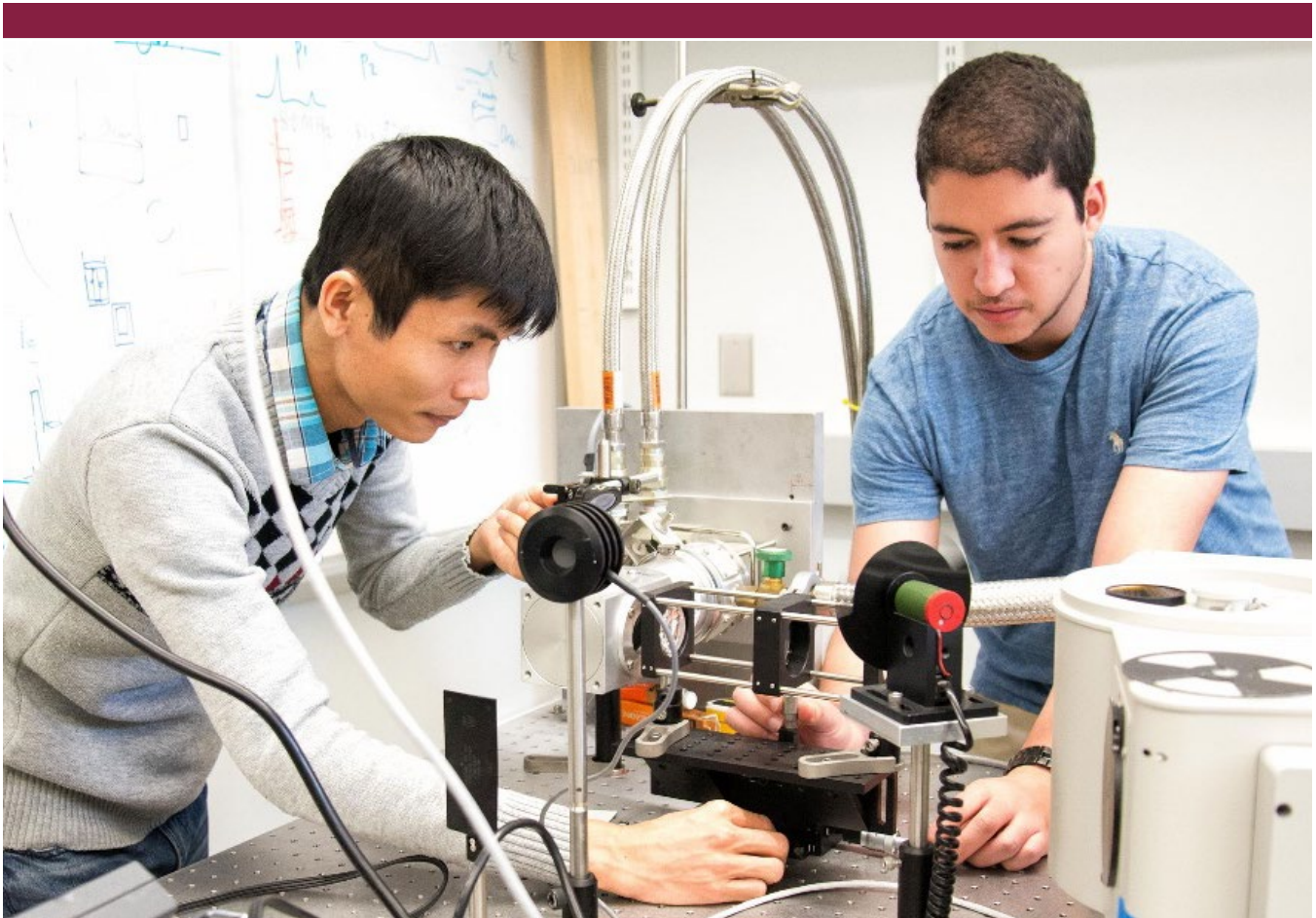




**Assistant Dean of Advancement,
College of Science**
Leadership Profile

Prepared by Ashley Buderus, Mercedes Chacón Vance, and Jevon Walton



WittKieffer

Executive Summary

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) seeks an accomplished, collaborative, and externally engaged advancement leader to serve as Assistant Dean for Advancement for the College of Science. Reporting jointly to the Dean of the College of Science and Senior Advancement Leadership, the Assistant Dean serves as the College's chief advancement officer, with full strategic and operational responsibility for a comprehensive advancement program spanning development, alumni engagement, and stewardship. This role is based in Blacksburg, Virginia.

The College of Science is a central driver of Virginia Tech's research and teaching mission, advancing discovery and innovation across the life sciences, physical sciences, and computational disciplines. With approximately 6,500 students, \$80M in annual research expenditures, and a strong, engaged alumni base, the College is widely recognized for its research productivity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and commitment to student success. Philanthropy plays an increasingly important role in supporting faculty excellence, research growth, and student access, positioning the College with a meaningful opportunity to expand its advancement program and deepen external engagement.

The Assistant Dean will build upon a strong foundation of philanthropic support and a collaborative, high-functioning culture to lead the next phase of advancement growth. In close partnership with Dean Kevin Pitts, senior academic leaders, and central advancement, this individual will develop and execute a forward-looking advancement strategy aligned with the College's priorities. This includes strengthening major and principal gift activity, expanding corporate and foundation partnerships connected to research, enhancing stewardship and donor engagement, and activating a broad and loyal alumni base, including younger alumni.

This role requires a visible, relationship-driven leader who embraces a player-coach model, balancing strategic leadership with active fundraising and external engagement. The Assistant Dean will personally manage a selective portfolio of major and leadership gift prospects, while also building a strong pipeline and ensuring consistent, high-quality donor engagement across the program. The successful candidate will be adept at translating complex scientific research into compelling philanthropic opportunities and will partner closely with faculty and academic leaders to build credibility and inspire investment.

Internally, the Assistant Dean will lead and develop a dedicated advancement team, fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, and shared success. Working across 11 academic units and in close coordination with central advancement, this individual will serve as a connector and strategic partner, ensuring alignment, effective use of resources, and strong communication across stakeholders. The role also requires the ability to navigate a complex, matrixed environment while building trusted relationships across the College and university.

This is a compelling opportunity to join a highly engaged Dean and advancement leadership team and to shape the future of philanthropy for a college that is "punching above its weight" and poised for continued growth. The ideal candidate will bring demonstrated success in advancement, strong leadership capability, sound judgment, and a collaborative approach. This individual will be a credible and authentic ambassador for the College, a trusted partner to institutional leadership, and a results-oriented leader motivated by the opportunity to elevate advancement performance and support the College of Science's mission and impact.

The ideal candidate will bring demonstrated experience in advancing philanthropic support within a complex organization, paired with strong relationship-building skills and a collaborative leadership approach. This individual will be a compelling communicator, an effective partner to senior academic leadership, and a visible ambassador for the College of Science among alumni, donors, volunteers, and external stakeholders.

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

Position Overview

Serving as a key member of the College of Science (COS) leadership team, the Assistant Dean for Advancement is responsible for planning and implementing a comprehensive, integrated approach to COS advancement by managing College development, alumni relations, and stewardship activities. The Assistant Dean serves as chief development officer and leads the College's advancement program, which receives \$20M per year in new gifts and commitments (an amount that has more than doubled over the last four years).

Dually reporting to the Dean of the College and the Vice President for Advancement, the Assistant Dean will lead a team focused on securing private philanthropic support by identifying targeted alumni, friends, and constituent engagement opportunities and providing excellent stewardship of donors. In collaboration with corporate relations, College leadership, and faculty, the individual will also oversee the College's efforts to further advance corporate engagement and philanthropic opportunities.

Working closely with the College of Science Senior Director of Communications and Marketing, this individual will help shape and extend the College's brand while advancing admissions and programmatic initiatives and highlighting College priorities.

Leadership Competencies and Professional Profile

The Assistant Dean for Advancement provides leadership and expertise in these areas:

- **Strategic Fundraising Leadership:** Demonstrates the ability to lead comprehensive fundraising efforts, develop long-term philanthropic strategies, and drive revenue growth in alignment with institutional priorities.
- **Major & Principal Gift Development:** Expertise in managing and advancing a portfolio of high-value prospects, including cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of major and principal gifts.
- **Institutional Strategy & Advocacy:** Strong understanding of academic and research priorities, with the ability to effectively communicate and advocate for institutional goals to internal and external stakeholders.
- **Prospect Development & Relationship Management:** Experienced in identifying, cultivating, and stewarding donor relationships through consistent outreach and travel to maximize engagement opportunities.
- **Collaborative Partnership Building:** Proven ability to build and sustain effective partnerships with senior leadership, faculty, and program directors to align fundraising strategies with programmatic needs.
- **Donor Engagement & Advancement Strategy Execution:** Skilled and creative in designing and implementing innovative, targeted engagement and fundraising initiatives that deepen donor relationships and secure impactful philanthropic support.
- **Strategic Communications & Messaging:** Ability to support compelling narratives and communications that elevate the visibility, impact, and reputation of the College and its alumni.
- **Leadership & Talent Development:** Demonstrates strong leadership in recruiting, mentoring, and retaining high-performing teams, fostering a culture of positivity, accountability, and excellence.
- **Cross-Functional Collaboration:** Effectively collaborates with central advancement and peer colleges to align strategies and advance broader institutional goals.

Key Responsibilities and Areas of Impact

A successful Assistant Dean of Advancement for the College of Science will demonstrate strength in the following areas:

Strategic Leadership and Advancement Direction:

- Serve as a strategic partner to the Dean and College leadership to identify priorities and translate them into a comprehensive advancement plan.
- Participate in College leadership team meetings and contribute advancement perspectives and priorities.
- Collaborate with central advancement to leverage institutional resources and align strategies.
- Ensure compliance with university, state, and federal laws as well as the CASE Donor Bill of Rights.
- Maintain confidentiality and proper stewardship of all donor and institutional information.

Fundraising and External Engagement:

- Lead all fundraising efforts for the College of Science.
- Personally manage a portfolio of major and principal gift prospects.
- Develop and execute strategies for cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of individuals, corporations, and foundations.
- Travel regularly, approximately five to eight days per month, to engage donors and prospects regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- Identify and develop new philanthropic opportunities and prospective donors.
- Advance corporate and industry partnerships in collaboration with the Center for Advancing Partnerships.

Team Leadership and Organizational Excellence:

- Lead, manage, and develop a comprehensive advancement team, including development, leadership gifts, and alumni relations.
- Foster a positive, collaborative, and high-performing team environment.
- Build strong working relationships with central advancement, college-based colleagues, and university partners.
- Participate in and support advancement staff meetings, trainings, and division-wide activities.

Communications, Engagement, and Relationship Management:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy to highlight the College's achievements, priorities, and opportunities.
- Strengthen engagement with alumni, donors, and friends of the College through targeted outreach and programming.
- Partner with faculty, department heads, and program leaders to align advancement efforts with academic priorities and initiatives.
- Support volunteer engagement efforts, including identifying, cultivating, and stewarding volunteer leaders.

Program Development and Institutional Advancement:

- Assess opportunities for advancement growth through faculty research, student success, and programmatic achievements.
- Design and implement strategies to expand the donor pipeline and broaden alumni engagement.
- Work closely with academic and administrative leaders to develop compelling funding priorities and philanthropic cases for support.



Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The next Assistant Dean for Advancement, College of Science, will have the opportunity to build upon a strong philanthropic foundation and help shape the College's next phase of growth and impact. As a key member of the College's leadership team, this individual will serve as a strategic partner to the Dean and lead a comprehensive advancement program focused on fundraising, alumni engagement, and relationship-building.

Partner with the Dean and University Leadership

Serve as a trusted advisor to Dean Kevin Pitts and collaborate closely with university advancement leadership to advance the College's philanthropic priorities. Align advancement strategies with institutional goals while helping position the College for continued success.

Lead and Grow a Comprehensive Advancement Program

Provide leadership for fundraising, alumni engagement, stewardship, and advancement operations. Build upon existing momentum while identifying new opportunities to expand philanthropic support, strengthen donor engagement, and enhance advancement performance.

Drive Major Giving and Corporate Partnerships

Lead efforts to secure major and transformational gifts while expanding corporate and foundation partnerships that support the College's research, academic, and student success initiatives. Partner with faculty and academic leaders to translate complex scientific work into compelling donor opportunities.

Develop a High-Performing Team and Collaborative Culture

Lead, mentor, and develop a talented advancement team while fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, and shared success. Work effectively across the College's 11 academic units and build strong partnerships with faculty, staff, and campus leaders.

Strengthen Alumni Engagement and External Relationships

Leverage the College's highly engaged alumni community to deepen relationships and expand philanthropic participation, particularly among emerging generations of alumni. Serve as a visible ambassador for the College with alumni, donors, and external stakeholders.

Balance Leadership and Execution

Success in this role will require a player-coach mindset—someone who can provide strategic leadership while remaining actively engaged in fundraising, relationship building, and advancing key initiatives. The ideal candidate will combine strong leadership skills with the ability to execute and deliver results in a collaborative, complex academic environment.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

Required Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree combined with substantial professional experience.
- Demonstrated success in fundraising, including the cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of major gifts, or comparable experience in sales, business development, or related fields involving complex relationship-based revenue generation.
- Progressive leadership experience with a consistently high level of professionalism and integrity.
- Exceptional written and verbal communication skills, with a proven ability to engage, inspire, and motivate volunteers and donors.
- Demonstrated success leading and developing advancement professionals, including experience setting performance expectations, coaching staff, managing portfolios and fundraising strategies, and fostering a collaborative, high-performing team culture.
- This position is primarily onsite, with an expectation of regular in-person engagement.
- Willingness and ability to travel frequently as required.

Preferred qualifications:

- Master's Degree with professional and relevant experience.
- Experience in higher education fundraising environments.
- Proven track record of building and sustaining effective relationships with senior administrators, business leaders, faculty, staff, boards, volunteers, and donors.
- Demonstrated success in securing major gifts through increasingly sophisticated fundraising strategies.
- Experience developing and managing corporate partnerships or engagement initiatives.

Personal Qualities

- Collaborative and relationship-oriented approach to advancement work.
- Ability to operate effectively within a complex, matrixed organization.
- Commitment to professionalism, teamwork, and donor-centered engagement.
- Strategic and action-oriented with a strong focus on execution.
- Collaborative and relationship-driven, with high emotional intelligence.
- Comfortable navigating ambiguity and organizational complexity.
- Able to build trust quickly and foster strong partnerships across stakeholders.
- Skilled communicator and storyteller who can translate academic priorities into compelling donor opportunities.
- Entrepreneurial and growth-minded, with a willingness to challenge the status quo.
- Confident and professional presence with the ability to engage effectively with senior leaders, donors, and volunteers.



About Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Overview

Virginia Tech is the Commonwealth of Virginia's most comprehensive university and a leading R1 research institution, offering more than 280 undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs to over 38,000 students across nine colleges. Managing a research portfolio approaching \$600 million, the University advances knowledge and discovery that address pressing challenges across the Commonwealth, the nation, and the world.

Founded as a land-grant institution in 1872, Virginia Tech is deeply committed to accessible education, public service, and research that improves the human condition. This legacy continues to shape the institution's work today through Virginia Tech Advantage—a university-wide commitment to expanding access, affordability, and student success—and Virginia Tech Global Distinction, an ambitious effort to elevate the University's national and international profile through scholarly excellence, faculty distinction, and transformative interdisciplinary research.

Guided by its motto, *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), Virginia Tech embraces a culture of collaboration, service, and engagement. The University's land-grant heritage remains central to its identity, inspiring programs and partnerships that translate research into real-world impact, support communities across the Commonwealth, and prepare graduates to lead in an increasingly interconnected world.

The main campus in Blacksburg spans 2,600 acres, with 235 buildings, cutting-edge research facilities, and a regional airport. The campus is widely recognized for its academic quality, collaborative community, and exceptional student experience, consistently ranking among the top public universities in the United States.

Virginia Tech also maintains a broad geographic footprint, extending its academic and research mission across Virginia and around the globe. This includes a rapidly growing presence in the Washington, D.C. metro area; the Health Sciences and Technology Campus in Roanoke; research and extension facilities throughout the state; and international sites in Europe and other locations that support global research, education, and outreach.

Through its integrated mission of education, research, and engagement, and through bold initiatives such as Virginia Tech Advantage and Virginia Tech Global Distinction, the University is uniquely positioned to shape the future of higher education, contribute to economic and societal progress, and fulfill its enduring commitment to service.

Additional Information

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

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



Virginia Tech College of Science

The College of Science is a core academic unit at Virginia Tech, advancing the university's mission through excellence in foundational science education, research, and discovery. The college plays a central role in preparing students for careers and advanced study in science, medicine, data-driven fields, and public service, while supporting Virginia Tech's strengths as a leading public land-grant research university.

The College of Science enrolls approximately 6,500 students, including about 5,700 undergraduate students and 800 graduate students, making it one of the larger science colleges among public research institutions. Academic programs span the life sciences, physical sciences, mathematical sciences, social sciences, and computational disciplines, with departments including biological sciences, chemistry, economics, geosciences, mathematics, neuroscience, physics, psychology, and statistics. The College also contributes significantly to interdisciplinary education and research aligned with university-wide priorities.

The College is nationally recognized for its strengths in science education, research productivity, and student outcomes. Faculty conduct externally funded research with national and international impact in areas such as data science, computational modeling, neuroscience, materials science, climate and environmental systems, and molecular and cellular biology. College of Science faculty collaborate extensively across Virginia Tech and with external research partners, supporting a robust and growing research enterprise.

Experiential learning and undergraduate research are defining features of the College of Science. Students are encouraged to engage in research early in their academic careers, strengthening preparation for graduate study, professional programs, and science-based careers. The college is a significant pipeline for students pursuing advanced degrees in science, medicine, engineering, and related fields.

The College of Science is based primarily on Virginia Tech's main campus in Blacksburg, where the majority of its undergraduate education, faculty, and research activity are located. While the college participates in select graduate programs and interdisciplinary research initiatives in the National Capital Region, it functions as a single campus academic unit with limited activity outside Blacksburg.

Philanthropy plays an important role in advancing the College of Science. Private support strengthens access through scholarships, supports graduate education, enables faculty recruitment and retention, and accelerates research and instructional innovation. With a large alumni base, strong alignment with national research priorities, and sustained demand for science graduates across multiple sectors, the College of Science presents a compelling platform for philanthropic investment.



Virginia Tech Advancement Division

Virginia Tech Advancement serves as the university's central fundraising and engagement organization, partnering with university leadership and academic units to support priorities across education, research, access, and capital needs. The institution **raises more than \$200 million annually**, including approximately \$225 million in recent fiscal years, with support from nearly 68,000 donors.

Boundless Impact: The Campaign for Virginia Tech is the most ambitious fundraising effort in the university's history. **Launched publicly in 2019, the campaign's goal was increased from \$1.5 billion to \$1.872 billion** to reflect unprecedented philanthropic momentum. Scheduled to conclude in 2027, the campaign also seeks to engage 100,000 alumni and supporters in meaningful ways. The university has already surpassed the \$1 billion mark, setting multiple records for gifts, commitments, and donor participation.

Philanthropy through Boundless Impact is central to advancing the College of Science's strategic priorities. Donor support strengthens scholarships and access, faculty excellence, experiential and technology-enabled learning, research and PhD education, and modern learning environments.

VIRGINIA TECH
**BOUNDLESS
IMPACT**

Virginia Tech Advancement, led by Senior Vice President Tom Wamsley, is nationally recognized for fundraising excellence and is a member of the CASE 50, positioning the university—and the College of Science—for continued philanthropic growth and long-term impact.



Leadership

Kevin Pitts | Lay Nam Chang Dean's Chair & Dean of the College of Science



Kevin Pitts is the Lay Nam Chang Dean's Chair and dean of the College of Science at Virginia Tech, a role he assumed on June 13, 2022. As dean, he provides strategic leadership for the college's academic programs, research initiatives, faculty development, and student success efforts. In addition to the College, Pitts also leads Virginia Tech's management and oversight of Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility in Newport News, Virginia.

Prior to joining Virginia Tech, Pitts served as chief research officer at Fermilab National Accelerator Laboratory. He was also a professor of physics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he held multiple leadership roles, including vice provost for undergraduate education and associate dean for undergraduate programs in the College of Engineering.

A distinguished physicist, Pitts has co-authored more than 600 peer-reviewed publications in leading journals, with 90,000 citations. At Virginia Tech, he also holds a faculty appointment in the Department of Physics.

Pitts earned his bachelor's degree from Anderson University and his master's degree and Ph.D. in physics from the University of Oregon.

Tom Wamsley | Senior Vice President for Advancement



Tom Wamsley serves as Senior Vice President for Advancement at Virginia Tech, where he leads the university's efforts to deepen alumni engagement, expand philanthropic support, and elevate its national reputation. Appointed in August 2025, Wamsley brings almost 30 years of experience in development and advancement, including 20 years in higher education.

Prior to joining Virginia Tech, Wamsley was vice chancellor for Advancement at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) and senior vice president at the University of Illinois Foundation. At UIC, he led the university's most ambitious fundraising campaign, IGNITE, which closed at a record-breaking \$803.4 million — 107 percent of its goal. Under his leadership, UIC secured the largest individual gifts in its history and expanded its advancement team significantly to support future campaigns.

Wamsley's career also includes serving as chief development officer at the University of Michigan's Stephen M. Ross School of Business, where his team raised \$415 million during a university-wide campaign. He has held advancement roles at Wright State University, Antioch College, and the University of Dayton.

Known for his strategic vision and donor-centered approach, Wamsley emphasizes best-in-class stewardship, continuous improvement, and the development of empowered teams. His leadership style fosters innovation, professional growth, and a culture of excellence in advancement.

Wamsley holds a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Ohio University and an MBA from Wright State University. Outside of work, he is a competitive road cyclist and enjoys spending time with his wife, Libby — a former TV news anchor turned mystery author — and their three children.

Blacksburg, Virginia

Nestled on a plateau between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains in Virginia's New River Valley, Blacksburg is a vibrant university town consistently recognized as one of the nation's best places to live. Home to more than 43,000 residents, the town combines the energy of a major research university with the charm, safety, and connectedness of a close-knit community.

Blacksburg offers an exceptional quality of life. Outdoor enthusiasts enjoy unparalleled access to the region's natural beauty, including the Appalachian Trail, Jefferson National Forest, and an extensive network of hiking, biking, fishing, climbing, and kayaking destinations. The town's moderate climate and ready access to green spaces support year-round recreation and community activities.

Located approximately 45 minutes from Roanoke, the cultural and economic hub of Southwest Virginia, Blacksburg benefits from proximity to regional transportation, healthcare, arts, and entertainment amenities while maintaining its distinctive identity as a welcoming and intellectually stimulating place to call home. The town is also within driving distance of several major metropolitan areas, including Washington, D.C. and Charlotte, providing access to broader business, cultural, and travel opportunities.



Procedure for Candidacy

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

WittKieffer is assisting Virginia Tech in this search, which will remain open until an appointment is made.

Application materials should be submitted using WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#).

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to: Ashley Buderus, Mercedes Chacón Vance, and Jevon Walton via the office of Jevon Walton at jwalton@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 of Civil Rights Compliance and Prevention Education at 540-231-2010 or Virginia Tech, 220 Gilbert Street, Suite 5200, Blacksburg, VA 24061.

