When Jay Williams finally visited campus for the first time a few years ago, he knew that Virginia Tech was the school for him. “There’s an energy about Virginia Tech that I didn’t feel at any other campus I visited,” says Williams. Williams is a resident advisor (RA) in Main Campbell, an honors residential community. The best part about his job as an RA is the opportunity he has to meet so many interesting people who have a passion for learning just as he does. Williams says, “I think the most valuable lesson I’ve learned as an RA is the uniqueness of a residential community and how small things — even the day-to-day activities of residential life — create an atmosphere that translates into a rich learning experience that will last me a lifetime.”
Division of Student Affairs

There is a common thread between today’s graduates and the graduates of a generation or two ago. They both tend to look fondly at their time at the university, place a high value on the theoretical knowledge and professional skills they gained, and value the friendships and other relationships they formed.

However, the students of the current generation are also substantially different and operate in a much-altered environment. They live in a world that is filled with far more uncertainty than that of their predecessors. Because of significant changes in family structure, globalization of labor and trade, reduced participation in social organizations, and institutional changes, they lack some of the social and economic anchors of an earlier time. They also face increasing technological challenges. Today’s students need to do more than merely speak and write well conventionally; they must also adapt their expression to the variety of tools that are a part of this computer age.

Given the complex student background and the current complicated environment, when a first-year student arrives on campus, universities are increasingly called upon to play multiple roles. They must maintain a clear focus on intellectual accomplishment and skills acquisition, but they must also exercise care for the whole student, including personal, physical, emotional, spiritual, social, and career dimensions. When they enroll in college and become engaged in its culture, for many students it is the first time they have been away from their community of family and friends. This change is sudden and can be difficult for students to manage, especially when coupled with balancing their demanding coursework. Students today require a different set of skills to navigate the social, emotional, and physical challenges of college.

Within a university, student affairs professionals provide the resources necessary to help college students successfully plot a course through these challenges. These professionals are responsible for many aspects of a student’s university experience, including health and wellness programs, student activities, career services, multicultural programs and services, residential life, and leadership training. Because of this broad scope of essential resources, student affairs plays a major role in supporting students from orientation to graduation.
Virginia Tech’s orientation leaders epitomize the Hokie Spirit. Each summer, these students spend nearly four weeks preparing for and welcoming the newest Hokies to campus. The orientation process is an intensive two day program that helps new students become acquainted with their new home and meet other Virginia Tech students. During orientation, these student leaders emphasize ethical leadership, camaraderie, Hokies Respect, and school spirit. And while new students are not required to attend, nearly all of them do, making the role these enthusiastic young men and women play in welcoming new students and families to the Virginia Tech community vitally important.
With an increasing demand by students throughout the nation for first-year experience initiatives, multicultural programs, and residential living communities, the role of student affairs in the educational mission of the university is vital. Student affairs professionals share responsibility with faculty members and administrators for creating the conditions that inspire students to participate in activities outside the classroom that enrich their educational and personal development. They also help students make informed decisions about health and wellness, interpersonal relationships, and co-curricular activities. By taking a lead role in educating the whole person, student affairs offices enable universities to be more competitive in attracting the nation’s brightest scholars. These professionals provide programs and services that enrich student life on campus and enhance student growth and development.

While students graduate from college with high-quality preparation in their respective disciplines and are well equipped to engage with the challenges unique to the knowledge base they have acquired, the world in which students seek employment has expanded, becoming more complex and more global with each passing year. Globalization, then, necessitates that universities provide fundamental leadership skills to help students successfully navigate the complexities and explore the opportunities inherent in our all-inclusive world. Student affairs professionals are trained to provide opportunities for education in ethical leadership to all students.

Working together to provide a valuable network centered on student success, student affairs professionals help students prosper at both ends of the educational continuum: as they enter the university community and again as they leave their studies to enter society.

**Building a Campus Community**

Every student who attends Virginia Tech is touched by student affairs, whether it’s through our residential life centers, where students have frequent and powerful experiential learning opportunities that transform how they think, interact, and serve the communities where they live, or through sorority and fraternity life, where students build a sense of community by engaging in the principles of scholarship, service, and leadership. Through our health and wellness centers, students receive important medical, counseling, and disability services, which enhance academic and personal success in the college years. Here they also learn about therapeutic options, lifestyle changes, and preventative strategies, with respect to nutrition and exercise for example, which can enhance long-term happiness and longevity. In our multicultural programs, students have opportunities for constructive and civil dialogue about differences, including
student leadership training, cultural celebrations, faculty interaction, and diversity training. These broad-reaching programs encourage personal growth, community development, and academic excellence. At its heart, the Division of Student Affairs at Virginia Tech embodies the university motto, *Ut Prosim,* “That I May Serve,” by helping to develop broader individuals and well-rounded citizens.

The competition is generally very keen these days for highly accomplished and high-potential students. As a member of the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), Virginia Tech competes with some of the very best public institutions of higher education in the nation, institutions which in many cases can offer attractive physical environments and generous financial aid packages. Parents and students understand the link between academic success and personal growth. A student’s decision to attend Virginia Tech is partly determined by the academic strength of this institution, but it is also strongly influenced by the amenities and support that we can offer in the area of student life. Because of the competition for the best students, we have developed innovative programs geared specifically to Virginia Tech. Our Leadership Tech Program was designed to develop ethical, globally conscious citizens and leaders. This program integrates leadership into the collegiate experience beginning in a student’s freshman or sophomore year and emphasizes small peer-group learning communities, major and career preparation, and individualized mentoring. We are also developing a certificate in our Multicultural Leadership Program to cultivate citizens who are aware of how cultural differences can add value in a productive society. Through these programs, students discover the value of responsibility, self-discipline, community service, and understanding of others.

Our mission extends the university’s teaching and learning focus by creating programs and services that encourage students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to everyday life. We are committed to a holistic educational experience that promotes personal and professional standards of ethical behavior and good citizenship. We have demonstrated success in creating programs and activities that prepare students for success in whatever fields they choose to enter. Our students go on to distinguish themselves through their analytical and problem-solving skills and their dedication to making the most of their education, their careers, and their lives. At Virginia Tech, students come for the education, and they stay for the community.
Brittney Davis loved the idea of attending a big school without that big-school feel, not to mention it was just far enough away from home to allow her to become an independent adult, yet not too far away that she couldn’t visit when she wanted to. Davis says, “I checked out other schools before deciding on Virginia Tech, but Tech had all of the aspects that I was looking for in my choice of college.” She’d been exposed to life at Virginia Tech from a very young age; both her father and her brother are proud Hokie graduates. As a first-year student, Davis has become actively involved as a participant in Each One, Reach One, a mentoring program sponsored by Multicultural Programs and Services. In this program, first-year students of color are paired up with an upper-class mentor. Through this program a variety of issues common to academic and personal success are explored. For Davis, Each One, Reach One has been an incredible opportunity for her to learn more about how Black students, in particular, can become involved in various campus activities. The program has taught her to give back, which is a characteristic she naturally possesses. “Because of my involvement this past year as a participant in the Each One, Reach One Program, I intend to become a mentor next year as a sophomore,” Davis says. She explains that even after she graduates from Virginia Tech, she is confident that one of the most valuable lessons she will have learned from Multicultural Programs and Services is the importance and significance of being a role model to others.
Annamarie Ammen was born with Hokie blood. Her grandfather was a cadet here in the 1930s, and both of her parents attended Virginia Tech, so there was little doubt she would attend Virginia Tech. More of a natural leader than a follower, Ammen was drawn to the ideals of Leadership Tech — an educational program of curricular and service experiences designed specifically for student leadership development. Ammen quickly learned the benefits of being surrounded by a group of her peers who also appreciate the opportunity to integrate teamwork and leadership into their curriculum. It’s a program that will heighten their abilities to think critically, to be more creative, and to solve problems. Ammen says, “Leadership Tech is setting the groundwork for all student leaders. Later in life I anticipate using these leadership experiences as a positive learning tool in my career.”
Our Plans for the Future

Many of today’s students participate in community outreach activities, recreational sports, and other creative pursuits. They do so because they are eager to improve themselves in every aspect of their lives, and they are eager to make a difference in society. The Campaign for Virginia Tech: Invent the Future will enable us to help these young people by increasing program support. In particular, we will extend our Leadership Tech Program, enhance our faculty-student involvement initiatives, and create freshmen interest groups. We will also supplement equipment such as a ropes challenge course, outdoor picnic facilities for residential areas, cardiovascular and fitness equipment, and computer equipment in the Imaginarium, a student-programming support center.

We will use the campaign to support the growing work of the departments dedicated to promoting student health and wellness, such as the Cook Counseling Center, Schiffert Health Center, McComas Recreational Center, and the Office for Services for Students with Disabilities. After the events of April 2007, the Cook Counseling Center and offices in health and wellness showed themselves to be an extraordinary resource. Their importance on campus has encouraged us to rededicate ourselves to strengthening these student support systems.

The campaign will also enable us to increase multicultural initiatives on campus. We will create new courses and provide educational forums that foster a greater understanding of how students can contribute to the ethical leadership of their respective disciplines. In achieving this, Multicultural Programs and Services will offer a credit course on Hispanic-Latino culture. The objective of this course is to develop a series of cumulative educational forums leading to a project designed to educate and inform others about Hispanic-Latino culture. Additionally, the National Pan-Hellenic Council, which represents nine historically African-American fraternities and sororities at Virginia Tech, would like to establish an outdoor area on campus where each Pan-Hellenic organization could display its symbols and demonstrate its pride. This project would offer the university community an opportunity to honor the diversity present on campus and to provide our students with a physical representation of our commitment to foster a climate that celebrates and honors their history. In addition, the United Council of Fraternities and Sororities (UCFS) proposes to develop a memorial garden to provide a physical representation and gathering place for members of the multicultural Greek-letter organizations at Virginia Tech. This project would provide an excellent opportunity for the university to celebrate the various organizations represented throughout our campus community while illustrating to our students the inherent value we place on their experiences.
As one of five children, Jasmine Dhir says coming to Virginia Tech was an easy choice. She especially loved the idea of attending a big school with outstanding academic and cocurricular opportunities. Once she enrolled, Dhir knew she wanted to become involved as much as possible during her education at Virginia Tech. One activity in particular that interested her was joining a sorority. “I never really thought of myself as a leader, but I can see that I’ve evolved into one by becoming an active member of the campus community. I am currently chairwoman of external philanthropy within my sorority and soon hope to run for a lead position in the Society of Professional Journalists,” says Dhir. Being a sorority member has helped Dhir to become a successful communicator with the confidence to speak publicly at her sorority chapter meetings, where easily there may be 120 or more individuals in attendance. With the dream of entering into a career in public relations, Dhir knows that excellent communication skills are vital. “Being a part of fraternity and sorority life has helped turn me into a confident, organized, creative young professional. The skills that I’ve learned and the friendships I’ve made are invaluable.”

JASMINE DHIR
A sophomore from Chester, Virginia, majoring in communication
Finally, student affairs will extend the undergraduate experience to more students by providing additional scholarship opportunities. We will create new need- and merit-based scholarships for students who face challenges in accessing a college education as well as those students who show promising leadership ability. The Virginia Tech Rescue Squad Scholarship is just one example of a new need-based scholarship Virginia Tech hopes to establish for students seeking financial assistance. These students volunteer their valuable time serving others through the campus rescue squad.

Unrestricted funds will allow us to proactively accommodate emerging educational trends and adapt them to meet the changing needs of our students. Through the campaign, we will offer our students the best holistic education possible.

**Partnerships are Important**

Giving to the Division of Student Affairs at Virginia Tech is an opportunity for you to invest in our students and their futures as successful, productive citizens. You can shape their educational experiences and help us provide the optimal conditions in which learning and growth can take place. With your participation in the Campaign for Virginia Tech: Invent the Future, we can offer our students an education that is more than a series of classes taken for credit — we can offer an education balanced by experiences that transform coursework into active engagement with the community and with the future.

**Campaign Priorities**

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