
25 GREAT THINGS ABOUT VIRGINIA TECH

A top 10 list just wouldn't do it justice

by Su Clauson-Wicker



1. Smart students

We like to brag about the outstanding students Virginia Tech attracts. Eighty percent of the students in our freshman class were in the top quarter of their high school class; 100+ were valedictorians or salutatorians. Virginia Tech is among the top 30 universities in the enrollment of National Merit Scholars and among the top 100 universities in the overall credentials of its students, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

2. The Drillfield

In the middle of campus is a wide, open space where two soccer games, a wedding, an ultimate Frisbee match, and a meeting of the Society for Creative Anachronism can occur simultaneously and still leave space for you to sprawl out under the sky. The Drillfield also boasts two underground streams and an underground chapel.

3. Personal attention from the Prez

President Paul Torgersen doesn't let leading the largest university in the state get him out of touch with his constituents. He continues to teach an organizational theory course required for every industrial engineering student. During his 28 years at Tech, Torgersen has taught some 5,000 students and still considers this class a high point in his week.

4. Great sports

We've had a lot of great athletes, but one thing we're particularly proud of is that, in 100 years of facing UVA on the football field, we beat them 38 times to their 34 wins, counting our fourth quarter triumph Nov. 18. We've also had 5 ties and several years of not playing because of war and league disputes.

5. The great outdoors

From the Drillfield, you can look east to see Price Mountain, west to see Brush Mountain. In the late afternoon, you can hear flocks of Canadian geese honking overhead as they fly out from the Duck Pond to spend the night on outlying ponds or rivers. Hang out at the Duck Pond and you're likely to see green-back herons, mallards, muscovy ducks, and possibly black-crowned night herons, white ibis, barn owls, pintails, grebes, and common loons. "You can sometimes see fowl in the winter that are totally bizarre for this area," says avid birder and faculty member Jerry Via, who has spotted bar-headed Himalayan geese there.

For those who want to experience nature off campus, good mountain biking is only a few minute's ride away on Brush Mountain, and you need only take the Blacksburg bus system to its southern terminus to explore one of the region's limestone caves. Other adventures—tubing the New River, scaling Fool's Face rock, and hiking the Appalachian

President Paul Torgersen dispenses personal attention while teaching his industrial engineering course.



Tech: 36, UVA: 29

Trail—are within a 20-minute drive.

6. "Car Factory"

Solaray, Virginia Tech's solar-powered car and winner of the Florida SunDay Challenge, is one of several vehicles designed and built each year by the 300 engineering students working in Virginia Tech's "car factory." The prize-winning hybrid electric car, Tech's all-terrain vehicle, and its formula race car are all created here by students learning to design, manufacture, and market specialized vehicles.

7. Potty parity

True equality in the bathrooms began here, with the research of College of Human Resources Ph.D. Susan Rawls (HIDM '88). Her 1989 study of "elimination fixture inequity" in restrooms has led to changes in many state and city plumbing codes, requiring that the number of fixtures meet women's needs.

8. First in hospitality

The doctoral program in hospitality and tourism management has been ranked No.1 in the nation in a study by Cornell University, whose program used to be first (so there's no ulterior motive there). Virginia Tech's undergraduate program was one of the first accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration. One plus is the on-campus Donaldson Brown Hotel and Conference Center, where students gain hands-on experience.

9. Most active Y

Virginia Tech has the most active student YMCA in the nation, according to Doug McNeel, regional YMCA executive. YMCA students here run an after-school recreation program for children, lead a school tutoring program, repair homes for the indigent, perform service work on Indian reservations, and have

initiated campus recycling efforts.

10. Leading library

When you use Tech's library system, you're hooked to the world. The university library has established itself as an international leader in the use of computer technology to access information on a global basis. The library also holds the fifth largest microforms collection in North America and has achieved recognition for its special collections on the Civil War and the American aerospace program. OK, but how many books? 1.8 million in Carol Newman alone.

11. Green engineering

The goal of the green engineering program is to reduce the necessity for "end of the pipe" treatment for pollution problems by employing engineering practices that eliminate the production of

pollutants and increase the recycling of materials. Each department in the College of Engineering is incorporating green engineering concepts into courses in the core curriculum.

12. International outlook

Hundreds of people jam Draper Road and College Avenue every spring, sampling international food and culture at Virginia Tech's International Street Fair. Approximately 1,500 international students representing 106 countries registered at Virginia Tech last fall, giving everyone on campus a unique perspective on the world. At any time during the year, another 200 international visiting scholars or faculty are sharing their knowledge here.

13. Top cow critics

Virginia Tech's dairy judging team is legendary among land-

grant universities. In a dozen years, the formidable student judging team has only been bested twice.

14. Inventions and patents

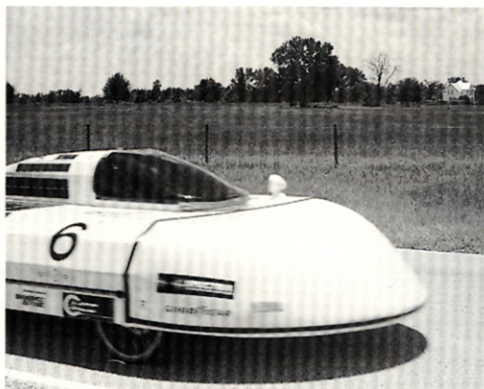
You have Virginia Tech faculty and alumni to thank for a more effective cancer treatment, a new diagnostic process for intestinal problems, better earplugs, the sponge contraceptive, and more than 700 other intellectual properties. The university itself is among the top 25 in the nation in patents received, with more than 100 to its credit.

15. Golf course on campus

Need to unwind? The university's 18-hole golf course beside the Duck Pond provides a great escape for a reasonable fee. In the winter, its slopes make fine sled runs.



Approximately 1,500 international students representing 106 countries attend Virginia Tech. The university's International Street Fair attracts visitors from across the region.



Solaray, a prize-winning vehicle, was manufactured at the "car factory."



The Virginia Tech Golf Course is one good putt from the Drillfield.



16. Dead governors

We have two buried in the cemetery behind the Cage parking lot. They are James Patton Preston and John Buchanan Floyd, relatives of the Preston family who built the 18th-century Smithfield plantation adjoining campus.

17. Corps of cadets

The corps has a long, proud tradition at Virginia Tech, having produced seven Medal of Honor recipients. The Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets accepted its first female member before Shannon Faulkner was born (1973). Since then, a woman has served as the corps' highest officer, regimental commander, and many have said the equality they experience in the corps is unmatched anywhere else in life.

18. Men of stone

Tech's geology department has

had more faculty members for whom minerals have been named than any other department. The minerals are blossite, for F.D. Bloss; ribbeite, for Paul Ribbe; gerrygibbsite, for G.V. Gibbs; and wonesite for the late David Wones.

19. Wired to communicate

Faculty, students, administrators, researchers, and staff members all benefit from Virginia Tech's state-of-the-art communications system. This system has 2,330 miles of optical fiber and 23,000 data and voice connections linking every dormitory room, lab, office, and classroom to computing capabilities and audio and video data.

As a result, the entire campus has easy access to data systems around the world. The university has been the one of the most computer-equipped

since it was the first to require computers for all freshmen engineers in the mid-1980s.

20. Classy, trashy art

Virginia Tech's landfill is not the eyesore that most dumps are. Art professor Steve Bickley has created "ottawm romuttun," animal-shaped earth mounds out of recycled trash in the tradition of the early native American mounds.

21. Help for animals

Board-certified clinicians in the Virginia Tech Veterinary Teaching Hospital treat about 45,000 animals a year. The companion animal blood bank created by the college of veterinary medicine and the state veterinary medical association has made canine blood and plasma products available for emergency transfusion in veterinary practices across the state.

22. Boosts for business majors

The Pamplin College of Business offers merit scholarships to 25 percent of its freshman class—one of the highest proportions in the nation.

23. Laid-back agriculture?

Well, no—farming is always hard work. But faculty and student researchers in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences have initiated the largest low-input farming systems comparison study in the nation. The project looks at cultivation practices to reduce herbicide use, legume cover crops to reduce nitrogen fertilizer inputs, cover crop manipulation for reducing the need for insecticides and herbicides, and other practices.

24. Busiest student union

Squires Student Center provides the largest number of reservable spaces of any single student center in the nation. This is good, because Tech has an unusually large number of student organizations, ranging from peer counseling groups to a surf sailing club to a meditation society. And they do good—80 percent of those organizations do some sort of service work, contributing more than 83,000 hours of community service a year.

25. Snowball fights on the Drillfield

There are those who would say the winter weather is one of the worst things about Virginia Tech, but who can't recall, with some nostalgia, waking up to the sounds of the first snowball fight on the Drillfield?

And if lobbing gobs of the white stuff at laughing strangers and getting a few back in return doesn't build community, well then a Hokie isn't a turkey. □