



What are the Principles of Community-- And Why Are They Referenced So Often?

Discussion Guide

Discuss

1. The prelude to the Virginia Tech Principles of Community includes the statement, "...we acknowledge those aspects of our legacy that reflected bias and exclusion." What have you learned about Virginia Tech's history? How does the story we tell about ourselves as an institution reflect historical biases and exclusions?
2. The text box to the right (continuing on to the back) provides some details about exclusionary elements of Virginia Tech's history. Are there other groups that have experienced bias and exclusion that are not documented by milestone events?
3. Why is an acknowledgement of bias and exclusion important in the process of becoming an inclusive community?
4. Consider the affirmations stated in the Principles of Community. Do any of these affirmations resonate more strongly with you?
5. Consider your personal experiences of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect:
 - a. What does this look like to you?
 - b. When have you felt included, valued, and respected?—and, when have you not?
 - c. What does it mean to express thoughts and opinions freely in this climate of civility?

VT was founded in 1872 as Virginia's white land-grant institution. Hampton Institute became the commonwealth's first Black land-grant school.

Mandated four-year participation in the corps for all males. This changed to two years in 1923, and then became voluntary in 1964.

Admitted women for the first time as full-time students in 1921. The corps opposed their admission and made life difficult for them.

Denied admission to Everett Pierce Raney, the first Black student to apply to VPI in 1951. Raney wanted to study business, but Virginia State, then the state's Black land grant, had a business program.

Admitted the first Black student ever to the college—Irving L. Peddrew III—in 1952 to study electrical engineering, a subject not taught at any Black college in the commonwealth. He was required to fulfill the two-year military requirement but forced to live and eat off campus. He left after three years.

6. In the video, Bev states that the Principles of Community is not a policy statement enforceable by punitive measures; rather, it is a statement of values. We enforce the Principles of Community by the way we live. Thus, when we witness a violation of the Principles of Community, our role is to call people back into community. But what does that mean—and how do we call someone back into community?
7. What does it mean to have individual and collective responsibility? Have you seen that in action?
8. How can you increase your own understanding?
9. What is one thing you can do this semester?

Admitted three additional Black male students—Lindsay Cherry, Floyd Wilson, and Charlie Yates— in 1954 to study engineering. They, too, had to participate in the corps of cadets and live and eat off campus. Cherry and Wilson left before completing their studies.

Yates earned a BS with honors in Mechanical Engineering in 1958, the first Black graduate from Virginia Tech.

Admitted six Black women in 1966: Linda Edmonds, Freddi Hairston, Marguerite Harper, Jackie Butler, Linda Paulette Adams, and Chiquita Hudson. Adams, transferring from a community college, earned her degree in 1968, the first Black female graduate from Virginia Tech.

Dig Deeper

Most people agree that civility is a shared value that is essential to a well-functioning community. However, there are critiques to civility. Some believe that the rules of civility are written by the powerful to keep people in place. Others believe that civility cannot be demanded of those who don't enjoy full membership in community. Listen to this six-minute Code Switch podcast, "When Civility is used as a Cudgel against People of Color:" <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/700897826>. How can we nuance our calls for civility without silencing the voices of those who need heard? Can you think of recent examples of how we've used civility to push back on dissent?

Learn more

The Council on Virginia Tech History has a number of initiatives underway to honor the many stories that define us: <https://strategicaffairs.vt.edu/CouncilonVTHistory.html>.

Watch these #VTUnfinished Conversations with [Female Pioneers](#) and [Mr. Irving Peddrew](#), the first Black student at Virginia Tech on the InclusiveVT YouTube Channel.

For underrepresented students, having a place where they can be themselves has been vital to their well-being at Virginia Tech. Discover how you can support the Cultural and Community Centers: <https://ccc.vt.edu/index/history.html>.