experience.

Graduate #4: 75—100 percent chance

Champion—or, as I like to call her, "Champ" needs to leave the job fair. After I meet her, I don't want her visiting any other booths! She has charisma and experience. And she smiles. I wish I didn't have to wait for the scheduled interview. I wish I didn't have to screen other applicants, I could just leave, get back to work, and have a champion in my business. That's how Champ comes across. If I don't hire her, someone else will. She will be successful because she is successful. I want charisma. I want experience. But I need a champion.

A graduate's hope is a chance at an opportunity. A proud VT Hokie or not, opportunities come to those who pursue adventure with passion. You can only get so much of that in a classroom. 



Announcing Dan Smith's *Saving Homer*, a children's book for everybody.

Order your signed copy (\$15) for yourself or as a gift by calling 540-556-8510 or e-mailing editrdan@msn.com

Letters

More wind

I see you featured an article on our sister program in the Shenandoah Valley ("Preparing workers for wind," January FRONT). It was a fabulous article and I am pleased you are reporting on this subject matter. CREATES, the grant program located in the southwest Virginia region, is doing the exact same training, but with a focus on wind installation and technician training, rather than manufacturing.

I encourage you to take a look at our Web site (<http://www.createsprogram.org>) for more information about our federally funded green jobs training program and the curriculum offered. The program spans across a 21-county region .

Jackie Pontious
CREATES Employer Outreach Specialist
Community Housing Partners
Christiansburg

Send letters to news@vbFRONT.com or any FRONT contact of your choosing (page 6). Submissions may be edited. You can see, read, print any current or back issue online at www.vbFRONT.com

So much more.

So many FRONTreaders just can't get enough in our monthly magazine. "Give us more!" they say. Well, we say, "OK." Read more stories and latebreaking updates on our moreFRONT blog.

morefront.blogspot.com

- > Tech, Wake To Collaborate on Animal Regenerative Medicine
- > Tech's Center for the Arts Interior Design Released
- > Goodman, Dixon Hughes To Merge
- > Cantal To Locate in Botetourt, Bring 40 Jobs
- > Montgomery Chamber Selects VCOM Best
- > Whole Antibiotics Entering Our Water, Tech Finds
- > Free Money for Manufacturers: Apply by Feb. 8
- > Businessman Gordon Willis Sr. Dies in Roanoke
- > Team Effort: Digital version of ER Pediatric Response Chart
- > Seeking Customer Service Stories
- > Honoring Valley Business FRONT's Contributors

and much more (of course; hence, the name)

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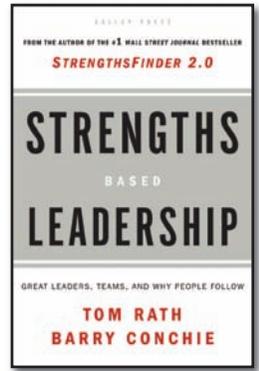
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Books @ the FRONT >

Following are book recommendations from our publishers and business people in the Roanoke and New River Valleys who are inveterate readers. Readers are invited to submit 125-word reviews of books you've read during the past six months. Our goal is to recommend good books on any topic and in any genre. Send reviews to Editor Dan Smith at dsmith@vbfront.com



Leadership test

My brother, a management consultant, recently sent me a copy of *Strengths Based Leadership* (Gallup Press, \$24.95) by management consultants Tom Rath and Barry Conchie (management consultants travel in packs) and my first response was to be repelled by yet another business book pretending to have all the answers. Fact is, though, this one has some use, even if you only employ it as a parlor game.

At the back of a long definition and explanation about leadership strengths there is a password for an Internet test that will tell you where your strengths lie. Takes about 30 minutes to complete. It's useful and, frankly, it's fun. I took it and my brother and I compared notes. He then told me that many of his clients are buying the book, handing it out to their managers and then meeting to see whose strengths lie where. They then pair the leaders into teams, getting a full range of skills together.

What you're getting here is a pretty useful test for a smidge less than \$25, one that could easily cost 10 times that. I gave an upper-level pal of mine a copy of this for Christmas and she immediately said she saw a use for it in evaluating her managers.

—Dan Smith

And the killer is ...

Gary Braver's fine novel *Skin Deep* (Forge, \$25.95) takes a while to get started because there's a detailed setup, but once it's rolling and characters are taking shape, it's a quick, satisfying murder mystery and the guy telling the tale is one of the prime suspects. But he is clueless about the facts, given his penchant for mixing booze and Atavan, resulting in large

blocks of lost consciousness. This tale has a lot of delicate, sensitive and uncomfortable elements, not the least of which is the young man at the center of it all, and his psychosexual relationship with a would-be actress of a step-mother who is feeling desperate for affection.

Detective Steve Markarian's estranged wife is undergoing a face rebuilding project that will make her a new woman—threatening him and his hopes for reconciliation—and his partner is about half a level below a Gestapo agent. All this and more combine to give you a lot to absorb and a lot to think about—not just this baffling murder of a young stripper who wanted to go to grad school. Fun read. It'll get you away from business books and clear your head.

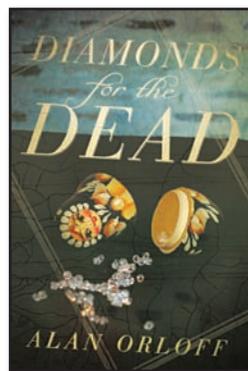
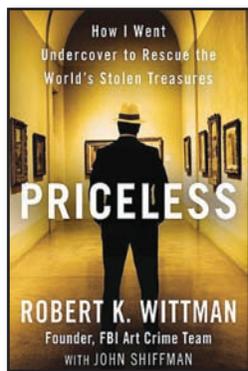
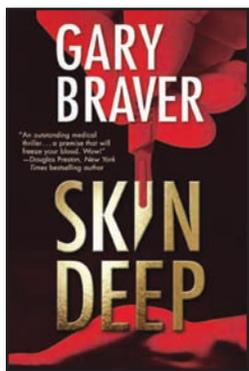
—Dan Smith

The art of stealing

Priceless: How I Went Undercover to Rescue the World's Stolen Treasures by Robert K. Wittman and John Shiffman (Crown, \$25) is a revealing look into a brand of badness that doesn't get much love in the post-9/11 world: art crime.

Wittman, a recently retired FBI agent, was one of handful of agents and federal prosecutors assigned to investigate thefts of valuable art at a time when most of the FBI's attention is turned toward terrorism and drugs. The book recounts tales of Wittman going undercover in both the U.S. and overseas, recovering everything from Rembrandts to original copies of the Bill of Rights to native American art made with illegal bald eagle feathers.

Wittman possesses an enjoyable combination of cockiness and a keen awareness of just how quickly he'll be dead if an undercover operation



goes south. In addition to being a good non-fiction crime/mystery read, *Priceless* will have you shaking your head at government bureaucracies, domestic and foreign, that too often stymie good detective work because of egos and turf wars. True crime fans, art lovers and history buffs should pick this one up.

—David Perry

Development tools

As a follow up to *Economic Development Marketing*, Anatolio Ubalde and Andrew Krueger clearly explain *Economic Development Online* (\$63, GIS Planning Inc.) and offer solutions for the different types of online tools economic developers can use to transform a region. Through charts, graphs, stories and screen shots, the book outlines how ED professionals can implement new technologies their private sector customers are using such as Yelp, Four Square, cloud computing, SEO, SEM, SMO, Twitter, to leverage results and gain credibility in the complex and competitive industry.

For example, Ubalde says the implementation of ED strategy should be distributed to a much larger legion of voices and partners that can share, forward, tweet, like and communicate your message.

The days of a select few group thinkers setting traditional regional economic policy are behind us. The present and future of economic development entail empowering individuals in your offline community—who have a presence in these online communities—to share and implement your vision.

ED professionals would be operating irresponsibly by not becoming a user, student and expert of the book's content. Further,

creative leaders who set regional economic development strategy would be wise to align with Ubalde's organization, ZoomPropsector.com.

—Stuart Mease

A bit off balance

In *Diamonds for the Dead* (Midnight Ink, \$14.95 paperback), Alan Orloff, a Northern Virginia writer, balances Russian Jews, stolen diamonds, and murder in his debut mystery. Orloff presents a tightly written plot about Josh Handleman, the son of "Honest Abe," from whom he has been estranged for years. When Abe dies, Josh deals with guilt, loss, an old Russian Jew living in his father's basement, hints of murder, and lost diamonds.

Well drawn characters help the plot work. Josh is in over his head. Lev Yurishenko is big enough and menacing enough to keep the reader off guard. Kassian, the man living in the basement, is just odd enough to be the villain. Add a couple of sexy women and some one-liners ("When you're hot, you're hot. And when you're not, you're Josh Handleman, stud to dud in 60 seconds") and you have enough to be kept off balance. One of the characters has to be evil, but Orloff keeps us guessing until close to the end.

—Betsy Ashton

(The reviewers: Betsy Ashton is a writer who lives at Smith Mountain Lake. David Perry is a caped freelance writer by night and works for the Western Virginia Land Trust by day. Stuart Mease is with the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech. Dan Smith is editor of FRONT.)



photos: Dan Smith

Home show >

The **Greater Roanoke Valley Home and Garden Show** was held at the Roanoke Civic Center Jan. 15. **Ann Swank** (left picture) of Tomboy Tools in Roanoke sells pink tools to women. **Scott Fleming** (right picture) of SertaPro Painters in Roanoke talks remodeling to a potential customer.

NCTC Tech & Toast >

NCTC Tech & Toast has become a favorite early morning networking opportunity around the coffee pot. This group met at the Inn of Virginia Tech January 20, 2011 to hear **Brad Jaeger**, Director of Research and Development Edison 2, talk about "100 Miles per Gallon (and Beyond!)" regarding mileage breakthrough efficiency of the Very Light Car.



photo: Jane Dalier

Valley Business FRONT is FRONT'n About at many events each month. Check the blog links at www.vbFRONT.com for more coverage.

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Media for sale >

Master of Ceremonies **Allan Mower** (left) sets the stage and encourages the auctioneer at the **AAF Media Auction** on Jan. 20 at Schaal's Metamorphosis in Roanoke. The event is an annual fundraiser, allowing businesses to purchase media (television, radio, publications, creative services, etc.) at significant discounts.



Classtime >

FRONT Editor **Dan Smith** (orange sweater) and Roanoke Times Arts Reporter **Mike Allen** talked journalism and other types of writing with students at Community High School in downtown Roanoke Jan. 20. They regaled the students with Adventures of Journalism Man and talked about careers in writing.



NRV Synergy >

The people that attended the NRV Synergy Session of January 20, 2011 are (left to right): **Darin Britt**, Wheeler Broadcasting; **David Shanks**, Architect; **Alan Tsang**, 88 Owls; **Davina Irvin**, Definite Directions; **Rhonda Burnett**, Blue Ridge Florist; **Lynda Foster**, Synergy; **Sandy Birkenmaier**, Brush Creek Aquaponics; **Mandi Martinez**, Radford Animal Hospital; **Allison Davis**, Creekmore Law Firm; **Jeannie Patterson**, Send Out Cards



photo: Jane Dalier

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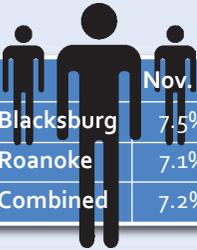
To learn more, visit www.vt.edu/impact.



"Stability" is the watchword for the region's economy. The number of people both out of work and working has remained steady from a year ago and a month ago. Home prices and airport activity are up. The number of people filing initial unemployment claims has dropped.

Unemployment/Employment

Unemployment dropped slightly in the combined Roanoke and Blacksburg Metropolitan Statistical Areas from November 2009 to November 2010. Blacksburg dropped 4 percent, while Roanoke held steady (one of only 24 metro areas to do so). Virginia's rate rose from 9.3 percent to 9.4 percent. From October 2010 to November, Blacksburg held steady, while Roanoke rose slightly. The region's combined unemployment rate also rose slightly from October.



	UNEMPLOYMENT		
	Nov. 09	Oct. 10	Nov. 10
Blacksburg	7.5%	7.2%	7.2%
Roanoke	7.1%	6.9%	7.1%
Combined	7.2%	7.0%	7.1%

The **employment** picture in the region mirrors the fairly stable unemployment data. More people were working in November than a year ago (0.5 percent). But the number of people employed dropped by the same percentage from October to November.

EMPLOYED		
Nov. 2009	Oct. 2010	Nov. 2010
221,341	223,614	222,457

As maybe a hint of things to come, the number of people filing **initial unemployment claims** dropped sharply from week 52 of 2009 to the same week in 2010, according to the Virginia Employment Commission. For the week of December 24-30, initial claims in the Roanoke and Blacksburg MSAs fell at a faster pace than Virginia as a whole: -27.2 percent compared to -19.7 percent.

INITIAL UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS

Week 52 2009	Week 52 2010
967	704

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

Real Estate

November home prices in the Roanoke Region were up from both the previous month and the same month a year ago. Prices were up a healthy 12 percent over the year, while nationally, the average home price rose just 3.4 percent over the same period.

HOME PRICES		
Nov. 2009	Oct. 2010	Nov. 2010
\$185,008	\$204,110	\$207,256

Source: Roanoke Valley Association of REALTORS & National Association of REALTORS

On the flip side, foreclosure activity in the combined region was up slightly from October to November and up sharply from a year ago. Statewide, foreclosures rose 1.3 percent from November to November. Nationally, the amount of foreclosure activity dropped 14 percent.

FORECLOSURES			
	Nov. 2009	Oct. 2010	Nov. 2010
Blacksburg MSA	23	21	18
Roanoke MSA	93	147	151
Combined	116	168	169

Source: Realtytrac

Air Travel

More passengers and cargo left the Roanoke Region in November than a year ago, though both were down slightly from October. Passenger boardings were up 14.4 percent from a year ago, and the amount of emplaned cargo rose by almost 12.2 percent.



AIR TRAVEL			
	Nov. 2009	Oct. 2010	Nov. 2010
Passengers	24,090	30,293	27,564
Cargo (lbs.)	778,029	889,913	872,557

Source: Roanoke Regional Airport

—By Anne Piedmont,
Piedmont Research Associates



John Provo with his Ralph Stanley bumper sticker.

Rachael Garrity

touchdowns for Tyrod—tell at least some of a story wherein success is an amalgam of leadership and teambuilding.

John's office collaborated with the New River Valley Planning District to bring in \$1.5 million in federal funds for a program called the Western Virginia Transportation Equipment Manufacturing Competitiveness Initiative. Volvo Trucks in Pulaski provided another \$175,000 in matching funds, and has already begun to hire (and

in some cases rehire) employees. Available for businesses in 14 counties between Bristol and Roanoke, the funds are expected to result in at least 8,000 new hires.

"This is a case," John explains, "where the local business community identified the need, Tech faculty helped construct the proposal, and the result is a way of not only keeping manufacturing alive, but making it globally competitive."

Then there is the \$3.8 million for CREATES (Construction, Retrofitting, and Energy-Efficiency Assessment Training and Employment Systems) a collaboration among three community colleges, Tech, a series of regional business development organizations, and an industry committee that includes Breakell Inc. in Roanoke. Community Housing Partners is the lead organization for the project, which is designed to teach workers the skills needed for emerging energy efficiency and renewable energy industries.

And, number three, but by no means the end of the full list, a \$4.7 million grant for training individuals in the health care field on electronic

Tech's economic development machine >

Executive Summary:

John Provo recognizes "the power that comes from service in an atmosphere of creativity and inventiveness" and uses it to the region's advantage.

By Rachael Garrity

To describe John Provo as "dynamic" is like characterizing Tech footballer Tyrod Taylor as "helpful." Huh? There is much more to be said, and even statistics—dramatic as they are in both—fall a bit short.

The Director of Tech's Office of Economic Development, last year alone Provo helped bring roughly \$10 million into this area, and behind that sum is a vast number of new jobs. There are lots of different projects and initiatives he is working on, but three examples—like three

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

medical records technology. Working on curriculum development with the Pamplin College of Business are five community colleges and the development office of the University of Virginia at Wise, along with an industry advisory committee from 19 hospitals and health care systems.

What, then, is it that drives this young man, who grew up in Fredericksburg, did his undergraduate work at William and Mary, earned his masters degree from Virginia Commonwealth University and finally went west to claim a PhD in urban and regional planning from Portland State University? Why here?

"This is close to home, of course," he says, cocking his head to one side and grinning. (This is not a man who tents his hands and muses, so that he appears contemplative.) "And, while I was in Oregon I worked in a similar office and saw the power that comes from service in an atmosphere of creativity and inventiveness.

"I'm first and foremost what I call a 'place professional'," he continues. "Tech has a huge impact on this area. Sometimes local people can be a little suspicious and make it clear they need to know just exactly what Tech wants out of any program. It's really exhilarating to be able to give them an answer that says—loud and clear—to provide value where it makes sense."

Somehow it's not surprising that one of the first moves this always-moving executive

In Brief

Name: John Provo
Age: 43
Company: Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development
Location: Blacksburg
Title: Director
Type of Business: University-affiliated economic development
History: Virginia native who has spent six years with the VT office of Economic Development and served as associate director before being appointed to replace Ted Settle, who retired from the position. Teaches the Economic Development studio at Virginia Tech. Music lover, hiker, camper, father of three small children. Gives new definition to the word "peripatetic."

made when he arrived in the area was to learn about local culture. He's sheepish about the "Ralph Stanley for President" bumper sticker on his car, not because he's not earnest about his enthusiasm for bluegrass, but because he was put onto it originally by a movie ("Oh, Brother"). He does not want to be a poseur, he says. Somehow, that's the last thing one would think of. He hasn't time to pose. 

"The Answer My Friend..."

Wind turbines at the new William Fleming High School Stadium will generate a portion of the power required to run the stadium. When the turbines produce more power than the stadium uses, the excess power will flow backward through the meter into the APCO grid for use by other APCO customers. The Stadium's electric bill is in turn reduced by the amount of power returned to the APCO grid.

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Career FRONT

FINANCIAL FRONT



Gardiner

Banks

Linda Harrison Gardiner has joined StellarOne in Christiansburg as business banking relationship manager.

LEGAL FRONT



McKell

Law Firms

The Roanoke law firm Spilman Thomas & Battle has hired **James F. McKell Jr.** as an associate.

WELLNESS FRONT

Alternative Medicine

Gail Steele, an Ayurvedic Lifestyle Consultant and Certified Massage Therapist, has opened Blue Ridge Ayurveda inside Classic Image Day Spa in Roanoke. She also offers yoga and nutrition education.



O'Malley

Eldercare

Susan O'Malley, administrator of Friendship Retirement Community's Eastwood assisted living, has been named chair of the Virginia Center for Assisted Living. The center serves as the assisted-living arm of the Virginia Health Care Association (VHCA), the state's largest organization representing long-term care providers. The center facilitates support, education and information about assisted living.



Baker

Martha "Mardy" Baker has been named director of events and volunteer programs at Warm Hearth Village in Blacksburg.

Hospitals

Dr. Mark Werner, president of Carilion Clinic Physicians and Chief Medical Officer for Carilion Clinic in Roanoke, has been named Chief Clinical

Integration Officer with Fairview Health System in Minneapolis. Werner will guide strategy for the development of an academic health system in partnership with University of Minnesota School of Medicine.



Sutliff

TECH/INDUSTRY FRONT



Holiday

Awards

Kent Holiday, vice president and general manager of ATK Energetic Systems, operator of the Radford Army Ammunition Plant, has won the Picatinny Chapter of the National Defense Industrial Association Firepower Management Award.



Morgan



Kingery



Kocher

DEVELOPMENT FRONT

Real estate

Joe Sutliff of RE/MAX All Stars, has been elected to serve as president of the Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors for 2011. **Melissa Morgan** of Renaissance Real Estate is vice president-elect. **Betty Kingery** of Mountain to Lake Realty is vice president. New directors are **Vic Coffey** of RE/MAX All Stars, **Donna Greer** of Premier Realty



Donnan

Economic Development

The Alleghany Foundation has named **Mary Fant Donnan** as its first full-time director.

Have a career announcement?

Send announcements to news@vbFRONT.com. Photos should be color, 300dpi. A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.

Services, **Donna Marie Harris** of Long & Foster and **Connie Hash** of MKB. **Chris Kocher** of Park Place Realtors won the Community Service Award.



Toohig

Tim Toohig of RE/MAX All Points in Roanoke has been named 2010 Realtor of the Year by the Roanoke Valley Association of Realtors.



Simmons

The New River Valley Association of Realtors has named Long & Foster's **L.T. Simmons** and **Donna Travis** as winners of its 2010



Travis

Good Neighbor Award for contributions to their community. The award is judged on the impact of personal contribution, broadness of impact,

and the project's suitability as a role model for other Realtors.

RETAIL FRONT

Auto parts

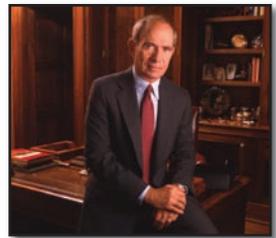
Advance Auto in Roanoke has named **Chris Hagestad** as vice president of merchandising and parts.



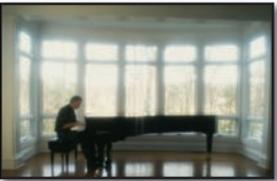
ADVANCE AUTO



MEDECO



BERTRAM FIRESTONE



BRUCE HORNSBY



ROANOKE TIMES



ROWE

gregvaughnphotography.com

Career FRONT

EDUCATION FRONT



Kleiner

Colleges

Brian M. Kleiner has been named director of the Myers-Lawson School of Construction in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies and the College of Engineering at Virginia Tech.



Johnson

Dr. Cynda Ann Johnson, founding dean of the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, has been

honored at the Association of American Medical Colleges' 2010 annual meeting held in Washington, D.C., for her leadership in founding the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. She received a Certificate of Recognition.



Klinefelter

Public Relations

Access Advertising & Public Relations in Roanoke has named **Beth Klinefelter** public relations account coordinator.

CULTURE FRONT

Museums

The Taubman Museum of Art in Roanoke has named **Kim Williamson** director of development



Williamson



St. Clair

and **Maria St.Clair** membership manager. **Nick and Jenny Taubman**, for whom the museum is named, have given a \$2.5 million grant to the Roanoke arts community.

OTHER FRONTS

Chambers

Ken Lanford, president of Lanford Brothers Company in Roanoke has been elected



Lanford

chairman of the board of the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce for 2011. Other officers are: **John Francis Jr.**, First Citizens Bank, chairman-elect; **Charles Robbins**, BB&T, past chairman; **Steven Anderson**, D'Ardenne Associate, vice-chairman membership; **Harvey Brookins**, Wachovia Bank, vice-chairman economic development; **Jim Lee**, JBL Consulting, vice-chairman of operations and treasurer; **John Parrott**, Rutherford, vice-chairman at large; **Kim Stanley**, Cox, vice-chairman of public policy; and **Joyce Waugh**, Roanoke Regional Chamber, president and secretary. New members of the board are: **Vickie**



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Bibee, Scott Insurance; **Melinda Chitwood**, Brown, Edwards & Co.; **F.B. Webster Day**, Spilman Thomas & Battle; **Chris Head**, Home Instead Senior Care; **Dale Lee**, RGC Resources, Inc.; **Curtis Mills**, Carilion Clinic; **Todd Morgan**, MB Contractors, Inc.; and **Todd Putney**, Medical Facilities of America.

Clubs

Bill McChain of New York Life in Roanoke has received the Rotary Club's Paul Harris Fellow award for humanitarian and education contributions.



McChain

Consulting

Paula Wilder of WilderWeber Leadership Group in Blacksburg has been named a Certified Professional Facilitator by the International Association of Facilitators.

Non-Profits

Greater Blue Ridge



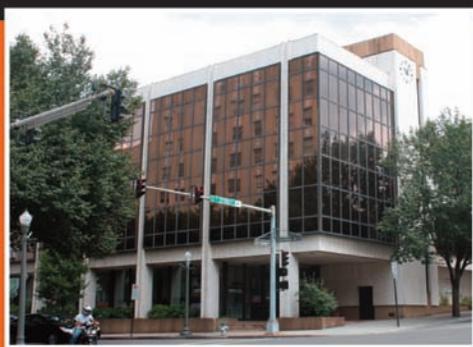
Neff-Henderson

Chapter of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation in Roanoke has named **Laura Neff-Henderson** development coordinator.

Organizations

The Professional Women's Resource of SML has named **Juanita D. Thomas** of the Retail Alliance as

its board president for 2011. Other officers are **Kimberley Davenport-Hill** of Old Virginia Mortgage, vice president; **Alicia Young-Dudley** of TeleMedia Productions, vice president; **Jean Gorman** of JKG Accounting, treasurer; **Tracy Overstreet** of Overstreet Associates, membership; **Tara Wall** of TNT Auto Repair & Service Centers, reservations and speakers; **Wendy Furrow-Scott** of Hickory Hill Winery, member-at-large; **Angela Batey** of Gracious Living Realty, past president.



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Tech researcher Amy Pruden

Tech studies antibiotic resistance

Virginia Tech scientist **Amy Pruden** is one of a team of researchers who have studied and reported upon the alarming incidence of whole antibiotics making their way into our waterways. Whole, excreted antibiotics can enter streams and river via discharges from animal feeding operations, fish hatcheries, and the flow from fields where manure or biosolids have been applied, and water filtered through wastewater treatment plants.

These discharges become "potential sources of antibiotic resistance genes," says Amy Pruden, a National Science Foundation (NSF) Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) award recipient, and an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering. "The presence of antibiotics, even at sub-inhibitory concentrations, can stimulate bacterial metabolism and thus contribute to the selection and maintenance of

antibiotic resistance genes," Pruden explains. "Once they are present in rivers, antibiotic resistance genes are capable of being transferred among bacteria, including pathogens, through horizontal gene transfer."

The World Health Organization and the Center for Disease Control recognize antibiotic resistance "as a critical health challenge of our time," Pruden writes in a paper published in a 2010 issue of *Environmental Science and Technology*. Pruden says reducing the spread of antibiotic resistance is a critical measure needed to prolong the effectiveness of currently available antibiotics.

Goodman to merge

Goodman & Company, which has a significant presence in Roanoke, and Dixon Hughes plan to merge their firms and affiliated entities March 1. Headquartered in Charlotte, the combined firm will be known as Dixon Hughes Goodman

LLP. With more than 1,700 people in 30 offices in 11 states and D.C., Dixon Hughes Goodman will be the largest certified public accounting firm based in the Southern U.S. and the 13th largest in the nation.

Goodman & Company will retain all of its existing Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. offices, and will seek to expand its presence within this footprint as part of the merger. Thomas H. Wilson, Managing Partner of Goodman & Company, will become Deputy Chairman and Chief Operating Officer of the new firm. Charles Edgar Sams Jr., chairman of Dixon Hughes, will continue to serve as chairman of the new company, and Kenneth M. Hughes, CEO of Dixon Hughes, will also remain in that position.

Botetourt gets Cantal

Canatal Steel USA Inc., which develops steel structures for commercial buildings, has opened its first U.S. operation in Botetourt County. U.S. customers comprise about 95 percent of the Canadian company's business. "With so much of our business in the United States, we were looking to increase efficiency, reduce costs and streamline our operations," says Charles Trent, controller of Canatal Steel USA. "Botetourt County puts us closer to our customers and offers affordable operating costs and an experienced, motivated work force."

Canatal Industries fabricates and installs

steel beams primarily for commercial, residential, institutional, and industrial building construction. Located in the former O'Neal Metals Building, the company will initially invest more than \$1 million in facility and equipment. Canatal plans to create up to 40 full-time jobs by April 2011 and could create as many as 100 by 2012. Jobs will range from welders and fitters to eventually office staff, estimators and engineers.

Double Envelope grows

Double Envelope of Roanoke (and its parent company BSC Ventures) has acquired assets of one of its primary competitors, Wolf Envelope Company at a price that was not disclosed. Wolfe is based in Michigan and has a large plant in Indiana. The Michigan offices will close, but the plant will simply undergo a name change, preserving its 65 jobs. No new jobs will be created in Roanoke.

With the deal, Double Envelope/BSC will grow to about 400 employees (200 in Roanoke) and its sales should go from \$65 million to \$80 million.

Taubmans give \$2.5 million

Nick and Jenny Taubman, for whom the Taubman Museum of Art in Roanoke is named, have given \$2.5 million to Roanoke arts community organizations. The museum has had a negative impact on the bottom line of many of the sister organizations in the

Roanoke Valley since it was opened two years ago. There will be 20 grants over two years, ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000 each. They'll go to programs within 20 miles of Roanoke.

VCOM named best

The **Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine-Virginia Campus** has been named the Business of the Year by the Montgomery Chamber of Commerce. VCOM was one of nine organizations nominated for this award which recognizes community involvement; civic and charitable contributions; innovation; and economic impact to the Montgomery County, Virginia community. Since its founding in 2002, VCOM, a not-for-profit business, has graduated over 600 physicians and employed hundreds of faculty and staff members. Currently enrollment is over 720 doctoral and 30 post-baccalaureate students.

VCOM has grown from one to four buildings,

including a research building and a simulation and technology building with state-of-the-art equipment for educational instruction and evaluation. While much of the country is facing a physician workforce shortage, the addition of VCOM has guaranteed a medical student population that, along with the additional four medical schools should meet Virginias needs.

County re-accredited

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) has re-accredited the **Roanoke County Office of Economic Development**. The county one of 25 economic development organizations accredited by IEDC as an Accredited Economic Development Organization (AEDO).

Bank of Va. Sold

Cordia Bancorp Inc. has acquired a majority interest in **Bank of**

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A contact / source must be provided. Inclusions are not guaranteed and all submissions are subject to editing.

Virginia, purchasing 6,776,316 shares at a price of \$1.52 per share for a total investment of \$10,300,000. The investment results in Cordia owning approximately 59.8 percent of the outstanding shares of Bank of Virginia. Under the terms of Cordia's agreement with Bank of Virginia, Cordia may invest up to an additional \$9,700,000 at the same price per share by September 30, 2011.

Jefferson accredited

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges has reaffirmed **Jefferson College of Health Sciences** in Roanoke's accreditation.

Prime Photonics picked

Prime Photonics of Blacksburg will take part in the Army Commercialization Pilot Program for 2011. Limited to 25 participants from approximately 500 candidate companies, the goal of the Army CPP is to assist small businesses in commercializing new technologies and in transitioning them into Army applications.

Prime Photonics will continue development, and begin commercialization, of its FOCIS gas turbine blade monitoring sensor system that is currently being developed under an Army Phase II SBIR contract. "We see the CPP as further validation of the exciting commercial

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Kathy Surace

JANUARY 2011 > Contributor of the Month

Business Dress columnist **Kathy Surace**, who has been with FRONT since even before it was launched, has been a steady source of excellent information for the business professional who wants to put forth the best face in public. Her column deals with the obvious and the obscure, always with a level of expertise that is evident and with a logical approach that allows the evolution of fashion without the iron-bound "this is the way it's always been" outlook. Kathy's opinions are based in reality and they are solidly held, but with an eye toward the future. For her consistent, intelligent and well presented views, we honor her as the Contributor of the Month for the January 2011 issue. Congratulations.

“there's a lot of room between wearing cut-offs with sneakers and a business suit

— Page 23

potential of our advanced sensor technologies and of the progress we are making in evolving from an R&D services organization to a product-based company," says CEO Steve Poland.

Center recognized

The **West End Center's Community Market** in Roanoke has won the FLITE Foundation's Opportunity Hall of Fame Award. The market introduces locally grown food into a financially depressed community, providing sources of fresh produce. It also promotes the value of good diet and proper nutrition to all the children who attend the center.

Program added

Warm Hearth Village, a senior living community in Blacksburg, has added a new senior care management program called Warm Hearth at

Home. The new program is led by Certified Care Manager Ellen Ward and will provide care and support services in the home, whether on the Warm Hearth campus or in the community.

Named best

Maison Beliveau has received the 2010 Best of Blacksburg Award in the Bed and Breakfast and Event Center category from the U.S. Commerce Association Best of Local Business awards program.

Office relocation

The law firm of **LeClairRyan** in Blacksburg has expanded and relocated its offices to 1715 Pratt Drive, Suite 2700 from smaller quarters at 2000 Kraft Drive. The firm has completed a custom build-out, upgrading both the technology and work space. "With technology upgrades designed to

improve client service and efficiency, we are excited that this new office space will provide us with room to grow, while offering our clients state of the art meeting space and videoconferencing," says Blacksburg office leader James K. Cowan, Jr.

VTLS in Hong Kong

HP Enterprise Services has signed a 10-year contract with the government of Hong Kong to help its public libraries deliver services using a product developed by **VTLS** in Blacksburg. HP will provide support for a new Integrated Library System (ILS) that is designed to maintain efficiency and support new library offerings to meet increasing demand. Virtua ILS, which HP is scheduled to implement at HKPL in 2011, is a Unicode-compliant offering from VTLS in the Corporate Research Center at Virginia Tech. The system delivers a

self-service experience to library visitors and includes a pilot implementation of Fastrac, a radio frequency identification technology to enable automated management of book borrowing rights.

ITT splits into thirds

ITT Night Vision in Roanoke County will remain a part of ITT Geospatial Systems when the company breaks into three separate, publicly traded companies, ITT Corporation has announced. ITT is based in White Plains, N.Y., and was founded as a telephone equipment manufacturer.

ITT Night Vision, which employs nearly 1,500 people in Roanoke County, will continue as part of the company's defense and information systems group, which will soon get its own name.

Compiled by Dan Smith

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