Virginia Tech Conductor

A GUIDE FOR OUR JOURNEY TOWARD EXCELLENCE, EQUITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Diversity plan wins media award

by Benjamin Dixon, vice president for multicultural affairs (bdixon@vt.edu)

Dixon

In late 2000, "The Faces of Change," the diversity strategic plan for Virginia Tech, was entered in the CASE Region III Advancement Awards Competition in the category "Institutional Publications." The plan took the Grand Award for its category and was displayed at the CASE Region II Conference in Atlanta in February 2001. The plan was also entered in the Virginia Press Women (VPW) Communications Contest and in the national Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Circle of Excellence Awards Program. Notification of awards in the VPW competition will be made in late March and in the national CASE competition, in the spring.

The University Diversity Strategic Plan was distributed to all faculty and staff members last fall. Since then, a wide variety of activities have been initiated in response to the goals and tasks outlined. Projects, started before the plan, have taken on a new or expanded significance because of their contribution to particular goals.

The strategic plan took about 18 months to complete. The time spent by the Advisory Council for Diversity and Multicultural Affairs to carefully craft a document that addressed the diversity needs of Virginia Tech was well worth it. In addition to the overwhelming positive responses from the university community, affirmation of the quality of the plans' content and presentation have come from several external organizations and groups. The Office of Multicultural Affairs has received requests for copies of the document from individuals in business, education, and community organizations. Particularly gratifying is the growing number of Tech alumni who have expressed an interest in receiving their own copy.

Even though publication and initial distribution of the diversity plan has gone well, all involved in its development fully understand the importance of the plan's implementation. There is a time for planning and a time for execution. Virginia Tech is committed to doing its best to carry out the tasks of the plan in a manner that meets the performance standards or measures built into the plan.

Members of the university community are encouraged to keep track of how the plan is being implemented. The success of this project will depend largely on our ability as a community to be both mutually responsible and mutually accountable for what happens. In addition to reviewing periodic updates of the plan, attention should be

What do you think?

Faculty member recruiting revisited

by Richard Conners, professor of electrical and computer engineering and a Multicultural Fellow

In this article, I would like to revisit the topic of creating new faculty recruiting and hiring policies in order to increase the diversity of our faculty. I am doing this for one very good reason. The provost has asked each college within the university to develop and submit such new procedures by April 1 of this year. I applaud this step as being a good beginning point from which we can proceed.

Conners

Gordon

Because of the above, it seems advisable to consider what has been learned from the implementation of the new faculty search and hiring procedures in the College of Arts and Science during the last academic year. To do so I (RC) decided to ask Associate Dean Myra Gordon (MG) about her experiences with this effort. Gordon was heavily involved in both the formulation and the implementation of new procedures in arts and sciences.

However, first I would like to thank the two respondents to my first article on this topic (*The Conductor*, Feb. 2, 2001) for their thoughtful comments. Both basically supported the need for new procedures to increase the representation of underrepresented groups and both thought that the dialogue taking place on this campus about this matter is a step in the right direction. Both are relatively new to Virginia Tech and they indicated the places they just left had similar problems.

I asked three questions.

RC: "Myra, thank you very much for meeting with me. My first question is: What do you think are the essential components of the College of Arts and Science's new recruiting and hiring procedures for faculty members?"

Visible, articulate leadership

MG: "There are probably four or five things that are absolutely critical in this process. The first thing is (Dean Robert Bate's) very visible and articulate leadership on this issue. The dean has been very front and center in this process. He has articulated both the vision and the expectations associated with our approach to hiring. He

People who make a difference

McConnell spoke up for the staff

by Susan Trulove, PR manager, research, and a Multicultural Fellow (strulove@vt.edu)

"Twenty years ago, staff had no input," recalls Sherilyn McConnell, a charter member of the Classified Branch of the Women's Network, its first president in 1981, and, a decade later, the first president of the Staff Senate. "The reason given was that control of staff positions was through the state and the legislature, not the university, so why did the staff need input?"

Trulove

McConnell

In 1981, faculty women were concerned with the development of affirmative action and sexual harassment policies. Sexual harassment was also a staff issue, resulting in a request that grievance procedures be improved, exit interviews be reviewed by the Equal Opportunity Office, and that there be training for existing supervisors, not just aspiring supervisors.

But the Classified Branch of the Women's Network was most concerned with issues that were not exclusively women's issues, particularly representation within the governance structure and better communication.

"We included librarians, administrators, writers, editors, audiovisual technicians, lab staff, and clerical staff, and we also represented physical plant staff, police … and other jobs filled by men and women."

McConnell met with university administrators in 1982 with specific suggestions — put staff members on committees that make decisions that impact staff, offer supervisor training, hold a fall classified staff meeting, and

introduce other staff-administration communication activities. McConnell and other staff members at the meeting were advised to work directly with committee heads and within departments and colleges. They were told that supervisor training was voluntary, and that it was so expensive that it couldn't be required, nor could the university afford a broad program. There was a statewide budget crisis at the time.

The Faculty/Administrative Branch of the Women's Network was more successful in educating the university community about issues. A sexual harassment policy was adopted, for instance.

"When staff and faculty members began to work together, such as on Women's Week after 1983, we discovered issues in common," McConnell recalls. "We also discovered a few areas where we needed to compromise. For instance, when the faculty women wanted to bring a radical feminist as the keynote speaker, the staff members on the planning committee were not ready for that and would not support that selection. So a less controversial keynote speaker was invited."

The Women's Network set an example of faculty-staff collegiality.

"Staff members' activities and contributions in the Colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Veterinary Medicine began to be appreciated," McConnell says.

Pam Orcutt, a lab manager in veterinary medicine,

Safe Zones: Feel free to be yourself

*by David R. Winston,
Extension dairy scientist
and a Multicultural Fellow
(dwinston@vt.edu)*

A large U.S. automaker uses the slogan "Different" to market its vehicles. Different is portrayed as the "in" thing. Why be like all the rest? Why settle for average or commonality when you can have something different, presumably better? While this marketing approach is effective with cars and other products, human beings have a tendency to be wary of other people and groups who are different. Those who are different are often excluded, treated as outcasts. Student success in the

Winston

academic community is more likely to be achieved if students feel accepted and nurtured regardless of their differences. Fortunately, our campus has numerous programs and events to celebrate and nurture our multiculturalism and diversity. The Safe Zone program is a prime example.

A Safe Zone is an officially recognized individual, place, or merchant that provides a supportive environment as well as information to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students and their allies. Safe Zone programs have been in existence at several peer institutions for a number of years. Virginia Tech's Safe Zone program was established in 1998. The Dean of Students Office; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Alliance (LGBTA); Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Caucus; and Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action are sponsors.

The objectives of the Safe Zone program are:
1. To identify a network of allies who are concerned, empathetic, and knowledgeable about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues.
2. To provide evidence of the support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people and their allies within the Virginia Tech community by displaying a sign as tangible evidence of their support.
3. To reduce the fear of reprisal and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people and their allies within the Virginia Tech community.
4. To assist lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and allied students in achieving their educational goals by creating an environment in which they can be themselves.

(Source: *Safe Zones of Virginia Tech Resource Manual*)

A special ceremony to recognize Safe Zone participants was held in the Multicultural Center on Feb. 23. Participants received a packet of information containing a resource manual and a Safe Zone sticker that identifies program participants. The 2001 sticker has a new logo and slogan. One can easily recognize the new Safe Zone stickers by the rainbow colored triangle that appears below the Safe Zone label. "Feel free to be yourself" is the new slogan.

The resource manual was developed to enable participants to be of greater assistance to those who call upon them for help and support. The Safe Zones of Virginia Tech Resource Manual provides an overview, definitions, and information about LGBT people as well as information about myths and stereotypes, coming out,

McConnell...

was active with the Classified Branch of the Women's Network. Her husband, Dave Orcutt, a professor in plant pathology, physiology, and weed sciences (PPWS), also sought an increased voice for staff in university decision making. "Thanks to Dave and others, appreciation for the diversity of skills and importance of what staff know and can do expanded from respect for individual colleagues to a broader awareness of a group of people who can contribute a great deal more, if allowed," says Larry Moore, former PPWS department head.

In the meantime, the College of Arts and Sciences initiated an annual two-day staff workshop and an outstanding secretary award. McConnell coordinated both activities. After the first year, as long as she worked in the college, she made contributions to the Virginia Tech Foundation to cover the cost of the workshop.

Then, in 1987, national accreditation required a self study. The committee organizing the effort, headed by Moore, identified the need for improved communication on policies and issues and for a vehicle for staff representation equal to the Faculty Senate in voice and responsibility.

An ad hoc committee, made up of clerical, paraprofessional, and technical employees, worked with Moore, Bob Madigan, Lud Eng, Leon Geyer, and David DeWolf to develop a governance model with staff participation. Because of her activity with the Women's Network and in her college, McConnell was asked to serve on the committee.

"The Classified Staff Affairs Committee was formed to set up the workings of a staff senate and a way to represent staff. It was decided that the number of representatives would be based upon the number of employees per unit," McConnell recalls. Thus, university-wide staff representation began as a university committee on Sept. 26, 1989.

"Throughout the second year, we met with all the staff in all the departments. We suggested that each college and area have an organization to deal with college and department issues and hold elections for senators and commission members. By the third year, we were ready to start."

The newly created Staff Senate held its first meeting on Sept. 19, 1991. A constitution and by-laws were established, officers elected, and staff named to all councils, commissions, and committees. McConnell, as Staff Senate president, served on the university president's budget and planning committee.

"It was an intense experience from the beginning," she says. "We were having another state budget crisis that resulted in layoffs and salary freezes. There was talk of decreasing salaries, and there was controversy about reducing only staff salaries. The budget and planning committee talked about ways to distribute any reduction, but, in the end, salaries were not cut," McConnell says.

Staff participation in the governance system was controversial, but President McComas supported the effort. He also introduced awards for outstanding staff members, and McConnell was one of the first recipients.

As the university became more accepting, staff were called upon for more operating committees, as the Women's Network had requested a decade earlier. And staff members provided needed diversity on faculty member and administrator search committees.

"Governance participation also gave staff members associations outside of their units," McConnell says. "The senate was diverse and staff members broadened their

> **As the university became more accepting, staff were called upon for more operating committees, as the Women's Network had requested a decade earlier. And staff members provided needed diversity on faculty member and administrator search committees.**

circle of acquaintances across cultures. There were many women in leadership positions, our parliamentarian was from India, and there were people of color representing their units. We all had broader cultural experiences as a result."

"The staff senate opened doors for some staff members," McConnell says. "There were officers who went on to become administrative faculty, for instance. The Staff Senate showed the university that there are areas that impact the well being of employees where the university does have more control than it realized."

Governance experiences have also provided opportunities for staff members to gain experience — "to speak publicly, to write for the general public, to learn how to run a meeting, keep it under control, and get the job done. These were opportunities many staff members wouldn't have had," McConnell says. "I, for one, disliked public speaking. Then the Student Government Association had a rally and asked me to speak to 10,000 students about budgeting issues and class scheduling cuts. I did it." She shakes her head. "Delegate Shuler and Andy Swiger told me it was the best speech given that day."

"Become involved in the university," she advises. "Service is the rent we pay for living. Staff members certainly help the university through their jobs. And I know that isn't always appreciated. But those who serve beyond their jobs are taking advantage of an opportunity to grow personally and are exercising a right to help the university be of greater service itself," such as by directing the university to see even more ways it can help individuals realize more of their own potential.

Diversity plan...

given to the specific projects, programs, and activities now being implemented. Some examples are:

Administrative Support
- Diversity becomes one of the "key factors" in the current strategic planning for the university overall.
- The president and senior administration authorize establishment of a revolving fund to support scholarships for underrepresented students.
- The provost requires colleges to submit plans for increasing faculty diversity through the application of search committee practices piloted in the College of Arts and Sciences.
- Each of the 16 administrative units, including the colleges, is working on a local diversity plan that will be aligned with the university diversity strategic plan.

Diversity Programs
- The Residential Leadership Program offers the first international learning experience with a trip to Kenya; the program increases diversity recruitment efforts.
- The Dean of Students Office increases services and support for Hispanic/Latino students.
- Multicultural Affairs, Alumni Affairs, and Cooperative Extension collaborate to reconnect Black alumni to the university, increase outreach to community, and increase diversity of Cooperative Extension staffing.

Diversity Conversations/Dialogues
- University leadership programs come together under the auspices of the Pamplin College to discuss diversity principles and competencies in leadership training and behavior.
- A National Issues Forum dialogue model is used by Center for Public Administration and Policy to explore race relations issues.

Diversity Tools
- The Office of Multicultural Affairs revises and reissues the survey form for the Diversity Inventory to the university's 16 administrative units.
- The EOAA Committee is developing an awareness-training module whose centerpiece will be a diversity video created by Media Relations.
- The Admissions Office, working with Media Relations, has produced a recruitment video that targets African American high school students.

Faculty recruiting...

has been intimately involved in the charging of search committees. He has had to step in to intervene in some very sensitive matters. So I would say that his very visible and very articulate leadership and his consistent involvement in the process throughout has been very important. We always know that leadership at the top is very important. But I think on this matter, it is extremely important because the issues involved in faculty hiring, to begin with, are complex and when you add in another factor to be considered, it makes a complex proposition even more so. So, I think his leadership has been critical in this whole process. Also, I think it has been the signal to people that this is a very serious effort -- that this is not a flash in the pan. This isn't anything faddish. This isn't anything that is going to go away. I think that the dean's involvement is the only way to clearly signify that to a unit like a college.

More accountability

"The second essential element has to do with introducing more accountability for diverse hiring outcomes. There has been a lot of rhetoric associated with the diversification of the faculty. That is not new. But I think what is new is the emphasis now being placed on the outcomes. That is, it isn't so much the procedures themselves; they are only important in so far as they are able to increase the probability that our hiring outcomes will be more diverse. If there were other ways that people could get to the same outcomes, that would be just fine, because what we are looking for are results.

... it is really important to have people understand ... that we can accomplish this objective of diversifying the faculty without hurting quality.

"Despite the espoused commitments, the previous procedures and work that has taken place have not been successful at diversifying this faculty. We know this based on institutional data coming out of the Office of the Provost. When we compare ourselves to our 50 benchmark institutions, we are languishing around the bottom. Other people have been able to do this better than have we. Clearly, we need to be held accountable for the outcomes associated with any hiring cycle.

"Empowering someone in the dean's office to work closely on all aspects of faculty searches has been critical to this process. The creation of the review team representing the dean's office has put in place an engine to drive this effort. You have the leadership provided by the dean, but a dean, is not going to oversee every step in every search in the college. So, you have to have somebody positioned close enough to the searches to really know what is going on in these searches to be able to introduce the accountability factor. Having that team is extremely important.

Diversify search committees

"Another factor has been the diversification of our search committees. This is an area where, again, institutional data indicated that we were not doing a very good job. We know from the literature that search committees basically will reproduce themselves. If they are homogeneous, they will have homogeneous outcomes. If they are diverse, they will have diverse outcomes. However you structure that search committee, you can be pretty sure, when you look at the collection of hires you make in any given year that they are going to reflect, in many ways, what your search committees looked like. We wanted diverse outcomes, so it was necessary for us to structure diversity into our search committees.

Search, not select

"I think another important aspect has been recasting the nature and function of the search committee so that it really is a search committee and not a selection committee. This was something that the dean -- all of us, and the literature, felt was a very important thing to do. That focuses the effort of the search committee in a certain way and leaves the final decision about the order in which the offers will be made to the department head and the dean."

Other essential elements are "insuring that position announcements are written with much attention given to the required and desired qualifications and being sure the recruiting and advertising plan is broad enough to reach all the potential candidates. The recruiting and advertising plans require an awful lot of proactivity on the part of committee members, lots of phone calling, lots of personal contacts, and lots of follow up. This is critically important because, of course, you cannot get out of a search what is not in the applicant pool to begin with. One important way to increase the probability of a diverse hiring outcome is to be sure that you have a number of qualified applicants in the pool. This isn't new. We have always been talking this kind of language under the rubric of affirmative action. But I think we have been paying more attention to it in the process of our searches more recently.

Quality and diversity

"Finally, it is the good will of the many people in our college, stepping up to the plate around these procedures, which ultimately has accounted for the procedures working. You can have all the procedures in the whole world, but if people do not invest themselves in what you are trying to accomplish then the effort is doomed to failure. I think it is really important to have people understand what it is we are trying to do, why we are trying to do it, and that we can accomplish this objective of diversifying the faculty without hurting quality. I think that a major hurdle that we must work through in a lot of peoples' minds is the attitude that, somehow, merit and equal opportunity cannot exist in the same place at the same time. Very often, you see discussions in the literature that place merit and equal opportunity in conflict with one another. But what we have been saying is that it is possible to have excellence and diversity in the same place at the same time. In fact, during the last hiring cycle, one of the most important things we accomplished was to prove to people that this was possible.

"Still and all, I think that many people who may have had their questions about the procedures were willing to give us the benefit of the doubt because they could understand what the goal was, and why we as a college, in particular, needed to be pursuing this goal. Many, many people did. So, what people did out there in the departments was crucial to making the process work. There was no way the dean's office could do it by itself."

Question 2: Faculty concerns

RC: "You talked about the good will of the faculty and about quality. What were the faculty's primary areas of concerns about the new procedures?"

MG: "Traditionally, faculty hiring has been a privilege of the faculty in a department. As such, it is an activity that has gone on in the academy with little to no outside influence. It has been, in many respects, a very private and closed activity. The outcome typically has been that people will come forward after having done whatever they did and say, 'These are the three people that we would find acceptable ranked in this order.' And what happened at the level of the dean's office would be pretty much pro forma. We may have gotten involved in some salary negotiations, or issues related to spousal hiring or something else. But in terms of the actual selection of the candidates, that was pretty much the sole purview of the search committee. That is a search committee that operates as a selection committee. That is pretty much what the tradition in academia has been -- not just at Virginia Tech.

"So, there was a negative reaction among some faculty to what was perceived as unwelcome interference by the dean's office in a privileged activity. There was a resistance to just the mere fact that the dean's office wanted to enter into this partnership related to faculty hiring, a partnership where the department and the search committee perform certain functions, the dean's office and the dean perform certain functions, and all those functions together result in someone being hired. Some faculty, especially the ones who believe administration exists to serve them, said in effect, 'Well, how dare they …'

"I think the second problem was based on a fear that departments would be forced to admit to the faculty, people that the department didn't want. The perception was that this partnering with the dean's office was going to result in 'us' having no say about who joins 'us'. Now, after people have actually gone through the process, they see that nothing could be further from the truth.

The third issue was moving the responsibility for diverse hiring outcomes into our mainstream searches rather than saying, okay, if you can find some women or people of color to hire, we will give you (Equal Opportunity program) money or we will find some other resources to do this. Prior to our hiring cycle of last year, we were hiring white males on our regular (budget) lines and then finding other ways to hire women and people of color. I think when we said that we would only selectively support these alternative ways of hiring, some people started thinking 'Wait a minute. We have to hire 'them' through our regular searches?' … This definitely upped the ante."

Question 3: If you had it to do over...

RC: "If you had it all to do over again is there anything that you would do differently?"

MG: "Well, I guess I would have to say that I would not do anything differently. There were some points last year when I wondered if more time should have been spent trying to promote this whole activity; that is, should we spend more time trying to bring people on board -- changing their attitudes, you might say -- before the work was implemented? But, you know what? As time wore on, it became very clear to me that we accomplished more by forging ahead and changing people's behavior before we changed their attitudes because their attitudes have come a very long way in the course of one year.

"What we were doing was affecting massive institutional change in a very short period of time. There are two ways to do this. You can either change attitudes and hope behavior changes or you can change behavior and hope attitudes change. ... Most of the time we try to change peoples' attitudes and hope their behaviors will change. But the truth of the matter is that we seldom get to address the real attitudes that stand in the way of hiring diverse faculty.

The kinds of attitudes that were unearthed by the behaviors required in the search procedures are not the same attitudes that you can address ahead of time when things are staying squeaky clean.

The kinds of attitudes that were unearthed by the behaviors required in the search procedures are not the same attitudes that you can address ahead of time when things are staying squeaky clean.

"With all the politically correct rhetoric that goes on out there and the way people want to be seen versus the way they really behave and think, it is very difficult to access some of these attitudes that lie at a very deep level. If this process did nothing more, it brought all those things straight up to the top so that they were laying right out

Livers shares challenges, benefits of being an African-American or woman leader

by Mary L. Connerley, associate professor of human resource management and a Multicultural Fellow (maryc@vt.edu)

Ancella Livers, Ph.D., program manager for the Center for Creative Leadership's African-American Leadership Program, Women's Leadership Program, and Foundations of Leadership Program gave a

Connerley

Livers

presentation on campus titled "The Challenges and Benefits of being an African-American or Woman Leader." Livers drew on her professional experience and personal experience as an African-American woman, to offer valuable insights into the issues facing African-American and women leaders. Below are some excerpts.

One issue Livers said she frequently hears concerns the importance of discussing African-American and women leaders separately from traditional white, male leaders. She responds to this concern: "…when we are trying to understand people's leadership experience, we can't just assume that all men and all women or all blacks and all whites are having the same experiences and dealing with the same issues. They're not."

She shared that a recent study at the Center for Creative Leadership found that men are rewarded for being more assertive and impartial than women, while women are rewarded for displaying less dominant values than men. What impact does this have on women leaders? According to Livers, "[W]omen in our African-American leadership class, report that they are regularly classified as being direct and aggressive. Some have tried to change

> **We must make the invisible visible and we must be able to accept that experiences other than our own exist.**

who they are while others have tended to respond more like me (wondering if the feedback is gender or race-based). There is a danger to both approaches. Leadership is best when authentic and people who change themselves to meet others expectations can get lost in the change. However, it is also problematic to assume that feedback is always race and gender based when it may be accurate. Of course that leads us to another problem. How do you know when you should pay attention to a comment or let it ride? How do you know people don't respect you because of your race, your gender, or your personality? How do you determine if you are really incompetent or if people are just saying you are? The answer is there is no real way and it can eat at you."

Although Livers had no problem discussing the challenges to being an African-American or women leader, she also discussed the opportunities, stating that "we have made enormous strides in the last 30 years. Today, we have legally banished the blatant stuff and are being asked to ponder that which is subtle. While we are having to deal with the vestiges of the attitudes that created the "for whites only" sign or the "ladies should stay at home" attitude, we are also questioning, as a nation, the value of these notions. We are questioning their value to our businesses and to ourselves. Consequently, we have increasing opportunities to do and be what we want. I can look at my children with more hope and tell them with more honesty that they can be what they want than my parents were able to with me. Certainly, I can say it with more belief than my grandparents could say it to my parents. I believe that, in spite of all of the obstacles before us, there is power in understanding that a momentous change has, in fact, occurred."

Livers also said that most people belong to both empowered and unempowered groups, and one must be careful because the opportunity to oppress others is there with membership in any empowered group. However, belonging to an unempowered group does not mean one must feel an inability to lead. She stated, "Those of us who are outside of the mainstream, have a wonderful opportunity to lead, first by understanding our own biases and second by working to get passed them. We need also to understand our own privileges and to recognize that everyone doesn't have them. White women, for example need to understand that you get benefits for being white that I don't get. Black men, for instance, need to understand that you get benefits for being male that I don't get. And I need to understand, for instance, that I get benefits for being heterosexual that others don't get. If I don't speak out for others as I would speak out for myself, then I believe I have missed an opportunity to lead. If you don't, I believe you have missed one as well.

Livers wrapped up her energetic speech with the following thought. "We will not get anywhere until we begin to discuss what has typically been indiscussible in this country. You will not get my best work and you will not begin to see me as a leader until you are willing to understand that I am leading under different circumstances than are you. We must make the invisible visible and we must be able to accept that experiences other than our own exist. Then, and only then, will we truly understand that leadership is not one path that travels through one set of experiences to get to one goal. Leadership is much more personal than that and it is much more varied."

Safety Zones ...

homophobia, and campus and community resources.

To date, 160 individuals, places, and Blacksburg merchants have been recognized as Safe Zones. The program is growing and changing to meet the needs of LGBT students, faculty and staff members, and their allies.

Members of the Safe Zone network are expected to be supportive and visible, be open and affirming, answer questions, provide information, make referrals as requested, respect an individual's privacy, and to treat information gained from individual's confidentially unless that infor-mation leads you to believe that a human being may be in danger. Members are not expected to provide counseling or to function as a therapeutic support group. If you are interested in being a Safe Zone participant, pick up an application in the Multicultural Center in 140 Squires, the Dean of Students Office, or the LGBTA Office in Squires.

A brown bag lunch, entitled "Safe Zone Dialogue," will be held in conjunction with Gay Awareness Week. The lunch will take place in the Multicultural Center at 11:30 a.m., Friday, April 6. Safe Zone participants and others who are interested in the program are invited to join in a conversation to help further strengthen the program.

The goal of the Safe Zone program is for Virginia Tech to be labeled a Safe Zone in its entirety. This goal does not mean that everyone will have the same view about LGBT issues. It means that we, as a community, will meet people where they are and will help them reach their potential and goals. We have a ways to go, but we are making progress towards the goal one person at a time.

Question 3...

there for us to deal with. And I mean the attitudes were of all types. Like, 'No outside person can contribute anything to our search committee deliberations.' 'Nobody can understand what we need in our department.' 'Nobody in industry can inform this effort.' 'Women and minorities really aren't capable of doing science.' 'We can't do this because it will cost us twice as much to hire a talented black person as it will to hire somebody else and there are going to be problems because of that among the faculty.' … "

Gordon said she has accumulated lists of such comments "that have just come out. I mean, these are the things that had to be talked about and worked through so that people really could arrive at a different place in their thinking. Because, really, once people arrived at a different way of thinking, their behavior just fell into line and their outcomes pretty much fell into line. So there were some times when I thought that maybe, if we went around and talked to more people, we wouldn't have had some of the resistance that we had. But now, having gone through it, I see that spending more time talking would only have wasted another year. We've been talking for decades. We would have missed one whole hiring cycle. No, we did the right thing: to lead boldly on a critically important issue. We are in a better place right now because we addressed some deep-seated issues. People, now, have had an opportunity to work closely with other people and have heard what they have to say about a lot of things. Most importantly, they have experienced success in this hiring process and proven to themselves that excellence and diversity can exist in the same place at the same time."

RC: Thank you, MG, for your candor. I hope the responses will be equally so. Some things need to be said even though many may not want to hear them.

While the above addresses a number of issues, the one that I want to pick up on is one that should really be obvious to us all. While institutions must make policies to reach goals, the administrators who implement these policies are the keys to success. Consequently, I think that Virginia Tech should implement a rewards system for administrators who do a good job implementing these new policies. In particular, I believe that the review of every administrator should include a discussion about diversity. I further believe that seriousness under which these discussions are held will be indicative of how long it will take us to reach our goals.

Well, that's my option. What's yours? Let me know. My e-mail address is *rconners@vt.edu*, and my phone number is 231-6896. If you e-mail me please include something about faculty recruiting or hiring in the title. The names of all respondents will be kept confidential.

About 'The Conductor'

The Conductor is produced twice during the fall and twice during the spring semesters by the Multicultural Fellows and is published by the Office of Multicultural Affairs.