

# VHCC newsletter

## Veterans Program Established

Specialized veterans services are now being offered at VHCC and on community college campuses throughout Southwest Virginia, thanks to a U.S. Department of Education grant that has established a Veterans Upward Bound Program.



Miller

The program is designed to assist veterans of the U.S. armed forces achieve their educational goals by helping them select a college, earn a degree, and choose a career. Denise Miller, one of two advisors hired for the program, will be on the VHCC campus each Tuesday from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. She is available to meet with veterans already enrolled in VHCC classes and those interested in becoming students.

“This is a great program geared entirely toward veterans,” Miller said, explaining that the program is the only one in Virginia and one of only 45 nationwide. “I am available to meet individually with veterans so that I can provide a broad range of services that will help them complete a college education.”

Miller will split her time between VHCC and Southwest Virginia Community College, while advisor Martha Strouth will meet with veterans at Wytheville Community College. The two will share duties at Mountain Empire Community College.

Services are available to any veteran who:

- Has served at least 181 days of active duty and
- Received a discharge other than dishonorable and
- Is a first-generation college student or
- Meets federal low-income eligibility requirements.

All services are free to qualified individuals. Advisors are available to provide veterans with help selecting a college and completing financial aid forms. Once enrolled, academic advisement, tutoring, career counseling, and workshops designed to promote academic success and job readiness will be offered. Miller said the program also is planning to provide group counseling on each campus to assist veterans in making the transition from military life to life as a college student. The first counseling session will be held March 4 from 5:30-7 p.m. in ISC-216.

Those interested in learning more about the program are encouraged to attend an informational session from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesday, March 18. The session will be held in ISC-303.

Please contact Miller at (276) 964-7557 or [Denise.Miller@sw.edu](mailto:Denise.Miller@sw.edu) for more information.



## New Degrees Programs Approved by SCHEV

VHCC has enhanced its program offerings to include Associate of Applied Science Degrees in Computer Numerical Control Machine Operations, Electrical Technology, and Air Conditioning, Heating & Refrigeration.

Each of the programs has been approved by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and will be offered during the 2008-2009 academic year, said Robert May, dean of the Division of Science and Engineering Technology.

“We’ve offered certificate and diploma programs in these areas for many years, but we began pursuing the degree programs at the request of students and employers,” May said. “Many companies will only consider applicants with a college degree, and others use a degree as criteria for a promotion within the workplace. We think this is going to make our graduates more employable and provide additional opportunities

for advancement.”

The long-established certificate and diploma programs will still be offered, May said, noting that these programs can be completed in a shorter period of time and include fewer general education courses than the degree programs. Students who pursue the associate degree programs will take many of the same courses but also will be required to complete courses in social sciences, humanities and physical education. The degree programs typically can be finished in two years.

VHCC officially will begin offering these new degree programs in Fall Semester 2008, which begins in August, but students can take some required general education courses during the summer, May said.

For additional information, please contact May at (276) 739-2432 or [rmay@vhcc.edu](mailto:rmay@vhcc.edu).



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](mailto:adunham@vhcc.edu) or contact her by phone at 276-739-2456. VHCC is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution.

Virginia Highlands  
Community College  
[www.vhcc.edu](http://www.vhcc.edu)

or call  
276-739-2400

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(276) 739-2436

# VCCS Safety Report Recommends 'Redundant Strategies' for Emergency

**Richmond** – 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, often detailed and technical, 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.

"When it comes to getting the word out in a crisis, there's no such thing as a silver bullet," said Neil Matkin, VCCS vice chancellor for information technology services and chair of the task force. "Text messaging and other high-tech resources are wonderful but limited. And those limitations are often outside of our control. 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.

"Emergency planning has a lot of moving pieces. A point person to coordinate what planning is occurring is essential," said David Sam, president of Germanna Community College and one of the task force's co-chairs. "That central coordination is key for both the college community and those outside, like first responders and other community leaders."

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.

"People have a fundamental right to know about how safe our campuses are and what we are doing to make them safer," said Cheryl Thompson-Stacy, president of Eastern Shore Community College and the task force's other co-chair. "But I don't know if the current method of reporting – a piece here and

a piece there – really allows people to see the whole picture. We can and should do better with that."

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 the weapons policy recently enacted by Germanna Community College after review by the Office of Virginia's Attorney General.

"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 [www.myfuture.vccs.edu](http://www.myfuture.vccs.edu).

## Campus Safety Tips

From VHCC Campus Police

- Wherever you are, stay alert to your surroundings and the actions of people around you.
- Follow your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, change directions, go to an emergency phone or into a public building, or call Campus Police (276) 614-8282.
- Do not leave your belongings unattended, even for a few minutes.
- Avoid displaying large amounts of cash or other tempting targets such as jewelry or expensive clothing.
- Always lock your car and keep valuables out of site. Check the back seat before getting in.
- Memorize the phone number of the Campus Police (276) 614-8282.



## FROM THE ARCHIVES



Feeling frustrated by the new features of Office 2007 and wishing you could go back to the old way of doing things - back to the good old days when Sandy Mullins was a student and carbon paper and liquid paper were everyday tools? This photo is not dated but it comes from a day when those studying to be administrative assistants enrolled in the Secretarial Science program.

## Virginia Offers Cash Match Plan

Most employees are familiar with the primary fringe benefits offered by the state for salaried employees. Health insurance, basic retirement, life insurance and leave benefits are generally pretty well known to the majority of employees. Due to busy schedules, the information provided on some other benefits may not always get noticed. So, are you missing out on any great benefits? One of these benefits, the Virginia Cash Match Plan, is briefly described in this month's article.

The Virginia Cash Match Plan is an employer-paid cash match program for salaried employees who make pre-tax retirement account contributions to the state's Deferred Compensation Plan (457) or to a Tax Sheltered Annuity Plan (403b) through payroll deduction. The employer match amount is 50% of a participant's contribution or \$20 per pay period, whichever is less.

The maximum cash match amount contributed by the state is \$480 each year. (The amounts are adjusted for faculty paid on a nine-month schedule so they also may receive the maximum cash match contribution of \$480 per year.) More information is available through the FYI - Benefits section on the Human Resources web page or by contacting Debbie Hale at (276) 739-2425 or [dhale@vhcc.edu](mailto:dhale@vhcc.edu).



Put on your boogie shoes, dust off your best gold medallion, squeeze into your spandex, and get ready to dance the night away. The VHCC Student Government Association is hosting a semi-formal dance on Friday, April 4, from 8 p.m. to midnight at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center. All students, former students, and employees are encouraged to attend. A deejay will spin all the hits from the 1960s through today. Advanced tickets are \$8 per person or \$15 per couple and can be purchased in ISC-216. All tickets will be \$10 at the door.