

President's BOV Remarks
June 6th, 2016
Meeting of the Full Board

Among the many highlights I could share since our last BOV meeting, I would like to start with the election of Professor X.J. Meng to the National Academy of Sciences. Professor Meng is a distinguished molecular virologist. This is a rare honor and a testimony to Professor Meng's extraordinary impact.

As the Beyond Boundaries vision for Virginia Tech one generation from now is coming into focus, that vision is influencing and energizing our faculty, students and the administration as we begin to implement the vision. Visioning, planning and implementation have become simultaneous but linked processes.

One of those manifestations of the vision is the identification of Destination Areas. The DAs are complex problem spaces where the full breadth of the university can be engaged. We seek to become a global destination for talent in each of these areas, understanding that we cannot alone dominate any one of these areas. We need partners: university partners, industry partners, foundation partners and government partners.

Partnerships are the theme of this century going forward. Whichever institutions do this well will attract talent and the resources needed to grow.

Yesterday, we shared our progress and our aspirations for the VTC partnership in Roanoke. The Commonwealth of Virginia has endorsed the next phase of this partnership by granting construction authority for the next building in the emerging Health Sciences & Technology Innovation District.

On a broader scale, the Commonwealth has created the Virginia Research Investment Fund, a fund that will incentive cross-sector partnerships that will help our research universities work in concert to attract that talent that will define the future of Virginia's economy.

One of our Destination Areas, "Intelligent Infrastructure for Human-Centered Communities" is already attracting partners, from the Hitt family whose gift will enable the build-out of Phase II of the Myers-Lawson School of Construction, to the City of Arlington now formally engaged with Virginia Tech through the MetroLab partnership.

I could list dozens of emerging partnerships and established but growing partnerships that are blossoming or poised to do so.

It is these partnerships that will define our research profile going forward. While we will not lose focus on research expenditures, we will develop metrics that

focus on scholarly impact, and impact that improves the human condition. There is risk in this approach. These new metrics are not as clearly defined. But this is a risk worth taking in the spirit of Ut Prosim and what it means to be a global 21st Century land-grant institution.

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As I described during yesterday's meetings, Beyond Boundaries has evolved rapidly from visioning to implementation. I'd like to thank the co-chairs of the Steering Committee, Rosemary Bliezner, Alan Grant and Thanassis Rikakis for their leadership and counsel. Minnis Ridenour and his group, and particularly Kate Preston Keeney guided the process expertly, engaging many hundreds of faculty, students, staff, alumni and partners in a wide range of discussions, town halls, and web-based engagements (we will lose Kate soon, as she starts her academic career as a member of the faculty at the College of Charleston. Good luck, Kate!).

Theresa Mayer, Rachel Holloway, and Karen DePauw organized faculty-led workshops of each of the five destination areas. Five more strategic growth areas are emerging. Concepts such as the VT-Shaped Student, Destination Areas, Living Laboratories and Innovation Districts are quickly moving from concept to practice. Woven throughout these initiatives are aspirations to engage the broadest possible set of lived experiences, an aspiration that will turn to action during the coming year under the leadership of Menah Pratt-Clarke.

Commencement this year was an opportunity to share what is best about Virginia Tech while acknowledging the shortcomings of our history. The engaging commencement address by Mona Hanna-Attisha and our own Marc Edwards, along with their Flint water team, showed a tangible and inspirational example of Ut Prosim through the application of engaged science. There is no doubt that they have saved the lives of children and prevented more serious outcomes for those afflicted. Their engaging presentation was certainly a watershed moment (no pun intended) for many in the crowd of 25,000 at Lane Stadium, including more than 4,000 of our graduates.

Commencement also featured an historically important moment in Virginia Tech's history, with the awarding of a BS in EE to Irving Peddrew III, the first black student to attend an all-white public 4-year institution in the 11 former states of the Confederacy. While we regret the treatment he received while he was a student at VPI, we celebrate his contributions to every generation that followed.

Commencement wasn't the only opportunity we had this spring to celebrate the bravery and persistence of our African-American students and alumni. Commencement was merely the capstone after we celebrated the largest Black Alumni Reunion in Virginia Tech's history. More than 430 alumni spanning six decades spent several days on campus in late April.

During four spectacular days,

- The Black Cultural Center celebrated its 25th Anniversary.
- The Athletic Department hosted a first-ever Alumni Athletic Panel featuring discussions on engagement, mentoring and investment with Hall of Fame, All American and Pioneering Black athletes.
- A Black-tie Gala celebrating the first 6 black females who graduated in the 60s and 70s, and recognition of Irving Peddrew, who later spoke at the biggest Donning of the Kente celebration in Virginia Tech history.
- On Sunday morning we celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the Enlightened Gospel Choir.

Let's take a moment to watch a short video from the Gala featuring the first Black female students at Virginia Tech <<video>>.

The reunion was not planned in a weekend. Many people spent 14 months preparing for this incredible week. It would not have happened without the passionate leadership of Wayne Robinson. Wayne's vision would not have been realized without the contributions of Matt Winston and his staff, Whit Babcock and his staff, Dr. Patty Perillo and her staff and the Alumni Executive Planning Committee along with the many alumni volunteers who served on committees.

Thanks to all of these passionate Hokies for a signature spring that serves as the starting bell for our next marathon that will take Virginia Tech toward the goal of becoming everyone's global land-grant university, whose greatness will be defined by a focus on improving the human condition for everyone by accessing the talents of people from the broadest possible array of lived experiences.

Video: Black Alumni Reunion—Pioneering First Women

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tcbp3-YGaOI>