

Staff Senate Constituency Report to Virginia Tech Board of Visitors

March 30, 2008

Judy Alford, Staff Senate President

Rector Lutz, members of the Board of Visitors, President Steger, administrators and guests. It is an honor and privilege to speak to you about Virginia Tech's Staff Senate.

- The Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs is working on developing a staff emeritus award. The commission also worked with University Leadership Development to initiate the Virginia Tech Staff Leadership Award. A call for nominations was sent in late February and the winner will be announced at the McComas seminar in May. The Commission works with University Leadership Development and Human Resources to provide input on staff training and professional development needs to promote support for staff development. The commission is also exploring the possibility of developing an Ombudsperson position for Staff.
- The senate selected working at the Blacksburg food pantry for the VT-ENGAGE project. We are collecting food and helping sort food at the pantry.
- The McComas Leadership Seminar will be held on May 1st. Ray Plaza and Jane Ann Williams are the speakers for the program entitled Defining our Role in Developing an Inclusive Community.
- Elections were held earlier this month. Tom Tucker, Space Information Manager, was elected as President for the upcoming year. Tom has served the University for 22 years, has been a staff senator for 2 years and was Staff Senate Vice President this past year. We are pleased to welcome Tom as our upcoming president. Since Tom is not able to attend the June meeting, I would like to introduce him now.

At this time, I would like to hi-light staff employees in the Vice President for Information Technology area. The mission of Virginia Tech's Information Technology organization is to serve the university community and the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia by applying and integrating information resources to:

- Enhance and support instruction, teaching and learning
- Participate in, support and enhance research
- Foster outreach, develop partnerships with communities and promote the capabilities of advanced networking and communications
- Provide, secure, and maintain systems allowing the university to accomplish its missions

Information Technology Specialists define, install, analyze, plan, and modify computer systems in a diverse technical environment ensuring accuracy and efficiency. The IT specialists have knowledge of Oracle, JAVA, Perl, SQR, DHTML, HTML, XML. These folks continually develop and code software systems and system utilities to assist in supporting the university's technology-enriched environment. They also work with the web content managements systems, My VT Web Portal, and VT search projects. They play an integral role in the collection, storage, discovery, and the distribution of web content for Virginia Tech.

Employees in the Systems Support Department maintain the operating systems and servers that host centrally provided I.T services including:

- messaging (e-mail, Instant Messaging, and the new VT Alerts system),
- administrative applications (Banner, courseware, directory, portal, and data warehousing systems),
- and high performance research systems (including the Apple Mac "System X" cluster).

Systems Support also maintains central storage and back-up/archiving services for both I.T. and departmental servers, as well as desktop equipment across campus. Staff from this department have performed the bulk of the data collection and data preservation efforts related to the events of April 16th.

Virginia Tech's Advanced Research Computing team provides an environment in which the latest high performance computing technologies are employed to support computational sciences and engineering. Working with investigators in all computationally demanding fields, they help determine what specialized resources will be required to support the needs of the University. This is done by leading in the implementation and application of emerging technologies, and designing new technologies in association with principle investigators. Collaboration with internal and external university researchers and partnerships with industry through contracts and grants, drive the success of ARC.

Employees in the Information Technology Security office test computer hardware and software for security vulnerabilities. They actively design, develop and implement computer and network security training materials, classes (in-person and online) to the university's technical and general users. The security office also serves as a testing facility for cooperative research projects between the IT security officers and academic researchers. They will also provide testing services to external entities according to a fee schedule.

Information Resource Management staff provide the university community with policies, procedures and support for secure access to information resources to complement its teaching, learning, research, and outreach as well as to support administrative operations.

Computer Support Specialists (4Help staff) provide computer assistance to faculty, staff, students, alumni, retirees, and parents. They provide a second level of end user technical support for customers experiencing problems with their computers or centrally offered information technology services such as Blackboard, Banner and the Hokie Spa.

Field engineer personnel work closely with project architects and engineers, as well as the university's capital design and constructions teams during project development to ensure communications cable pathways and spaces meet all industry and VT standards. Communications Network Specialists install cabling and necessary equipment for all residence halls, academic buildings, laboratories, athletic facilities and some off campus locations.

Video Broadcast Service Technicians maintain and operate electronic classrooms throughout the state for the interactive videoconferencing network. The group also produces broadcast-quality instructional video and advanced multimedia instructional materials.

Digital Imaging staff provides a comprehensive range of scanning services in support of research projects and course development grants or proposals. They play a key role in helping faculty prepare materials appropriate for storage in digital repositories.

The staff in Assistive Technologies support people with disabilities as they prepare for a lifetime of teaching and work by leading in coordination of assistive technologies, computer-related accessibility, and disability accommodations. They also continually research new ways to support learning and quality of life challenges for faculty, staff and students with disabilities.

Computer-Integrated Classroom Support Technicians maintain computer labs across the university by assuring software is up-to-date and machines are running properly for faculty and students. They also monitor labs for secure, appropriate use of the systems.

Online Course Support staff provide assistance for such learning technologies as Blackboard, Scholar, and Dyknow. In addition to answering help desk questions regarding these systems, these staff also train faculty, staff and graduate students regarding best practices with these tools; and they produce documentation for using the tools, and investigate new tools at the same time working with early adopters to vet and improve new technologies.

The systems integration team electronically designs, installs, secures, and maintains the enterprise web applications for teaching and learning applications including linking appropriate applications to such systems as Blackboard, Dyknow, Courseware, online course evaluation tools, iTunesU, and the

Learning Gateway. This group also oversees dozens of servers that host these applications.

IT staff also support the university's test scoring services by helping with the collection of data from faculty, staff and students. They also assist with online survey software.

The Vice President for Information Technology's area is fortunate to have a group of very talented and dedicated staff employees. They continue to meet the challenge of staying on the cutting edge of the technology fields in which they work, even as they support daily, technology-enabled functions of the university. They work in a highly competitive environment and the university benefits from their broad-ranging skills and areas of expertise. In fact, several of our IT employees are nationally known for their work.

Thank you,

Judy Alford
Staff Senate President