

## TRANSFORMATIONS

APRIL 2008

### ODDS & ENDS: SPRING 2008

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#### AdvanceVT End of the Year Celebration

Tuesday, May 7th  
The Inn at Virginia Tech

Each spring we celebrate the end of the academic year with a lunch recognizing individuals who have participated in many of AdvanceVT's program offerings and thanking those who have provided support to the program in various ways. This event is by invitation only. Please

contact Peggy Layne, Director, for more information at playne@vt.edu.



#### Graduate Student Needed!

AdvanceVT is searching for an assessment graduate assistant for the 2008-2009 academic year. Qualified candidates will possess the following skills:

- Working familiarity of SPSS and basic descriptive statistics
- Exemplary written and oral presentation skills
- Commitment to diversity.

If you meet these qualifications, contact Ane Johnson at atj@vt.edu. Please include a letter of interest and a resume in your email.



#### THE ADVANCE GRANT ENDS, BUT ADVANCEVT CONTINUES!

The ADVANCE Institutional Transformation Grant will come to a close in August of 2008. With ongoing support from the Office of the Provost, the Graduate School, and the Colleges of Science and Engineering, AdvanceVT will continue to support increased participation and success of women in faculty careers.

In the fall of 2008, AdvanceVT will once again conduct a Faculty Work-Life Survey to assess the needs of faculty at the university. Virginia Tech is committed to maintaining a work environment in which all faculty members can succeed. In order to assist the university in achieving this goal, AdvanceVT hopes to receive input from all teaching and research faculty members on issues related to climate, leadership, recruitment, and work-life balance.

Please visit [www.advance.vt.edu](http://www.advance.vt.edu) for more information!

## CREATING A POSITIVE DEPARTMENTAL CLIMATE AT VIRGINIA TECH: A COMPENDIUM OF SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

“Creating a Positive Departmental Climate at Virginia Tech: A Compendium of Successful Strategies” was created as part of the *AdvanceVT* Departmental Climate Initiative (DCI). The Department Climate Committee collected policies and practices from a variety of sources to provide department chairs and heads with opportunities to learn about departmental issues at Virginia Tech, to understand more fully the ways in which these issues manifest themselves within departments, and to share both successful and unsuccessful strategies illustrative of the different approaches departments have taken towards promoting effective, efficient, and pleasant work environments.

The purpose of the compendium is to help make departments places in which faculty, staff, and students live, work, and

prosper with the utmost success. It draws from results of an initial 2006 DCI survey, follow up *AdvanceVT* workshop discussions of existing strategies, work-life survey data, a literature review, and materials from other institutions. The compendium focuses on five critical areas that emerged from these sources: creating a sense of intellectual community, providing for fair and full evaluations of staff and faculty, improving communications to ensure clarity and mutual respect and understanding, building more effective departmental policies, and helping department members achieve an effective work-life balance.

The compendium will be available to the university in fall 2008. Please visit [www.advance.vt.edu](http://www.advance.vt.edu) for more information on this initiative.

*For decades, scholars have tried to sort out how much of the gender gap in wages is caused by raw discrimination and how much is driven by mediating factors. Female faculty members have sometimes been found, for example, to have fewer and less-prestigious postgraduate degrees, on average, than their male colleagues. Some studies have also found that women are concentrated in fields or institutions that attract relatively little external research money, or where faculty members publish less frequently.*

*Those mediating factors do not necessarily excuse the gender gap, because they might themselves reflect various kinds of past and present sexism. But they complicate efforts to understand and remedy wage disparities.*

*The bottom line: ... the salary gap is more strongly driven by women's concentration at certain institutions (public, master's-level institutions where faculty members tend to teach more sections and draw less outside research money) than by their concentration in certain disciplines, like education and anthropology.*

- “Gender Gap in Academic Wages is Linked to Type of Institution, Researcher Says.” (2008, March 25). *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

## THE MICHIGAN CRTLT PLAYERS AT VIRGINIA TECH

The University of Michigan’s Center for Research, Learning and Teaching Players performed at the Lyric Theater on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008. The Players have worked with the University of Michigan’s ADVANCE program to develop performances based on faculty interviews and focus groups that demonstrate the challenges female faculty may encounter in interactions with students or with other faculty.

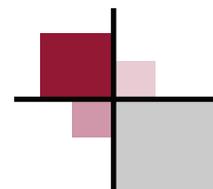
Using a solid foundation of research on the experiences of faculty and students, the Players develop and present provocative vignettes to engage their audience members in thinking and talking about issues of diversity and inclusion. The theatre sketches draw the audience into the scene with a mix of comedy and drama designed to portray the complexities and challenges of everyday situations in academe. Following each sketch, audi-

ence members have the opportunity to dialogue with the characters. The actors continue to play their roles from the sketch, answering questions and making comments to the audience members. A trained facilitator guides the dialogue and provides professional expertise on the topic at hand.

The Players have worked with the [University of Michigan's ADVANCE program](#) to develop performances based on faculty interviews and focus groups that demonstrate the challenges female faculty may encounter in interactions with students or with other faculty. The sketch performed on April 2 posed questions regarding the fairness of some common issues and dynamics in hiring and tenure discussions and portrays the subtle ways that gender can affect a committee’s interpretation of the candidate’s scholarship and productivity.

Specifically, the Players performed an interactive theater presentation called **The Faculty Meeting**, which depicted faculty discussions involving important topics such as faculty search and promotion and tenure decisions and how gender dynamics and faculty rank influence the conversation and affect the participants.

Attendees included department heads, deans, faculty, undergraduates and graduate students. “This was better than a hundred PowerPoint slides!” one participant observed following the presentation.



TRACKING WORK/LIFE POLICY SUITE UTILIZATION: DUAL-CAREER HIRE ASSISTANCE

Research university policies are evolving in order to accommodate the personal needs of faculty members. The goals of these policies are to create a welcoming and supportive environment for all faculty members so they can succeed and are not required to make unacceptable choices between family and career. Retention of a talented faculty workforce requires not only good start-up packages and opportunities for professional development, but policies that allow faculty members the flexibility to manage family and personal needs throughout their careers. These policies, referred to as work/life policies, include tenure clock extension, modified duties, part-time employment, and dual career hiring assistance. A priority for the *AdvanceVT* program at Virginia Tech has been institutionalizing a suite of work/life policies that facilitate the career trajectory of all faculty members and increase faculty retention at the university. This article presents data on utilization of **dual-career assistance** policies to date and the impact of these policies on faculty career progression.

Virginia Tech, with the assistance of *AdvanceVT*, has made several changes in university policies and procedures over the past five years. One of the first initiatives was the development and dissemination of dual-career assistance guidelines. Successful faculty recruitment and retention often depend on suitable employment opportunities for the spouse or partner. To address these needs, Virginia Tech established dual career hiring guidelines, hired a full-time coordinator, offers referral services, publicizes its support for dual career couples, and provides search exemptions and transition funds for partner appointments where there is a fit with

a hiring department. Central funding to the dual career assistance program has also increased since its implementation.

Many academics are partnered with other academics, who are seeking faculty careers themselves. This has proved to be especially true for women whom Virginia Tech is recruiting as the primary faculty hire, more so than for male recruits. Virginia Tech has been able to accommodate quite a number of faculty dual career hires – 22 in 2005 – 2006, and 12 thus far from the 2006 – 2007 cohort. In many cases, the university has been enriched in the process; managing to recruit outstanding faculty members using the dual career hiring guidelines.

Of faculty members surveyed who took advantage of the dual-career hire assis-

tance program in 2005 – 2006, 41% had a very positive experience with dual-career hiring at Virginia Tech. Most respondents reported having a good experience with dual career hiring at VT, whether they used the office or were hired directly by the department. Other participants in the program had greater expectations than the program was able to accommodate, and reported somewhat positive and negative experiences. Despite this, one participant noted: “Guidelines and the existence of the Dual-Career Office at Virginia Tech made us feel more secure about accepting Virginia Tech as an employer for my husband. It is a good indication that Virginia Tech cares for the employees and their family, which is one of the most important factors to consider while looking for a new job.”

Figure 1. Data on Dual-Career program use at Virginia Tech

2005	2005 – 2006	2006 - 2007
Dual-Career Assistance Office opened	66 Total cases 45 new hires 7 retention cases 10 subsequently declined offers	67 Total cases 39 new hires 19 retention cases 9 subsequently declined offers

Figure 2. Employment outcomes for dual-career hires at Virginia Tech



## ADVANCEVT CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS: 2007 - 2008

AdvanceVT leadership presents at a variety of conferences, both nationally and internationally, on research conducted under the AdvanceVT auspices.

### Association for the Study of Higher Education ([www.ashe.ws](http://www.ashe.ws))

November 6–9, 2007  
Louisville, Kentucky

“Factors that Influence Perceptions of Collegiality Among Faculty Members in Engineering and Other Disciplines”, Tonya Saddler, Elizabeth Creamer

### American Educational Research Association ([www.aera.net](http://www.aera.net))

March 24-28, 2008  
New York, New York

“A Longitudinal Analysis of the Priorities and Challenges of Pre-tenure Faculty in Engineering and the Sciences by Gender” (poster), Tonya Saddler, Elizabeth Creamer

### National Science Foundation ADVANCE Principal Investigator Meeting ([www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org))

May 12-13, 2008  
Arlington, Virginia

“AdvanceVT Leadership Development Program: Empowering Women Faculty at Virginia Tech as Leaders & Scholars” (poster), Roseanne Foti, Peggy Layne, Ane Johnson

“Climate Change at the Departmental Level” (Roundtable discussion), Jack Finney, Pay Hyer, Tamara Savelyeva

### Women in Engineering Programs & Advocates Network ([www.wepan.org](http://www.wepan.org))

June 8-10, 2008  
St. Louis, Missouri

“Policy Change is Not Enough: Measuring the Impact of Work/Life Policies at a Research University”, Peggy Layne, Ane Johnson, and Patricia Hyer

### American Society for Engineering Education ([www.asee.org](http://www.asee.org))

June 22-25, 2008  
Pittsburg, Pennsylvania

“Changes in the Nature of Faculty Work in Engineering during the First Three Years”, Elizabeth Creamer, Tonya Saddler, Peggy Layne

### International Conference of Women Engineers and Scientists ([www.icwes14.org](http://www.icwes14.org))

July 15-18, 2008  
Lille, France

“Advancing Women Scientists and Engineers on Faculties in the United States”, Peggy Layne



Left to right: Jane Tucker, negotiations training consultant; Peggy Layne, AdvanceVT Director

AdvanceVT is a comprehensive program to promote and enhance the careers of women in academic science and engineering at Virginia Tech through institutional transformation. Elements of AdvanceVT include:

**Pipeline:** Advancing Women into Faculty Careers

**Recruitment:** Increasing the Representation of Women

**Leadership:** Empowering Women as Leaders and Scholars

**Institutional Change:** Updating Policies and Changing Culture

Go to [www.advance.vt.edu](http://www.advance.vt.edu) to learn more about the initiative.