Encouraging Diversity at Virginia Tech: An outreach Program to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU).

Diversity is one of the five core values identified by Virginia Tech as a quality that a Twenty-first Century land-grant university should pursue. In the interest of increasing the numbers of graduate students from underrepresented groups here at Virginia Tech and addressing several recommendations proposed by the Task Force on Race and the Institution, Dr. April L. Few (Human Development), Dr. Anthony Kwame Harrison (Sociology), Marilyn Kershaw (Director, Graduate Student Recruiting), and Karen Eley Sanders (Assistant Provost and Director, Academic Support Services) developed the Coordinated School Visit Program (CSVP). The CSVP is designed to provide an opportunity for interested Virginia Tech faculty and graduate students to: (1) network across disciplines, colleges, and universities; (2) unify various disjointed faculty or department efforts to connect to historically Black colleges and universities as well as other minority-serving institutions; (3) provide a pipeline of quality graduate students to assist faculty in research projects; and (4) serve as a significant activity toward fulfilling the diversity component of the Faculty Annual Report (FAR). It is hoped that the CSVP has the potential to fulfill scholarship domains desired by the university: discovery, learning, and engagement. Along with the Department of Human Development and Sociology, the Provost’s Office, Academic Support Services, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission enthusiastically have pledged to financially support the pilot program for three years. The CSVP committee has Dean Jerry Niles and Associate Dean Valerie Hardcastle to thank for the successful launch of the CSVP this summer. The CSVP will be piloted this Fall, 2007 in the College of Liberal Arts and Humans Sciences. The CSVP committee is searching for dedicated faculty and graduate students who are invested in diversity issues and in changing the campus climate of Virginia Tech.

In summary, the overall purpose of the CSVP is four-fold: (1) to increase the overall number of applications from students who identify as members of underrepresented groups; (2) to specifically target promising students from underrepresented groups; (3) to implement effective retention strategies to integrate these students into the Virginia Tech community; and (4) to establish and maintain strong connections with other diverse universities — connections which may prove fruitful in the years to come. The CSVP committee looks forward to further collaboration with Dean Ott Rowlands on this project.