

#### VCCS Task Force Issues Campus Safety Report

A special VCCS campus safety task force, created in the wake of last April's tragic shooting at Virginia Tech, is offering 40 recommendations to improve safety across Virginia's Community Colleges.

The recommendations, focus on three key areas: redundant communication sources, vigilant emergency preparation, and better coordinated, easier-to-understand reporting of campus safety-related information.

"I appreciate the leadership and hard work of the panel members," said Glenn DuBois, chancellor of Virginia's Community Colleges. "We serve two out of every three undergraduate students attending public colleges in Virginia and they're all commuter students. We serve them in 5.7 million square feet of instructional space in 224 buildings located on our 40 campuses in urban, suburban and rural settings. Our sheer size and diversity make campus safety a challenge while underscoring its priority."

The taskforce report calls on colleges to "develop multiple redundant strategies" for communicating in a crisis including both "high tech and low tech" methods."

"Text messaging and other high-tech resources are wonderful but limited," said Neil Matkin, VCCS vice chancellor for information technology services and chair of the task force. "When you lose power, an old-fashioned bull horn could be a life saver."

The report further calls for organizational changes to ensure that there is always a point person on each campus responsible for coordinating emergency planning. It also calls for annual training to ensure that everyone who learns and works on a community college campus is aware of emergency preparedness.

The report also urges the review and simplification of campus safety information reporting. Currently, Virginia's community colleges have to submit various pieces of safety and security-related information to more than two-dozen agencies and various levels of governments.

Regarding the possession or use of firearms, explosives or other deadly weapons, the report endorses the findings and recommendations of the Virginia Tech panel report and urges Virginia's community colleges to adopt a strong weapons policy.

"We understand there is a lot of emotion that surrounds the issue of weapons on campus," said DuBois. "Put simply; deadly weapons are not appropriate for a learning environment."

To read the entire campus safety task force report, visit the VCCS website at <a href="https://www.vccs.edu.">www.vccs.edu.</a>



VHCC News is produced each month by Anne Dunham of the Office of Institutional Advancement. If you would like to suggest information for the newsletter, please send your ideas to adunham@vhcc.edu or contact her by phone at 276-739-2456. VHCC is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution.

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(Above, Left to Right) Bobby Patrick, Samantha Hobbs, Dr. Wilkin, Brittany Lutzo, and Ed Harris stopped at the newly renovated Virginia State Capitol during a recent trip to Richmond to meet with the local legislative delegation. The trip is part of "Every Day is Community College Day," a legislative advocacy event organized by the Virginia Community College System. (Right) Bobby Patrick and Samantha Hobbs joined the group in visiting a Jan. 23 session of the Virginia House.

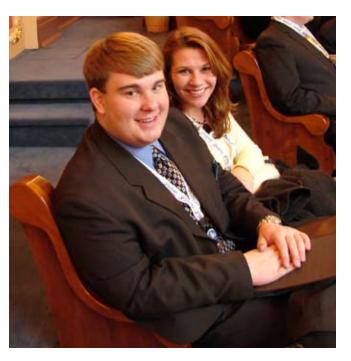
## Student Advocates Visit Virginia's General Assembly

Four VHCC students joined President David Wilkin and Tim Harrison, coordinator of the Student Success Center, on Jan. 22-23 for a trip to Richmond to meet with the local legislative delegation about issues that impact higher education.

Students Bobby Patrick, Brittany Lutzo, Samantha Hobbs and Ed Harris participated in the Virginia Community College System's "Every Day is Community College Day." The annual event is designed to have community college students in Richmond each day that the General Assembly is in session.

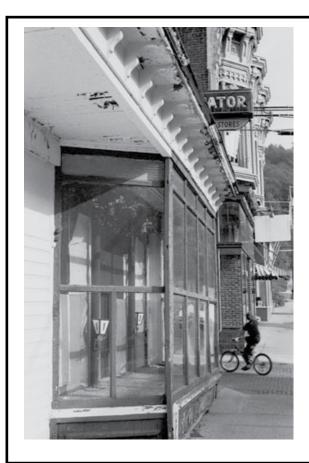
In addition to meeting with VCCS Chancellor Glenn DuBois, students took time to meet delegates Terry Kilgore, Bill Carrico, and Joe Johnson. Senators William Wampler Jr. and Phillip Puckett were in committee meetings and were not available.

The VCCS this year is supporting:



- Gov. Tim Kaine's proposed \$1.6 billion General Obligation Bond Issue. If approved by the General Assembly, Virginia voters will consider the issue on the November ballot. The funds would be used for capital projects on college/university campuses across Virginia, including more than \$2 million for renovations to the VHCC Library and Learning Lab.
- Additional operating funds to serve the growing population of Virginians who attend community colleges, to provide faculty raises, and to provide adequate financial aid for students.
- Funding to implement the Career Coach and Middle College programs on campuses where they do not currently exist. Both programs are designed to steer more Virginians toward education.

Legislative updates are available by visiting the VCCS website at <a href="http://vahighered.com">http://vahighered.com</a>.



#### Photographic Exhibit Chronicles Virginia's Lost Cities

"Lost Communities of Virginia," a traveling photographic exhibit that chronicles 14 communities that have suffered the effects of transportation and economic changes, is now on display at Virginia Highlands Community College.

On loan from Virginia Tech's Community Design Assistance Center, the exhibit highlights Pocahontas, Pamplin City, Mineral, Derby, Doe Hill and several other small communities from Appalachia to Virginia's eastern shore. Each photograph is accompanied by a narrative about the community and issues that led to its shrinking population.

Photographer Kirsten Sparenborg chose forgotten schools, empty stores, and abandoned railroad tracks to illustrate once-thriving communities that lost their purpose because of changes in industry, agriculture and transportation. As coal mines closed and new roads developed throughout the state, residents moved and the railroad was no longer an essential mode of transportation in many of these tiny towns. Retail businesses also closed, leaving abandoned stores and crumbling buildings behind.

The exhibit was developed during a five-month tour across Virginia.

The public is invited to view the exhibit, which is on display in the VHCC Library and the adjacent corridor. There is no charge to view the exhibit, which will remain on display at VHCC through the end of February.

Additional information is available (276) 739-2456 or http://cdac.arch.vt.edu/exhibit.html.

(Photo) Centre Street in Pocahontas. "Where there were shop windows filled with goods and doors opened and closed by miners and their families, there is now broken glass, dusty, abandoned interiors, and silence." The Southwest Virginia Improvement Co. was formed in 1881 by Southern engineers who bought up the coal rich land and began building a town at Pocohontas. Today there are more bodies in the historic cemetery than living in the town.

#### Retirement System Offers Planning Tool

The Virginia Retirement System offers a number of options for retirement planning. On the VRS web site at <a href="www.varetire.org">www.varetire.org</a> (under the Member tab), members may register in myVRS, which offers access to the member's VRS account information including total service credit, account balances and purchases of prior service. This site also includes a feature that allows members to run retirement estimates based on current account information. In addition, members may access other retirement planning materials such as the Pre-Retirement Planning Guide at this site.

As an additional retirement planning service, VRS offers local sessions of the Retirement Education Seminars (RES) and Group Counseling Sessions (GCS). The Retirement Education Seminars provide general retirement information including estate and financial planning. The Group Counseling Sessions are for VRS members planning to retire within the next five years. Sessions will be held this spring at Wytheville Community College and VHCC. Preregistration is required. For more information and to preregister, go to the VRS web site and click on Planning for Retirement under the Members tab.

A link to the VRS web site is also available on the VHCC Human Resources web page. If you have any questions, please contact Debbie Hale.



#### FROM THE ARCHIVES



Community college presidents come and go, but 1969 panelling never goes out of style. Here's VHCC's first president, Dr. Donald Puyear, making some important executive decisions during Fall Semester 1970. It's interesting to note that extra money was requested during the construction phase of the original campus buildings to include special touches in the presidents office. Insert a computer and Dr. Wilkin in this photo and it would be hard to believe this shot was taken almost 40 years ago.

# Student Safety Tips

#### Learn the best routes between your classes and activities. Take the safest route, not the fastest route.

- route, not the lastest
   Travel in groups of two or more at night and always walk in well-lit, heavily traveled areas.
  - traveled areas.
    Stay on the part of the sidewalk that is farthest away from shrubs, dark doorways, and alleys.
  - Share your class schedule with friends
     and family, effectively creating a buddy
  - When you go out, let someone know where you are going and when you plan to be back.
  - Know where the emergency telephone is located. Beside the sidewalk by LRC building entering Parking Lot 4.
    If you feel unsafe walking to your car
  - If you feel unsafe walking to your after dark, call campus police for an escort. (276) 614-8282.

### SOAR Team Tackles Key Goals

A successful SACS visit came this past October after much behind-the-scenes work on the quality enhancement plan, which was launched under the theme SOAR (Strengthening Orientation, Advising and Retention).

SOAR strategies that were successfully completed include:

- Website redesign took a step forward with presentations from several companies. A contract currently is being negotiated.
- Publications Guidelines were drafted and approved by the Marketing Team and PAC. The guidelines are available at <a href="https://www.vhcc.edu/publications">www.vhcc.edu/publications</a>.
- Early intervention strategies including an early alert system and an attendance tracker program were explored. An ad hoc committee approved adopted a system developed by Danville Community College.
- A common syllabus for orientation was developed.
- Accurate lists of advisees were sent to each faculty advisor
- A speaker to address developmental advising was recommended for February in-service.

Work has begun on the additional strategies, which include:

- Piloting a semester long orientation class
- Refining/developing advising student learning outcomes and developing a way to assess them.
- Developing an "online preview" that will include information previously presented in new student seminars.
- Providing a February 14 in-service on developmental advising
- Developing an advising manual
- Selecting an e-portfolio/communication tool
- Identifying students in need of two or more developmental courses
- Blocking enrollment for students with at least 15 credits who still need Orientation or developmental courses
- Developing on-going advising training for faculty