

**Increasing the representation and advancement of women in academic science and engineering careers**

**AdvanceVT**  
236 Burruss Hall  
Mail Code 0180  
Blacksburg VA  
24061

Phone:  
(540) 231-7682

Fax:  
(540) 231-1991

E-mail:  
AdvanceVT@vt.edu

www.advance.vt.edu

## Upcoming Events Fall 2006



### Welcome to Virginia Tech Fall Reception for Women Colleagues

September 21, 2006, 4 pm - 6 pm  
University Club

Join women faculty, staff, and graduate students to meet new colleagues and network across colleges, departments, and institutes. In addition, the Women's Center will be presenting their annual "Advancing Women" Awards to administrators, faculty and graduate students who have made notable contributions toward the advancement of women at Virginia Tech. This event is co-sponsored by the Graduate School, the Organization of Women Faculty, the Women's Studies Program, the Women's Center, and *AdvanceVT*. Child care will be available at the Women's Center. Please visit <https://survey.vt.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1154533483782> to register.

### **AdvanceVT Graduate Student and Postdoc Workshops Conflict Resolution and Negotiation**

October 30, 2006

Graduate Life Center, Rm F

Dr. Barbara Butterfield and Dr. Jane Tucker will present two workshops on negotiations and conflict resolution for young scholars, with a special focus on women. The workshops address specific scenarios that graduate students and postdocs/research associates face. Course content includes key concepts of negotiations and interest based solution finding. There will be separate workshops for graduate students and for postdocs. Participation is limited to 24 people per session. Please RSVP at <https://survey.vt.edu/survey/entry.jsp?id=1157050263923>.

## Congratulations!

Congratulations to Dr. Amy Bell, a 2005-06 *AdvanceVT* Leadership Development Participant and associate professor of electrical and computer engineering, who has received a 2006 Outstanding Student Branch Advisor Award from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Inc. (IEEE), the world's largest professional organization for electrical and computer engineers. This was Dr. Bell's first year as an advisor to the 307 students of the Virginia Tech branch of the IEEE.

## Transforming the Professoriate: Conference Evaluation

On July 20-22, 2006, *AdvanceVT* held the Transforming the Professoriate conference at the Skelton Conference Center at the Inn at Virginia Tech. The goal of this conference was to provide female graduate students and postdoctoral associates in science and engineering with the tools to plan for a successful career in academia. With a special emphasis on women of color, the conference also served as a preliminary faculty recruitment effort by providing a forum for exposing nationally-competitive senior female doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers from around the country to Virginia Tech's science and engineering programs.

In order to participate in the conference, graduate students and postdoctoral associates were required to apply for one of the conference positions available. 68 scholars were chosen, with all expenses paid, to attend. The conference boasted participants from India, South America and Eastern Europe.

Prior to the onset of the conference, the organizer, Dr. Tonya Smith-Jackson and her conference committee, provided the participants with a Blackboard site, hosted by Virginia Tech. This site allowed participants the opportunity to connect prior to the conference with other attendees and with conference speakers and presenters. This site also afforded participants the chance to share their expectations for the conference with conference organizers, thus informing the content and the organization of the conference. Tamara Savelyeva, *AdvanceVT* evaluation specialist and graduate assistant for the conference, said, "The Blackboard site created special ties between participants and opened up new routes of communication." Post conference activities were also conducted on the Blackboard site.



The conference itself covered a broad range of important and timely topics, including sessions on networking, negotiating, contemporary pedagogy and work/life balance. At each lunch Virginia Tech faculty members were on hand to facilitate conversations regarding academic careers and obstacles faced by women faculty, particularly those of color. One attendee remarked of the conference, "It was a rewarding experience. It's my first time to have shared with so many great and interesting women. I felt very comfortable and learned many useful things for my career planning."

### A Special Thanks...

*AdvanceVT* would like to thank, in particular, Tonya Smith-Jackson, Associate Professor of Industrial and Systems Engineering, for the effort she exerted in organizing the conference. We would also like to extend our thanks to the conference committee for their hard work, as well as all of the Virginia Tech faculty who offered us their time and expertise.

*"This conference helped me to open my eyes for a career in academe. I also made contacts with people (women) in my field that shared their opportunities with me. These women also encouraged me at a time in my program where I was ready to give up the idea of completing my PhD."*

*"I wish these types of frank discussions and valuable information were a part of every graduate program. I've never been surrounded by so many young, talented women, especially minority women scientists."*

-Transforming the Professoriate conference participants

*Chemistry is one of the most male-dominated disciplines in academe. In 2003, the most recent year for which such figures are available, about 12 percent of all tenured and tenure-track chemistry professors at the country's top research universities were female. That was the case even though at least 30 percent of the doctoral degrees earned in chemistry go to women.*

- "The Chemistry Between Women and Science"

**The Chronicle of Higher Education**  
May 26, 2006

## **National Science Foundation - Site Visit: Recommendations and Commendations**

On June 8 & 9, 2006, a committee of NSF ADVANCE program evaluators arrived at the Virginia Tech campus to assess the *AdvanceVT* program. The evaluators met with *AdvanceVT* stakeholders and other faculty members from across the Virginia Tech campus in order to ascertain the impact the program is having and evaluate the overall effectiveness of *AdvanceVT*.

The program evaluators praised the *AdvanceVT* program for its ability to garner so much faculty and administrative support at Virginia Tech. The assessment also acknowledged *AdvanceVT*'s efforts at preparing female graduate students for careers in academe through monthly seminars and the summer conference on "Transforming the Professoriate." Workshops created to reduce gender bias in the faculty search process were also noted as being valuable to department heads and faculty hires alike.

The evaluators encouraged *AdvanceVT* to move forward on creating a model for departments on mentoring junior faculty members, versus the current *ad hoc* methods. The creation of more formal, uniform mentoring programs will heighten the sustainability of the *AdvanceVT* program, after the grant funding is completed. In addition, the NSF evaluators encouraged *AdvanceVT* to extend initiatives to non-STEM fields in order to bridge departments and facilitate institutional transformation. Most importantly, the NSF evaluation noted that an external evaluation (outside of the University and NSF) had yet to be performed. *AdvanceVT* was requested by the NSF evaluators to complete this external assessment of programs immediately so that recommendations for improvement could be sought and implemented within the remaining two years of the grant, in order to heighten the impact of the ADVANCE grant on Virginia Tech.

In response to the NSF evaluation of the *AdvanceVT* program, two external evaluators will be visiting the Virginia Tech campus, November 7 & 8, 2006, to conduct an assessment of the program.

---

## **AdvanceVT Welcomes New Members to the Leadership Team**

Elizabeth G. Creamer, Assessment Director  
**Andrea Dietrich, Advance Professor, College of Engineering Liaison**  
**Jack Finney, Associate Dean, College of Science**  
Roseanne Foti, Advance Professor  
Patricia Hyer, Co-PI  
Peggy Layne, Project Director  
Mark McNamee, Principal Investigator  
**Ellen Plummer, Director, Women's Center**  
**Nancy Ross, Advance Professor, College of Science Liaison**  
**Janis Terpenney, Advance Professor**

## Recent Policy Changes Impact Virginia Tech Faculty

by Patrica Hyer, Associate Provost for Academic Administration

Over the last nine academic years, 44 women and 27 men have received tenure clock extensions for a variety of reasons, including childbirth, dependent care, personal health, and extenuating personal and professional circumstances.

-AdvanceVT  
Faculty Work-Life  
Survey Data Report:  
Work-Life Issues  
Spring 2006

The Board of Visitors recently approved two important policy initiatives for tenured and tenure-track faculty members. The "Stop-the-Tenure-Clock" policy, which has been in place for several decades, was significantly revised to reflect the actual range of acceptable justifications and to recognize the demands of childbirth or adoption on either parent by granting an automatic approval in such cases. "Modified Duties" is a new policy designed to provide greater flexibility in work assignments during a one-semester period for faculty members facing extraordinary family-related demands or difficult personal circumstances. A brief overview of these two policy initiatives is below. Both are effective immediately.

### **Stopping the Tenure Clock** (See section 2.8.2.1 of the Faculty Handbook):

- A one-year probationary period extension shall be automatically granted to either parent (or both, if both parents are tenure-track faculty members) in recognition of the demands of caring for a newborn child or a child under five newly placed for adoption or foster care. The request should be made within a year of the child's arrival in the family.
- An extension of the probationary period may also be approved on a discretionary basis for other extenuating non-professional circumstances that have had a significant impact on the faculty member's productivity, such as a serious personal illness or major illness of a member of the immediate family.
- In rare cases, extraordinary professional circumstances not of the faculty member's own making may be acceptable justification for a probationary period extension, for example exceptional delays in providing critical equipment, laboratory renovations, or other elements of the committed start-up package essential to establishing a viable research program.
- Requests must be made within one year of the "qualifying event." Probationary period extensions are granted in one-year increments. A cumulative total of two years is normally the maximum probationary period extension for any combination of reasons.

### **Modified Duties** (See section 2.15.9 of the Faculty Handbook):

Special family circumstances, for example, birth or adoption of a child, severe illness of an immediate family member, or even issues of personal health, can cause substantial alterations to one's daily routine, thus creating a need to construct a modified workload and flexible schedule for a period of time. The policy allows tenured or tenure-track faculty members to request a semester of "modified duties" while remaining at full pay in order to accommodate such extraordinary circumstances. The accommodation may be a reduction in teaching, or other duties as determined feasible and appropriate by the department head and dean. The provost's office provides financial support to the department to accommodate the reassignment of responsibilities.

