



Dean of the College of Natural Resources and Environment

Leadership Profile

Spring 2025



Executive Summary

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) is seeking an innovative, collaborative, and forward-looking leader to serve as the next dean of the College of Natural Resources and Environment. The successful applicant will be passionate about making a difference, dedicated to excellence, and eager to join a vibrant community of scholars. The new dean will lead a college that is a catalyst for progress in natural resources and the environment, building on the college's roots in forestry, forest products, fish and wildlife conservation, geography, and the land-grant mission of Virginia Tech.

Virginia Tech's main campus is in Blacksburg, Virginia, which is consistently ranked among the country's best places to live. In addition, Virginia Tech has facilities across the state and around the globe, including a network of Agricultural Research and Extension Centers. One of these is dedicated exclusively to forestry. As the Commonwealth of Virginia's most comprehensive university and a leading research institution, Virginia Tech offers about 110 undergraduate majors and more than 120 master's and doctoral degree programs to more than 38,000 students and manages a research portfolio of close to \$600 million. The university fulfills its role as a land-grant institution by fostering a collaborative environment that integrates technology into all disciplines so that the Virginia Tech community can serve as a force for positive change around the Commonwealth, the country, and the world. Through experiential learning, future-focused research, and an inclusive, spirited culture, Virginia Tech strives to accomplish the charge of its motto *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve).

The College of Natural Resources and Environment (CNRE) at Virginia Tech is widely recognized as one of the nation's top programs dedicated to the study and stewardship of natural resources. CNRE offers a dynamic and interdisciplinary academic environment where students, faculty, and researchers collaborate to address some of the most pressing environmental and resource management challenges facing the world today. The college is home to a diverse range of programs that span forestry, wildlife conservation, sustainable biomaterials, fisheries, and geography, all grounded in a strong foundation of sustainability, innovation, and global engagement.

The new dean will have the opportunity to build on a strong research foundation to strengthen further the impact of scholarship, engagement in graduate student and postdoctoral education and training, and national/international reputation of faculty in the college. The college is focused on addressing global challenges, including protection of the natural environment; afforestation and habitat destruction; invasive plant and animal species, climate change and its associated impacts such as rising sea levels and extreme weather events; biodiversity loss; the ecology of infectious diseases, use of biomaterials in construction, and sustainable use of vital resources such as water.

The next dean must have a record of scholarly achievement appropriate for a tenured appointment at the level of full professor in a department within the college and must have a steadfast commitment to innovation in education with an emphasis on experiential learning and be committed to advancing inclusive excellence. The new dean must have a record of administrative leadership and demonstrate the administrative, fiscal, and operational acumen required to manage a distinctive program in the context of a large, complex institution. The dean should demonstrate outstanding leadership qualities and exceptional interpersonal, collaboration, and communication skills. Additionally, the dean should demonstrate the potential and desire to forge strong relationships with colleagues and engage donors, alumni, and others in enhancing philanthropic support for the college.

To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see Procedure for Candidacy at the end of this document.

Role of the Dean of the College of Natural Resources and Environment

The dean of the College of Natural Resources and Environment serves as chief administrative officer of the college and is responsible for strategically leading the college's academic and administrative operations. The dean leads and promotes excellence in teaching, research, scholarship, extension, and service in the college and across the university.

The dean of the College of Natural Resources and Environment is responsible for:

- Providing academic leadership and strategic execution, including revising and updating the [college's strategic plan](#) in support of the university's strategic vision; overseeing curriculum development and academic program management; representing the college to external stakeholders, including alumni, donors, and government bodies; and advocating for the college's needs and interests at the institutional and governmental levels.
- Enhancing research and innovation by promoting and supporting research activities within the college in support of the Virginia Tech [Global Distinction](#) aspirations, including ensuring the college is aligned with, supports, and advances the university's Core Strategic Themes as outlined in the [Goals and Priorities: Virginia Tech's Academic Enterprise](#) and the associated cross-cutting goals; fostering collaboration and interdisciplinary research initiatives; managing the college's physical infrastructure and facilities; and planning for the renovation and expansion of research and teaching spaces.
- Championing initiatives that prioritize and enhance student academic success, ensuring educational access and affordability in support of [Virginia Tech Advantage](#), including developing scholarship opportunities, and enhancing support services so that students from all backgrounds are empowered to succeed academically and professionally. Additionally, the dean will support student-centric programming, internships, and hands-on learning experiences that prepare graduates to thrive in a competitive, globalized workforce.
- Supporting the college's and university's outreach and extension by strengthening connections with the agricultural industry, government agencies, and community stakeholders; promoting the dissemination of research findings to the wider community through extension services; and developing and maintaining partnerships and collaborations with external organizations as well as internal partners including the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine.
- Managing and supporting people, including recruiting, hiring, evaluating, and promoting faculty and staff; fostering a positive and inclusive work environment; encouraging and supporting faculty in their teaching and research activities; and supporting the university's commitment to inclusive excellence, shared governance, and access and affordability.
- Overseeing budgeting and financial management, including developing and managing the college's budget under Virginia Tech's Partnership for Incentive-Based Budget (PIBB) system; allocating resources to departments and programs; seeking external funding, grants, and donations to support the college's mission and activities; monitoring and controlling expenses to maintain financial stability.

The dean reports to the [executive vice president and provost](#), is a key member of the university's senior leadership team, and works closely with the college's faculty, associate and assistant deans, department heads, and directors, as well as with the deans, vice presidents, and directors of other university units. The dean provides leadership that reflects a commitment to the land-grant philosophy and mission of the university and college in its diverse development, extension, information technology, international, instruction, research, and service activities. The dean must be an authentic leader with vision and imagination who will be credible to a diverse array of constituents and willing to work collaboratively at all levels.



Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The next dean of the College of Natural Resources and Environment will have the opportunity to:

- **Provide leadership and foster innovation within the college:** The dean will guide the college in setting a visionary agenda that encourages creative problem-solving, interdisciplinary collaboration, and cutting-edge research, while also promoting inclusive excellence that drives both academic success and community impact. With \$23 million in research expenditures this past year, CNRE is the fourth most research productive college at Virginia Tech.
- **Drive advancements in forestry, conservation, agriculture, geography, and related fields with real-world applications:** By supporting research that directly addresses critical issues like sustainable resource management and environmental restoration, the dean will help translate academic knowledge into practical solutions that benefit both local communities and global ecosystems.
- **Build partnerships with industry, government, and community stakeholders:** The dean will play a pivotal role in fostering collaborative efforts across sectors, leveraging partnerships to secure funding, influence policy, and implement innovative practices that promote sustainable natural resource use and environmental stewardship.
- **Foster inclusive excellence and build community:** The dean will ensure a positive, collegial, and highly collaborative work environment that embraces openness, transparency, diversity of thought and will promote an atmosphere of belonging where all faculty, staff, and students feel welcomed, valued, and included. The dean will develop and implement strategies to promote inclusive excellence across CNRE, ensuring equitable access and opportunities for all members of the college community.
- **Recruit and retain talented faculty, staff, and students:** Actively recruit and retain a varied and highly talented faculty, staff, and student body. The dean will understand and address the unique needs of all faculty and staff, by fostering commitment to and full engagement with CNRE through trust, recognition, and flexibility. Further, the dean will recognize the current landscape with regards to student recruitment and invest the necessary resources to continue the college's positive trajectory in enrollment. The dean

will also be astute regarding opportunities for new avenues to recruit students, including amplification of the college's successful professional degree programs.

- **Mentor and empower students to become future leaders:** Through leadership in curriculum development and experiential learning, the dean will equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in their fields, inspiring them to address environmental challenges and make lasting contributions to society as future leaders in natural resources and conservation. The dean will continue the college's success in experiential learning and student research experiences.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

Required Qualifications

- Earned doctorate and a distinguished record of scholarly activity that would qualify for the rank of professor within the college.
- Effective communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to work effectively in collaboration with many constituencies.
- Experience in leading and managing a major research program or academic unit.
- Demonstrated successful leadership in higher education.
- Commitment to the mission of a land grant university and to inclusive excellence.
- Demonstrated effectiveness in planning, administration, and personnel and fiscal management.



Desired Qualifications

- Vision and ability to advance the research agenda of the college and university, including transdisciplinary and cross-college initiatives in support of Virginia Tech's global distinction aspirations.
- Previous leadership of an academic unit in a discipline and college relevant to the academic disciplines in the College of Natural Resources and Environment.
- Record of accomplishment in recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, staff, and students.
- Successful experience, or demonstrated potential, in fundraising, development activities, and collaborating with industry.

About the College of Natural Resources and Environment

The College of Natural Resources and Environment (CNRE) at Virginia Tech is widely recognized as one of the nation's top programs dedicated to the study and stewardship of natural resources. CNRE offers a dynamic and interdisciplinary academic environment where students, faculty, and researchers collaborate to address some of the most pressing environmental and resource management challenges facing the world today. The college is home to a diverse range of programs that span forestry, wildlife conservation, sustainable agriculture, fisheries, and geography, all grounded in a strong foundation of sustainability, innovation, and global engagement.



As described in its [strategic plan](#), the College of Natural Resources and Environment mission is “to prepare the future generation of leaders to address the complex natural resources issues facing our planet, primarily through world-class faculty who conduct transformational research that complements the student learning experience and impacts citizens and communities across the state and around the world on issues of sustainability, natural resources management, and the environment.” It is a thriving college that includes a diverse, innovative, and creative world-class faculty; talented and forward-looking staff and students; state-of-the-art facilities; and engaged stakeholders and alumni.

With its commitment to transcriptable experiential learning, CNRE emphasizes hands-on education through fieldwork, internships, and research opportunities that allow students to apply classroom knowledge to real-world problems. The college also plays a pivotal role in Virginia Tech's land-grant mission, engaging with local communities, industry partners, and government agencies to foster environmental stewardship and sustainable resource use. Faculty within the college are leaders in their fields, driving advancements in critical areas such as forest management, climate change adaptation, water resource protection, remote sensing, geospatial sciences, and biodiversity conservation. Through its forward-thinking research and teaching, CNRE is dedicated to preparing the next generation of environmental leaders who will help shape the future of natural resources management.

Along with the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the College of Natural Resources and Environment is at the center of the land grant tradition at Virginia Tech, and consequently conducts its research and educational programs at numerous sites on- and off-campus. The college is home to approximately 217 faculty and staff, including 73 tenured or tenure-track faculty. It offers six B.S. degrees, one B.A. degree, 11 majors, five M.S. degrees, and three Ph.D. programs. These degree programs are offered through five academic units: four departments and one center. The college has enrolled 1,014 undergraduate students and 306 graduate students, and it has initiated and nurtured programs for recruitment and retention of under-represented students. CNRE's undergraduate degree programs are unique in the Commonwealth of Virginia, a real strength of the college.

Faculty in the college are deeply engaged in basic and applied research with research expenditures of nearly \$23 million in FY2024, ranking fourth among colleges at Virginia Tech. Researchers in the college work on a wide range of topics, including sustainable forest management, wildlife conservation, water resource protection, and climate change adaptation. They are also engaged in advancing geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing technologies to monitor and manage natural resources more effectively. CNRE faculty are leaders in studying biodiversity, ecosystem services, and the impacts of human activities on the environment. Their research is often applied in real-world contexts, informing policy, conservation efforts, and sustainable practices.



By fostering collaboration with industry, government, and community stakeholders, CNRE faculty contribute to solutions that promote long-term environmental sustainability and resilience.

About Virginia Tech

As the Commonwealth of Virginia's most comprehensive university and a leading R1 research institution, [Virginia Tech](#) offers approximately 280 degree programs to more than 38,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students across the commonwealth and manages a research portfolio of close to \$600 million. The university fulfills its role as a land-grant institution by fostering a collaborative environment that integrates technology into all disciplines, so the Virginia Tech community can serve as a force for positive change around Virginia, the country, and the world. Through experiential learning, future focused research, and an inclusive, spirited culture, Virginia Tech strives to accomplish the charge of its motto [Ut Prosim \(That I May Serve\)](#).

Located in Blacksburg, Virginia, the main campus includes 235 buildings, 2,600 acres of land, and an airport. Virginia Tech is consistently recognized for its value and the quality of its programs and is [ranked](#) 23rd in Top Public Schools, 54th in National Science Foundation total R&R expenditure rankings, and 47th in Best National University rankings in the United States. Virginia Tech has a significant presence across the commonwealth, including the Innovation Campus and other sites in Northern Virginia, the Health Sciences and Technology Campus in Roanoke, and sites in Newport News and Richmond; educational and research facilities across the state; a study-abroad site in Switzerland, and an 1,800-acre agriculture research farm near the main campus.

The dean will join Virginia Tech at an exciting time of growth. The university's 16th president, Timothy D. Sands, who began his tenure in 2014, has led the university community in a long-term, future-focused visioning process to ensure Virginia Tech's position as a global land-grant university leader for the coming generations. This was followed by strategic planning that builds on key opportunities including defining the Virginia Tech's aspiration to global distinction and a new access and affordability program: [Virginia Tech Advantage](#).

Building on its motto, [Ut Prosim \(That I May Serve\)](#), Virginia Tech is dedicated to [InclusiveVT](#) – an institutional and individual commitment to community and inclusive excellence. The institution seeks candidates who adopt and practice the [Principles of Community](#), which are fundamental to the university's ongoing efforts to increase

access and inclusion and to create a community that nurtures learning and growth for all its members. Virginia Tech actively seeks a broad spectrum of qualified candidates to join its community in preparing leaders for a diverse, global society and encourages individuals across racial, ethnic, religious, gender, sexual orientation, ability, international, and other identities to apply.

Additional Information

To learn more about Virginia Tech, see the following links:

- [Virginia Tech Website](#)
- [Facts about Virginia Tech](#)
- [University Strategic Plan](#)

Blacksburg, Virginia

Nestled on a plateau between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny mountains, the Town of Blacksburg is part of Montgomery County in the heart of Southwest Virginia's New River Valley. Because of the town's award-winning services, reasonable cost of living, safety, moderate climate, and abundant leisure activities, Blacksburg is consistently ranked among the country's best places to live and has a nationwide reputation as a well-managed, stable, and forward-looking community. Blacksburg is located on the I-81 corridor approximately 45 minutes from Roanoke. Blacksburg is home to over 43,000 residents and is the 15th largest municipality in the State of Virginia.

Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting Virginia Tech in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by February 28, 2025.

Applications, nominations, and inquiries can be directed to Suzanne Teer, Lauren Bruce-Stets, and Cathryn Davis at VirginiaTechCNRE@wittkieffer.com.

Virginia Tech does not discriminate against employees, students, or applicants on the basis of age, color, disability, sex (including pregnancy), gender, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, or military status, or otherwise discriminate against employees or applicants who inquire about, discuss, or disclose their compensation or the compensation of other employees or applicants, or on any other basis protected by law.

For inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies, contact the Office for Equity and Accessibility at 540-231-2010 or Virginia Tech, 220 Gilbert Street, Suite 5200, Blacksburg, VA 24061.