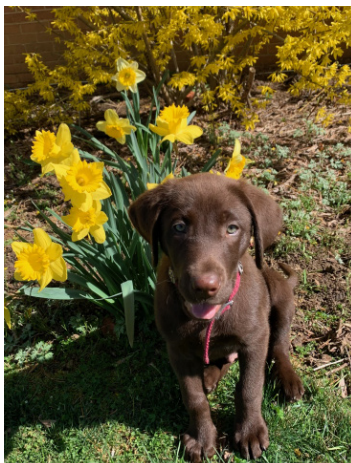




fye.vt.edu

Happy 2021, Hokies!

Greetings FYE@VT Community of Practice:
Welcome to spring!



While many thoughts may turn to renewal as Mother Nature reminds us of the fresh start of spring, we must persevere and continue the great work to finish the semester strongly. I have felt our COVID work is similar to the basketball event known as March Madness. Much like the basketball teams playing, there have been many super human efforts by the FYE@VT community to make the most of our current experience for our students. We have devised game plans quickly, made shifts during timeouts in the semester to alter course outlines (I sure missed spring break), and we have made last second changes to create the best learning experiences for the students. Additionally, the FYE@VT teams (colleagues, collaborators and friends) have rallied together to provide a high quality student learning experience.

The body of work in the FYE@VT community of practice has been exceptional this year - thank you! The students have benefitted from your commitment to create a challenging and supportive environment for them to be introduced to your discipline and the Virginia Tech academic community. We have had record enrollment numbers, over 8,700 students and we will be adding 4 new FYE@VT courses next fall.

When the semester concludes we will reflect and take stock of the good work. We will learn from the innovation and required pivots. We will take some time to nourish our person and to kick off the summer, we will come together at the Summer Institute May 18-20. Here we will reflect and take note of the work as a community of practice, remind ourselves of the important elements in our work and set our sights on the fall and our new students who will arrive in August. While we are not sure what the fall will entail, it is comforting to know that the FYE@VT community is preparing to greet the students when they arrive on campus.

Best regards and be well!

Rex Waters | Associate Director of Undergraduate Academic Programs

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What's New with FYE@VT?

Camp FYE@VT and National FYE Conference 2021

Camp FYE@VT 2021

On January 13, 2021 we held our Camp FYE@VT 2021. Due to the pandemic, the event was held over Zoom, like most other activities this year. We began the day with a FYE@VT panel discussion hosted by **Tiffany Shoop** examining what we learned in the fall. There was great conversation and insight shared on how to navigate a virtual semester, as well as how to keep students engaged and active during this difficult time. We also had a session filled with Zoom tips and tricks by **Dan Yaffe** and **Danielle Thacker**, which allowed participants to ask specific Zoom questions and learn the new updates to Canvas. Right before we broke for lunch, **Charmaine Troy** joined us for a beautiful presentation all about educating first generation students. Charmaine provided the attendees with knowledge and resources on how we can help first generation Virginia Tech students be more successful. During lunch, **Nasim Schwab** hosted a breakout room for those interested in joining in on a roundtable discussion about transfer students. Our last session of the day was about relationships and learning with **Peter Felten**. Peter is the author of Relationship-Rich Education, and in our session he shared his research on how students' relationships and connections can alter their college experience in positive or negative ways. We finished Camp FYE@VT 2021 off by heading over to see **President Tim Sands** give the State of the University Address.

We give a special thanks to all of our presenters: Tiffany Shoop, Renee Eaton, Rob Jacks, Alma Robinson, Jennifer Hanratty, Dan Yaffe, Danielle Thacker, Charmaine Troy, Nasim Schwab, and Peter Felten. We also want to thank everyone that attended, you truly made Camp FYE@VT 2021 a success!

- **Zoom Social Half-Hour** | bring your own caffeine
- **Welcome** | Rex Waters
- **What Did We Learn in Fall 2020** | Tiffany Shoop, Renee Eaton, Rob Jacks, Alma Robinson and Jennifer Hanratty
- **Who's Zoomin' Who and Canvas Forward** | Dan Yaffe and Danielle Thacker
- **Strategic Populations and FYE@VT: First Generation** | Charmaine Troy
- **Transfer Roundtable lunch discussion** | Nasim Schwab
- **Relationships and Learning** | Peter Felten

FYE@VT Faculty Recognized for Outstanding Roles

40th Annual National Conference on The First-Year Experience

The 40th Annual National Conference on The First-Year Experience was supposed to take place in Seattle, Washington, but due to COVID-19 health restrictions the conference was conducted over Zoom. The conference, which is sponsored by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition University of South Carolina, occurred over three days from February 15-19 and included a schedule filled with preconference workshops, vendors and conference sessions.

Several of our own FYE@VT Faculty were able to present during the 40th Annual National Conference. We want to recognize **Dr. Tiffany Shoop, Alma Robinson, Rex Waters** for their presentation of Pivot for Success: Sustaining an FYE Community of Practice Online. We also want to recognize **Dr. Charmaine Troy, Dr. Janet Hilder, Matt Kwiatkowski and Rex Waters** for their eye-opening presentation of Creating GenerationOne: Building a Living-Learning Community that Supports First-Generation Students.

Two of our own faculty were recognized at the national conference for being the Virginia Tech nominees in outstanding roles.



Buddy Howell was highlighted at the national conference for his achievement in receiving **Excellence in Teaching First-Year Seminars Award**. This award showcases educators who have achieved great success in teaching first-year seminars and continue to inspire student learning, development, and success.



Anne Brown was also recognized at the national conference for earning the honor of **Outstanding First-Year Student Advocates**. This award rewards those individuals who exhibit success and unprecedented work in a student's first-year development and learning.

Don't Miss Out on the 41st Annual National Conference on The First-Year Experience!

Where: Orlando, FL

When: February 12-15, 2022

Sponsored by: National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition University of South Carolina

For more information visit: https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/national_resource_center/events/conferences/first-year-experience/



FYE@VT by the Numbers

First-Year Experiences at Virginia Tech

2020-2021 Stats

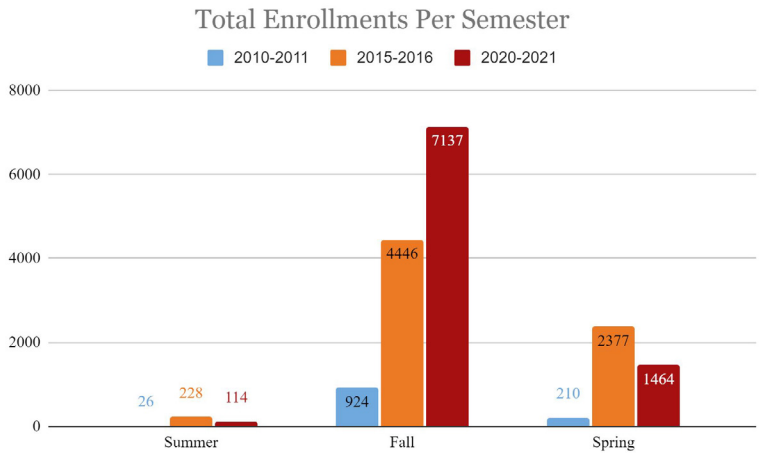
Students	8,715
Sections	173
Faculty	109
Peer Mentors	250+

Who's Involved?

FYE@VT has **22** program collaborators throughout Virginia Tech, including [University Libraries](#), [Undergraduate Research](#) and [Career & Professional Development](#). For more information, visit <https://fye.vt.edu/partners.html>. There are over **109** faculty members and over **250** peer mentors dedicated to making FYE@VT classes as engaging as possible for new students. **7** colleges at Virginia Tech offer FYE@VT courses for students that focus specifically on being successful in their major.

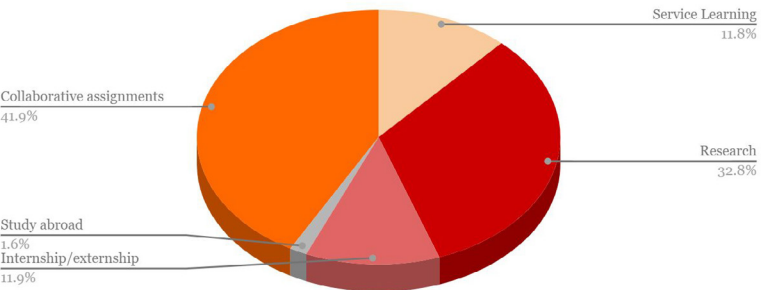


10 Years of FYE@VT



Foundational Learning Experiences

Number of Students Engaged in Foundational Learning Experiences



Foundational Learning Experiences are integrated in FYE@VT classes for students to engage in significant applied learning experiences.

Course Showcase

Agriculture & Life Science	
Architecture & Urban Sciences	
Engineering	
Liberal Arts and Human Sciences	
Natural Resources	
College of Science	
Multidisciplinary Program in Real Estate	
Pamplin College of Business	

Peer Mentors at Work:

What is the FYE@VT Peer Mentor Program?

The FYE@VT Peer Mentor program matches first-year students adjusting to the demands of college life with a veteran undergraduate student who shares their major and is capable of guiding them through a successful start to their own undergraduate career.

Peer Mentors serve in a variety of roles within the context of the First-Year Experience.

- **Connector** Peer mentors are equipped with knowledge of campus programs and resources and have the communication skills necessary to connect students to their campus community.
- **Student Advocate** Peer mentors serve as a liaison between mentee and professor, acting in the best interest of the mentee on both an academic and personal level.
- **Learning Coach** Peer mentors encourage mentees to develop their study habits and life skills, helping the mentee realize their academic potential.
- **Friendship** Peer mentors work intentionally to build trust and develop friendship with each mentee.
- **Role Model** Peer mentors lead by example – they too strive to develop their professional skills, engage with the campus community, and achieve academic success.
- **Facilitator** Peer mentors facilitate meaningful discussions with first-year students. The first semester of college can feel like a whirlwind for students - weekly conversations with a group of peers can serve as a welcome grounding experience for new students.



The Mentor-Mentee relationship is mutually beneficial - mentees benefit from the knowledge and lived experiences of their mentor; mentors benefit from a sense of fulfillment, in addition to gains in confidence and leadership skills. While the mentor-mentee relationship is typically one or two semesters in duration, many students continue to share a friendship with their mentor/mentee that extends beyond their time with FYE@VT Peer Mentor program.

Interested in Becoming a Peer Mentor?

- If you have a desire to help new students transition to college life, an appreciation for people from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles, and an enthusiasm for Virginia Tech and the Hokie community, then you may be a good fit for the FYE@VT Peer Mentor position!
- Mentors are organized by department/major, and the application process is slightly different for each program, so the best way to get involved is through contacting your FYE@VT faculty and asking about the application process!
- Peer Mentoring Training Dates 2021: August 17, 19, 25, 31 and September 3
- All peer mentors must attend just one of these training sessions. The sessions include different speakers and presentations that will prepare peer mentors to be the best they can be.

Have questions? Contact Rex Waters (watersr@vt.edu) to learn more!

Peer Mentor Q&A



- **Major:** Computational Modeling and Data Analytics
- **Peer Mentor for:** CMDA 1984
- **Year:** Junior

Allison Woods

What made you want to get involved with peer mentoring?

My freshman year I decided to rejoin the Orion Living Learning Community because of my peer mentor and he actually wasn't in my major but he was the person I was able to talk to the most about transitioning to college and really getting comfortable here at Virginia Tech. We still go out and see each other all the time so it really was because of my own peer mentor.

How do you think the skills and experience you have gained during your time peer mentoring will impact your life and career after graduation?

Mentoring is really about building relationships with superiors and people that you are meeting in the real world. You can ask people to be your mentor, literally anyone that you look up to; I actually got that advice from someone who works at Microsoft and they suggest choosing mentors that you are interested in learning more about and learning from. You can carry this experience anywhere and use it for networking and building relationships.

How have you grown during your time as a peer mentor?

I think that I have learned to communicate with students that are not necessarily looking up to me, but who are about to do what I am currently doing. I'm trying to give advice and use my experience to help them in the future and hopefully avoid the mistakes I have made.



- **Major:** Public Health
- **Peer Mentor for:** Orion Living Learning Community
- **Year:** Junior

Sara Honaker

Why do you believe the peer mentoring program at Virginia Tech is so valuable to a student's first year experience?

I think it's really important because we have so many students and we're such a big campus so it's easy to feel like you're just a number. Having a mentor and having someone guide you, figure out the things you like, your interests, but also hear you is important. It makes Virginia Tech feel like a smaller community than it is.

What is the best advice you could give to someone who is thinking about being a peer mentor or who has just started peer mentoring?

I would suggest that they put themselves in the place of the person that they are peer mentoring, so for me anything that I wish I had known freshman year or I wish I could've gone to someone to talk about that what I tried to be for them. I also tried to focus a lot more on wellness and doing mental health checks with them so that they knew they had someone to come to who would provide resources for them.

How has peer mentoring impacted your experience at Virginia Tech?

I feel like I have a niche, like a place at Virginia Tech and a purpose. I like that it gives me purpose, I feel like I'm giving back to other people.



- **Major:** Biochemistry
- **Peer Mentor for:** BCHM 1014, BCHM 1984
- **Year:** Junior

Brenna Hegedus

What is your favorite aspect about peer mentoring at Virginia Tech?

I like how inclusive it is because there is student diversity within the peer mentors and you get to interact with so many different kinds of people. It's really cool especially once you see your mentor group become friends with each other and exchange numbers, it's like oh my gosh I did something right! I love it. It's a good way to make more friends and it's good for tutoring. I can't tell you how many times I've gone to my older friends for a mentor to help me. It's also really good for networking and getting to know the faculty.

What skills have you learned during your time as a peer mentor?

Proper communication, effective time management, and how to learn to explain something in ways that maybe I already understand but maybe someone won't understand it in the way I do.

How are you persevering as a peer mentor throughout this time of virtual learning and COVID-19?

I have definitely been keeping in contact with the professor in charge of the course and other peer mentors. It is very helpful to become friends with other peer mentors because it shows it's more fun to be a peer mentor and it's good networking. I have had students who have had my friend as a peer mentor or that I have peer mentored somewhere else so it's like, woah, small world. It's kind of cool when everything connects.

What's Coming Up?

2021 Summer Institute: May 18-20.

- The 2021 Summer Institute will be held this May 18-20. The three day format will host **Pathways, HHMI and FYE@VT communities of practice**. The first two days will be more conference style and participants will select the program they want to attend. The third day, May 20, will be dedicated to focused time for each of the communities.
- **Don Taylor** will open the Institute and **Shannon Brady** will provide a keynote address for the Institute. There will be FYE@VT and general sessions sprinkled throughout the first two days and on day three we will spend the morning focused on FYE@VT specific content. We will end at 11:30 on the 20th. The program format is planned to be virtual. More details about session and times will be added to the website as they are confirmed. We hope to see you at the 2021 Summer Institute.
- For more information visit: https://www.provost.vt.edu/who_we_are/undergraduate_affairs/the-summer-institute.html