# VIRGINIA TECH CONDUCTOR

### A GUIDE FOR OUR JOURNEY TOWARD EXCELLENCE, EQUITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

## In this issue...

Our theme for this first issue of the second year is retention. Thus, we have spotlighted the College of Engineering's aggressive approach to recruit and retain minorities and women.
- On page 3, we ask people what would make the university more welcoming.
- On page 4, we introduce the new Multicultural Fellows, and John Easterwood looks at commitment to diversity.

### The Virginia Tech Conductor

The *Virginia Tech Conductor* is a guide to university resources that can help you
- learn more about diversity,
- share in multicultural experiences, and
- benefit professionally and personally.

Regular features in this twice per semester publication include quotes and facts, resources and events, good news, dialogue, essays, and explorations of the assumptions we make about one another.

To learn more and participate, visit *www.multicultural.vt.edu* or *www.diversity.vt.edu/forum.html*. You are invited to participate electronically and are definitely welcome to contribute.

## Good News

# McNair Scholars a university resource

*by Miya T. Simpson, director, Ronald McNair Program, Center for Academic Enrichment and Excellence*

The Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program began its first year at Virginia Tech in October, 1999. One of eight federal TRIO* programs, the McNair Scholars Program is fully funded through the U. S. Department of Education and designed to encourage students from groups currently underrepresented in higher education to complete the bachelor's degree and pursue doctoral study. Targeted populations include low-income, first-generation college students and students of African-American, Native-American, and Hispanic ethnicity.

To date, a total of 16 scholars have been selected to participate in a variety of activities throughout the academic year and summer that will assist them in their pursuit of graduate education. These include academic support activities, faculty mentorship, workshops, seminars, networking opportunities, and a summer research experience, all of which are intended to motivate scholars to set goals and experience the satisfaction of attaining them.

As the program approaches the end of its first year, I am pleased to have this opportunity to highlight the work of the 11 McNair Scholars who participated in the summer research experience. Scholars were involved in an intensive 10-week summer research experience and worked closely with a Virginia Tech faculty member. At the end of this experience, the scholars were able to present their research findings at the First Annual Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program Research Symposium and Closing Brunch on July 29, 2000. The following is a list of the Summer 2000 McNair Scholars, their

faculty mentor(s), and a brief description of the research project. (* TRIO refers to the three original programs funded in the 1960's -- Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Special Services.)

Scholar: **Crystal Armes**, Human Development
Mentor: Bonnie Billingsley, Teaching and Learning
Research: Teacher Attrition and Retention in General and Special Education

The 1990's literature review explores the research findings on special educators career decisions and seeks to analyze the problem of teacher shortages, especially within the field of special education.

Scholar: **Marché Barnes**, Communication Studies
Mentor: John Tedesco, Communication Studies
Research: Public Relations and Technology

The research investigates the impact of the Internet and other communication technology on the field of public relations. The study explores the perceptions of practitioners regarding the effects of technology on the profession and the training provided for future public relations professionals.

Scholar: **Brandi Collins**, Environmental Policy and Planning
Mentors: Diane Zahm, John Randolph, Urban Affairs and Planning
Research: State Brownfield Redevelopment Initiatives: Do They Further the Goals of Environmental Justice?

The study explores the interrelationship between environmental justice and brownfields in the National Environmental Justice Movement. It examines the elements of environmental justice, social, and economic effects of brownfields, and tenets of the environmental justice movement.

Scholar: **Dana Dillon-Townes**, Industrial and Systems Engineering
Mentors: Bevlee Watford, Kerri Danna-Link, Office of Minority

## Making a difference

# Office of Minority Engineering Programs

*by Richard Conners,*
*associate professor, electrical and computer engineering*

The Office of Minority Engineering Programs was started in the College of Engineering in 1992. The director is Bevlee Watford, associate dean for academics. The objectives of the office are to increase the number of students from underrepresented populations who apply to, enroll in, and graduate from the College of Engineering. To increase the retention rate of underrepresented students, the office's staff provides academic, professional, and personal support programs for students. To encourage underrepresented students to enter the engineering profession, staff members try to increase the awareness within specific underrepresented groups that engineering and other technical fields provide exciting and rewarding careers. The office also supports student chapters of the National Society of Black Engineers, the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, the Society of Women

Engineers, and other student organizations that support the office's mission. Finally, the office tries to foster collaborations among the university, industry, and the local community to support its mission.

While this office administers a number of programs directed toward reaching these goals, only those activities directed at improving retention of students from underrepresented groups will be highlighted here. These retention efforts start even before new students' classes begin in the fall. For example, office staff members conduct the ASPIRE program — a five-week long summer program designed to bridge the gap between high school and college. ASPIRE students take classes on mathematical, chemical, and engineering problem solving. They also participate in various academic and professional development activities. This program is currently limited to African American and Hispanic students. In the near future, the office expects to expand the program to include all women entering engineering. Also, during July, daily orientation sessions introduce the Office of Minority Engineering Programs' services to the first-year students and their families. This is an opportunity to meet the staff and learn about the various programs and activities that are provided for the students.

Once a student from an underrepresented group arrives on campus, Watford and her staff direct an aggressive mentoring program. Each new African American, Hispanic, and woman engineering student is invited to participate. The mentors, upper class engineering students, meet with the first-year students weekly to provide the opportunity to discuss both academic and social issues. New students are invited to a welcoming reception at the start of the academic year, where they meet their "team leaders" and fellow team members. Various faculty and staff members also attend to welcome the students to the College of Engineering. The mentors typically live in close proximity to those students for whom they are responsible. This encourages interactions between a student and his or her mentor on a regular basis. This mentoring program has become a model for similar activities on campus.

After the academic year begins, the office staff tries to keep in touch with underrepresented students. For example, the office maintains several listservers, which they use to provide information to students about scholarships, internships, and summer research opportunities. The Office also distributes a monthly electronic newsletter for underrepresented engineering students to keep them

## Virginia Tech hosts first conference on stepping

Stepping is a complex performance involving synchronized percussive movement, singing, speaking, chanting, and drama. Developed by African American fraternities and sororities, it is now practiced by people throughout the world.

Now, a conference at Virginia Tech, organized by Humanities Programs director Elizabeth Fine, will not only showcase this exciting art form, but will bring together scholars and students to discuss issues associated with stepping.

The first ever national conference on stepping will be April 6-7, 2001, at the Donaldson Brown Center. The conference deals with all aspects of stepping, including:

- history of stepping
- role in Black Greek-letter organizations
- relationship to African movement patterns
- role in developing leadership, character, and community
- role in social action and/or cultural promotion
- adaptation by Latino, Asian, and multicultural groups
- role in popular culture (film, television, advertising).

The event will feature a benefit performance by Step Afrika!, U.S.A. for the restoration of the Christiansburg Institute, an historic African American school.

There will also be a round table discussion on leadership issues and stepping with Michael Gordon, immediate past executive director of the Pan-Hellenic Council, and representatives from the nine National Pan-Hellenic Council member organizations.

Sponsors are the Virginia Tech Black Studies Program, Humanities Programs, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of History, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Office, Virginia Tech Chapter of the National Pan-Hellenic Council, and the Christiansburg Institute.

For additional information, contact Fine at 231-9593 or *bfine@vt.edu*, or visit *www.cis.vt.edu*/humanities for updated conference information.

### *COLORS*

*by Shel Silverstein*
"My skin is kind of brownish
Pinkish yellowish white.
My eyes are greyish blueish green
But I'm told they look orange in the night.
My hair is reddish blondish brown,
But it's silver when it's wet.
And all the colors I am inside
Have not yet been invented yet."

*The Campus Diversity Report*, May/June 2000. Reprinted with permission of PaperClip Communications, Garfield, N.J.

# Call for Campus Child Care: Part II

*by Richard Conners,*
*Class of 1999 Multicultural Fellow*

The response to last spring's "What Would You Do" column on campus childcare was absolutely the best yet. I received 23 e-mail responses and two responses on the diversity web page. These first person responses were thoughtfully prepared and described the difficulties families face with childcare at Virginia Tech. Because of this response I would like to discuss this matter again. However, before doing so, I would like to remind you that you can either e-mail me at *rconners@vt.edu* or you can phone me at 231-6896. To involve yourself in a more open debate, go to *www.diversity.vt.edu/ forum.html* and click on "Join the discussion now."

Based on these admittedly anecdotal responses, there appears to be a number of problems with childcare in the Blacksburg area. First and foremost, there appears to be a shortage of facilities. Families have to get in line to have their children admitted to childcare programs. It can take several months to get a child into a program.

Next, there appears to be a problem with getting care during nonstandard hours. As should be clear to everyone, students and faculty members do not always start their day at 8 a.m. and end their day at 5 p.m. Sometimes we even have to work a weekend or two. Consequently, the availability of care outside of standard hours is very important.

Then, there appears to be a problem when a child becomes slightly sick. In this situation, childcare providers typically refuse to provide care until the child recovers. The burden for providing care during this period falls on the family.

There also appears to be a problem in finding adequate care. As one might expect, all childcare providers are not necessarily created equal. Getting a child admitted into one of the better programs is problematic.

These are the lessons I learned from correspondence I received. Please note that my wife and I did not have children.

The university is beginning to examine this problem in that the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Committee has a new Parenting Concerns Subcommittee, which will be able to make use of the assessment of childcare needs in Montgomery County -- the research project of one of the McNair Scholars.

I have relatively strong feelings about this issue myself for a number of reasons. First, President Steger has stated that he would like for Virginia Tech to be rated in the top 30 research universities. To do this, Tech must recruit the best minds. Doing so will not be an easy task. A highly educated person typically marries another highly educated person, who also wants to pursue his or her own career. Finding a job for the other person is not as easy in this area as it would be in a more urban area. To help offset this, Tech needs to provide other types of advantages for working here. Childcare could be one such advantage. Of course, we must not only recruit capable people, we must also retain them. Doing so involves not only providing a good working environment, but a good family environment as well. Childcare is at the heart of any good family environment. In many of the colleges, women are underrepresented. I can think of no better way to help recruit and retain women faculty members than to provide childcare.

A university needs to provide for its students. National trends suggest that an increasing number of our students will be single mothers with at least one child. National statistics also suggest that single moms have trouble staying above the poverty line. One way of helping them is to provide a means for a good education — a higher education. This means these students must have access to inexpensive childcare.

There is one last group that is often left out of discussions in universities — the staff. One should not have to think long to see that great universities require great staffs. In one e-mail I received, the author pointed out that the cost of childcare in this area can eat up as much as half of a staff person's salary. There is also the issue of staff performance and well being. Not having to stay home when a child is slightly sick improves a worker's performance. The same argument applies to faculty members and students. Many great U.S. corporations have known this for years and find it economically beneficial to offer childcare for their employees.

Given these arguments, I think it is appropriate for Virginia Tech to study this issue in some detail.

That's my opinion! What is yours?

# Fresh Air Returns

*by Danny Axsom,*
*Class of 1999 Multicultural Fellow*

Earlier this summer, after a five-year absence, the popular and award-winning program "Fresh Air" returned to the airwaves of WVTF (89.1), the public radio affiliate owned by the Virginia Tech Foundation. The program airs weekday evenings from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. "Weekend Fresh Air" can be heard Sunday evenings from 6 to 7 p.m.

"Fresh Air" is a radio magazine of contemporary arts and issues featuring in-depth interviews with prominent cultural and entertainment figures, as well as distinguished experts on current affairs and news. It is one of the most popular public radio programs in the United States, with an estimated weekly audience of 1.8 million listeners.

Terry Gross, host of the program, is often cited as being one of the best interviewers in the country, and the show has received a Peabody Award, which commended Gross for offering "probing questions, revelatory interviews, and unusual insights."

According to Glenn Gleixner, WVTF general manager, "The return of 'Fresh Air' has been greeted with much positive response … Every week we receive letters, e-mails, and phone calls thanking us for returning Terry Gross to our schedule. WVTF is pleased to offer this program for our listeners and we anticipate 'Fresh Air' will receive excellent support from our audience."

People wishing to express their appreciation for the return of the program should contact WVTF: Grand Pavilion, 4235 Electric Road, S.W., Suite 105, Roanoke, Va. 24014-4145. Phone 540-989-8900; Blacksburg, 540-387-5000; VA-NC-WV, 800-856-8900. E-mail: *wvtf@vt.edu*.

## Staff mentoring offered

Newly placed minority classified staff members working in grade 5-7 office/clerical positions have the opportunity to participate in a mentoring program designed to provide professional support from mentors in existing similar positions.

The Mentoring Program for Minority Classified Employees of Virginia Tech, initiated during the past academic year, will hold a training program for new participants on Oct. 2, 1:30-4:30 p.m., Donaldson Brown Hotel and Conference Center rooms D and E. Training skills will be taught by Kimberly Townsend, a human development associate in the Office of Human Resources at Penn State University. Townsend is responsible for the leadership, development, instruction, and evaluation of the curriculum areas of leadership, career development, and personal effectiveness. She will share skills taught at Penn State for a similar mentoring program.

Additional information appeared in the Sept. 22 *Spectrum*. Any classified employees interested in joining the program as a mentor or mentee should contact Robin Atkins at *atkinsrw@vt.edu* or 231-1820 today.

# What might Virginia Tech do to make the campus a more welcoming community for all?

*Prepared by Charlotte M. Waggoner, safety engineer and Class of 1999 Multicultural Fellow*
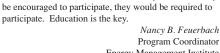
I think the larger a group gets, the more isolated individuals feel. When a person moves into this area it would be nice to have "easier" access to unusual/special interest groups. Whether on campus or around town, advertisements in the local phone books and fliers can have listings for such activities as underwater hockey games to fondue tasting nights to ethnic musical gatherings. Most communities evolve around the popular and highly advertised activities, such as football games or sorority/fraternity events. Those are positive and entertaining events but not everyone is interested. The wonderfully eclectic avenues in an area get lost in the growing fray. Most people like to be involved in some activity or event; accessibility to them is key to a happy, developing community.

*Colleen Smith*
Research Assistant
Force Plate Lab
Veterinary Medicine

Orientation for new employees would be extended to include a workshop on campus climate issues. As a condition of employment, staff and faculty members would be required to participate in and actively support events sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Dean of Students office. Participation and support activities would be reflected in performance expectations and evaluations. Staff and faculty would not only be encouraged to participate, they would be required to participate. Education is the key.

*Nancy B. Feuerbach*
Program Coordinator
Energy Management Institute
Mechanical Engineering

I think that the upper levels of administration need to be more involved in the aspects of diversity/multiculturalism. More involved, to me, means that the upper levels should not just talk about the importance of diversity but embrace it. That can be accomplished by having the president, the provost, the vice president's for administration, athletic director, etc., be more active in whatever events are going on. If there is a Latin group playing on campus, have the president and others at that level have the first dance with a member of the community, and stay on and dance the night away. If there is an opening event or buffet service, have that level of the administration serve the food, take the tickets, pass out the flyers, dance and/or actively participate in whatever is going on for that particular culture. I believe this would show not just an acceptance of all the cultures we have on campus, but that the university embraces the culture as well. Only by walking the walk can we really talk the talk. Being actively involved will only improve the level of participation by the students, faculty, and staff in university governance matters. In turn, this will give all members of the campus community a greater level of "buy in" when they see that upper levels embrace what they are and how they are away from their studies.

*Rene C. Rios*
Former Assistant Director
EOAA Office

Education and experience are key in making Virginia Tech a more welcoming community. We all need to learn more about other cultures and experience relationships with different peoples.

*Josiah E. Hills*
Undergraduate
Biology

## Office of Minority Engineering Programs ...

informed about various campus events and about the accomplishments of current and past students. The newsletters frequently include articles of interest, such as Engineering Workforce Commission (EWC) information on the enrollment trends for underrepresented students and the EWC annual salary survey.

Beginning this fall, the office will provide each ASPIRE participant with an industrial mentor. The idea is to have a weekend activity where the students will meet their mentors, and then to continuously promote regular electronic communication between the students and the mentors. This program is aimed at improving the personal and professional development of the African American and Hispanic engineering first-year students. In the fall of 1999, the office was invited to participate in MentorNet, a national program, much like the ASPIRE program, aimed at providing industrial mentors for women in engineering.

Somewhat related to retention, the office also administers the Faculty of the Future Program. This is a General Electric funded program that provides scholarships, graduate stipends, tuition, and fees for underrepresented engineering students. The goal of this program is to encourage underrepresented students to not only successfully complete their undergraduate work but to pursue a graduate degree as well.

Obviously, running these programs costs money. Working in conjunction with University Development and Career Services, Watford and her staff have been able to raise more than $1 million from private companies. The office has had the continuous support of General Electric, Corning, Honeywell, and Dupont. Other companies that have joined include Lockheed Martin, Ingersoll Rand, General Motors, and Exxon/Mobil. But Watford says the lack of space to work in, not money, is the biggest problem facing the office.

Watford has been innovative in program development. One of her first efforts was the Academic Workshops program aimed at improving the mathematics skills of underrepresented students. Another of her efforts is the College Success Strategies program, which is aimed at improving the communication skills of students from groups underrepresented in engineering.

As a result of the success of such efforts, other departments now have similar programs.

Learn more at: *www.eng.vt.edu/affairs/perspective/mep.html*

## McNair Scholars...

Engineering Programs
Research: The Retention Rate of Ethnic Minorities and Females in Engineering: A Study of Minority Engineering Programs at Virginia Tech

The work offers an analysis of the retention programs in place for ethnic minorities and women within the College of Engineering. It uses both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to examine the impact of existing programs on the target populations.

Scholar: **Sonora Fletcher**, Mass Communication and Marketing
Mentor: Stephanie Sargent, Communication Studies
Research: Gender Roles and the Psychological Effects of Sad Movies

The study examines autonomic nervous system activity during induced emotional states and the differences that may exist based on gender.

Scholar: **Kasey Martin**, Human Services
Mentor: Tammy Henderson, Human Development
Research: Grandparent's Visitation Rights

This is a study of the issue of grandparent visitation rights based cases litigated between 1986 and 1999. The study examines potential national trends.

Scholar: **Cyndy Mondelus**, Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise (HNFE)
Mentor: William Barbeau, HNFE
Research: Examining the Potential Connection Between Wheat and Juvenile Onset Diabetes

This study explores the possibility of a relationship between wheat proteins and juvenile diabetes.

Scholar: **Justin VanKleeck**, English
Mentor: Dennis Welch, English/CIS Humanities
Research: Henry James Richter's Daylight: The Developing Aesthetics of Early English Romanticism

This is an extensive study on the life, art, and thought of Henry James Richter, with an emphasis on his work, *Day-light; a recent discovery in the art of painting: with hints on the philosophy of the fine arts, and on that of the human mind, as first dissected by Emanuel Kant (1817).*

Scholar: **Chaketa Whitfield**, Political Science
Mentors: Susan Gooden, Raquel Becerra, Center for Public Administration and Policy
Research: Childcare Needs for Montgomery County

A comprehensive assessment of the childcare needs of individuals and families in Montgomery County.

Scholar: **Tamia Williams**, Accounting and Information Systems (AIS)
Mentor: Kelly Hilmer, AIS
Research: Developing On-line Tutorials for Information Systems Instruction

The work is the creation of a visual computer simulation of Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) using Macromedia Flash. The simulation will be implemented on the Web and used by information systems professors teaching telecommunications.

Scholar: **Zhongqi Phyllis Wu**, Biochemistry
Mentor: Neal Castagnoli, Chemistry
Research: Mechanistic Study on Parkinson's Disease

The research is a synthesis of molecular probes for MAO and its mechanistic study. It focuses on the mechanism of MAO catalysis and its significance in the development of Parkinson's Disease.

Additional 1999-2000 McNair Scholars include: Sharnnia Artis, Dominique Greene, Jamie Smith, and Carl Tinsley, all in engineering, and Nicole Jones, biology.

# Introducing the New Multicultural Fellows

*by Barbara Pendergrass, Dean of Students*

The Multicultural Fellows Program is a volunteer association designed to provide a formal mechanism for faculty, staff, and administrators to contribute to the university's mission of fostering a welcoming community for all. The program, which provides professional development opportunities and recognizes members of the university community for their voluntary contributions to diversity, is intended to provide a means for individuals to:

• conceptualize, participate in, and influence programs that promote diversity and multiculturalism;
• offer input and feedback to the university on diversity and multiculturalism issues; and
• share ideas on diversity and multicultural issues.

The Multicultural Fellows Program is an initiative of the Dean of Students (DOS) Office, political science department, and the Office of the Vice President for Multicultural Affairs (OMA). Peggy Meszaros, during her tenure as Senior Vice President and Provost, provided initial funding for this program. The OMA and the DOS Office have provided recurrent funding.

The first group of Fellows was inducted in 1999. They are now joined by the Class of 2000 Multicultural Fellows, introduced here with a quote from their applications.

**Jerrold P. Allen**, Commandant of Cadets: "I am interested in working to strengthen the student body commitment to treating everyone with dignity and respect. I consider this effort extremely important and I am prepared to devote significant time and energy."

**Kimberly S. Brown**, director, Center for Undergraduate Studies: "My interest in serving as a Multicultural Fellow stems from a personal and professional ethic which attempts to create, facilitate and support multicultural environments."

**Mary Connerley**, assistant professor of management: "I want to develop a better understanding of diversity….. I believe that my readings and research will allow me to contribute to the discussions of multiculturalism in a unique way."

**James C. Klagge**, associate professor of philosophy: "I hope there will be opportunities to connect students and other people within the university community to the work of the Diversity Forum, so the schools can benefit from the university."

**Martha Laster Mullen**, foreign national tax specialist: "I applied for ... my current position of Foreign National Tax Specialist because I wanted to be a resource for the international community and a part of their welcoming committee."

**Raymond V. Plaza**, residence director: "As a representative of the Hispanic community, I feel that I can contribute that perspective... I also feel that I am a role model of expected behavior and that this would indeed be a tremendous opportunity."

**Ann Kilkelly**, associate professor of theatre arts and women's studies: "I want to be an ally and a change agent in the university by helping facilitate conversations through the arts."

**Tony A. Sutphin**, financial aid counselor: "As a fellow, I feel I could bring a diverse background, a strong commitment to diversity and a belief in a community of oneness, where we all work together for the good of all."

**Mahmood A. Khan**, director, Hospitality and Tourism Management, Falls Church: "I have been raised in a multicultural environment and have a profound interest in multicultural issues."

## Unpack your assumptions

# Is it enough to be open to all?

*by John Easterwood, associate professor of finance, insurance, and business law*

Recently, I was looking for something on the web, when I stumbled across an article about a major state university in the south and the composition of its faculty and student body. The university's student body was about 6 percent African-American and had remained at more or less that figure for 15 to 20 years. The faculty of this university is even less diverse. Two African-American seniors were interviewed for the article about their experiences, and, between them, they could only remember having three Black teachers.

The article also talked about the climate on the campus. This university had largely ignored the issues of diversity and integration of minority populations, except when threatened with court action. About 10 years ago, the university's administration began to seek improvement in this area. The university administration had, at the time of the article, just completed a survey of African-American students to gauge their perception of the campus environment. Despite this official interest, the two seniors described feeling isolated during most of their stay on this campus. In most cases, the two students stated that they were the only African-American students in their classes. They stated that most white students kept contact with them at a superficial level. Another Black student remarked that his experiences seemed similar to those of his mother 25 years earlier.

The article also reported that white students (and faculty members) were largely oblivious to these views and that the university's recent efforts to attract more African-American students were not successful.

The university was not Virginia Tech.

In discussions about diversity, several of my colleagues have asserted that our university should not spend time, energy, or resources on diversity because it's really not a problem. Sure, they concede that official state policy, for years, was to encourage segregation and that our university's actions reflected this policy; however, they are quick to point out that this is "ancient" history. In their view, our campus is open to traditionally under-represented groups and, by and large, students and faculty members interact without regard to race. All of which

> **... most of our university is not diverse and is, unfortunately, becoming less diverse.**

sounds remarkably like the university described above. But is this opinion accurate?

One means of assessing where Virginia Tech stands is to simply look at the composition of our student body and faculty. VT's undergraduate population is currently about 4 percent African-American, down from 5 percent a decade ago. My own college's current figure is about 3 percent, down from 4 percent a decade ago. This decline has occurred despite administrative efforts to increase our population of African-American students. An assessment of faculty composition yields similar conclusions. A casual look at the numbers suggests that most of our university is not diverse and is, unfortunately, becoming less diverse. While it is unreasonable to expect the university demo-

graphics to match the state's population out to the tenth decimal place, prospective students are apt to wonder about a university that is so different from the state.

Another means of assessing where Virginia Tech stands is to examine attitudes. The Campus Climate Survey conducted recently polled undergraduate students, staff, and the faculty to gauge attitudes toward race, gender, and other aspects of diversity. The Pamplin College MultiCultural Diversity Committee sponsored a presentation of the undergraduate results by Valerie Conley of Institutional Research in the fall of 1999, and presentation of the faculty results by Associate Provost Pat Hyer in the spring of 2000. Among the questions, survey respondents were asked to classify the general climate at Virginia Tech as racist, neutral, or non-racist. In the student survey, 59 percent of white student rated the climate non-racist, 27 percent rated it neutral, and 14 percent rated it racist. In contrast, 24 percent of Black students rated the climate non-racist, 36 percent rated it neutral, and 40 percent rated it racist. A similarly suggestive finding emerged in the faculty survey. Clearly, opinions suggest that many students and faculty members of color see problems on the Tech campus that white students and faculty members fail to perceive. These perceptions are important because they shape the beliefs, actions, and reactions of those who hold them.

So, where does Virginia Tech stand and what does it attempt to do? The first and most important problem for our university community is to admit that a problem exists. As long as the faculty and students, in general, deny that any problem exists, no solution will be found.