



# State Council of Higher Education for Virginia UPDATE

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## SCHEV and Dominion Announce the 2012 Outstanding Faculty Awards



**Dr. Giorgio Ascoli**  
George Mason University



**Dr. Kathleen Garces-Foley**  
Marymount University  
Rising Star



**Dr. Bryan Giemza**  
Randolph-Macon College  
Rising Star



**Dr. Robert Hazen**  
George Mason University



**Dr. Douglas Hicks**  
University of Richmond



**Dr. James Kahn**  
Washington & Lee University



**Dr. Zina McGee**  
Hampton University



**Dr. Rasha Morsi**  
Norfolk State University  
Teaching with Technology



**Dr. Charles Poland**  
Northern Virginia  
Community College



**Dr. Anne Stewart**  
James Madison University



**Dr. Lesley Wheeler**  
Washington & Lee University



**Dr. Steve Yetiv**  
Old Dominion University



The Outstanding Faculty Awards (OFA) are the Commonwealth's highest honor for educators at Virginia's public and private colleges and universities. Now celebrating its 26th year, the award recognizes the superior accomplishments of Virginia's higher education faculty in teaching, research, knowledge integration, and public service. The OFA program is administered by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and sponsored by Dominion, one of the nation's largest producers of energy.

**OUTSTANDING FACULTY AWARDS**  
A ceremony will be held at the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond to honor the 12 faculty members selected from a pool of 125 nominees submitted by 2- and 4-year institutions across Virginia. After a two-part selection process by a panel of peer reviewers and a final selection committee comprised of academic, business, and community leaders, awardees were recognized in each of four categories based on institutional type. Two early-career 'Rising Stars' and one outstanding 'Teaching with Technology' designee were among those selected.

The Virginia General Assembly and Governor created the OFA program in 1986. Since the first awards in 1987, a total of 304 faculty members - including the 2012 recipients - have received this high honor. Each of this year's 12 recipients will receive an engraved award and a \$5,000 check underwritten by the Dominion Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Dominion, which has fully supported the OFA program since 2005. ❖

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The Outstanding Faculty Awards are graciously sponsored by



# Partnership of 5 Virginia Institutions Poised to Enhance Engineering Education Through Web-Based Distance Learning

By Kathleen Kincheloe

In the fall of 1983, in response to SCHEV's goal of expanding technical education opportunities for Virginians, the University of Virginia (UVA) began broadcasting courses in Materials Science and Civil Engineering to students at a receiving site in Virginia Commonwealth University's Cabell Library. By 1984, both UVA and Virginia Tech were broadcasting via instructional television fixed service (ITFS) transmitters to receiving sites in their regions.

Nearly 30 years later, what started out as a distance-learning experiment with a handful of classes taught by instructors at the Commonwealth's two renowned engineering schools has evolved into a dynamic partnership of five institutions offering master's degrees, certificate programs, and non-credit seminars to practicing engineers and scientists.

Now known as the Commonwealth Graduate Engineering Program (CGEP), this collaboration among UVA, Virginia Tech, George Mason University (GMU), Old Dominion University (ODU), and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) has become Virginia's premiere provider of accessible post-baccalaureate engineering education.

Thousands of students have enrolled in CGEP courses over the years, with 499 going on to earn a master's degree at UVA alone. According to Dr. James Groves, UVA's CGEP program director and Assistant Dean for Research and Outreach in the School of Engineering and Applied Science, typical graduate enrollment in UVA CGEP classes varies from 10 to 30 students on campus, with about an equal number of off-grounds students. Dr. Groves believes that there are opportunities to grow off-grounds enrollments, but the current use of videoconference technology as a primary medium for course transmissions in recent years has been limiting.

"Our targeted audience of working engineers can find it difficult to get to one of our videoconference receive sites," says Dr. Groves, "especially in the Northern Virginia area. With traffic congestion and gridlock, students might not be able to make it to a 6:00 pm class even if they leave the office at 5:00." Dr. Groves, who served as CGEP State Chair from 2004 to 2008 — the chairmanship rotates among the five partici-

pating CGEP institutions — hopes that recent technological upgrades will allow CGEP instructors to reach even more interested students.

## *Sparking a Discussion of What's Next*

Advances in IT hardware and software have afforded periodic opportunities for the participating institutions to make changes to the CGEP technology platforms in order to offer the best teaching and learning environment at a reasonable cost. One of the more recent technological developments is the ability to transmit course broadcasts over the commodity internet, as opposed to a special network.

When the Virginia legislature offered financial support for the University of Mary Washington to build an educational facility outside the gates of the Naval Surface Warfare Center at Dahlgren, CGEP institutions came to an agreement to refresh the program's technology platform. "CGEP courses used to be taught on base," says Dr. Groves, "so University of Mary Washington officials asked for our input on the newest technologies to facilitate an interactive distance learning environment. That sparked a discussion amongst CGEP institutions about what's next and newest for this type of learning environment. We agreed that the commodity internet offered many advantages for students and faculty alike."

Previously many CGEP courses were taught via video teleconferencing (VTC) technology, which required both the students and the instructor to be physically present at a technology-equipped site. Students' time with their professor and other classmates was limited to scheduled class sessions, and course availability was limited based on the capacity of the VTC facilities.

But discussions sparked by the creation of that new educational facility from the ground up led CGEP members to conclude that the internet's growth and pervasiveness provided the capacity for a stronger, more interactive learning environment. While technological differences will still exist from class to class, all CGEP institutions are planning to complete a transition to online instruction by Fall 2012.



**Photo courtesy of Dr. James Groves, UVA's CGEP program director and Assistant Dean for Research and Outreach in the School of Engineering and Applied Science.**



With the transition to internet delivery, CGEP students are now able to participate in graduate engineering classes wherever they can access the internet.

In the near future much of CGEP's course delivery will be in real-time, although some of the universities are even exploring how to use the internet environment for asynchronous course delivery.

### *No Longer Confined to the Traditional Classroom*

The online instruction model will allow both the instructor and students to participate in real-time via the web from almost any computing platform with a reliable internet connection. This means CGEP students, most of whom are members of the engineering workforce, can attend class from their office, their home, or even while working out of town or on vacation. Professors can lead class sessions from project sites or conferences, and they also have greater flexibility to invite guest speakers to lecture.

Professor Groves says all web-based classes will be video equipped and have two-way audio capabilities. If students want to share a comment or question during class, they can press a button and a raised hand icon appears next to their

name on the live list of participants. Professors can also manage their settings to hear an audio cue when students raise their hands. Visually, students can see what Dr. Groves calls "electronic inking;" instead of a grainy video of a white board, students see a live data stream of images written on Smart tablets or shared via PowerPoint slides, for example. In addition to connecting students for instructional classes, the new internet-based model makes networking outside of class much more feasible. For example, distance learning students can connect with their instructor during office hours, whereas the video conferencing model only allowed students to interact visually with their professor when the network was up because class was in session.

The web also allows student-to-student interaction outside of class. "Instead of being confined to a specific instructional period, students can log in anytime and see which of their peers are online," explains Dr. Groves. "They can instant message other users or share video and screen images at any time of the day or night, whenever they happen to be studying."

This past fall, UVa offered 20 engineering classes to students at a distance, 15 of which were offered using the new web-based environment. The University expects that 100 percent of its engineering distance learning classes will be online by January 2012.

Dr. Groves hopes that CGEP will experience an increase in off-campus enrollment now that the new technology allows for more flexibility and mobility, but he says that making sure that current students are comfortably on board is a priority. End-of-course questionnaires completed by students already using the new online model are promising.

"This is one of the biggest changes CGEP has undertaken," says Dr. Groves, "and I am proud of the group's collaboration. For a quarter century, we've been working together and engaging each other on a regular basis about how to grow Virginia's engineering capabilities and better serve the needs of students." In that time, he says, CGEP has evolved from "two schools broadcasting via VTC to a partnership of equals." ❖



# Measuring What Virginia College Students Learn

SCHEV Works with VAG, the Oldest Higher Ed Assessment Organization in the U.S., to Measure Student Learning

By Carmen Johansen

How do we know if college graduates are prepared for their professional, civic, and personal lives? Answering this question has been a focus of the Council since 1985 when Senate Joint Resolution 125 directed SCHEV to “investigate means by which student achievement may be measured to assure the citizens of Virginia the continuing quality of higher education in the Commonwealth.” In response, SCHEV recommended that all state-supported institutions of higher education establish assessment procedures and programs to measure student achievement.

Assessment is the measurement of college-level learning and is used to improve the educational experience. Ideally, an assessment program provides data needed for informed decision-making about curricula and offers the public useful information about student learning. In 1987, SCHEV worked with Virginia’s public colleges and universities to develop guidelines for assessing general education. As a result, public institutions started evaluating learning outcomes of students in their major and general-education classes.

For more than two decades, the Council has collaborated with Virginia’s higher education institutions on assessment, recognizing the diversity of Virginia’s public colleges and universities, the tradition of institutional autonomy, and the capacity of faculty and administrators to identify their own problems and solve them creatively. Over this period of time, assessment procedures evolved to include the identification of six areas of knowledge and skills, or basic competencies that should be achieved by all students completing a degree at public institutions: Information Technology Literacy, Written Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, Scientific Reasoning, Critical Thinking, and Oral Communication.

In 2010, Council approved a new policy on the assessment of student learning that gives institutions the prerogative to design and utilize methods of assessing the six Virginia competencies according to their missions, and to do so on a timetable that aligns conveniently with their accreditation schedules. Public institutions report to SCHEV their plans for assessing the six competencies, the results of the assessments, and the ways in which the results will be used to improve undergraduate education. The plans currently are available on the SCHEV website, and assessment results will be available as institutions complete their plans.

The Virginia Assessment Group (VAG) has been integral to the success of assessment of student learning efforts in Virginia. Formed in the 1980s, VAG is the oldest continuing

professional higher education assessment organization in the United States. Members are from both public and private institutions. The mission of VAG is to promote quality higher education through assessment and institutional effectiveness practices, and serve as a network for communication and collaboration among higher education institutions, state and federal agencies, and accreditation bodies.

VAG held its annual conference November 16 – 18, 2011, in Williamsburg. The theme of the conference was *Leading and Learning through Assessable Moments: Engage to Improve*. More than 100 people attended the conference with at least a dozen coming from other states. The conference drew a national assessment expert as the keynote speaker: Dr. Pat Hutchings, Senior Associate at The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Dr. Hutchings stressed the importance of establishing a campus “culture of evidence” in assessment practice, aimed at continuous improvement of undergraduate education.

Another highlight of the conference was the participation of Dr. Susan Albertine, Vice President for Engagement, Inclusion and Success, and Dr. Terrel Rhodes, Vice President of Quality, Curriculum, and Assessment at the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U). The AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. It is committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career.

The presence of Dr. Rhodes and Dr. Albertine at the conference is an indication of VAG’s importance to Virginia’s status as a designated AAC&U LEAP state. LEAP, which stands for Liberal Education and America’s Promise, is a program that champions the value of a liberal education for individual students and for a nation dependent on economic creativity and democratic strength. Through this initiative, AAC&U

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*For more information about assessment, visit the following websites:*

**Virginia Assessment Group**  
[www.virginiaassessment.org](http://www.virginiaassessment.org)

**American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U)**  
[www.aacu.org](http://www.aacu.org)



## Student Snapshot

*Alex Reber*

*University of Virginia, Class of 2013*

*Chair, SCHEV's 2011-12 Student Advisory Committee*

### **SCHEV: What is your major?**

**Alex:** Systems Engineering and Economics.

### **SCHEV: Why did you run for Chair of the Student Advisory Committee?**

**Alex:** Higher education is at a turning point in Virginia. With a new emphasis placed on our higher education system by Governor McDonnell, this is a point where students have a responsibility to see that their institutions are set up for continued excellence. Having worked with multiple organizations, such as Virginia 21 and the University of Virginia Student Council, to lobby on behalf of higher education, I have realized the importance of working to provide a unified voice across the Commonwealth. My hope is that as Chair I can further expand the power of this voice in Richmond.

### **SCHEV: What do you think is the most important issue facing Virginia students?**

**Alex:** The disinvestment in higher education throughout the last budget cycles has started to take a toll on university resources. Decreased financial aid and no increases in professor salaries are both obvious effects of this disinvestment. As professor salaries decrease in comparison to their peers, [faculty members] may find it hard to justify staying in the Commonwealth. As we see tuition rise, this makes it harder for students to pursue continued education. In the long run this decreases [Virginia's] productivity, and if we continue this pattern, we will be working against providing opportunity for all students in the Commonwealth.

### **SCHEV: What can students, administrators, or legislators do to address that issue?**

**Alex:** The most important thing that anyone can do is get involved and understand the importance of higher education. Higher education improves the capital productivity of our citizens and results in long-term economic growth for the Commonwealth. In fact, recent studies have shown that investing in higher education provides more tax revenue than the cost of that investment. While there are many priorities in government, none is more important than

those that impact our long-term productivity. The two key items that do this are infrastructure and education. We must understand this if we are going to create a more productive America that leaves our children better off than ourselves.

### **SCHEV: If you could travel back in time to high school, what advice would you give yourself or your friends about the college-going process?**

**Alex:** Get involved as often as you can in both high school and college. Whether through a political campaign or student government, you gain valuable experience by being a part of an organization. Make sure that when you look back you never see a missed opportunity. These opportunities will pay dividends as you make connections that can help you in ways you could never imagine.

### **SCHEV: What are your future plans and career goals?**

**Alex:** Over the summer I will be participating in the Policy Internship Program through the UVa School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. This program will help to place me in an office in Washington working with policy. After this summer I hope to continue to use my technical skills to improve government policy and provide common sense solutions to problems. ❖



Governor McDonnell greets Alex Reber while Secretary of Education Fornash looks on. Photos courtesy of Alex Reber.

## 25-Year Awards



Linda Norris  
VCO Procurement & Agency  
Operations Manager



Elizabeth Waddy  
Student Services Specialist

# Service Awards

On November 28, 2011, SCHEV staff celebrated a number of Service Awards presented by Interim Director Peter Blake.

### 5-Year Awards

Joe DeFilippo, Director of Academic Affairs & Planning  
Beverly Covington, Policy Analyst

### 10-Year Awards

Tod Massa, Director of Policy Research & Data Warehousing  
Juanita Sherman, Communications Assistant

### 15-Year Award

Deborah Morgan, Administrative Assistant for GEAR UP VA

### 20-Year Award

Harvey Carmichael, GEAR UP VA Associate Director

Congratulations and thanks to these members of the SCHEV staff for their many years of service to the agency and to the Commonwealth.

## Measuring... (continued from page 4)

offers practical assistance and materials and provides a national voice for colleges and universities. The ultimate goal of LEAP is to help states reach their objectives for degree attainment, workforce preparation, and engaged citizenship through access to high-quality liberal education for all students.

With Virginia's higher education goals made clear through the Virginia Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011, the Commonwealth is well positioned to help colleges and universities measure their progress. SCHEV looks forward to continued collaboration with VAG to make sure these objectives are met. ❖



VAG's annual conference was held in Williamsburg in November. Photos used with permission. Copyright Linda Townsend.



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Higher Education for Virginia

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