



fye.vt.edu

Welcome Back, Hokies!

"We are the creative force of our life, and through our own decisions rather than our conditions, if we carefully learn to do certain things, we can accomplish those goals." - Stephen Covey

Greetings FYE@VT Community of Practice:

The mission of undergraduate education is to ensure all Virginia Tech undergraduate students receive a 21st century education in the spirit of the university's motto, *Ut Prosim*, That I May Serve. I can think of no better community of people than the Virginia Tech FYE@VT faculty and collaborators to embark upon this mission in such a distinctive time in the history of higher education.

In addition to taking a strong FYE@VT course, my hope for our students during their first-year is that they:

- Cultivate an insatiable curiosity,
- Foster meaningful relationships with faculty,
- Engage with the residential campus experience during these challenging virtual scenarios,
- Find opportunities to learn more about self-awareness, and to meet, engage and be open to those that are different,
- Explore civic/political engagement to be a part of social change for the betterment of Virginia Tech and beyond, and do their best to live the university motto, that I may serve, *Ut Prosim*.

As always, go Hokies!

Rex Waters | Associate Director of Undergraduate Academic Programs

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> ICYMI

What's New with FYE@VT?

Celebrating 10 Years & Fall Semester Kickoff

Celebrating 10 Years!

This fall, the Office of First-Year Experiences is celebrating 10 years at Virginia Tech! For more information on the history of FYE@VT, please visit our website at <https://fye.vt.edu/about-fye/institutional-history.html>. To learn about the story of FYE@VT and how it came to be, please see page 5.



Keeping in Touch:

Attention all FYE@VT Faculty members! Consider sharing your scholarly work with the larger FYE Community. We would love for the FYE Community to stay connected as virtual teaching and learning has taken over. Send conference presentations, articles, photos, and/or samples of student work our way! Submit work to Rexford Waters (watersr@vt.edu)

Fall Kickoff Workshop:

In August, the FYE@VT Community kicked off this fall semester with a workshop and planning session. At the workshop, we learned about the Class of 2024, discussed education as an agent of cultural change, and shared lessons learned from this past spring and summer spent online. We also discussed other adaptations to working in a virtual environment and the latest updates in the FYE@VT program.

Thank you to our guest speakers, Jill Sible, Dannette Gomez-Beane, Frank Shushok, and Tiffany Shoop, for sharing their insights with the FYE@VT Community of Practice. For more information, please email Rexford Waters (watersr@vt.edu).

Summer Intern Instagram Takeover:

Our student program assistants developed and launched an "Instagram Takeover" this past July. This event allowed incoming students to connect with campus programs and resources by asking and submitting questions via Instagram.

Student program assistants from each department in Undergraduate Academic Affairs (UAA) were present to answer questions on behalf of their programs. Thank you Nala Miller for representing FYE@VT! Visit the Undergraduate Admissions Instagram to view the highlights: <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/18063430495243285/?hl=en>

> ICYMI

Peer Mentor Training Goes Virtual

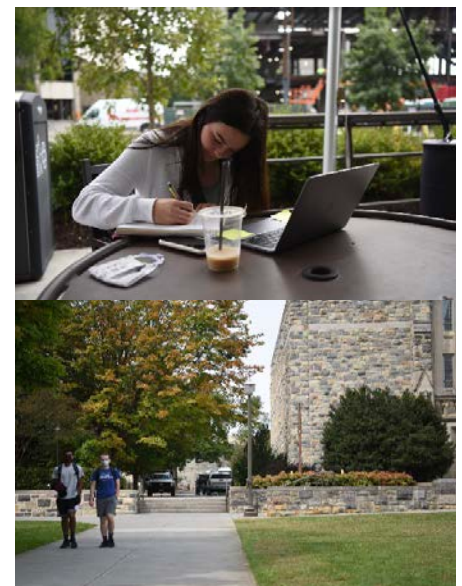
FYE@VT's peer mentoring program began launching its summer seminars in 2019 to prepare new students for their semester ahead as mentors. One year later, the training sessions have switched scenes -- moving online to Zoom.

The goal remained the same this year: to integrate peer mentors into the program through open discussion on expectations and opportunities of the position.

Through a variety of Zoom sessions available for student sign-up, the future

of FYE's peer mentoring program was able to come together, despite the distance. Bringing together the peer mentor community was a success this year, and FYE@VT looks forward to seeing how they grow and evolve this year as leaders.

Check out this peer mentoring [tip sheet](#) for helpful tips on navigating this school year as a peer mentor. For more information on FYE@VT's peer mentoring program, click [here!](#)



> Faculty Highlights & Awards

FYE@VT Faculty Recognized for Outstanding Roles

FYE@VT is proud to spotlight three Virginia Tech faculty members who have been awarded for their outstanding efforts in teaching and their roles as mentors. Congratulations to our faculty and staff!



Stephen Skripak, instructor of MGT 1104: Foundations of Business, was recently given the **William E. Wine Award for 2020**. This award was established by the Alumni Association and allows students, faculty, and alumni to nominate candidates from each college. Each recipient is inducted into the university's Academy of Teaching Excellence. Skripak developed the First-Year Experience Course, which has since been a crucial tool for first-year business students. Skripak has truly paved the way for Pamplin newcomers for accomplishment in course design and his dedication and service to the university and student learning. He continues to play a vital role in the success of first-year students. For more information on Stephen Skripak and the William E. Wine Award, click [here](#).



Buddy Howell, advanced instructor of COMM 1004: First-Semester Experience in Communication, was awarded the **University Sporn Teaching Award for Excellence in Teaching Introductory Subjects for 2020**. Nominated and selected by undergraduate students, the Sporn Teaching Award recognizes Howell for his roles as a mentor, advisor, and counselor. Howell says, "You want to be known as somebody who really loves students and tries to treat them the way you want to be treated...when they express appreciation for that, words can't describe it. You feel like you've been a part of their lives, encouraging them and helping them learn." For more information on Buddy Howell's recent award, please view this [article](#).



Maia Greene-Havas was announced winner of the **2020 Alumni Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Academic Advising** this past spring. Since 2016, she has been an academic and career advisor in the Department of Engineering Education. She has worked specifically with our international students -- collaborating with them as an investigator on an IRB-approved research study regarding first-year experience international students. Maia says, "I work to create an environment in which each student feels welcomed and respected. With diversity comes the opportunity to hold meaningful discussions that can greatly increase awareness and understanding when carried out appropriately." For more information on Maia's 2020 Alumni Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Academic Advising, click [here](#).

Thank you to our instructors for showing their dedication and compassion inside and outside of the classroom. Be sure to take a look at the other faculty and staff members recognized for their achievements this year by clicking [here](#). For the full video of recent Virginia Tech awards, you can view it [here](#).

> Support

FYE Council Members 2020-2021



The FYE@VT faculty community of practice is supported by the 2020-2021 Council Members listed below. Formed only a year ago, this group is committed to helping the Office of First-Year Experiences to provide valuable opportunities for student development and success.

Tiffany Shoop, Associate Director for Special Programs, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Herbert Bruce, Assistant Director of Practice for Undergraduate Education, Department of Food Science and Technology

Kirsten Dean, High-Impact Practices Librarian, University Libraries

Taran Cardone, Director, Learning Partnerships

Catherine Cotrupi, Assistant Director for Campus & Community Engagement, VT Engage

Renee Eaton, Undergraduate Program Director, Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise

Mara Knott, Academic Programs Manager, Engineering Education

Ron Poff, Assistant Professor of Practice, Pamplin College of Business Department of Management

Alma Robinson, Instructor/Teacher-in-Residence, Physics

Buddy Howell, Advanced Instructor, School of Communication

Dean Stauffer, Professor & Associate Department Head for Undergraduate Affairs, Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation

Robert Jacks, Director of Academic Advising, College of Architecture and Urban Studies

Rex Waters, Associate Director, Undergraduate Academic Programs

Sarah Bechtel, Advisor/Co Instructor, School of NeuroScience

Leigh Anne Leist, Associate Director, Career and Professional Development

Sherry Anton, Administrative Assistant, UAA - Undergraduate Education - Office of First-Year Experiences

Nala Miller, Student Programming Assistant, UAA - Undergraduate Education - Office of First-year Experiences

> Student Support

Meet the Interns: Student Support Profiles

The Office of First-Year Experiences' student program assistants play key roles in developing projects year-round for first-year students.



This fall, we're happy to welcome back **Nala Miller**, who is supporting data collection for FYE@VT.

Nala is a junior majoring in Computational Modeling & Data Analytics (CMDA), and has been working in the

Office of Undergraduate Education for the past year.

She collects data about FYE classes to ensure that they are fully preparing first-year students for the rest of their college career.

As a peer mentor for first-year students majoring in CMDA, Nala loves to help them learn ways that they can be successful in college and in their major. She is a member of the Association for Women in Computing, where she is able to connect with other women in computing majors and network with large computing companies.

She is also an active member in the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP). This program provides personal advisors and educational workshops for minority students in STEM fields.

Nala is passionate about using data to learn more about the world and she wants to use it to make major improvements to society.

>> Continued

Student Support

We would also like to highlight two other students working in departments under the Undergraduate Academic Affairs (UAA) unit, which includes First-Year Experiences and Academic Integrity.



Caroline Chappell is a junior majoring in communications with a focus in science and social inquiry. She chose her major to strengthen her leadership and further develop her strong and effective communication skills. While working with the Office of Undergraduate Academic Integrity, Caroline found an outlet to practice her passions in communication, leadership, integrity, and service to help fellow Hokies. Caroline has also enjoyed supporting the FYE@VT communications team this past summer. She is looking forward to enhancing her skills in communications while interning with both Academic Integrity and FYE@VT this fall.



Ashley Brein is a senior majoring in public relations. She is also pursuing minors in leadership and social change and professional and technical writing. Ashley has helped support FYE@VT's strategic communications efforts this past summer and will continue into the fall. She is also a member of the university's Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) and has served as their Treasurer and Community Outreach Chair. She chose a path in public relations/communications because she is passionate about working with and empowering others. Besides content-creating, her favorite thing about interning with FYE@VT has been the sense of community while collaborating with other interns in UAA.

Calling All FYE@VT Instructors!

The FYE@VT [website](#) is being updated to ensure that first-year students have access to important information such as campus resources, FYE@VT courses, and more.

In order to properly showcase your course with photos and useful tips, we need to hear from you!

If you haven't completed our course showcase survey, or would like to provide more information about your class, please email:

Rexf Waters (watersr@vt.edu) or

Ashley Brein (arb3@vt.edu).

FRESHMAN TIP SHEET:

Time Management Tips

Advice for Online Learning

Campus Resource Information

View the full Freshman Tip Sheet on our website by clicking [here](#).

Share with your students!

> Celebrating 10 Years

Here's to 10 Years: The Story of FYE@VT and Its Path Towards Success



- **2010**
FYE@VT Launches |
Originally named
“Pathways to Success”.
- **2016**
Peer Mentoring Expands |
Provides new
opportunities for peers
to aid fellow first-year
students.
- **2018**
Program Grows |
Out of the 6,827 students
registered as first-year
students in 2018, 5,317
enrolled in FYE courses.
- **2020**
FYE@VT Today |
Comprises over 7,000
students, making up 88%
of total first-years.

Over the past decade, FYE@VT has grown into a valuable initiative in transitioning first-year students to collegiate academics.

FYE@VT was originally named “Pathways to Success”, and served as a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). This launched in 2010 as a re-accreditation initiative with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The courses within FYE@VT have prospered over the years, offering a variety of disciplines and areas of study to students.

The incorporation of four foundational cornerstones with five essential “VT-shaped” practices has ensured an integrative academic transition and experience for students. For more information on FYE@VT’s essential practices and foundational cornerstones, please visit <https://fye.vt.edu/about-fye.html>

The development of the peer mentoring program has also fueled the growth of FYE@VT, allowing for transitioning students to connect with their peers and others in their major.

FYE@VT began in 2010 with just 5 courses and 1,000 students. Now, the program has expanded into 123 sections across the 7 university colleges. FYE@VT also comprises over 7,000 students, making up 88% of total first-years in 2019. Today, FYE@VT continues to develop -- remaining dedicated to first-year students and their academic success.

The impact that FYE@VT has had on its students could not have been achieved without our Community of Practice. Thank you to our faculty, staff, and others involved for ensuring that the university’s first-year students are able to learn, develop, and grow during their time here at Virginia Tech. Learn more about the history of FYE@VT by visiting our website [here](#).



REMINDERS FROM FYE@VT:

- The Virtual Majors Fair is coming up from September 28th to October 1st, 2020.
- Remind your students to register! For more information on registration and scheduling, please visit the advising [website](#).

FYE@VT Goes Remote: How We're Navigating Online Learning

With the fall semester in full swing, FYE@VT and other campus departments are facing new, everyday challenges. Navigating a virtual learning environment may feel normal to some, yet daunting to others during this time. We reached out to a few FYE@VT instructors to see how they are combatting the effects of COVID-19, in their classrooms and beyond.

“Lean into it, there are tons of people out there who have it worse than you,” says Dr. Matthew Komelski, who teaches HD 2335: Principles of Human Services. In his course, he says, “We are leaning into it. We are preparing to deliver online tutoring and mentorship to local elementary school kids and creative arts programs to seniors at Warm Hearth Village.”

Other course instructors have taken a different approach, choosing to integrate the topic of COVID-19 into their classes (as a result of redesigning activities for synchronous online courses). Robert Jacks, director of Academic Advising and professor for CAUS 1004: Explore Architecture and Urban Studies, says: **“the best advice I have received from a FYE@VT colleague was not to shy away from talking about COVID-19 in class.”**

This has enabled students in the College of Architecture & Urban Studies to use COVID-19 to learn about what people in various design-based majors do and how designers “respond to a changing world.” As we experience new circumstances, it can be beneficial to reflect upon them together.

Moving a majority of classes online has also impacted many people’s usual routines. Instead of walking across the drillfield everyday, students and staff are using that time to attend virtual lectures, enter and leave Zoom breakout rooms, and overcome the new normal technical difficulties -- all from their at-home desks and living room sofas.

Renee Eaton, who teaches HNFE 1114: Orientation to HNFE, says: “Combining virtual learning and in-person learning is quite challenging. Remembering to turn on Zoom, share my screen, unmute myself, keep Zoom minimized, and record the class are all added – and necessary – tasks.”



On the other hand, she notes how impressed she is with students managing their new schedules: **“Students have consistently come to class on time, been engaged, and have always had their class materials. I appreciate their diligence of wearing masks and maintaining distance, and I’m hoping class break-out spaces and mentor time will help them talk and get to know each other.”**

It seems that in many ways, the pandemic has allowed for deeper reflection upon ourselves and those with roles in education. Dr. Buddy Howell, advanced instructor of COMM 1004: First-Semester Experience in Communication, says that COVID-19 has helped him think more about the mental well-being of his Hokies. He says he has begun to **“see them -- more than usual -- as human beings, and not just human doings or academic students.”**

Connecting with others, as we continue to take care of ourselves, may be the best thing we can do for overall well-being at the moment. Whether that means daily exercise, Netflix and Amazon comedy specials, or simply taking a break to go on a walk for some fresh air, there are still ways to relax and regroup.

FYE@VT Goes Remote: How We're Navigating Online Learning

There are also numerous resources to take advantage of outside of campus. Sarah Betchel, academic advisor and FYE@VT coordinator, shares how she's been utilizing the atmosphere surrounding southwest Virginia. She says, "I joined the VT Rec Sports Employee Hokie Movement Club, which has kept me motivated to exercise. Other healthy ways I have tried to maintain my overall well-being include trying some new recipes and visiting the Virginia State Park hiking trails."

Robert Jacks also adds, "These little things have had such a positive impact on my work-life balance. It has improved my own well-being and health, and I've found I'm actually a lot more productive because of it."

Right now, we have been given an opportunity; one where we get to choose how to apply ourselves during this time. We must focus on simply doing our best -- as a result of our own determination -- rather than our conditions. The present circumstances have clouded everyone's sense of normalcy. Many may feel uncertain of what's to come.

As we continue to navigate the effects of COVID-19, remember that FYE@VT remains a community. Reach out to your colleagues, talk to your students, and stay connected. We are Hokies, and together we will prevail.

For more information from Hokie Wellness on maintaining personal health, safety, and well-being, please visit the website at <https://well-being.vt.edu/>. If you would like to learn more about fun, indoor and outdoor activities local to Blacksburg, please visit: <https://recsports.vt.edu/outdooractivities.html>.

What's Coming Up?

- **Camp FYE:** This event will be going virtual. (January 13th, 2021 - exact times to be determined)
- **National Transfer Student Week:** Virginia Tech is celebrating and recognizing our amazing Hokie transfers and the professionals who support them. (October 19th-23rd). To learn more about this week and its events please click [here](#).
- **CETL Fall Events:** **Creating Effective Group Activities and Assignments** (October 2nd, 2-4 p.m.) and **Student Voices: Learning in a Large Class** (October 7th, 2-4 p.m.) To register, or for more information on these events, visit the website at <https://teaching.vt.edu/>
- **CETL 13th Annual Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy:** Session will be online with **reduced registration fees**. (February 3-5th 2021) For more information on pre-conference workshops and registration, please visit: <https://chep.teaching.vt.edu/>