

STUDENT AFFAIRS ANNUAL REPORT



2020-2021

Student Affairs 2020-2021 Annual Report

Dear Provost Clarke,

This was a year of tremendous change and uncertainty, yet progress. It challenged us like never before. It also gave us a chance to show who we are and what we can do - we provide valuable experiences and services to our students and campus, and paved the way with adaptable, agile, caring practices. In the midst of it all, we revamped the Student Government Association, wrapped up the Creativity and Innovation District construction project, launched “The Market” food security program, and had another record-breaking fundraising year, among other things.

I am profoundly impressed with the Student Affairs team’s ability to step up and meet the call of service to our students, providing superior learning opportunities and support during this incredible year. Things moved quickly and employee capacity was pushed to the limit. Yet amidst the constant changes to operations and policies, and concerns for personal and collective welfare, there was persistence. The Student Affairs team’s willingness and commitment to serving our students defined the very essence of what it means to be a member of this university community.

I watched my Student Affairs colleagues work tirelessly for the benefit and well-being of our students. In addition to their regular responsibilities, many jumped in to help their colleagues with COVID-related initiatives. They served at the university call center, assisted with isolation and quarantine work, and put in volunteer hours in the massive COVID testing effort.

In Student Affairs, our mantra is “we will do whatever it takes to support the individual success and well-being of every student.” To this end, our aim is for all students to fully [ExperienceVT](#) and grow in their understanding of our [Aspirations for Student Learning](#). Student Affairs employees have taken this to heart with a driving determination, innovative ideas, and stamina in the pursuit of our goals. It was their hard work and tenacity that made students feel welcomed, cared for, and valued in very unusual circumstances.

Sometimes a crisis can help to burn away the non-essentials, centering attention on what is most important about our work – student learning. In a year when socially distanced and virtual interactions were the norm, I am proud of the ways that we were able to maintain existing relationships and establish new ones. This year strengthened the fundamental purpose of our collective work.

The myriad stressors of the year – political, social justice, pandemic – and the need to be available at all times for students took a toll. Our team, in every capacity, sacrificed during this time. Thanking and supporting them was essential.

Well-being became a central message in communication to our students and employees. We began to think in new and creative ways about how we could create a culture of well-being on the Virginia Tech campus and how that culture is foundational to the success of our students.

While COVID affected us in countless ways, there was so much other good work done for and with students. While there are many measurable outcomes, there are also intangible realities that have made this year particularly extraordinary. For example, how do you measure the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets mission to develop leaders of character in service to the nation? How do you express in numbers Cranwell International Center’s role as a catalyst for the advancement of Virginia Tech as a globally oriented and internationally connected land-grant institution? How do you quantify VT Engage’s life altering experiences that shape the next generation of leaders and the world they create?

What it comes down to is this: Students are our priority. We measure our success by their success. We made it through this difficult year by embracing Ut Prosim (That I May Serve), individually and collectively. We were reminded of why we are here and what we are called to do. Even on the hard days, remembering this made it possible to go on.

I have the opportunity to work with an amazing team of colleagues who put the needs of others first, day-in and day-out. Our 2020-2021 Annual Report reflects their grit, ingenuity, and perseverance.

With hope,



Frank Shushok Jr.
Vice President for Student Affairs
Virginia Tech

Student Affairs is comprised of faculty; full-time staff; wage employees; graduate assistants; and student employees, leaders, and interns -- more than 3,600 people who touch nearly every aspect of students' lives. The programs, essential services, events, and resources Student Affairs provides complement and complete the academic rigor of a Virginia Tech education.

Our mission, [Beyond Boundaries](#), [InclusiveVT](#), the [Aspirations for Student Learning](#), and our motto, *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), remain our guiding lights and have helped us to solidify a culture that is dynamic, human-centered, adaptable, and always preparing our students to understand the deeply moral calling of *Ut Prosim* to make the world better for all.

In this report, we outline the ways in which we are building, sustaining, and strengthening that culture.

Opportunities for students to ExperienceVT

In 2020-2021, Student Affairs made great strides in advancing cross-departmental support to fully launch [ExperienceVT](#), an initiative that empowers students to plan and track their Virginia Tech experience and to fully realize the opportunities we can open for them. In a piloted integration of ExperienceVT (EVT) with Pritchard Hall residents, the number of maps created grew from 511 to 3,854. Student Affairs equipped 140 Student Affairs faculty and staff with in-depth knowledge of EVT concepts and tools, leading them to consider how they can help students set goals, identify their strengths, offer pathways, and encourage progress. Student Affairs also facilitated workshops for academic affairs attendees, increasing their ability to integrate ExperienceVT into the campus culture. Full launch of the ExperienceVT initiative is scheduled for 2021-2022.

A culture of student success and well-being

Student Affairs' efforts to continually improve the student experience at Virginia Tech are informed and enhanced by [task force reports and recommendations](#). The recommendations resulting from the task force work guide Student Affairs decisions and actions.

The [Future of Student Governance Task Force Report](#) helped Student Affairs and our campus partners continue to lead and support the growth of the [Undergraduate Student Senate](#) (USS) and its transition to broaden representation of all students' interests.

The [Food Security Task Force Recommendation Report](#) led to changes in the way Virginia Tech confronts the grave issue of food insecurity among students and, with the help of [significant philanthropic support](#), led to the creation of [The Market of Virginia Tech](#). The Market provided 14,210 meals to 127 students to ensure they were able to obtain adequate sustenance during a very difficult time.

The **emergency grant program**, which provides economic support for students who find themselves in crisis, provided 190 students with 28 scholarships totaling \$61,357 and 162 grants totaling \$119,384.

The continuation of [Campus Kitchen at Virginia Tech](#) (CKVT) during the COVID pandemic was a significant feat. The VT Engage team, along with six CKVT student leaders, diverted 43,664 pounds of food during the academic year, which was distributed to New River Valley community partners to support those in need.

Student Affairs and its academic and facilities partners laid the groundwork for four new [Living Learning Programs](#) (LLPs) to open during the fall 2021 semester: [Aurora](#), [Rhizome](#), the [Creativity and Innovation District](#), and [GenerationOne](#). The new LLPs bring the total number to 19. The university has set a strategic goal of increasing the number of undergraduate students in Living Learning Programs to 67% by 2024. The latest data available from fall 2020 indicate that [38.9% of students living on campus are part of an LLP](#), significant progress in light of the pandemic's disruption of on campus living.

A culture of inclusion

Student Affairs departments engage in regular **assessment of diversity related outcomes** and track demographics of students who use their services or engage in their programs to identify the gaps in who was served.

The results of these efforts provided data to inform efforts across all units, and towards achieving the collective goal of serving all VT students and employees.

The Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets exceeded VT enrollment numbers for Black and Hispanic cadets, and continued to grow Asian cadet enrollment. Ultimately, the VTCC increased diversity and met its recruitment outcome with 1,184 cadets enrolled.

Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) served 4,065 Hokies with disabilities to provide equal access to university activities, ensures students had an equitable learning environment, and helped students with disabilities identity resources for self-care and independence.

Student Conduct served on the university's working group to create Policy 1026, which addressed Title IX and Gender Based Violence and Harassment, to comply with new federal regulations and create a dual system for addressing gender-based violence in partnership with the Office of Equity and Accessibility.

Cranwell International Center successfully completed the consolidation of support programs and immigration services for both undergraduate and graduate international students and comprehensive cross-training of all International Student Advisors. The center also significantly improved services and support for international students in the greater Washington, D.C. metro area through a memorandum of understanding with the Graduate School.

Recreational Sports (Rec Sports) launched an inclusive recreation webpage, developed an internal departmental committee to advance diversity and inclusion initiatives, and adopted a process for tracking attendance to fully understand the users of recreation spaces and programs and to aid in identifying underrepresented groups.

Cook Counseling Center provided nine staff members to serve as liaisons to five cultural and community centers, the VTCC, the Veterans' Center, Cranwell International Center, and the interfaith community.

Housing and Residence Life (HRL) hosted a variety of learning opportunities focused on developing cultural competency, including book clubs, presentations, and a dialogue focused on race and racial justice.

Fraternity and Sorority Life (FSL) welcomed two culturally-based organizations back into the community. Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Inc. is a Latino fraternity that reactivated into the United Council of Fraternities and Sororities, and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. reactivated into the National Pan-Hellenic Council. The University Expansion Committee convened in spring 2021 to review applications from interested potential international partners. Through these efforts, FSL has entered into agreements with six organizations over the next three academic years. These include the first IFC fraternity founded by gay men for gay, transgender, and progressive men, one NPHC fraternity, one UCFS sorority for Latina women, and three traditional IFC fraternities.

A culture of administrative excellence and effectiveness

2020-2021 was a banner year for **Student Affairs Advancement**. Student Affairs has had two consecutive record-breaking years, FY20 and FY21, raising in excess of \$12 million total. Despite COVID-19, Advancement exceeded their engagement and fundraising goals. Only four years into a ten-year campaign, Student Affairs is already at 69% (\$17.4 mil) of our \$25 million campaign goal:

Exceeded fundraising goal of \$1.2 million by raising more than \$4.4 million.

Achieved 100% participation in giving from all three Tier 1 Student Affairs boards for the first time. Of the 31 Tier 1 boards at Virginia Tech, only 10 were at 100% participation. Student Affairs boards were three of those ten.³

Promoted 14 key Student Affairs departmental annual funds on the VT giving website, overall increasing donors to Student Affairs by 237% (from 2081 to 7008) and increased dollars by 80% (from \$545,000 to \$984,000). Our most successful Giving Day ever raised more than \$130,000 from more than 550 donors for Student Affairs. An additional \$100,000+ came from more than 1,000 donors for student organizations.

A culture of data-informed decision-making

Student Affairs **Assessment and Professional Development (APD)** renewed, reinvigorated, and redesigned our commitment to data driven decisions with monthly share-outs of departmental data.

This included a new way to tell the stories of Student Affairs by the numbers in data graphics, many of which are included in this report's Appendices.

Student Affairs assessment plans require departments to engage in **regular assessment of diversity related outcomes** and track demographics of students who use their services or engage in their programs.

APD transitioned to a **hybrid work environment** and hosted professional development opportunities, assessment trainings, and consultations virtually, serving 864 participants across 28 programs, which reached all 24 Student Affairs departments.

The **HRL Snapshot survey** was sent every two weeks to the entire on campus residential population to measure and improve academic thriving, social thriving, and awareness of campus resources. 92% of all students reported a positive environment in their residential community and an identical percentage was reported when looking specifically at underrepresented or underserved students.

A fall semester **campus wide needs assessment** to better understand the needs and wants of students for programming during the pandemic went to all students via Canvas and over social media platforms.

A culture of teamwork, collaboration, and innovation

Student Affairs introduced substantive changes to its **leadership structure**. These changes have allowed us to more fully integrate initiatives related to [well-being](#), [inclusion and diversity](#), [first-generation student support](#), [Living-Learning Programs](#), [food security](#), [interfaith programs](#), and [Ut Prosim](#) (That I May Serve) as major components in each of the division's 24 departments. The [new Student Affairs leadership structure](#) is one that champions student success, increases collaboration among departments, highlights key initiatives, emphasizes collective possibility, and aligns the Student Affairs organization for the future.

Cook Counseling Center added three new embedded counselors in the Graduate School, the College of Engineering, and the College of Science during fall semester. The center has one counselor at the VT Carilion School of Medicine, the equivalent of two counselors in the Department of Athletics, and the equivalent of an 80% FTE counselor at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine.

SSD participated in two working groups in collaboration with the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies, and academic faculty to create and disseminate information related to test proctoring, alternative assessments, accessibility, and accommodations. This information was disseminated before the fall 2020 semester to provide **broad assistance to instructors pivoting to online learning environments**.

Through the Campus Accessibility Working Group, SSD collaborated with ADA and Accessibility Services and Accessible Technologies to successfully advocate for **\$100,000 in captioning resources**.

COVID-19 response

Schiffert Health Center (SHC) remained open with no change in operating hours to provide services and care for the VT students. Total visits to SHC was 54,584 with 16,190 unique student visits. SHC conducted mass testing clinics with more than 63,000 tests performed. SHC worked with the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute and other university departments to assist with development of rapid COVID tests and other COVID research.

The collaboration of SHC nursing staff with HRL, Dining Services, Communications, the New River Valley Health District, and others was critical for the **management of student isolation/quarantine (I/Q)** and education. 3,161 unique students required relocation for I/Q; 2,244 room assignments were made in on-campus relocation spaces; occupancy in on-campus spaces peaked at 203 on February 21, 2021. A massive volunteer base helped with the I/Q effort.

In spring 2021, Housing and Residence Life launched the [pod registration process](#), a tool to help students expand their social circles and create closer connections. The [pod network played a key role in campus life](#) and student groups created more than 365 pods that allowed them to participate in activities ranging from movie nights to craft projects to group exercise classes.

Orientation was provided virtually for 7,864 first year, transfer, and international students. New Student and Family programs also transformed **Welcome Week** into a COVID safe experience, with hybrid, virtual programs, and in person events. **Fall Family Weekend** engaged more than 500 families in 33 virtual events.

Student Affairs was heavily involved in **university COVID communications efforts**, including developing content for the VT Ready site, providing scripts for the COVID call center, and responding to hundreds of questions regarding public health guidelines, safety, and changes in services. Members of our leadership team were instrumental in messages to students and families, and it became vital that we presented accessible, easy-to-understand information to our students about how best to stay engaged and have a good experience at Virginia Tech.

Student Affairs communicated with parents and families who were concerned about their students. The number of unique page views for the [You're In ... Now What?](#) website increased 52.3% from 13,511 in 2019 to 28,315 in 2020. The [Hokie Family eNews](#) saw an increased clickthrough rate. Our Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook followers all increased significantly as well.

The Corps of Cadets committed to leading the way during the pandemic, with stringent protocols to avoid large gatherings and high-risk scenarios. The corps will also serve as the first cohort of students to receive increased mandatory testing. Despite restrictions, VTCC completed all major training and education requirements related to the accredited curriculum. The Global Scholars program successfully transitioned from a European focus to one within the United States and a Pacific focus on World War II.

Student Conduct played a large role in supporting public health and helping to maintain an on-campus experience for students by swiftly and strictly enforcing public-health policies and mandates related to masks, social-distancing, gathering, isolation/quarantine, and prevalence testing. Student Conduct's caseload increased this year to 2,992 students—up 40% from the previous year, which was already at a five-year high. Student Conduct worked closely with the Blacksburg Police Department and responded severely when necessary, issuing approximately 200 interim suspensions, followed by formal adjudication. These actions quickly sent a message to students that the university had no tolerance for behavior that could facilitate the spread of COVID-19.

Well-being became a priority for Student Affairs, with 14,730 student participants in **Hokie Wellness** services, focused on general health, mental health, financial well-being, and alcohol and other drugs.

Cook Counseling Center's clinical staff quickly developed **expertise in the delivery of telehealth** interventions and the center continued to offer the full range of services. Many clients reported liking the convenience of virtual appointments, and the no-show rate decreased by 2.5%.

Rec Sports launched a number of new programs with virtual and in-person options for individuals and pods. While COVID impacted the total occupancy and the sizes of group activities, Rec Sports was able to offer a version of every activity offered prior to COVID. Recreational Sports served Hokies with 355,331 swipes into McComas Hall; 34,264 swipes into the Field House; 23,785 attending virtual or in person group exercise classes; and 13,769 participating in Intramural Sports.

Student Affairs Human Resources (SA HR) participated and managed scheduling vaccinations for 1,100 Student Affairs employees.

Student Affairs Information Technology (SA IT) collaborated with multiple stakeholders to build an **online COVID testing platform**. More than 63,000 COVID tests were processed using the VTNotify testing platform. SA IT staff also helped Student Affairs remain productive while working remotely.

Student Engagement and Campus Life (SECL) remained open throughout the pandemic so that students had a clean, safe place to study and complete course work with reliable internet.

SECL continued to adapt so that students could find ways to connect to campus and each other. With the **Virginia Tech Union and Black Student Alliance**, SECL deployed fiscal, technological, and human resources to plan programs each weekend in the 20-21 academic year, hosting more than 350 events.

Programs or strategies that worked well

To address the challenge of long wait times for appointments, **Cook Counseling Center** instituted the Cook Connect Personalized Care Model (a triage model) in August 2020.

The Cook Connect Model yielded a 246% reduction in wait time to first appointment, from 11.69 days in 2019-2020 to 3.38 days in 2020-2021. Similarly, the wait time to the second appointment decreased from 16.75 days to 4.38 days. The overall satisfaction rate for students with services recommended during the Cook Connect appointment was 86.9%, with 94.5% of students reporting satisfaction with the wait time to the Cook Connect appointment. A 9.1% decrease in the number of students seen during 2020-2021 relative to 2019-2020 (4,170 vs. 4,584) was likely a result of the pandemic -- but the magnitude of the improvement cannot be totally explained by this decrease.

[Cook Counseling Center](#) was [ranked No. 1 for Best Counseling Services](#) in the 2021 edition of the Princeton Review's Best 386 Colleges. The Princeton Review college rankings are entirely based on surveys of 143,000 students at 386 colleges.

In a time of uncertainty, **Dining Services** remained consistent as a reliable service to the students at Virginia Tech while maintaining a safe work environment for essential employees. Dining Services succeeded in delivering in-person services throughout the entire academic year. Virginia Tech was one of the only institutions in the country that maintained a retail operating model with more than 25,000 daily transactions while adapting to meet customer needs.

Dining Services health and safety practices and policies helped maintain a safe working environment for staff while serving 4.2 million meals. State health inspection scores averaged 99.1%. No employees contracted COVID-19 in the workplace and no customer-to-staff transmission occurred. Dining Services delivered 34,719 meals to students in isolation/quarantine.

Healthy relationships, friendship, brotherhood and sisterhood are foundational to the fraternity and sorority experience, and planned coaching conversations and collaborative problem solving are key to the success **Fraternity and Sorority Life** (FSL) has with student leaders, volunteers, and community partners.

The challenge was to enhance programs, procedures, and leadership development opportunities offered to chapters by incorporating inclusion and social justice into the entire leadership curriculum, while at the same time creating new virtual experiences.

In the spring semester of 2020, FSL team members held approximately 600 meetings with students, advisors, and headquarters partners. For the 2020-21 academic year, FSL team members held more than 1,565 individual meetings, primarily via Zoom.

Student interest in the fraternity and sorority experience continued to grow. Despite being 100% virtual, Panhellenic Formal Recruitment boasted the highest retention rate in history and all 13 of our Panhellenic sororities matched to quota for the first time. The overall percentage of Virginia Tech students involved in FSL in Spring 2020 was 19.8%. For Spring 2021, the FSL involvement was 17.65%. This slight decline was due to three large IFC fraternities (Pi Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Pi, and Pi Kappa Phi) holding their members accountable, which resulted in the termination of approximately 120 members.

In 2020-21, FSL successfully implemented and supported many health and safety initiatives for our community. This effort included requiring chapters to submit a COVID Chapter Operations Plan; identifying mandated occupancy capacity numbers for common spaces in Oak Lane houses, removing Oak Lane house access to all non-residents, and having House Supervisors (daily) and FSL staff (weekly) conduct rounds in Oak Lane houses to reinforce safety expectations and updates.

For the 2020-21 academic year, 9% of students involved in FSL violated the Student Code of Conduct.

This is a slight increase from 7% in 2019-20 due to many of the policy violations related to COVID-19, including gatherings in excess of guidelines, repeated mask violations, and quarantine/isolation violations.

One program that did not meet expectations

VT Engage launched several initiatives focused on civic engagement on campus including hosting the first National Voter Education Week to support voter engagement. VT Engage provided rides to the polls for students from campus to Christiansburg during voting times and hosted three student civic engagement fellows who supported the programming.

Virginia Tech was awarded the Voter Friendly Campus Designation through NASPA and Campus Vote Project, and VT became a NASPA LEAD Initiative Institution. VT earned third place in the DemocrACCy Challenge among other ACC conference schools. VT Engage was accepted into the inaugural class of Co-Designer Campuses for the Ask Every Student Initiative. VT Engage also received an \$1,000 grant to support civic engagement programming from the Campus Election Engagement Project

Despite these distinctions, VT Engage did not meet the target for undergraduate engagement. The target goal was 80% of Voter Education Week and election-related program participants identifying as undergraduate students. Only 44% identified as undergraduate students. This gets to the heart of an on-going challenge: communicating with undergraduate students. While this is always a moving target, assessment of efforts indicates that increased engagement on social media platforms as well as targeting influencers could have helped.