VIRGINIA TECH

Dean, College of Engineering

Leadership Profile

Winter 2025

WittKieffer

Executive Summary

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) seeks an innovative, collaborative, and forward-looking leader to serve as the next Dean of the College of Engineering. The Dean will join one of the nation's largest and most comprehensive engineering colleges during a period of extraordinary opportunity and momentum—anchored by a rapidly expanding research enterprise, nationally recognized undergraduate and graduate programs, and strategic growth throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and in the greater Washington, D.C. region.

With more than 13,700 students, almost 900 faculty and staff, 12 departments, and 2 schools, and nearly $280 million in annual research expenditures, the College of Engineering (COE) stands as a national leader in engineering education, research, and innovation. The College plays a central role in Virginia Tech's land-grant mission, its aspirations for global distinction, its commitment to access and affordability, and its impact on economic development across the Commonwealth. The next Dean will have the opportunity to guide a large and complex academic enterprise, requiring strategic resource management, strong external partnerships, and the ability to cultivate philanthropic opportunities at scale.

Virginia Tech's main campus in Blacksburg—consistently ranked among the country's best places to live—is complemented by a significant and rapidly growing presence in Roanoke and the greater Washington, D.C. metro area. The Institute for Advanced Computing, located in Alexandria, Virginia, and the Coalition for Smart Construction at Virginia Tech, under development in Falls Church, Virginia, represent transformational opportunities for the College of Engineering to expand graduate education, applied research, industry engagement, and workforce development in one of the world's most dynamic tech ecosystems. 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 next Dean of Virginia Tech's College of Engineering will be a visionary and strategic academic leader with a distinguished scholarly record, exceptional communication skills, and proven administrative and fiscal acumen. Building on the College's strong foundation and accelerating its trajectory, this leader will advance bold new directions in engineering education and research, amplifying national prominence and global influence while fostering creativity, entrepreneurship, and transdisciplinary collaboration. The Dean will drive innovation in curriculum and experiential learning, strengthen student success, and expand graduate programs aligned with workforce needs. The Dean will also catalyze a growing research enterprise, forge high-impact partnerships, secure cutting-edge infrastructure, and guide strategic academic and organizational growth. Additionally, the next dean will deepen the College's presence in Northern Virginia, leveraging the region's unique assets to advance research, graduate education, and partnerships that address national priorities and fuel economic development.

To apply, 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 Engineering

The Dean serves as the chief academic and administrative officer of the College of Engineering and reports directly to the Executive Vice President and Provost. The Dean provides leadership for the College's teaching, research, and service missions and is a key member of the University's senior leadership team.

The Dean of the College of Engineering is responsible for:

Academic Leadership and Strategic Direction

- Providing vision and strategic execution for the College in alignment with the University's strategic plan and aspirations for global distinction.
- Supporting curricular innovation, program development, and academic quality across undergraduate and graduate programs.
- Enhancing the College's visibility and external reputation nationally and internationally.
- Ensuring the College meets the state-supported Tech Talent Pipeline degree targets.
- Representing the College to internal and external constituencies.

Research and Innovation

- Advancing the College's research enterprise, including growth in sponsored research, college-level initiatives, interdisciplinary collaborations, and industry partnerships.
- Ensuring alignment with Virginia Tech Global Distinction and the University's Core Strategic Themes and cross-cutting goals.
- Supporting infrastructure development, research facilities, and the strategic deployment of resources to enhance competitiveness.

Student Success, Access, and Experiential Learning

- Strengthening undergraduate and graduate student recruitment, retention, and success, including efforts aligned with Virginia Tech Advantage.
- Supporting experiential learning opportunities.
- Promoting student access and affordability across all programs.
- Advancing curricular improvements that enable students to remain on track toward timely graduation and make meaningful progress even with curricular disruptions.

People, Culture, and Excellence

- Recruit, retain, mentor, and support an exceptional faculty, fostering excellence across teaching, research, innovation, and engagement.
- Cultivate a collaborative organizational culture that values collegial debate and discussion, builds trust, and enables all faculty, staff, and students to thrive.
- Strengthen faculty success by investing in professional development, supporting pathways to leadership, encouraging scholarly growth, and promoting a positive and engaged staff culture.

Budget, Resource Management, and Advancement

- Providing strategic stewardship of the College's complex financial portfolio within Virginia Tech's Partnership for Incentive-Based Budgeting (PIBB) system, ensuring transparency, sustainability, and alignment with institutional priorities.
- Allocating resources thoughtfully and effectively to advance academic excellence, fuel research innovation, and support the College's long-term strategic goals.
- Navigating and leading within the current fiscal environment with creativity, discipline, and foresight, identifying opportunities for efficiencies, making informed tradeoffs, and ensuring the College remains resilient, adaptable, and well-positioned for future growth.
- Partnering closely with University Advancement to expand philanthropic support for the College, cultivating relationships with alumni, industry leaders, and donors to secure resources that enhance student opportunities, faculty excellence, and research impact.

External Engagement and Partnerships

- Cultivating and stewarding high-impact relationships with industry, government agencies, research sponsors, and external partners, working collaboratively with LINK: Center for Advancing Partnerships and other university units to expand opportunities for strategic collaboration, applied research, and long-term institutional partnerships.
- Positioning the College as a catalyst for statewide workforce development, economic growth, and national security priorities, ensuring that engineering expertise and academic programming contribute meaningfully to the Commonwealth and beyond.
- Strengthening the College's engagement in Virginia Tech's major externally focused initiatives—including the Institute for Advanced Computing, the Coalition for Smart Construction at Virginia Tech, the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute, the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, National Security Institute, and other mission-aligned enterprises—by fostering collaboration, amplifying visibility, and advancing shared strategic goals.

Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

The next Dean of the College of Engineering will have the opportunity to build on remarkable momentum and guide the College into its next era of growth and distinction. Key opportunities include:

- **Champion a Bold Vision for the Future of Engineering:** The Dean will advance a compelling vision for the future of engineering education and research, building on the newly updated college strategic plan while bringing fresh ideas to further strengthen the College's and University's leadership in addressing complex global challenges. This will include:
  - Amplifying the College's national prominence and expanding its global influence, elevating Virginia Tech as a destination for world-class engineering talent and transformative discovery.
  - Cultivating a culture of creativity, entrepreneurship, and transdisciplinary collaboration, empowering faculty, students, and partners to imagine and develop breakthrough solutions.
  - Leading innovation in curriculum design, experiential learning, and research translation, ensuring graduates are prepared to thrive in an evolving technological landscape and contribute meaningfully to the public good.

- **Advance a Growing and Highly Productive Research Enterprise:** With more than $277 million in annual research expenditures, the College is poised for further growth. The next Dean will:
  - Catalyze the pursuit of ambitious, center-level, multi-institutional, and large-scale extramural awards, positioning the College at the forefront of national and global research initiatives.
  - Champion emerging research strengths and cultivate bold new areas of strategic opportunity, advancing interdisciplinary collaborations that address society's most complex challenges.
  - Forge and expand high-impact partnerships with federal agencies, national laboratories, and leading industries, enhancing the College's role in shaping innovation ecosystems at regional, national, and international scales.
  - Secure and advocate for cutting-edge research infrastructure, including state-of-the-art facilities, core laboratories, and shared instrumentation that enable faculty excellence and world-class scholarship.

- **Strengthen Student Success, Experiential Learning, and Access:** The next Dean will champion a learning environment that prepares graduates to excel in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. This will include:
  - Enhancing first-year engineering pathways and strengthening progression into majors, ensuring that students build a strong foundation in engineering fundamentals and are supported in navigating key academic transitions.
  - Expanding and enriching experiential learning opportunities—including career-bridge experiences (e.g. internships, co-ops, undergraduate research, study abroad), hands-on design, with industry-engaged projects, and student competition teams—that enable students to apply their knowledge, develop professional competencies, and connect their studies to real-world challenges.
  - Developing a robust suite of self-sustaining professional master's programs that meet the needs of working professionals, particularly in the Greater Washington Area.
  - Expanding recruitment of domestic graduate students and implementing novel graduate programming to meet emerging workforce needs.
  - Promoting a vibrant, opportunity-rich educational environment that provides students with the resources and support needed to fully engage in their academic journey, develop leadership and problem-solving skills, and provide meaningful employment opportunities post-graduation.

- **Lead Strategic Academic and Organizational Growth:** The next Dean will provide visionary leadership to guide the College through its next phase of purposeful expansion and academic distinction. This will include:
  - Steering the continued evolution and innovation of academic programs to meet emerging student interests, respond to rapidly changing workforce needs, and anticipate future areas of disciplinary and interdisciplinary opportunity.

  - Guiding strategic enrollment planning across undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs, ensuring that growth is mission-aligned, academically sound, and supported by the necessary resources, infrastructure, and faculty capacity.
  - Empowering and partnering with department heads, school directors, and associate deans to advance academic excellence, strengthen program quality, and build organizational structures that support a dynamic, collaborative, and high-performing college community.

- **Support the College's Role in Northern Virginia:** The College of Engineering plays a central role in Virginia Tech's rapidly expanding presence in the Washington, D.C. metro area, and the next Dean will provide strategic leadership to deepen the College's impact and fully realize the potential of Virginia Tech's investments in Northern Virginia in collaboration with regional leadership and other university leaders. This will include:

  - Supporting the continued development of major university initiatives, including the Institute for Advanced Computing and the Coalition for Smart Construction at Virginia Tech.
  - Expanding graduate education, research initiatives, and externally funded partnerships that leverage the region's unparalleled concentration of federal agencies, national laboratories, technology firms, and policy organizations to address national priorities and fuel regional economic growth.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

Required Qualifications

- An earned doctorate and a distinguished record of scholarly achievement that merit appointment as a tenured full professor within the College of Engineering.
- A record of successful leadership in higher education, which may include experience leading a department, school, research center, or comparably complex academic enterprise.
- A demonstrated commitment to the land-grant mission, shared governance, and the values of academic excellence, access, and public service.
- Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to build trust, foster collaboration, and engage effectively with diverse constituencies.
- Proven administrative acumen, including demonstrated success in academic administration, strategic planning, fiscal stewardship, and personnel leadership.

Desired Qualifications

- A forward-looking vision and the strategic insight to advance the College's research enterprise, including the ability to foster transdisciplinary collaborations that strengthen Virginia Tech's aspiration for global distinction and elevate the University's national and international impact.
- A demonstrated record of excellence in recruiting, developing, and retaining outstanding faculty, staff, and students, with a commitment to cultivating a successful and supportive academic community focused on academic excellence.
- Successful experience in philanthropy, fundraising, corporate engagement, and industry partnerships, including the ability to inspire donors and external stakeholders to invest in the mission and priorities of the College.
- Demonstrated experience in international engagement, leadership, and/or collaboration that reflects a capacity to lead an organization with global impact and distinction.

Personal Qualities

- Strategic, innovative, and future-oriented thinker.
- Collaborative and transparent leadership style.
- Commitment to student success and faculty/staff development.
- Ability to build consensus and lead change.
- High emotional intelligence, integrity, and resilience.
- Strong relationship-building skills across large and multiple constituencies.

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 rooted in its commitment 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 that extends 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

College of Engineering

With more than 13,700 students, Virginia Tech's College of Engineering is one of the largest engineering colleges in the United States and a national leader in engineering education, research, and innovation. The College offers a comprehensive portfolio of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs across 12 departments and 2 schools, supported by 898 faculty and staff whose scholarly excellence, teaching innovations, and industry engagement drive the College's global reputation.

The College's research enterprise is robust, diverse, and rapidly expanding, with $277.6 million in research expenditures in FY25. These efforts significantly strengthen Virginia Tech's position as a leading R1 university

and play a central role in advancing the Commonwealth's economic vitality, workforce development, and national security priorities.

A strong commitment to experiential learning, hands-on design education, undergraduate research, and problem-driven innovation defines the student experience. Engineering students engage in immersive projects through highly regarded design teams, innovative makerspaces and laboratories, and collaborative partnerships with companies, national laboratories, and government agencies. These experiences prepare graduates to excel in competitive and rapidly changing professional landscapes.

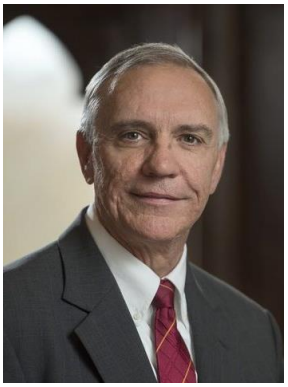
The College is also undergoing a major transformation of its physical infrastructure. Several significant facilities projects—most notably Mitchell Hall, the new state-of-the-art engineering and instructional complex—are under construction or recently launched. Mitchell Hall will provide advanced teaching laboratories, modern research facilities, collaborative learning environments, and critical capacity to support enrollment growth and experiential education. Additional shared capital projects and new engineering facilities further expand the College's footprint and reflect sustained investment in world-class academic and research environments.

In FY25, the College's annual expenditures totaled $412 million, with approximately 9% derived from state support, underscoring the importance of diversified revenue streams, including sponsored research, industry partnerships, and philanthropy. These resources enable the College to support its ambitious academic mission, attract and retain outstanding faculty, and invest in the infrastructure and programs that sustain excellence.

Through its scale, expertise, and commitment to innovation, the College of Engineering is central to Virginia Tech's land-grant mission and its aspirations for global distinction. It prepares future engineers and leaders, advances high-impact research, and builds partnerships that serve the Commonwealth, the nation, and the world.

Leadership

Dr. Cyril R. Clarke, Executive Vice President and Provost



A veterinarian, clinical pharmacologist, teacher, researcher, and academic leader, Dr. Cyril R. Clarke became the executive vice president and provost of Virginia Tech in January 2019, after serving in an interim capacity since November 2017.

A native of Johannesburg, South Africa, Clarke earned his professional veterinary degree from the University of Pretoria, South Africa, a Ph.D. in veterinary pharmacology from Louisiana State University, and a master's degree in higher education from Oklahoma State University. He is certified as a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Clinical Pharmacology.

Clarke's initial faculty appointment in 1987 was at Oklahoma State University, where he also served as an academic department head and as associate dean for academic affairs in the Center for Veterinary Health Sciences. Funded by corporate, state, and federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture and National Institutes of Health, Clarke's research focused on the interactions between antibacterial agents, animal patients, and infectious microbes. He is a recipient of the Pfizer Award for Research Excellence.

In 2007, Clarke was appointed to the position of Lois Bates Acheson Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Oregon State University. During his time as dean, Clarke continued to teach pharmacology to veterinary students. In addition to receiving a Certificate of Excellence in Teaching, Clarke was honored with the Oregon Veterinary Medical Association's President's Award. He subsequently joined Virginia Tech in October 2013 as dean of the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine.

Clarke has held leadership positions in several professional organizations, including the board of directors for the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges and past president of the American College of Veterinary Clinical Pharmacology. He is also a past member of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board and the AVMA Council on Education, the accrediting agency for veterinary medical education in North America.

Clarke will return to the faculty in early January 2026.

Julie Ross, Current Paul and Dorothea Torgersen Dean of Engineering & Incoming Executive Vice President and Provost (*effective January 10, 2026*)

Julie Ross is the outgoing Paul and Dorothea Torgersen Dean of Engineering. She has gained widespread recognition not only for growing the reach and impact of the College of Engineering's programs and research but also for championing a bold vision for the future of the College and University.

Ross has been instrumental as a spokesperson in elevating Virginia Tech's footprint and expansion in Blacksburg, Roanoke, and the Washington, D.C., metro area. In addition to her role as dean, she serves as special advisor to President Tim Sands and leads the effort to chart the vision and plan for Virginia Tech's presence in the region.

Ross was honored by her alma mater, Purdue University, with a 2022 Distinguished Alumna Award and was highlighted by the Society for Women Engineers Magazine in their "Women Engineering Leaders in Academe 2020" feature. In addition, she was named Outstanding Woman Leader in Virginia Higher Education at the American Council on Education 2022 Virginia Network Annual State Conference.

Ross is an elected fellow of the American Institute of Medical and Biological Engineering. Ross has also received the American Council on Education fellowship, the nation's premier higher-education leadership development program, preparing senior leaders to serve American colleges and universities.

An Indiana native, she holds a bachelor's degree from Purdue University and a doctoral degree from Rice University, both in chemical engineering. She holds faculty appointments in the Departments of Chemical Engineering and Engineering Education.

Ross will assume her new role as Virginia Tech's next executive vice president and provost on January 10, 2026.

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 among 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, intellectually stimulating, and scenic place to call home.

Procedure for Candidacy

Applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as two 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 full consideration, candidate materials should be received by February 2, 2026.

Applications, nominations, and inquiries can be directed to:

Suzanne Teer, Cathryn Davis, and Corin Edwards

VTDeanEngineering@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.