

## Second Outreach Forum Explores University Engagement

by Lois Stephens

As an engaged institution, Virginia Tech is creatively seizing opportunities to act and build its future as a leading international university. This observation was among the thoughts shared by **C. Peter Magrath**, senior presidential advisor of the College Board and president emeritus of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, during his keynote address at the recent Outreach NOW conference.

More than 200 Virginia Tech faculty and staff gathered at The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center on September 27 to hear and talk with Magrath, learn about the talents and scholarly outreach efforts of their peers, and explore the vital role of engagement in the success of contemporary land-grant universities.

*Outreach NOW: Inventing the Future Through Engagement*

was the second annual forum sponsored by the vice provost for Outreach and International Affairs and the Commission on Outreach and International Affairs.

**John Dooley**, vice provost for Outreach and International Affairs, provided opening remarks for the event and Virginia Tech **President Charles Steger** introduced Magrath.

The afternoon session included eight presentations by Virginia Tech faculty.

**Rumen Conev** from the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research discussed Beautiful Gardens, a new plant introduction program for Virginia and the mid-Atlantic region. **George Glasson**, **Absalom Phiri**, and **Ndalapa Mhango** from the Department of Teaching and Learning talked about ecological sustainability, indigenous cultures, and



**University Provost Mark McNamee** (right), talks with **Jerzy Nowak** (left), professor and head of the Department of Horticulture and **Rumen Conev**, a faculty member and researcher at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, during the reception following the Outreach NOW conference.

education in Malawi. **Eugene Brown**, **Mary Kasarda**, and **Whitney Edmister** shared information about educational outreach in the College of Engineering. Engagement as a Construct for Empowerment was presented by **Ed McPherson** from Learning Technologies.

**Patricia Hipkins** and **Don Mullins** from the Virginia Tech Pesticide Programs talked about pesticide safety education in Mali, West Africa. Transformative ESL Teacher Education Through Service-

Learning was presented by **Kris Tilley-Lubbs** of the Department of Teaching and Learning. The value of work-integrated learning to students, Virginia Tech, and the community through the Cooperative Education/internship program was offered by **Pam Herrmann** from Career Services. A session developed by **Robert Dunay**, **Joseph Wheeler**, and **Robert Schubert** on the Virginia Tech Solar House was also presented.

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# Ideas in Assistive Technology and Augmentative Communication Exchanged at Conference

by Jane Todd

For the first time, The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center hosted the annual Assistive Technology and Augmentative Communication Conference: Making the Connections '06. Held on June 22–23, the program was attended by many educators, service providers, administrators, parents, and paraprofessionals. The conference was sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education's Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC) at Virginia Tech.

The program opened with **Gretchen Hanser**, who is an occupational therapist and doctoral student at the University of New Hampshire. Hanser is currently working as the project director of the Deaf-Blind Literacy and Communications Model Demonstration Classroom Project at the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies

at the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill). She is also the co-author of *Write to Talk—25 Intellitalk Templates and The Project Planbook Series* with **Caroline Musselwhite**.

Assistive technology and augmentative communication devices are constantly evolving and being developed. This conference provided an opportunity for educational team members in southwestern Virginia and across the commonwealth to stay up-to-date so that they can provide support and powerful educational opportunities to all their students.

Due to the success of this year's conference, plans are already underway for next year's conference. AT and Aug Com '07: A New Direction will be held on June 18–19, 2007, at The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center.

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**Gretchen Hanser** (right) demonstrates how teachers can use the Color Coded Eye Gaze Frame for writing. This assistive tool is intended for students with disabilities who are unable to hold a pencil or who are unable to physically manipulate a keyboard. The demo was held during the annual conference on assistive technology and augmentative communication.

## Virginia Tech Hosts Annual Meeting of the American Society of Biomechanics



**Stefan Duma** (right), associate professor of mechanical engineering and founding director of the Virginia Tech–Wake Forest Center for Injury Biomechanics, talks with a participant during a poster session. The poster presentations were a feature of the annual meeting of the American Society of Biomechanics, held at The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center on September 6–9. Duma was the chair of the

event that attracted 474 participants to symposia, tutorials, exhibits, as well as the poster sessions. **Mike Madigan** and **Kevin Granata**, both from Virginia Tech's Department of Engineering Science and Mechanics, were co-chairs of the conference. The primary sponsor was the Virginia Tech–Wake Forest School of Biomedical Engineering and Sciences, with support from various Virginia Tech and Wake Forest University departments, colleges, and centers. ■

# Second Outreach Forum

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Twenty-seven exhibitors from various departments and centers showcased their outreach efforts throughout the day and during the evening reception.

Following a ceremony for faculty awards for outreach excellence, **Mark McNamee**, university provost and vice president for academic affairs, offered closing remarks and reflections.

“This year’s conference highlighted the importance of engagement as part of the university’s new strategic plan,” said **Jeri Childers**, director of Outreach Program Development and conference chair.

“Dr. Magrath’s remarks challenged the university community to seek ways to fully integrate discovery, learning, and engagement to address critical issues confronting our society, and I believe Virginia Tech is uniquely positioned to respond to this challenge,” said Dooley.

Next year’s Outreach NOW conference is scheduled for September 24, 2007. **Sterling Speirn**, president and CEO of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is the invited speaker. For more information, visit the web site at [www.cpe.vt.edu/outreachnow/](http://www.cpe.vt.edu/outreachnow/). ■

**C. Peter Magrath** (left), senior presidential advisor of the College Board and president emeritus of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, **Jeri Childers** (center), conference chair and director of Outreach Program Development, and Virginia Tech President **Charles Steger** (right), react to introductory comments during the Outreach NOW 2006 conference.

## Keynote Highlights from C. Peter Magrath, Outreach NOW 2006

“My thesis is that for Virginia Tech or any other university, and most particularly land grant universities that aspire to being leading American and international universities, engagement is priority number one.”

“Engagement can be the primary priority by building on the already extensive and successful initiatives that Virginia Tech has underway and fusing its discovery and learning mission with engagement and outreach.”

“The idea for a revitalized, expanded, and broader involvement of universities with society is one of the products of the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. I and a number of leaders of mainstream research-intensive universities, organized the Commission in the late 1990s. We insisted that education and research or discovery needs to be applied to be socially and economically useful. We suggested that making engagement a central university mission was a way

for universities to engender support politically and financially by being seen as vital and useful to their communities.”

“What I find profoundly encouraging in reviewing the strategic plan for your university is that these objectives are part of Virginia Tech’s plan, including a commitment to educating the whole student. And this objective is later stated as a goal of increasing student involvement in discovery and engagement by creating more opportunities for undergraduates to be involved in research, capstone experiences, education abroad, and experiential learning.”

“In our Commission’s report, published in 1999, three things were identified in successful, engaged institutions:

- 1) Institutions must be organized to respond to the needs of today’s student and tomorrow’s;
- 2) Enrich students’ experiences by bringing research and engagement into the curriculum and offer practical opportunities for students to prepare for the

world they will enter; and

3) Put critical resources (knowledge and expertise) to work on the problems the communities it serves face.”

“Engagement, which includes a significant economic development component, is essential to attracting and generating needed resources. The engaged university that serves community and state needs is in a much stronger position to generate political and public support for its work and the resources it needs to serve society.”

“One of the definitions is that engagement is ‘the condition of being in gear.’ I believe that Virginia Tech is creatively seizing opportunities to act and build its future as a leading American and international university, and that you are very much ‘in gear.’”

For a complete transcript of C. Peter Magrath’s presentation, visit [www.cpe.vt.edu/outreachnow/](http://www.cpe.vt.edu/outreachnow/). ■



# LEGO My Robot!

by Emily Cuykendall

More than 80 gifted and talented middle school and junior high students from Fairfax County, Virginia, and a colorful selection of robots descended upon the Virginia Tech Northern Virginia Center in Falls Church on a recent Saturday morning to participate in a Virginia Tech FIRST LEGO League (FLL) robotics workshop.

Using basic computer programming and engineering practices, the students worked diligently to calculate just the right combination of forward thrusts, right turns, left turns and backward drives to program their robots to successfully complete the final challenge.

The workshop, sponsored by the Fairfax County Association for the Gifted, was conducted by Virginia Tech FLL Director **Bill Duggins** and Associate Director **Susan Duggins**. FLL is run by FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), a multi-national non-profit organization that aspires to transform culture, making science, math, engineering and technology as “cool” for kids as sports.

The organization also runs the FIRST Robotics Competition for

high school students, the FIRST LEGO League for children 9 to 14 and FIRST Place, an innovative science and technology center. Students who participate in FIRST programs come from a variety of backgrounds and skill levels, but all have an interest in technology.

At the Northern Virginia Center, students from ages 9–14 sat two to a computer, with a volunteer or FLL coach to guide them. Each pair started with a basic pre-assembled robot, made with LEGO bricks, motors, wheels, and sensors. The lead FLL coach guided the students through RoboLab, a software program designed to transform the students’ creativity into functional technology.

The students’ ultimate goal was to write a program which would allow their robot to complete the final challenge, a lunar exploration, in the mere 90 seconds allotted. In the final challenge the students are required to move LEGO rocks from one crater to another, knock over towers of meteors and place one LEGO rock inside a cave. Students wrote between two and twelve programs.

*Students from ages 9-14 compete in the FIRST LEGO League robotics workshop at the Virginia Tech Northern Virginia Center in Falls Church.*

Once the robot was programmed, students began to build upon their base robot. They were given a plethora of additional parts to choose from to ensure their robot could complete the final challenge tasks successfully and efficiently. Many students created bulldozers from their base robot, adding several horizontal LEGO bricks to the front of their robot in order to push multiple LEGO rocks from crater to crater at once and knock over as many meteors as possible at a time.

During the final challenge each pair competed along side cheering coaches, parents, and other students. Each task garnered points and the winner received the coveted prize of bragging rights. But regardless of points, “each student walked away with a little extra knowledge, a sense of accomplishment and for some, a new path to the future,” said Bill Duggins.

For information on organizing FIRST LEGO League teams, please visit [www.usfirst.org/jobtc/flg\\_gi.htm](http://www.usfirst.org/jobtc/flg_gi.htm) or [www.firstlegoleague.org](http://www.firstlegoleague.org). ■

## Ideas in Assistive Technology

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**Lora Kingma**, communications coordinator with T/TAC at Virginia Tech said next year’s conference “promises to provide participants with the same quality experiences as previous conferences, but with new and expanded networking and hands-on learning opportunities. Attendees will have ample time to connect with colleagues and vendors during our expanded vendor reception/commercial exhibit preview.” Kingma added, “All sessions will be working labs and/or make-and-take projects. Participants will leave the conference with materials and skills they can immediately put to use in their classrooms or homes.”

The mission of T/TAC at Virginia Tech focuses on improving educational opportunities for children and youth with disabilities, as well as those who are disadvantaged or at risk of school failure. Toward this end, T/TAC provides a variety of quality training opportunities for school personnel, service providers, and parents to meet the needs of these children and youth.

For more information on T/TAC programs, please contact Kingma at [lkingma@vt.edu](mailto:lkingma@vt.edu) or 540/231-2926. ■

# Planting “Little Seeds” in Alianza: A Student Reflection on the Global Citizen Partner Exchange with Tec de Monterrey

by Amanda Davis (VT '07)

Experiencing life through the cultural lens of another is one of the greatest treasures that you can be given. To partner with those same people, overcoming differences, in order to accomplish a common goal is even more of a gift. In my own words, those were the two goals of the Global Citizen Partnership Program that I was a part of this summer.

While experiencing life through the eyes of children living in a marginalized and impoverished community on the outskirts of one of Mexico's largest industrialized cities—Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, I partnered with three other Virginia Tech students and four Mexican students to provide the children with a summer-long values course including lessons such as teamwork, care for the environment, honesty, and friendship.

Equipped with what I had learned during four semesters of Spanish classes at Virginia Tech, a green t-shirt with the word “Instructor” on the sleeve, lots of art supplies, and the help of Marcos (my Mexican partner), I began my six weeks in Alianza.

At first, I wasn't sure how much of an impact our small task of teaching lessons and playing with the children would have, but the word *Semillita* (the name of our project which means “little seed” in Spanish) soon became my motto. Although consistent and suitable education was sometimes difficult for the

In a community where survival really does depend on caring mainly about self and how one can pursue his or her own interests, teaching themes of friendship, teamwork, and honesty did not always come easy. However, through role-modeling and team building activities, I believe that the children learned to greater

It wasn't until one of the last days when the children were asked to draw a mural of their community that I realized I had truly become a part of it. When describing their drawings to me, one of the children pointed to a picture of a bus that she had drawn to represent how our group arrived every day to work with them. Another drew an airplane in the sky and expressed gratefulness for our coming so far to be with them.

I am thankful for the summer program that afforded me the opportunity to become a global citizen and to experience what it's like to overcome differences and barriers in order to partner with others and to give back to a community of children that became such an important part of my life. I hope that the “little seeds” that were planted continue to grow in the lives of the children as I know they have begun to grow in me. ■

*“I hoped that every “little seed” that I planted would grow as the children witnessed the example that we set through our own actions.”*

children to obtain, I as a fellow student could provide motivation for them to continue learning.

Instilling respect for the environment seemed like an impossibility when I looked around at the amount of trash and graffiti that littered the community, but I hoped that every “little seed” that I planted would grow as the children witnessed the example that we set through our own actions.

appreciate the benefits of working together instead of competitively against each other.

Although I spent a significant amount of time in Alianza, I sometimes felt as if I were still an outsider who would easily be forgotten after I left. I knew that I had gained a lot from my experience, but I hoped that I could leave behind as much as I took with me.

**Amanda Davis** (fourth from left), a Virginia Tech Service-Learning student who participated in the Global Citizen Partner Exchange this summer, poses with her Tec de Monterrey supervisor, **Melissa Coronado Orozco** (second from left) and children from the Alianza community. Virginia Tech student **Tiffany Franck** (fifth from left) was also a part of the journey.



# An Economic Cultural Investment Summit: Engaging Diverse Communities



Symposium presenters **Atieno Asiyo** (left) from the Mayor's Multicultural Advisory Committee, and **Ed Murphy**, CEO of Carilion Health System (right), talk with a conference participant during the June summit on Engaging Diverse Communities. Key community leaders from education, government, business, and industry gathered at the event to discover more about the changing demographics in the Roanoke region and the impact

on community and economic development. Participants were introduced to numerous English as a Second Language service providers and resources available in the Roanoke region designed to meet diverse workplace training and literacy needs. **Susan Short**, director of the Virginia Tech Roanoke Center, was chair of the program planning committee. The summit was sponsored by the City of Roanoke and Virginia Tech. ■

## Conference Examines Commitment of Institutions of Higher Learning to Community Engagement

by Jane Todd

Over 125 participants, representing 54 institutions and communities from around the country, participated in the Challenge of Engagement conference in July at The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center. This was the third annual University-Community Partnership Conference sponsored by the Virginia Tech Service-Learning Center. This year's program focused on examining the challenge of engagement, particularly as it

relates to leadership and institutional missions of higher education.

The keynote speaker was **Donald Blake**, formerly the executive director of Connecticut Campus Compact and vice president for academic affairs at Kentucky State University. Blake opened the conference by sharing 45 years of experience as an educator, corporate executive, administrator, and civil rights activist. His energetic and enlightening presentation was followed by interactive sessions where participants reflected on the meaning of authentic engagement.

Framing key issues for institutional leaders, in his keynote address, **Stephen Percy** presented six promising practices that are essential to higher education's commitment to community engagement. Percy is director of the Milwaukee Idea at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and co-author of the provocative document, *Calling the Question: Is Higher Education Ready to Commit to Community Engagement?*

"This year's event seemed to be particularly relevant to conference participants," said **Michele James-Deramo**, director of the

Service-Learning Center and chair of the conference planning committee. "Participants commented on the depth of the conversations and the applicability of the presentations to issues they are facing on their own campuses."

The fourth annual University-Community Partnership Conference, The Community Calls Forth the University, will be held on July 18-20, 2007, at the Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center. For more information, contact James-Deramo at [deramo@vt.edu](mailto:deramo@vt.edu).

**Laura Hawthorne**, director of University Outreach and special assistant to the provost at the University of Virginia, addresses participants in the breakout session, *Are Virginia's Higher Eds Ready to Call the Question*, during the conference on the Challenge of Engagement. **Jeri Childers**, director of Outreach Program Development at Virginia Tech, and **Alice Joynier**, director of Outreach at Virginia State University, were also co-presenters of the interactive session designed for faculty and administrators from across the commonwealth.

# Morse Provides Leadership for Smart Communities



**Suzanne Morse is the president of the Pew Partnership for Civic Change and a recently appointed fellow of Virginia Tech's Center for Organizational and Technological Advancement.**

Suzanne Morse, president of the Pew Partnership for Civic Change and recently named fellow of Virginia Tech's Center for Organizational and Technological Advancement (COTA), is providing solutions to some of the toughest societal issues for towns, cities, and regions across the nation.

Beginning in 2007, she will lead the Smart Communities Institute, a series of three seminars scheduled at The Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center. Participants will learn the Smart Communities model, the strategies for positive community change, and how to apply these plans of action in their communities.

The first seminar, Smart Communities Act Smart, is based on Morse's popular book, *Smart Communities: How Citizens and Local Leaders Can Build a Brighter Future*. The institute will focus on the seven things communities can do to improve their chances of success. Using a case study approach, participants learn how the "best of the best" got that way and will have an opportunity to benchmark their communities based on a series of "success" criteria. Participants will each leave the seminar with the knowledge necessary to begin to work with others to more effectively organize their community's approach to the future.

The second session in the series, Creating a Thriving Community, uses social and economic data on the most successful communities in the country, participants learn what it takes to go from a good community to a great community. They will craft a local plan of action that incorporates the principles of the Thriving Communities Model,<sup>TM</sup> identify the data needed to gauge how they are doing, and understand the investments, leadership, and

assets needed for long-term economic success. This model takes the guesswork out of forecasting and visioning. Communities learn what needs to be done and how they can do it.

Going Global While Staying at Home, is the third session of the series. The world of bytes and bites has opened the global economy to the smallest village and the largest city. Most communities want to take advantage of the power of the global economy while maintaining a livable community. This session focuses on ways for participants to position their communities to take advantage of new technologies and new market opportunities.

The three-part program is designed for a diverse mix of participants from public, private, and nonprofit sectors who are interested in helping their communities thrive. Community officials, nonprofit officers, concerned business owners, and economic development experts will all benefit from the seminar.

For more information about the series, visit [www.cpe.vt.edu/actcom/](http://www.cpe.vt.edu/actcom/).

Morse is also the founder of LeadershipPlenty,<sup>®</sup> a nationally recognized civic leadership development program designed to equip individuals with problem-solving skills such as building partnerships, managing conflict, and identifying community assets that are essential for all communities seeking positive change. The curriculum is offered in a train-the-trainer format to those from nonprofit organizations, businesses, local governments, and neighborhood organizations who are then licensed to return to their communities to offer the program. LeadershipPlenty<sup>®</sup> courses are being developed for 2007. For more information, visit the web site at [www.cpe.vt.edu/lpinstitute/](http://www.cpe.vt.edu/lpinstitute/).

"The COTA fellowship is a wonderful opportunity to bring best practices and tested solutions from communities across the nation to Roanoke and the region," says Morse. "The seminars and leadership training will build on the talents and resources already in place to invent a very bright future." ■

## Leadership Retreat Held for Talent Search Students



*Students spent July 17 at Apple Ridge Farm in Copper Hill, Virginia, participating in team leadership challenges as part of a two-day Talent Search Middle School Leadership Retreat. For more information about TRIO Talent Search or Upward Bound programs, contact Thomas Wilson, director, at [tgwilson@vt.edu](mailto:tgwilson@vt.edu) or phone 540/231-6911.*

## Inside OPD

### Welcome to...



**Anthia Ang**  
accounts payables specialist  
for finance for Continuing  
and Professional Education



**Julia Canas**  
program coordinator  
for Continuing and  
Professional Education



**Elizabeth  
Wade-Fillman**  
program coordinator  
for Continuing and  
Professional Education



**Denise Walker**  
office services assistant  
for the English Language  
Institute

### Congratulations to...



**Erica Butler**  
who has been promoted from  
part-time program accountant  
to full-time program accountant  
and accounts receivables  
specialist for Continuing and  
Professional Education



**Dave Elmore**  
who has been promoted from  
part-time to full-time graphic  
designer for marketing  
services for Continuing and  
Professional Education

### Best Wishes to...



**Alice Clawson**  
program coordinator for  
Continuing and Professional  
Education, who moved to  
California



**Priscilla Koelling**  
program closing specialist  
for the finance unit of  
Continuing and Professional  
Education, who is pursuing  
other opportunities

## Water and Wastewater Course Draws Loyal Following

**Kevin Bales**, systems technician at the Crazy Mountain Ranch near Clyde Park, Montana, has been a regular at Virginia Tech's summer Water and Wastewater Short Courses for the past four years. Both a working ranch with 650 head of Black Angus cattle and a dude ranch with 150 horses, Crazy Mountain is owned by Phillip Morris, USA, which uses it for retreats for up to 104 guests. "We can come here for a week and get twice the training we'd get anywhere else," says Bales, who is responsible for the ranch's water—including a 150,000-gallon storage facility, wastewater, hot water, HVAC, communications, and



**Kevin Bales**

construction systems. "And if a question comes up during the year between courses, we can e-mail **Professor Greg Boardman** and he guides us toward a solution." ■

## Sixth International Conference on Recirculating Aquaculture Held in Roanoke

**Greg Boardman** (left), conference presenter and professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, **George Flick** (center), conference chair and university distinguished professor in the Department of Food Science and Technology, and **Jae-Yoon Jo**, professor and conference presenter from Pukyong National University in South Korea, take a break during

the Recirculating Aquaculture conference. Approximately 175 participants attended the biennial international conference and trade show on July 21–23 at The Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center. The sponsors were Virginia Tech, the Aquacultural Engineering Society, the Freshwater Institute, the Virginia Sea Grant College Program, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. ■



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## Outreach Program Development

Jeri Childers, Ph.D., *Director*

Continuing and Professional Education

Center for Organizational & Technological Advancement (COTA)

English Language Institute

Service-Learning Center

Upward Bound / Talent Search

The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center

The Inn at Virginia Tech  
and Skelton Conference Center

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