Isaac Barber, a graduation and eligibility analyst in the Office of the University Registrar at Virginia Tech, took the stage in Burruss Hall Auditorium and performed for a crowd of 1,500 people during Virginia Tech’s Second Annual Gospel Concert, which was held during Black History Month.

The gospel concert featured internationally known Fred Hammond and newcomers to the gospel music scene, Z’iel, but Barber opened the event with a song for which he wrote the music and lyrics.

Barber earned the distinction of being the opening act by submitting a video on the YouTube website of himself performing a gospel song. Barber’s video was among a group of nine videos competing for the opening act. The contest was sponsored by the Office for Equal Opportunity at Virginia Tech.

After the submission deadline, the public was invited to go online and vote for their favorite video. A total of 469 votes were cast, and Barber’s “Your Love/Emmanuel” won with 69.5 percent of the votes.

Barber heard about the YouTube contest from two friends who encouraged him to submit a video. He investigated the contest rules and decided to enter the competition. “It was kind of at the last minute that I decided to go ahead and do it,” said Barber.

“I borrowed a friend’s camera and took another friend, Jonathan, and went to the scene, Z’iel, but Barber opened the event with a song for which he wrote the music and lyrics.

Barber performed “Your Love/Emmanuel” and did stay on key. The audience enjoyed the performance and responded with enthusiastic applause. He is comfortable performing on stage since his work with SAAB is a service-based organization and, according to Murphy, SAAB members thought it would be a great idea to reverse the program this year from honoring students to honoring the African American faculty and staff. Murphy said that a number of programs recognize students, so SAAB decided to honor faculty members mainly to let them know that “their work, leadership, and guidance does not go unappreciated.”

Murphy said that remarks from the award recipients made him and other SAAB members feel that the recognition awards program was successful. “They were very, very passionate about thanking us and saying how important it was to know that someone is really tracking and paying attention to the things they do for us,” he

Lee Murphy, a junior at Virginia Tech and a member of SAAB, said, “Ellington Graves is brilliant in the classroom, he is knowledgeable and seasoned in his field of study.” He commented that Kevin McDonald was “one of the first people I met when coming to Virginia Tech. He is indescribable; his humanitarian side is very visible on campus.” Murphy also stated that “Trey Waller is very influential to underclassmen.”

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Student Organization Honors Black Faculty and Staff Members

On March 13, the Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) sponsored its first Black Faculty Recognition Program to recognize African American faculty and staff members who have contributed a significant amount of time and effort to the African American community on campus. Five awards were presented during the program.

Winners included Ellington Graves, assistant professor, sociology; Brandy Faulkner, instructor, political science; Kevin McDonald, vice president for Multicultural Affairs and Equity; Trey Waller, director of student transition and the Pre-College Initiative, engineering; and Eric Beasley, program coordinator for the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life Student Programs and National Pan-Hellenic Council advisor.

Staff members and students nominated African American faculty and staff members whom they felt deserved recognition for their contributions to the Virginia Tech community. Awards were determined on merit of the faculty or staff member and survey information collected from staff members and students.

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The National Association of Black Accountants (NABA) student chapter, formed in the fall of 2007, is now in its second semester at Virginia Tech. NABA has 25 members and expects to increase its membership each semester because of the numerous opportunities available to members.

“We really wanted to come out strong in our first year,” said Veronica Gentry, chapter president. “We wanted to let everyone know that we weren’t just planning to hang out, that we were here to make a difference.”

Gentry said that one of the important benefits of being a member of NABA is the opportunity to meet the corporate sponsors of the chapter, which includes KPMG, Deloitte & Touche, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and Ernst & Young (the big four).

Gentry explained that NABA students are able to get acquainted with the corporate sponsors even though all of the companies do not come to campus. This past fall, 17 members of NABA attended the regional conference in King of Prussia, Pa., and interviewed with companies from Wall Street who generally do not come to campus. Basically every member had the opportunity to attend this conference, with PricewaterhouseCoopers paying travel expenses, the (parent) Richmond chapter paying registration, and KPMG covering hotel accommodations.

“We basically took our students to a career fair with every financial firm and accounting firm on the east coast,” Gentry said. “Students who are not members of NABA, she added, must make their own arrangements and pay their own expenses to be able to interview with these companies.

Students have the opportunity to improve their communication skills by talking with these companies. For example, Freddie Mac visited campus to conduct a session on sample interview questions. “Four years of being a member in NABA will be such a benefit because you are literally talking to these companies and they are critiquing your resume, and these are the people who will actually be taking your resume. They are looking at your resume and giving you feedback,” said Gentry.

Freshmen who join NABA have four years of dialogue with these companies and are knowledgeable about the requirements and expectations to gain employment. According to Gentry, “NABA puts students ahead of the game when it comes to communication with recruiters and human resources within these companies and prepares students for what to expect when they begin interviewing closer to graduation.”

NABA has been busy with activities since last fall. Gentry said that KPMG sponsored a recruiting picnic at the beginning of the fall 2007 semester. The chapter also sponsored internship panels that involved question and answer sessions with seniors who interned with the big four and smaller accounting firms. The sessions, she said, are helpful to those who have not yet worked as an intern to know what to expect. NABA is involved with resume workshops with career services, information sessions with PricewaterhouseCoopers and Freddie Mac, as well as social events with Mark Husband and the finance club.

Gentry said the Virginia Tech student chapter of NABA is currently competing to be named the top chapter in the eastern region. The competition is based on the number of activities the chapter participates in and the total number of points awarded for each activity. Each chapter, chapters submit reports to the national office where scores are tallied to see which chapters are most active. According to Gentry, “One other chapter is winning so far, but we are close behind.”

Gentry attributes the success of the chapter to its faculty advisor, the corporate sponsors of the chapter, and the development of the chapter’s vision statement. According to Gentry, “One other chapter is winning so far, but we are close behind.”

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A Student Reflects on Maya Angelou’s Visit

By Hannah Findlay

Presidential Campus Enrichment Grant Student

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Martin Luther King Jr. Day has never been a large holiday for me. At the least, it was a day off from school, and at the most, it consisted of hearing the “I have a dream” speech. So when I sat down in Burruss auditorium to hear Maya Angelou speak, the issues of civil rights and affirmative action had not crossed my mind for awhile.

However, something has to be said about an African American man reciting Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech word for word, completely memorized, and with as much vigor as the original itself. Furthermore, much more can be said about an elderly African American woman singing, with a youthful soul, in front of 3,000 people about hope for all races. What needs to be said is that unity and equality filled the room and flowed out onto the Virginia Tech campus.

Maya Angelou is a beautiful, strong woman filled to the brim with humor, intellect, and optimism. Considering the climate she grew up in and the struggles she overcame, she is a rare gem. It is refreshing and intriguing to see a pure ruby or sapphire just as it is to hear Maya Angelou speak.

She spoke as if everyone in the audience were her friend and casually talked of her experiences in life. She had one message to all: be a rainbow in the clouds. By this she meant that “at the worst of times...there is a possibility of seeing hope.”

Maya Angelou told an amazing story of her uncle Willie, and how he affected so many lives during his lifetime. Even after Willie’s death, she saw his influence when city officials, whose relatives at least two generations before knew Willie, honored her with an all–white male police escort to a speaking engagement.

Just as her paralyzed relative had affected so many peoples’ lives, Maya Angelou emphasized that we all should become a rainbow in the clouds. She wanted us to become rainbows for people different from us, including different ethnicities.

After hearing her relative stress the importance of education, she had good reason to think that she could achieve anything for she quoted an adage “I am a human being; nothing human can be alien to me.” It was profound to hear her call Martin Luther King Jr. just a human being. It is true; yet today, he is seen as a great figure.

Maya Angelou was keen to point out that whatever is in any famous human being is also in all human beings. I think it was her close relationship with

Maya Angelou visit, page 3
Recruiting and retaining new faculty and staff to Virginia Tech are some of the most important activities in which we engage. The on-campus visit is a critical first step in positioning Virginia Tech as an employer of choice.

In an effort to maximize the on-campus visit and effectively welcome new members of the campus community, the vice president for multicultural affairs and equity has developed a fund to support luncheons or receptions for positions and candidates who can contribute to campus diversity.

**Description of the Awards**
Hiring departments may apply for a one-time grant of up to $250 to support a luncheon or reception for candidates. The social gathering, which may be hosted on or off campus, may occur during the campus interview process or once the successful candidate begins employment at Virginia Tech.

Positions filled through the faculty search or staff recruitment process are eligible for a grant award.

**Selection Criteria**
Requests to obtain a one-time grant will be evaluated according to the ability to satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

1. The position has a diversity focus (examples: Women’s Studies, American Indian Studies, African-American Literature, Appalachian Studies, Multicultural Programs & Services).
2. The candidate’s record of scholarship or service will contribute to the diversity of the university community.
3. The candidate, if hired, would represent one of very few members of his or her group in the department (examples: a woman in a predominantly male department or the first person of color hired in the department).
4. The candidate would add to the compositional diversity of the department.

**Opportunities to Involve Campus Diversity Organizations**
Leaders of the Black Caucus; the Organization of Women Faculty; the Hispanic Caucus; and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Caucus have endorsed this grant program. These organizations are willing to assist search committees through identifying individuals within their membership to attend or assist in organizing a social gathering as needed.

Utilizing the campus diversity organizations to help in this capacity would be of particular benefit when a department has few diverse individuals to participate in these events. In addition, involving the campus diversity organizations would assure candidates that the community of support for them extends beyond the hiring department.

Should you need this level of assistance, please contact the Office of Multicultural Affairs to coordinate efforts with the respective caucus/organization.

**Application Procedures**
A complete grant application will include the following:

- Recruitment enhancement grant application
- Curriculum vitae or resume of the candidate
- Job description of position to be filled.

**Note:**
Should you desire the involvement of the Organization of Women Faculty; Black Caucus; Hispanic Caucus; or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Caucus in the event, please note this information in the description of the event when completing the application form.

**About the Conductor**
The Conductor is produced 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 available online at www.multicultural.vt.edu/conductor

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Maya Angelou visit continues

Dr. King that allowed her to see his strengths and weaknesses as a human being and grow from her time with him. I had never read any of Maya Angelou’s poetry before I saw her that night, and I am glad that I had not. There was something special about hearing Maya Angelou herself read her own work, sing through her own voice, and recite favorite lines.

Poetry has never meant much to me, and I think that is because I could never relate to the words on the paper. However, when Maya Angelou gave background and spoke with the inflection, pace, and voice intended for her words, her poetry meant so much more. Her poetry was detailing her life and struggles growing up in the face of discrimination and pain. It acted as a representative for all who could not speak during the torrential years of civil rights and prejudice. Those years, not so long ago, were no longer pages in a textbook but the life of an American woman—an African American woman.

My guess is that Maya Angelou wanted everyone in the audience to leave with the spirit of hope in their hearts because that is what happened. She illuminated the room with unity and laughter—qualities Virginia Tech encompasses and can always use more of. After attending Maya Angelou’s speech on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, I know why the caged bird sings, especially when it’s cloudy.

Good start continues

Lynette Wood, assistant professor of accounting and information systems. “She has basically pushed us to make sure that we succeed,” said Gentry. “Without her drive and connections, we would not have accomplished as much as we have. Without her guidance, we would not have been nearly so successful.

“Starting this new organization was difficult because there is such a small percentage of African American students, and if you get into specifics like accounting or engineering, it really takes down your numbers,” Gentry said. So when recruiting for membership, the organization decided to branch out to other majors, such as finance, management, and marketing, which helps these students because the companies are looking to fill various positions within the company.

Gentry said that she wants to stress to freshmen and sophomores the importance of being prepared to communicate with these companies in order to compete for jobs. She said that NABA plans to participate in orientation to discuss all of the opportunities that are available and to help sway some of the new students to choose accounting, finance, management, or marketing as their major.

Gentry said that anyone can join NABA, a chapter that is diverse in members’ backgrounds. Meetings are held twice a month and yearly dues are $20.00. “It is exciting how well the organization has been received,” she said.

For more information about membership in the student chapter of NABA, contact Veronica Gentry at vgentry@vt.edu.
Honors black faculty and staff members continues

said. The winners commented that they are glad they are making an impact on the lives of the students since students are the reason they stay here and continue to work.

SAAB is the first student organization to sponsor a black faculty recognition program and the award winners commended the organization for doing so. SAAB plans to make the Black Faculty Recognition Program an annual event and hopes to see increased support from year to year for the program. “We need to let the students know how important this is,” Murphy said, “and that these people really affect their lives and success.”

Founded at Virginia Tech in 2003, SAAB is a dynamic organization established specifically to assist participants to excel academically, socially, culturally, professionally, and in the community.

SAAB encourages participants to embrace proactive leadership by being positive examples for each other through a strong commitment to accountability, self-discipline, and intellectual development.

YouTube winner continues

vTONE, a Christian student organization on campus, often lands him in front of a crowd of 900 or more. He has also performed with the musical group Pocket Full of Rocks in Nashville, Tenn., as well as with numerous musical groups in churches.

Barber said that he felt inspired to write “Your Love” at a point in his life when he was frustrated by the lack of action from others in his church ministry. He said he was “following all the rules and jumping through the hoops, but it just didn’t feel like some members were doing their part.” Frustrated by the situation, he said he told God that he couldn’t do it anymore. He didn’t really expect God to answer, he said, adding, “it is like when you have a rant and feel better.” But all of a sudden, the words to “Your Love” came to him. “It wasn’t that I’m gonna take care of you and you’ll be okay, it was just me being able to say out loud about the truth in what we have in God, that His love is amazing, His love is unchanging. His love remains from yesterday and through today. It was like he was saying I’m constant and I’m able and I’m complete,” Barber said.

Barber wrote “Emmanuel” the week he recorded the video. He said he wanted to give even more dimension to what God’s love is about. He searched the Bible for ways to pull God’s love out because, he said, if he won, God’s love would be the message that he wanted to communicate to the audience.

Barber said that he “didn’t want to sing just a song that people could connect with, he wanted it to have a message of Christ in it.”

Barber has been interested in music since the age of six. He attended Louisiana Tech University, working toward a degree in music education. His family is musically inclined, his father plays bass and sings, his sister sings, and his brother plays the saxophone and drums.

Although his father was in the Air Force and his family relocated often, Barber considers Plattsburgh, N.Y., home. He moved to Blacksburg, Va., in 2004 and worked for Blacksburg Transit as a trainer.

When asked if he plans to pursue a singing career, Barber said, “I don’t know – I plan on doing whatever I feel like God wants me to do.” Barber said he has lived his life trying to follow where God leads him. He said that if he felt called by God to minister on a larger scale through music, then he would do it.