Regina and Lee Steeneck: Proud Hokies

Regina (’70 English) and Lee (’70 mathematics) Steeneck have traveled to spots all over the world — Australia, France, and China, just to name a few. And in each of those places, they have met Hokies who were proud to wear orange and maroon. “It is great to be able to start a conversation in a foreign country by saying ‘GO HOKIES’ or having someone start a conversation when they see the colors,” Regina said. “The spirit of Tech always makes me proud.”

Lee agreed, noting that the sense of community is one of the best things about being a Hokie. “If we wear a cap or Tech shirt people inevitably stop us to chat.”

For Regina, the Hokie community is a family affair. She was introduced to Virginia Tech by an aunt whose husband had been a student. Her aunt told her stories about going to Cotillion Club and Ring Dances. “Her description of the beautiful campus and her husband’s enthusiasm encouraged me to apply,” Regina said. “I did not visit the campus until I arrived as a freshman, and it was more beautiful than I had imagined.” For Lee, he found Virginia Tech with the help of his father, an NYU educated mechanical engineer, who helped Lee research universities with strong engineering programs. “VPI was the right size, the right price, and had the corps experience I wanted,” said Lee.

The Steenecks do share an especially wonderful memory from their time at Tech. One evening, after a concert on campus, Lee, by then a graduate student, took Regina to the War Memorial, where he proposed marriage and she unequivocally accepted.

Leaving Blacksburg in 1970, the Steenecks are still an active part of the Hokie community. Regina is a member of the Women and Leadership in Philanthropy (WLP) Council. The WLP program gives all Hokie women the opportunity to become involved in the life of the university. Thanks to the guidance of Regina and others on the council, the WLP is now sponsoring a mentoring program and a lecture fund. Said Regina, “I hope to see additional outreach to young women alumni that will keep them involved with Tech.” She also hopes that the council will be able to provide sponsorships for young women to attend the annual Circle of Excellence Conference, the flagship event of the WLP program.

In addition to her work with the WLP, Regina played a role in building the foundation of The Campaign for Virginia Tech: Invent the Future as part of the quiet phase Campaign Steering Committee. That committee worked for several years helping university leadership to
A successful campaign supports our faculty

This year has been a successful one for Virginia Tech. In July, we concluded a record-breaking fiscal year, raising more than $91 million in private support for the university. We have also just passed the first anniversary of the public launch of The Campaign for Virginia Tech: Invent the Future and we have reached the $700 million mark in campaign support — support that will be invaluable as we move into the future and implement the university's strategic plan.

Those of you who receive Impact make up the most important group of Virginia Tech supporters. It is your ongoing support that has made the university's success possible. In this issue of Impact, we want to share with you how your gifts are making a difference to our faculty.

Private money allows Virginia Tech to offer competitive salaries and compete with other nationally recognized institutions on an even playing field. Those salaries also often make the difference as a recognized scholar makes a choice between teaching and going to work in the private sector.

But it's about more than just salaries; your support provides resources that allow our faculty to conduct research. That research generates breakthroughs that benefit citizens around the world. What's more, as our faculty engage in the creation of new knowledge, they become better teachers. The best research — and the best researchers — draw in the top graduate students and gives undergraduates the opportunity to engage in the hands-on learning experiences that will make them stand out in a crowded job market.

Faculty support also allows us to recognize and reward faculty members for their excellence, particularly those young teachers and researchers who so often represent the future of teaching and research at Virginia Tech. These young scholars are often responsible for developing the most exciting courses and work with students on research, and are in great demand both at other institutions and in private enterprise.

As we come to the end of 2008, we hope you will consider Virginia Tech in your philanthropic decisions. A gift to Virginia Tech allows you a way to participate in the intellectual life of the university by providing support, not just to our faculty, but also to our students and to the communities we serve. We've come a long way this year, thanks to people like you who have helped us. You have played a critical role in our success and we hope you will continue that support in the years to come. IMPACT

Creating a culturally rich university experience

Virginia Tech has long been known for providing qualified, well-educated graduates in their chosen disciplines who excel in companies around the world. Today, as the world shrinks, the ability to work well with people from all kinds of backgrounds and cultures becomes at least as important as any discipline-specific knowledge.

Because of this trend, multicultural competence is a critical part of a complete and meaningful education. Simply put, we must prepare our students to live and work within a variety of other cultures. Here at Virginia Tech, we are hard at work creating educational experiences for our students that include exposure to the perspectives, talents, and skills of an increasingly diverse population. This broadened perspective guarantees that our students will be more competitive when seeking post-graduate employment or graduate school admission.

Building a diverse and inclusive community is not just about multicultural competence. It's also about the search for excellence. At Virginia Tech, we've done a good job pulling down barriers of class and finances, but we must also work to pull down cultural barriers so that the brightest minds, irrespective of geography, race, finances, gender, or culture, are moved to continue their educations at Virginia Tech. Doing so has the added benefit of creating a community where a great number of cultures and viewpoints are represented and their contributions valued.

True diversity incorporates these aims and permeates all aspects of the campus culture, from student education to research endeavors, all of which leads to a comprehensive transformation that enriches the lives of all members of the university community. As part of this commitment to diversity on our campus, Virginia Tech recently announced its Presidential Scholarship Initiative, which will reward and assist academically talented, low-income high school students from Virginia who demonstrate persistence and a commitment to academic excellence despite adverse life situations. The scholarship will provide a significant financial package intended to make the dream to attend college for first-generation college students from traditionally underserved Virginia communities a reality.

Private philanthropy will be critical as we seek to enhance multicultural opportunities on campus. Multicultural scholarships, professorships, and program support are important if we are to continue building a community defined by inclusive excellence. Increasing the number of scholarships is vital if we hope to attract students from underrepresented groups. We will enhance programming — such as special seminars, monthly support meetings, and mentoring activities — for underrepresented populations, with a focus on enriching the undergraduate experience. We will build our Diversity Certificate Program and our Multicultural Opportunity and Social Awareness Interest Community. Furthermore, we will create opportunities for our students to conduct diversity-related research under faculty guidance.

Financial support by alumni and friends will help us become an even more inclusive enterprise that respects and values the participation and contributions of all groups. Our supporters know that we must seek out excellence wherever it is and continue to eliminate social and economic disparities across racial, gender, and other lines of socio-economic and cultural difference.

Tomorrow's Virginia Tech graduates will pursue graduate study, live, and work with people from all over the world. As the global climate shifts to a deeper intercultural understanding, so must Virginia Tech. Your support and partnership will be invaluable as we strive to foster a diverse and culturally rich university experience. IMPACT
The Merrymans: When philanthropy is a family affair

Willie Taylor (right) recently created an endowment to support Virginia Tech’s College of Natural Resources. Unlike many donors, she is not an alumna. She spent her career in academia, but it was at Greensboro College, not here. And she doesn’t live in Southwest Virginia.

So why was she so generous to Virginia Tech?

“One of the reasons,” Taylor explained, “is the passion that my brother-in-law, Sonny Merryman, has for Virginia Tech. It’s contagious.”

Her brother-in-law, Floyd “Sonny” Merryman Jr., said he often urges people, alumni or not, to get behind the university.

“I’ve always been told that any time you give something, you get it back threefold,” he said. “And that’s always been true for me.”

It’s an attitude toward philanthropy that Merryman has not only embodied, but has spread to family and friends.

“As far as giving is concerned, Dad has passed that down to us,” said Pat Merryman, who is a major supporter of Virginia Tech, just like her father, her mother Lou Merryman, her brother Floyd Merryman III (’81 management), and his wife Lynn Merryman.

When it comes to supporting Virginia Tech, the Merryman family’s generosity has been both deep and broad. Along with being major donors to athletics, they have created multiple scholarships, contributed toward building projects, helped the corps of cadets, and supported a host of academic programs.

For the thousands of Hokie football fans who spend their fall Saturdays on campus, the Merryman name may be familiar because it adorns the athletic center next to Lane Stadium.

Students at the Pamplin College of Business may recognize the Merryman name from the title of one of their endowed professors.

Meanwhile, Central Virginia residents who hope to attend Virginia Tech but need financial assistance may be advised to seek a Merryman Scholarship.

Sonny Merryman followed in his father’s footsteps to enroll at Virginia Tech. As a member of the Class of 1946, he studied animal science. He would have loved to farm, but said he couldn’t make a living at it. Instead, he founded Sonny Merryman Inc. The firm, headquartered in Evington, Va., sells and leases transportation equipment across Virginia. It employs about 125 people, and has Virginia Tech alumni in several key positions.

School buses are a major component of the Merryman’s business, and they have established an endowment to provide scholarships for the children or grandchildren of people who work in or are retired from Virginia’s pupil transportation industry, such as bus drivers, mechanics, coordinators, and supervisors.

Now 84, Sonny Merryman continues to serve on the board of the company. His son is chief executive and president. His daughter is vice president.

All three of them, along with Lou and Lynn Merryman, are members of the Ut Prosim Society, a select group of the university’s most generous donors.

Lou Merryman said her first Virginia Tech experiences were attending football games while dating the man who is now her husband of 55 years. But as she learned more about other aspects of the university, her appreciation of it and desire to support it grew.

“When you get involved, the more we realize how much they do [at Virginia Tech],” she said. “I am just amazed at the research they are doing.”

Floyd Merryman said he’s enjoyed seeing — and playing a role in — Virginia Tech’s growth. Along with his financial support, he has been an active volunteer at the university. He is chairman of the athletic program campaign steering committee within the university’s $1 billion fundraising campaign, and is also on the National Campaign Steering Committee.

“It’s fun,” Floyd Merryman said of serving on volunteer committees. “You work with a lot of outstanding people from all over the state — the country, actually.”

While Floyd Merryman said his affinity for Virginia Tech developed young when attending football games in Blacksburg with his father, Pat Merryman said her involvement has been a more recent development.

“I have just gotten involved with Tech in the last few years with the Women and Leadership in Philanthropy [program],” she said. “I love sports and everything, but not quite as much as the men do. But I’m just blown away by all professors and the programs that you have there. They’re top notch.”

This year, the Sonny Merryman Inc. Endowed Professorship was awarded to Julie Ozanne of the Pamplin College of Business Department of Marketing.

Ozanne and Management Professor Anju Seth in March became the first female professors in Pamplin to be appointed to endowed positions. Ozanne said that in a field like academia, where forming partnerships is important for many projects, a named professorship is a respected credential that can help open the door to additional professional opportunities.

In recognition of his longstanding service to and support of the university, Sonny Merryman received Virginia Tech’s highest honor, the William H. Raftery Medal, in 2006.

“If I had any extra, I’d try to help,” Sonny Merryman said when asked why he has supported such a variety of programs at Virginia Tech. “I don’t need much for myself, and what I try to do is help. It’s a lot of fun doing things, helping people.”

Clockwise from top: Pat, Floyd, Lou, and Sonny Merryman

The Merryman Center at Virginia Tech was dedicated in 1998 and since then has become a recognizable fixture for Virginia Tech athletics.
Right now the bioengineering folks are kind of all I think the building will streamline a lot of research
Having gotten my bachelor’s and master’s there in
How philanthropy is reshaping Virginia Tech’s campus
Building the future:
John Rocovich Jr., another major supporter of the
year 2007.
Science at Virginia Tech. The institute, known as ICTAS,
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Private contributions are playing a role in the projects.
Davalos is one of dozens of talented researchers who
were eager to move into a new Virginia Tech building this fall specially designed to accommodate cutting-edge work in engineering, science, and medicine.
"I think the building will streamline a lot of research
and make our program more prominent," he said.
"Right now the bioengineering folks are kind of all
er over campus and having them co-located will enable more synergistic research."
The new building is the second of three earmarked
for the Institute for Critical Technology and Applied
Science at Virginia Tech. The institute, known as ICTAS,
opened its first building last year. By 2010 it plans to occupy an additional facility that is still to be built.
Private contributions are playing a role in the projects.
Supporters have contributed millions already, but university officials have a goal of $13 million more in donations toward the third building.
Mike Quillen, chairman and chief executive officer of coal producer Alpha Natural Resources Inc., said he contributed to the ICTAS project in part because it will help the College of Engineering remain one of the nation’s top programs.
"Having gotten my bachelor’s and master’s there in
the 60s, and seeing that we still are using mostly the
same facilities that were there when I was there, you certainly can imagine the need to update," he said.
John Rocovich Jr., another major supporter of the project and a former member of the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors, said, “If we’re going to maximize

ICTAS

Rafael Davalos believes a treatment he invented will allow doctors to kill cancer cells without damaging surrounding tissue, nerves, and blood vessels — a frequent side-effect of current techniques. Human trials began this year. NASA Tech Briefs listed the discovery, called irreversible electroproporation, as one of seven key technological breakthroughs from the year 2007.

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the potential of Virginia Tech internationally and nationally, ICTAS is absolutely essential. I can’t think of anything more important to support.”

Davalos, the cancer researcher, is on the faculty of the Virginia Tech-Wake Forest University School of Biomedical Engineering and Sciences (SBES), a joint venture between the Virginia Tech School of Engineering, the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, and the Wake Forest College of Medicine. The SBES arrangement illustrates a major trend in today’s research: crossing the traditional boundaries between disciplines to make increasingly complex discoveries.

Creating ICTAS, which is housing the SBES and other multidisciplinary research units in its buildings, is one way that Virginia Tech is meeting new demands in re-
search. "This century is going to be dominated by a few major converging technologies — nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive systems," predicted ICTAS Director Roop Mahajan.

A major goal of ICTAS, he said, is to make it easier for researchers in those areas to collaborate. The layout of the new ICTAS buildings — with flexible lab space and common areas where researchers from the vari-
ous specialties can mingle — helps toward that goal.

The four-story ICTAS building that was scheduled to be occupied this fall is nearly 100,000 square feet and located at the corner of Stanger and Old Turner streets, across from McBryde Hall. Within the build-
ing, researchers will address numerous important questions. How can nanotechnology be used to better target drugs within the body? How can the wireless spectrum handle the demand for bandwidth

being able to talk to each other that you don’t get otherwise.”

He cited the group in his school that is focused on tissue engineering to explain how the facility will benefit researchers. “They use a lot of expensive equipment, but it’s not like they use it exclusively,” Grant said. “They occasionally need it. We’re going to have all these people in one building, using one laboratory, so they can share equipment.”

Mahajan said that even as he and his colleagues were preparing to move into the new facility, they had an ambitious plan for the additional 42,000-square-foot building that is expected to be built in the life sciences quadrangle behind the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute.

“We need space where people from different disci-
plines can work together,” he said. “Physicists, chem-
ists, engineers, biologists — I need all these people to come together and work together in a collabora-
tive mode, in an interdisciplinary space.” IMPACT
The first year of the public phase of The Campaign for Virginia Tech: Invent the Future has seen a lot of success. As of September 30, 2008, we had raised $700.1 million — just over 69 percent of our goal. With your help, we’ll reach our $1 billion goal.

Everyone at Virginia Tech benefits from the support of our alumni and friends. Private giving plays an enormous role in providing the resources the university needs to continue its quest to deliver an exceptional education to its students and to conduct groundbreaking research that may change the world.

### Giving Sources

- **Alumni/Students**: $333,149,899 (47.58%)
- **Parents**: $12,429,389 (1.78%)
- **Friends**: $154,519,009 (22.07%)
- **Corporations**: $103,058,952 (14.72%)
- **Foundations**: $62,904,000 (8.98%)
- **Other Organizations**: $20,729,949 (2.96%)
- **Total**: $700,117,858 (100.00%)

### Giving Uses

- **Current Operations**: $363,558,041 (51.93%)
- **Endowments**: $193,548,452 (27.64%)
- **Capital Facilities**: $115,842,939 (16.55%)
- **Private Grants**: $27,168,426 (3.88%)
- **Total**: $700,117,858 (100.00%)

### Giving Priorities

- **Academic Excellence**: $202,423,031 (29.00%)
- **Undergrad Experience**: $104,373,113 (15.00%)
- **Research Facilities**: $66,316,456 (9.40%)
- **VT & the Community**: $45,634,577 (6.50%)
- **Pres. Discovery Fund**: $12,387,708 (1.70%)
- **Ongoing/Future Support**: $268,982,973 (38.40%)
- **Total**: $700,117,858 (100.00%)

### Campaign Figures

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### Campaign Region

- **Roanoke Valley**: $67,000,000
- **Atlanta**: $6,000,000
- **Hampton Roads**: $50,000,000
- **Tampa Bay/Orlando**: $5,000,000
- **Charlotte**: $7,500,000
- **Northern Virginia**: $80,000,000
- **Raleigh/Durham**: $7,500,000

### Regional Dollar Goal

- **Roanoke Valley**: $67,000,000
- **Atlanta**: $6,000,000
- **Hampton Roads**: $50,000,000
- **Tampa Bay/Orlando**: $5,000,000
- **Charlotte**: $7,500,000
- **Northern Virginia**: $80,000,000
- **Raleigh/Durham**: $7,500,000

### % of Goal Achieved

- **Roanoke Valley**: 105.5%
- **Atlanta**: 92.9%
- **Hampton Roads**: 105.9%
- **Tampa Bay/Orlando**: 72.0%
- **Charlotte**: 84.9%
- **Northern Virginia**: 79.9%
- **Raleigh/Durham**: 83.1%

### Raised as of September 2008

- **Roanoke Valley**: $70,681,984
- **Atlanta**: $5,572,107
- **Hampton Roads**: $52,947,463
- **Tampa Bay/Orlando**: $3,601,47
- **Charlotte**: $6,369,887
- **Northern Virginia**: $63,944,191
- **Raleigh/Durham**: $6,236,116
For those who want to help Virginia Tech invent the future, now is the time to make year-end charitable giving decisions in order to take full advantage of 2008 tax benefits.

Whether you're planning a cash donation by check or credit card or a gift of appreciated securities or real estate, contacting the Office of Gift Planning — at 800/533-1144 or 540/231-2813 or giftplanning@vt.edu — can help assure your contribution is counted for 2008 tax purposes.

Making sure your year-end gift counts for 2008 depends upon whether you intend to send it by mail, transfer securities to Virginia Tech Foundation Inc., or phone in a credit card donation. Please feel free to contact us with questions you or your financial advisor may have. We'll be happy to guide you through the process.

Support for the university can take many forms, and the type of gift that is right for you may vary based on your goals and circumstances. The simplest and most frequent gift to Virginia Tech is cash, but there are many other options.

Gifts of appreciated securities can provide significant tax benefits. You can donate a personal residence or farm and keep living in it throughout your lifetime. You can make a gift of life insurance in various ways. Life income gifts, such as charitable remainder trusts, gift annuities, and pooled income fund gifts, pay you lifetime income, generate current tax benefits, and provide future support for the university.

Of special interest to donors aged 70 1/2 or older is Congress’ recent extension of the charitable IRA (individual retirement account) rollover provision until December 31, 2009.

This temporary provision allows certain older donors to directly transfer, or rollover, limited lifetime gifts from their IRAs to eligible non-profit organizations, such as the Virginia Tech Foundation Inc., without the usual additional tax liability.

If you act before December 31, 2008, you can exclude from taxable income your qualifying IRA rollover gifts up to $100,000 per person for tax year 2008 and, if you wish, take maximum advantage of the provision again in 2009.

Your qualifying 2008 contribution can support the area of the university you designate and count toward the $1 billion goal of The Campaign for Virginia Tech: Invent the Future. You can support a particular college or program, create a student scholarship, help build a research facility, provide faculty support, and so much more.

And, by planning ahead, you can complete your gift in time to count for the 2008 tax year.

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**Ways to Give: Still time in tax year 2008**

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**There are numerous ways to arrange your donation.**

Outright gifts of cash, securities, or other qualifying assets can go to work at Virginia Tech right after receipt.

By giving cash, a pledge payable over as many as five years, or appreciated securities, such as stocks, bonds, or mutual funds, you may realize significant tax benefits.

Donating real estate can simplify estate planning, provide income tax deductions, and free the donor from maintenance costs, property taxes, insurance, and other ongoing expenses.

Company matching programs may increase the impact of your support.

Artwork, equipment, collectibles, supplies, books, and other types of tangible property can also be valuable gifts to Virginia Tech.

Life insurance policies offer gift options. You can cash in a policy that is no longer needed for its original purpose and the proceeds can benefit the university immediately. You can transfer ownership of a current policy directly to the Virginia Tech Foundation Inc. and receive an income tax charitable deduction for the premiums you continue to pay.

Deferred gifts are a way to make the university’s future part of your legacy. They can be structured to fit individual circumstances and goals.

Simple and flexible, estate gifts, such as bequests and retirement account beneficiary designations, allow you to retain lifetime control of your assets and may provide an opportunity to make a larger gift than would otherwise be possible.

A bequest through a will or trust can provide support as a specific dollar amount or a percentage of the remainder of an estate after other bequests or expenses have been paid. Bequests can even be limited to certain circumstances, such as the death of other named beneficiaries. A testamentary trust can provide lifetime income to family members with the trust remainder going to Virginia Tech.

Retirement account balances can also benefit the university after your lifetime. Simply name the Virginia Tech Foundation Inc. as a beneficiary. These assets may prove more valuable as tax-wise gifts to charities, which, unlike heirs, pay no income or estate taxes.

Life income gifts: provide you with income from your donated assets — usually for life. You enjoy dependable, professional management of those assets, along with significant tax benefits. When the plan ends, your gift supports Virginia Tech. Life income gifts can pay out a fixed or variable dollar amount, either right away or deferred.

Charitable lead trusts provide support for Virginia Tech now, and later benefit you or your heirs. Such trusts are typically used to reduce gift or estate taxes on assets passed to children, grandchildren, or other heirs.

For more information on how to make any type of gift or about the deadlines for making them, you may visit our website at www.campaign.vt.edu/year-end. If you have additional questions or would like to discuss any gift to Virginia Tech, please contact the Office of Gift Planning at 800/533-1144 or 540/231-2813 or at giftplanning@vt.edu.
Ferguson Enterprises: A longstanding supporter of Virginia Tech

In 1953, Pamplin College of Business alumnus Ralph Lenz co-founded a company that would become one of the nation’s largest distributors of plumbing, heating, and air conditioning equipment.

More than half-a-century later, and nearly two decades after Lenz’s death, there remains a strong and mutually beneficial relationship between Virginia Tech and the company he founded, now known as Ferguson Enterprises.

John Stegeman, Ferguson’s president and CEO, is a Hokie. So is Chip Hornsby, Stegeman’s predecessor, who now heads U.K.-based Wolseley plc, Ferguson’s parent company since 1982.

Both men have stayed involved with their alma mater as philanthropists and volunteers. Each is on the National Steering Committee of The Campaign for Virginia Tech: Invent the Future, as well as the campaign committee that focuses on the area around Hampton Roads, Va.

Stegeman (forestry and wildlife ‘84) also chairs the campaign committee dedicated to advancing the College of Natural Resources. “As you get a little older, you start to reflect on your life and how you got to where you are and who helped you get there, and being able to give back is nice,” Stegeman said when asked what motivates him to stay involved with Virginia Tech.

Hornsby (secondary education, recreation ‘78), a longtime member of the Pamplin College of Business Advisory Board, said that he stays involved because, “I feel that education is all about improving people’s lives and opportunities.”

As a company, Ferguson has given hundreds of thousands of dollars to the university and has endowed scholarships for student athletes and students in the business college. Richard Sorensen, Pamplin’s dean, said the college’s first named professorship was the one Ferguson created in Lenz’s name. The company and its employees also created an endowment for junior faculty in Sorensen’s name. Such an endowment, Sorensen said, “is very important to allow us to recruit and retain top faculty in business.”

“The couple has also included Virginia Tech in their estate plans and they note that deferred giving can be a great option to leave a lasting legacy. The Steenecks plan to give back is nice. - John Stegeman

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Hornsby said he combined a passion for teaching and coaching with his interest in business by taking courses at Pamplin as a junior and senior. “I also had the opportunity to begin to demonstrate my leadership capabilities as a brother at Sigma Chi and [by being] responsible for an extremely large fundraiser called Derby Days,” he recalled.

Stegeman took advantage of a cooperative education program to get work experience in the fish and wildlife field, and worked for the federal government for two years after graduating before he met a Ferguson executive and wound up interviewing for a position as a management trainee. During college, Stegeman said, is when he started to set concrete goals for himself and put plans in place to realize them.

Both he and his fellow associates at Ferguson recognize the importance of education in allowing young people to develop to their full potential, Stegeman said.

“We think education is paramount to having a better America in the future,” he said. IMPACT
In Memoriam: Dr. Zenobia Lawrence Hikes
Vice President for Student Affairs Zenobia Lawrence Hikes, whose strength and leadership helped unite the Virginia Tech community — most notably in the hours and days following the tragic events of April 16, 2007, has died from complications following cardiac surgery. She was 53 years old.

“Dr. Hikes was a deeply dedicated, charismatic, and inspirational leader who brought successful new ideas and leadership to the Division of Student Affairs,” said President Charles W. Steger. “Her passing is a terrible loss to our community. She will be deeply missed by the students whom she served daily and by colleagues who were inspired by her dynamic thinking and creative ideas.”

It was Hikes who organized the University Convocation held April 17, 2007, in Cassell Coliseum. The event, broadcast around the world, offered comfort and hope to a grief-stricken university community as well to those who watched the event.

Hikes was named vice president for student affairs at Virginia Tech on Sept. 1, 2005, having previously served as vice president for student affairs and dean of students at Spelman College in Atlanta, Ga.

In her three years at Virginia Tech, Hikes made numerous contributions to improve the quality of student life on campus. Among these were “Hokie Camp,” which began this summer and afforded 300 new students an opportunity to learn more about university traditions, respect for diversity, and the community-oriented spirit that thrives throughout Virginia Tech.

“In addition to her many programmatic contributions, Zenobia cared deeply about the students she served,” said Edward Spencer, associate vice president for student affairs. “She often held open forums for students, for example, simply to know what they were thinking and to hear their concerns. Students connected with her because they could see the compassion she felt for them.”

As the chief executive officer for Virginia Tech’s Student Affairs division, Hikes oversaw 15 university departments, including student life, housing and dining programs, career services, student health, and recreational sports.

Hikes received her Ed.D. from the University of Delaware, a master’s from Georgia Southwestern University, and a bachelor’s degree with honors from Spelman College.

The family also requests that donations be made to the Zenobia Lawrence Hikes Scholarship Fund, c/o Virginia Tech Foundation, Attention: Gift Accounting, 902 Prices Fork Road (0336), Blacksburg, Va., 24061. The scholarship will support undergraduate students who are underrepresented in higher education and embody the leadership and legacy of Dr. Hikes.

Zenobia Lawrence Hikes, whose strength and leadership helped unite the Virginia Tech community during a time of great tragedy, will be deeply missed by the students she served daily and by colleagues who were inspired by her dynamic thinking and creative ideas. Her legacy will continue to inspire us all as we work to improve the quality of student life on campus.

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