The Multicultural Fellows will enter their fourth year with new sponsors. In 1999, Dean of Students Barbara Pendergrass, Vice President of Multicultural Affairs Ben Dixon, and the Department of Political Science, represented by Richard Shingles, launched a program to ensure members of the university community for their voluntary contributions to diversity, and to foster professional development. The resulting Multicultural Fellows Program has become a volunteer association whose members — faculty, staff, and administrators — enjoy lively debate while they contribute to the university’s mission of fostering a welcoming community for all. The fellows produced the Conductor and workshops such as training in interactive performance, for instance.

With Pendergrass’ retirement this summer and the restructuring of the Dean of Students Office, Vice President of Multicultural Affairs Ben Dixon invited Personnel Services and the Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching (CEUT) to be sponsors, which they gladly accepted.

“With Pendergrass’ retirement this summer and the restructuring of the Dean of Students Office, Vice President of Multicultural Affairs Ben Dixon invited Personnel Services and the Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching (CEUT) to be sponsors, which they gladly accepted. The resulting Multicultural Fellows Program has become a volunteer association whose members — faculty, staff, and administrators — enjoy lively debate while they contribute to the university’s mission of fostering a welcoming community for all. The fellows produced the Conductor and workshops such as training in interactive performance, for instance. With Pendergrass’ retirement this summer and the restructuring of the Dean of Students Office, Vice President of Multicultural Affairs Ben Dixon invited Personnel Services and the Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching (CEUT) to be sponsors, which they gladly accepted.

The second image that comes to mind is...
Recommendations ...

Continued from page 1

They don’t understand that, despite 450 years of oppression and government sponsored systematic discrimination, despite an unrelenting and often hostile environment, despite living in a world that defines dark skin as being synonymous with inferiority, despite constant subtle and sometimes overt insults because of a darker skin color, despite being in the spotlight everyday of your life simply because you were born with more melanin in your skin than others, despite the negative stereotypes disseminated by the media and biased researchers, 60 percent persevere. This is amazing. We should recognize and celebrate this progress. We should understand that students with this type of track record will help everyday of your life simply because you were born with more melanin in your skin than others, despite the negative stereotypes disseminated by the media and biased researchers, 60 percent persevere. This is amazing. We should recognize and celebrate this progress. We should understand that students with this type of track record will help

Number four, we must acknowledge and appreciate all problem-solving approaches that seek to improve what is

Mission...

Continued from page 1

largest expansion of higher education the world has ever seen. More colleges were built during the 1960s than any time in our history. The community college concept was born during this era. The economic expansions of the 1980s and 90s likely had their roots in the intellectual ferment of the 60s and 70s. And it was all about access to the transformative power of education.

One sector of our society, however, had been denied access since before the founding of our republic more than 200 years ago. Blacks in America were shut out. It was only 50 years ago that this institution allowed access to African Americans. The year 2003 marks the 50th anniversary of admittance of Blacks to Virginia Tech. If academic years had to repeat them.

The quest for access — the quest for opportunity — is not yet achieved. We recently had a “discussion” of sorts on this campus about how we might continue to find ways to extend access to sectors of society who would not otherwise have the opportunity.

While I acknowledge that the laws of this country may be changing and affirmative action, as currently practiced, may soon no longer be allowed, we should recognize that the quest for diversity is, in some respects, simply a continuation of the century old land-grant tradition of providing access. Regardless of where our leaders direct us and regardless of where the Supreme Court leads us, we ought to remember the opportunity afforded those other generations and find ways to help current and future generations.

I will give you my wish list. I would like to see a Virginia Tech which does not turn a blind eye to the vestige of privilege that has been afforded some at the sacrifice of others. I would like to see a Virginia Tech that is not only accepting of people of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientations, differing abilities, social economic status, and religions, but is affirming of them. I would like to see a Virginia Tech that refuses to take refuge in laws created to return us to the legacy of the past. Of course, that would mean that we have learned from the past laws of the commonwealth that denied Blacks and Native Americans the opportunity to pursue an education. That means, we must acknowledge that the founding fathers of this great institution wrongly embraced those exclusionary laws instead of standing up for what was right. They embraced the flawed laws that denied my ancestors the opportunity to attend this institution for its first 80 years. We must fight the impulse to repeat their mistakes. We must understand that all laws are flawed because they are created by flawed humans and that they favor someone’s philosophical perspective. So, let’s go with the laws that favor justice. Let’s go with the laws that favor inclusion. Let’s go with the laws that favor progress. Let’s refuse to turn back the hands of time. Let’s learn from the mistakes of our ancestors and pledge not to repeat them.

Tech. I believe that our image is critical to our future success. It will determine who we are able to attract to become a part of the family. Not many individuals want to join a dysfunctional family. Potential faculty, staff, and students do not have an investment in our success like those of us who are already here. People are looking for a stable home and, thus, are seeking the best investment or buy. They don’t have the good memories and family loyalties to inspire them to join the home improvement committee. They want it to be ready for them. They are not like my good friends Lucinda Roy, Bev Watford, and Sam Cook, and many others who are vested in improving the existing structure. These and many other individuals appreciate what is in the glass and will work fervently to insure that the right ingredients are added. Our greatest asset in many ways are the current members of the Virginia Tech family, those with a commitment to the well-being of the university. We must treat them well. We must support them and reward them.

Finally, I will give you my wish list. I would like to see a Virginia Tech which does not turn a blind eye to the vestige of privilege that has been afforded some at the sacrifice of others. I would like to see a Virginia Tech that is not only accepting of people of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientations, differing abilities, social economic status, and religions, but is affirming of them. I would like to see a Virginia Tech that refuses to take refuge in laws created to return us to the legacy of the past. Of course, that would mean that we have learned from the past laws of the commonwealth that denied Blacks and Native Americans the opportunity to pursue an education. That means, we must acknowledge that the founding fathers of this great institution wrongly embraced those exclusionary laws instead of standing up for what was right. They embraced the flawed laws that denied my ancestors the opportunity to attend this institution for its first 80 years. We must fight the impulse to repeat their mistakes. We must understand that all laws are flawed because they are created by flawed humans and that they favor someone’s philosophical perspective. So, let’s go with the laws that favor justice. Let’s go with the laws that favor inclusion. Let’s go with the laws that favor progress. Let’s refuse to turn back the hands of time. Let’s learn from the mistakes of our ancestors and pledge not to repeat them.

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. All members of the university community are invited to contribute. Please submit articles to the editorial board at multicultural@vt.edu. Back issues are online at http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/vpubs/spectrum/

Editorial Board
Kimberly S. Brown, 231-8440, ksbrown@vt.edu
Richard Conners, 231-6896, rconner@vt.edu
Benjamin Dixon, 231-1820, bdixon@vt.edu
Mahmood A. Khan, 703-538-8398, mahmood@vt.edu
Susan Truelove, 231-5646, truelove@vt.edu

Production
Rosanna Link, Coordinator of Communications, Office of Multicultural Affairs, 231-2610, rosanna@vt.edu
Salem Times Register
The deadline for the next issue is November 12.
Higher education access important to society

By Susan Traulove, Multicultural Fellow

Higher education is the best way to tap into the American dream, three Virginia Tech graduates told those attending a community forum on “Delivering on the Promise: Access and Inclusion in Higher Education” in September.

The forum, part of the ongoing celebration of the 50th anniversary of admission of the first Black student to Virginia Tech in 1953, featured Tech graduates Linda Edmonds Turner and Ted King, and retired dean of students Barbara Pendergrass, who received her Ed.D. from Virginia Tech in 1987.

Moderator Benjamin Dixon, vice president for multicultural affairs, observed that “Despite its position as the most democratic nation on earth, America continues to struggle to fully implement one of its most highly espoused values: ‘Every citizen has the right to participate in and benefit from the social and economic benefits of a free society.’”

Linda Edmonds Turner, who holds a Ph.D. in business administration and an MBA from Tech, is president of Boston Urban College (UCB) – a two-year college that is a close partner of Action for Boston Community Development, Inc., Boston’s official antipoverty agency. UCB provides inner-city residents who might otherwise never go to college with the opportunity to achieve higher education credentials. The college provides students with support services that enable them to stay in school and complete their degrees. It grants associate degrees and certificate programs in human services administration, early childhood education, and general studies. It holds classes in downtown Boston and in neighborhood centers across the city. UCB also offers certificate programs in computer applications, management, and other areas. And it offers bilingual Early Childhood Education certification in both Spanish and Cantonese.

Ted King, legal counsel for the Maryland legislature, who entered Virginia Tech in the late 1960s and earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in economics before going on to earn a law degree at the University of Virginia, said that without scholarships, “I would never have been able to come here.”

“One purpose of this forum is to explore the issues and challenges for increasing the percentages of people from underrepresented groups who are successfully accessing and being effectively included in higher education opportunities in this country,” Dixon explained. “Another purpose is to continue the dialogue and conversation on how, at both community and institutional levels, we might change the prevailing view of many that racial, ethnic, religious, and other differences are liabilities, to a view that these differences are assets that we have to manage much more effectively.”

Education is still a privilege in the United States, Turner said. “The first problem is attitude. People say they ‘see no problem’, that we don’t need multicultural programs, and that ‘we can’t afford this.’ But money does solve problems,” Turner emphasized. Multicultural programs are an investment, she said. “The second problem is that words do not match actions,” she said. “People say ‘it’s important, but we can’t find faculty members or students who would succeed in this environment.’ What is not said is, ‘I’m not sure they’re qualified anyway.’

Asked what Virginia Tech should do, Turner said, “Promote diversity across the campus and don’t just expect it to be pursued by the multicultural affairs division. We are all in this together. Insist on a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. Differences are a positive that help the individual and an institution.”

Pendergrass, who founded the Diversity Summit, Multicultural Fellows, and Student Voices advisory council at Virginia Tech, said she is confident there is value in discussion. But “the myth of an egalitarian society is pervasive.”

While the discriminatory practices of 400 years are no longer the law of the land, as a result of the Civil Rights Act of only 40 years ago, hate and prejudice have not disappeared, she said. Because she still experiences discrimination, she continues to believe in Affirmative Action. “In order for me to believe Affirmative Action is not necessary, I would have to believe that every child is encouraged,” Pendergrass said. But she cited research documenting continued differential treatment by teachers of Black and White grade-school children.

“We still need to examine ourselves, be honest with ourselves, about the way we behave, make decisions, include some people.”

King responded, “One thing I always tell students coming to Virginia Tech is to get involved. Take advantage of all this university has offer. Don’t close your mind to new experiences and adventures. Find a way to give your interests expression.”

Jessica Anderson, an undergraduate student in human development, suggested, “We as students can share our Virginia Tech experience and invite others to come here. There are many opportunities.”

Lakisha Miller, a new graduate student in science and technology studies, talked about her previous experience at Iowa State, where the president met with students and where there were weekly roundtable discussions. Dixon told her of the Black Caucus and other groups and the annual Diversity Summit, which addresses issues of climate. He also pointed out that there will be a forum on Monday, Nov. 10, 3 to 5 p.m., in Owens to update the community on the review of race-conscious programs.

“We need more people to be involved,” Dixon said.

The Celebration Continues

The following events are part of the year-long celebration of the admission of the first Black student to Virginia Tech in 1953.

November 6, 8 p.m., Haymarket Theater, Squires Student Center: SWOPERA - Spoken Word Opera, presented by the Carpebag Theatre, Inc., a nonprofit, community-based, professional theatre company. The event is free. The mission of the Carpebag Theatre is to give artistic voice to the underserved. We address the issues and dreams of people who have historically been silenced by racism, classism, sexism, and ageism; tell stories of empowerment; celebrate our culture; and reveal hidden stories.

November 11 - December 10, Armory Art Gallery: Art exhibit featuring the paintings of Virginia Tech Professors Robert Graham and Yonemia White.
I had never encountered before. I imagined diversity, but Virginia Tech as Virginia Tech.

Yes, my perception of diversity has changed since I became a student at Virginia Tech. I have always considered myself an open-minded person. However, growing up in a small town in New Hampshire, there was not much cultural diversity. Since coming to Tech, I have had many opportunities to meet and create friendships with people from different backgrounds. Yes, my perception of diversity has changed since I became a student at Virginia Tech. I have always considered myself an open-minded person. However, growing up in a small town in New Hampshire, there was not much cultural diversity. Since coming to Tech, I have had many opportunities to meet and create friendships with people from different backgrounds.

My perception has changed in a somewhat minor fashion. I had always thought of the widest variety of personal ideas and ethnicities when I imagined diversity, but Virginia Tech presented me with people and thoughts I had never encountered before.

Sponsors...

The College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences and the Office of the Provost have issued a call for papers on diversity to be presented at the Mid-Atlantic Conference on the Scholarship of Diversity. Preference will be given to scholars addressing diversity issues in education, the social sciences, and humanities. Nov. 17 is the deadline for submissions.

Reflections

The Presidential Campus Enrichment Grant (PCEG) for students was established in the spring of 2001 as a cross-college effort as enhancing diversity at Virginia Tech. Selection criteria include the diversity activities of the candidate before arriving at Virginia Tech as well as their commitment to educational diversity. Academic achievement, financial status, and family educational background are also considered in the selection process. To ensure the fostering of educational diversity, recipients are required to continue and expand their activities on the campus and in the community by participating in programs and writing about their experiences in a journal. Other activities and the monitoring of progress are coordinated by the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Recipients must maintain a 2.5 GPA or better and be enrolled as full-time students. Below is a journal entry of one of the PCEG students.

PHC wonder

This morning I awoke to the maddening cheers of ten girls on my hall. Their excitement wouldn’t have bothered me had it not have been right in the morning on a Sunday. Despite the hour, they cheered in celebration of their bids to different sororities of the PHC (Historically White sororities). For an hour, all I remember wanting to do was open my door and tell them to “shut up.” Sadly, I now find myself living those stereotypes. How sad is it when we label others as superficial and “White.” How sad is it when we label others as superficial and “White.” How sad is it when we label others as superficial and “White.”

Diversity scholarship sought for conference

The College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences and the Office of the Provost have issued a call for papers on diversity to be presented at the Mid-Atlantic Conference on the Scholarship of Diversity. Preference will be given to scholars addressing diversity issues in education, the social sciences, and humanities. To be presented at the Mid-Atlantic Conference on the Scholarship of Diversity. Preference will be given to scholars addressing diversity issues in education, the social sciences, and humanities.

Special to SPECTRUM, October 31, 2003