Degrees with Value

Virginia Tech alumni make their mark on society by weaving the university’s motto, *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), into all aspects of their lives.
Ut Prosim in Action

Virginia Tech students pursue academic excellence with the intention of amplifying a positive impact on the world. Entering students at Virginia Tech have an array of relevant and challenging major and minor options to pursue. New interdisciplinary degree programs are attracting the most talented and ambitious students from the commonwealth and around the world.

Virginia Tech students intrinsically embrace service to community as an extension of themselves and their degrees. In the next pages, you will get a personal glimpse into the lives of nine vibrant alumni who began their journeys as members of the university’s student body. Although each has their own story based on their chosen paths, a common theme exists of how their undergraduate academic and service experiences have played a pivotal role in their career choices, outreach efforts, and community engagement.

We Are Hokie Strong

With a growing alumni network of over 240,000 and a current student body of more than 31,000, Hokies are notably leaving their mark on the world.

There is a universal thread that links all of these individuals. It is summed up in two words: Ut Prosim. As the university’s motto, its literal translation is “That I May Serve.” Its translation runs far deeper than a motto. For Hokies, it is an earnest mindset for doing for others and this perspective is just one shining example of what distinguishes Virginia Tech alumni. Virginia Tech is home to many majors for students who like to think critically, design solutions to improve the human condition, and to engage in the new technologies of the 21st century.

Students pursuing these new curricula experience the intellectual diversity that is so richly evident in our comprehensive university. In his installation address, President Timothy D. Sands pledged his support to ensure that Virginia Tech will become the top choice for students who are preparing themselves for a meaningful life of service to others, whether through a profession, an avocation, or simply a way of life. He went on to state that Virginia Tech will be known worldwide as a global “Service to Humanity Academy.”

Did you know?
Virginia Tech has more than 240,000 living alumni from every state and more than 100 countries.
Eric Latham

The beauty of the campus and the closeness of the Hokie Nation community always stay with me, shares Eric Latham (communications ’03).

As one of seven children, Latham knows firsthand about being a part of a big family.

Having grown up in the Washington D.C. area until age 11, Latham and his family moved to Abingdon, Virginia, where he readjusted to small-town living. During college tours, Latham initially leaned toward attending small colleges, but then took a “leap of faith” and applied to Virginia Tech.

Latham said he quickly realized he was not just a number; he felt he was part of something much larger than himself. “Virginia Tech is a community focused on giving back to the community through its motto, Ut Prosim (That I May Serve), and that is a good and important fit for me.”

A large part of Latham’s undergraduate experience was marked by service and outreach, including being an orientation leader, a Greek philanthropist, and a member of The Big Event, a student-run community service effort. “All of these service experiences had a huge impact on me,” notes Latham.

World expanding

His view of the world expanded while at Virginia Tech, including meeting and interacting with students of all cultures and backgrounds. “I saw diversity through the lens of the important causes that existed on campus which empowered me to want to know more about it and get involved.”

In 2004, Latham founded Walk About America as a way to organize walks and hikes to support good causes. In the first-ever campaign, Walk About America 2005, Latham walked from North Carolina to San Francisco and raised $21,000 for cancer research. Since 2005, Latham has helped organize several walks to raise money for causes.

In 2011, Latham founded Intellectual Property Executives, a family-owned and operated pharmaceutical technology development company in Johnson City, Tenn. This led to the offshoot company of New River Naturals, which specializes in vitamins and supplements. Staying true to his entrepreneurial roots, Latham and his wife also founded Johnson City Brewing Company in 2014.

Did you know?

Virginia Tech has the largest collegiate Relay for Life event in the nation, collectively raising more than $5 million toward a cure for cancer since its inception in 2000.
Admitting that he stepped out of his comfort zone to attend Virginia Tech, Charity says he knew it would be an "tremendous opportunity for growth." He further adds, "Virginia Tech allowed me to broaden my world view. I knew I would receive a quality education. However, I was both surprised and overjoyed to learn that I would be exposed to cultures and people that I otherwise may not have been introduced."

Above all else, Charity prided himself in being a part of the Virginia Tech community and making a positive impact. Once again, there were no shortage of ways to make an impact. Advocating for alma mater

Charity credits the Presidential Scholarship Initiative for making this a reality. As a competitive scholarship program, it recognizes and rewards academically talented students who have shown persistence and commitment to academic excellence. Through this scholarship program, Charity always looked for ways to engage with other students, including mentoring or working on enrichment activities.

However, one of his most passionate roles is to continue being an advocate for the university. "As a result of attending Virginia Tech, it has been my self-proclaimed responsibility to start a pipeline so that students who followed could go as well, and for those students to have me as a resource." To this day, he stays in contact with current students at Virginia Tech about their post-graduation plans and shares his undergraduate experience with prospective students.

“My purpose now is to advocate for the community, and to ensure that I am available to help future students.”

Charity is currently pursuing a J.D. at Georgetown University Law Center as a third-year student and will graduate in May. He will be taking his career to New York City practicing corporate law with Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP. ■
Kara Dodson

Virginia Tech provided the “natural” landscape for Kara Dodson’s (environmental resources management ’12) passion for the environment and creating positive change to flourish.

“Virginia Tech stood out because of my family’s long history with the school and my desire to stay in the Appalachian Mountains.”

To this day, she credits it as by far one of the best decisions she ever made. When thinking about which college to attend, Dodson reflected as to where she would be the happiest learning and starting a new chapter.

Virginia Tech: A natural fit

During her four years at Virginia Tech, Dodson certainly added depth to her college chapters, combining her love for the environment with personal discovery. She was an active member of the Environmental Coalition, where she developed strong friendships with those who shared similar beliefs and interests, including work with Stadium Woods.

Upon graduating, Dodson relocated to Boone, North Carolina and worked as a field coordinator for two years at Appalachian Voices, a regional environmental non-profit. In this post, she served the community through advocacy and outreach around issues such as stopping mountaintop removal coal mining, cleaning up coal ash pollution, securing water protections, and expanding energy efficiency programs.

Although passionate about the work, Dodson was eager to move away from a full-time indoor job and truly get up close and personal with her surroundings. Most recently, Dodson started working full-time at Mountain Works Sustainable Development, an organic farm near Boone, where they use horses for farming and logging. It is work that is not only rewarding but brings benefits to the community as the farm uses low-impact, organic methods to offer healthy produce, beef, and lamb to area markets and restaurants.

“This has been a great opportunity to use my education in environmental management and forestry,” shares Dodson. She looks forward to returning to the area in a couple of years and working her own horse-powered farm.

Coming back to Virginia Tech is a favorite activity of Dodson’s, including seeing friends and connecting with professors and mentors on environmental topics.

Did you know?

Virginia Tech has some of the fittest students in the country, according to The Active Times, including a robust recreational sports program, healthy dining options, and plenty of room to run, bike, hike, canoe, and explore in the surrounding community.

The university was ranked by Princeton Review as one the most environmentally responsible schools in the nation in 2014 and was named one of the Best of Green Schools by the Center for Green Schools.
Lee Murphy Jr.

One weekend in April made all the difference for Lee Murphy Jr. (business information technology '10).

The weekend, known as Gateway, is an invitation-only event for underrepresented students offered admission, where Murphy and fellow students were able to engage in social activities, learn more about Virginia Tech life, and stay with current students in the residence halls.

Murphy said the "tipping point" in his decision was having the attention of university officials that weekend, which still leaves an impact on Murphy. As a first-generation college student from South Boston, Virginia, Murphy arrived early at his decision to pursue the business information technology major, a hallmark program of the university.

This pioneering spirit continued through Murphy’s undergraduate years. In fact, during his sophomore year, he was a co-founder of the CommonWEALTH of Scholars, aimed toward enhancing and promoting academic excellence to underrepresented students on campus. Getting involved was something that came naturally to Murphy.

Turning heads
He also remembers “turning heads” on Thursdays on campus and in the community because of his professional attire—a life lesson he learned through his membership in the Student African American Brotherhood, an organization welcoming of all males to help them excel academically, socially, culturally, professionally, and in the community.

All of his undergraduate experiences combined led Murphy to a summer internship at Altria in Richmond during his junior year that would later lead to a full-time job offer going into the first day of his senior year at Virginia Tech. He is now celebrating his sixth year there as a senior technical analyst, with accountability for two major business intelligence softwares and support for four business areas.

Through the company’s tuition reimbursement program, Murphy is pursuing an M.B.A. in the evenings. He also enthusiastically serves on Altria’s recruitment team, which allows him to come back to his undergraduate home, with the hopes of offering students the same opportunity he was given.

As a member of the Yates Project in Undergraduate Admissions, Murphy visited his own high school and others to share his Virginia Tech story.

Did you know?
Virginia Tech’s Career Services finds that 83 percent of 2013-14 graduates who responded to the post-graduation survey, had employment or educational opportunities within six months of commencement. The same graduates reported an average salary of $53,000.
Having two older cousins attend Virginia Tech, Titus-Glover says he always had it on his list of colleges to explore. He recalls feeling very welcomed on campus when he came for Gateway Weekend. It was there that he bonded with other perspective students visiting from his hometown of Baltimore, as well as students from Northern Virginia. “The weekend changed my life,” he shares. “It is a magical place when you see the school while it is in session.”

So magical that he went on to earn both his undergraduate and dual master’s degrees at Virginia Tech. His brother Kyle, a rising senior, is also a proud Hokie pursuing engineering science and mechanics. Education is the cornerstone of the family, as their mother recently earned a Ph.D. in nursing from George Mason University. “I push to be a better version of myself,” exudes Titus-Glover.

Each semester, Titus-Glover would work to improve his GPA, his last 60 credit hours tremendously higher. He credits his four-year involvement with the National Society for Black Engineers, one of the largest student-governed organizations in the United States, as a tremendous linkage to meeting several role models and connecting with professional organizations.

Another association that shaped Titus-Glover’s undergraduate experience was the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., which had “brothers” from both Virginia Tech and Radford University. “I bonded with a diverse group of young men from completely different backgrounds, but who shared similar goals and ambitions.”

Today Titus-Glover is a senior business manager in the area of technology operations at AT&T in Atlanta with experience in cloud computing and storage technology. One of his greatest self-discoveries is that making mistakes is not necessarily the end of the world. “I learned a lot about myself by taking risks and making mistakes.”

Alfred K. Titus-Glover Jr. enjoys visiting with his brother Kyle, a senior majoring in engineering science and mechanics, and reconnecting with faculty. He especially enjoys the International Street Fair held every April.

Did you know?
Hokies truly are inventing the future with their choice of more than 240 undergraduate and graduate degree programs of study (certificates and masters).
Veronica Bonilla

It is the quintessential fall day on Virginia Tech’s campus when Veronica Bonilla (marketing management ’10) stepped onto campus for the first time. The leaves had just started changing color and there was a distinct crispness in the air.

“I had never come across so much school spirit in my life, and I knew then that I wanted to be part of it all.” She also adds that the Pamplin School of Business rankings did not hurt either.

It was Bonilla’s role in Leadership Tech through the Division of Student Affairs that proved to be a formative experience. As a multi-year, co-curricular leadership development experience, students have the opportunity to cultivate leadership skills by participating in a small group led by two peer mentors who are passionate about student leadership and the spirit of Ut Prosim (That I May Serve). “Seeing the amount of poverty that existed around the New River Valley helped keep me conscious of the fact that the world was much bigger than the little bubble we all lived in Blacksburg.”

Socially aware and active

Bonilla says she saw in her last two years at Virginia Tech that more efforts were being placed on diversity and inclusion initiatives on campus. She was personally engaged in this effort with her active role as secretary of both the Theta Phi Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and the National Pan-Hellenic Council.

With a passion for social justice ignited, Bonilla recently decided to build upon that fire by pursuing a master’s in political communication at American University, where she is exploring the intersection of marketing, communication, politics, and policy as it relates to social justice and civil and human rights advocacy work. She also had the special opportunity to serve as the policy and legislation fellow with the League of United Latin American Citizens. Prior to this role, she served as a technical writer for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Bonilla cites that the friends she made as a student are her “most constant and treasured connection to Virginia Tech.”
Duane Rollins

It was a “no-brainer” for Duane Rollins (mechanical engineering ’09) when submitting his college applications that his heart would take him to Blacksburg.

“Virginia Tech has the best engineering program in the state.”

His visit to the campus was welcoming and peaceful. He especially enjoyed the greenery and the distinct architecture. It was unlike anything he had experienced from his hometown of Chesapeake, Virginia.

Rollins took advantage of all the opportunities Virginia Tech had to offer—or his own words “seized the moment.” He found himself drawn to a service fraternity, where he found “like-minded individuals” that he says added to the depth of his collegiate experience.

Tapestry of experiences

He said he drew wonderful life lessons—such as shaping goals for himself—from some amazing mentors at Virginia Tech, including the late Zenobia Hikes, vice president of student affairs, who Rollins recalls as always making time for students and attending their events. His full tapestry of experiences—from serving on the Black Cultural Center advisory board to participation in the summer undergraduate research programs—set him up for the next chapter of graduate school at Georgia Tech, where he earned a master’s degree in industrial design.

Now situated in the nation’s capital—or as Rollins calls it, the “extension of the Hokie family”—he works at 18F as a UX lead and training specialist. “Engineering at Virginia Tech taught me to solve problems, as well as the value of service and being a student learner.” He enjoys the vibrant energy Washington D.C. exudes with young professionals from all walks of life, but also enjoys seeing familiar faces. “You cannot move around the city without meeting a Hokie.”

Rollins—along with his brother Devon—have co-founded STEMLY, a non-profit that advocates for increased diversity in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) field by improving pathways for minorities. To quote one of the non-profit’s founding principles, “The world we aspire to requires the full participation of its citizens to actively participate in meeting the demand of the challenges ahead.”

Did you know?
Virginia Tech awarded 4,249 STEM-H degrees in 2014–15, making it the most degrees offered by a university in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
Shyrah Thomas

Shyrah Thomas (history ’12) admits that during her fall visitation to Virginia Tech in her junior year, she came with “no expectations and little excitement.”

The tide would change over the next 48 hours during her visit—so much so, that she left Blacksburg with a changed mind. “I knew that I wanted to call Virginia Tech home,” says Thomas, sharing she was welcomed by students, faculty, and staff. “Everyone was so helpful and wanted to show me how to fall in love with their school, too.”

Falling in love with Virginia Tech

Thomas would soon find engagement with several student-focused programs on campus—perhaps a precursor to her role as the coordinator for hallmark programs at George Washington University.

After graduating from Virginia Tech, she went on to earn her masters of science in education focused on student affairs at Old Dominion University.

Involvement with several clubs and organizations on campus—coupled with her work in Undergraduate Admissions—Thomas was able to interact with a wide range of students. She served as chapter president of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and vice president of the National Pan-Hellenic Council, in addition to the Commission on Student Affairs. She also managed to serve as a resident advisor and orientation leader as another touch point to students.

It was through her interactions with staff members that she witnessed the most progress in diversity and inclusion and where she felt she could reach out for resources. As mentors, Thomas says she was inspired by their examples of “understanding civility and what it meant to be a courageous leader.” As Thomas views Virginia Tech today, she credits President Timothy D. Sands for being both an involved and responsive leader and setting high expectations on community standards.

With her campus visit being so transformative, Thomas was actively involved with both the Fall Visitation and Gateway programs offered through Undergraduate Admissions each year. “I wanted to help underrepresented students fall in love with Virginia Tech.”

Did you know?

Virginia Tech graduates outpace the national average when it comes to thriving at work, having great careers, and leading lives that matter? Gallup research indicates that Virginia Tech alumni flourish in all five elements of well-being: purpose, social, financial, community, and physical well-being.
Rivver Cox

A walk around the Drillfield, including stops at the iconic Virginia Tech pylons, confirmed for Rivver Cox (psychology and biology ‘13) that he was destined to be a Hokie.

Growing up in the deep southwest mountains of Virginia, Cox admits that his exposure to higher education institutions were limited. Virginia Tech happened to be his last stop on a weekend college tour trip hosted by his high school where he fell in love with the environment and atmosphere of Blacksburg. “It reminded me of home, while the intense collegial atmosphere gave me the big school feeling I desired.”

Upon graduation, Cox was honored to be inducted into the nation’s oldest honor society, the Phi Beta Kappa Society, as well as Virginia Tech’s local Phi Sigma Biological Sciences Honor Society chapter.

With part of his heart always in Blacksburg, Cox made sure his next step would keep him in close proximity to the campus so he could visit often. He is currently working on his juris doctorate degree at Wake Forest University School of Law in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Upon graduation this summer, Cox will be relocating to Florida where he has accepted an offer with The Bleakley Bavol Law Firm, where he will be working in intellectual property and sports law. It is here that he plans to put his Ut Prosim (That I May Serve) values to work by serving the community and staying connected to his collegial interests.

Hiking the legendary Appalachian Trail is one of the items on Cox’s bucket list (he hopes to find time in his career to take a year off to do this).

Did you know?

InclusiveVT was recently introduced as a new transformational model to increase inclusion and diversity at Virginia Tech. In 2014, more than 86 initiatives were created and implemented across every major area of the university to increase inclusion and diversity.

Giving back to Blacksburg

Cox quickly took advantage of the service aspects Virginia Tech had to offer, including actively serving in clubs and participating in community outreach efforts. “My community involvement stretched from remodeling and constructing local houses with The Big Event to shaping model citizens with my involvement with Blacksburg’s local fraternity of Delta Phi Sigma.”

Involvement in organizations both on and off-campus created a unique touch point for Cox. “Upon my arrival at Virginia Tech, I was immersed in an environment of students and faculty from all walks of life.” As an undergraduate, he valued the pride the university had in growing a diverse community and recalls the university advertising numerous organizations promoting diversity among its students.

He continues to be impressed with his alma mater’s efforts. “I recently discovered InclusiveVT, which I believe is a great initiative to advance inclusion and diversity throughout the university and community.”

Photos: Peter Means

Hiking the legendary Appalachian Trail is one of the items on Cox’s bucket list (he hopes to find time in his career to take a year off to do this).
Get Started on Your Path and Make Virginia Tech your Destination

Join the Hokie Nation

Virginia Tech takes a minds-on learning approach to include experiences that far exceed the classroom. University faculty members are nationally and internationally recognized and are dedicated to preparing students for success beyond their time at Virginia Tech. From undergraduate research, to state-of-the-art laboratories to education abroad and internships, Hokies are learning daily how to invent their future.

But being a Hokie goes above and beyond academic success. Virginia Tech admits students with a goal of graduation, while also preparing its students to be exemplary in all walks of life. The university is breaking free from the myth that success is defined by a graduate’s major or grades, rather than the interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive abilities a student has developed.

The profiles of the nine dynamic alumni featured all credit Virginia Tech for cultivating a community that empowered them to go forth and illuminate the Ut Prosim (That I May Serve) message in their actions and interactions with others. Virginia Tech is looking for students who are driven to succeed and to apply their knowledge to improve the human condition and to create opportunities in an increasingly connected world. If you see yourself in these experiences, then it is time to make Virginia Tech your destination.

Did you know?
Since 2013, the university has seen a 16-percent increase in freshman applications, with 25,263 applications received for the Class of 2020 representing every state and several countries.
Enrollment and Degree Management
The Office of Enrollment and Degree Management provides leadership and collaboration to achieve university strategic goals by recruiting, enrolling, and graduating a highly-qualified, talented, and diverse student body while seeking opportunities to increase access and affordability for qualifying students, regardless of their socioeconomic status.