



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES
ALUMNI ORGANIZATION
VIRGINIA TECH™



A PIVOT TO VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT: VT CALS Forged Ahead into New Horizons

Jamie Lucero

Director of Alumni Relations, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech

Gabi Mountain

Previously Assistant Director of Alumni Relations, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Director of Alumni Relations, College of Natural Resources and Environment



The Directive



- One week after Virginia Tech moved to teleworking, we were tasked by university advancement to execute 2-4 virtual engagement programs for our constituents within the next 2-3 months

Our vision



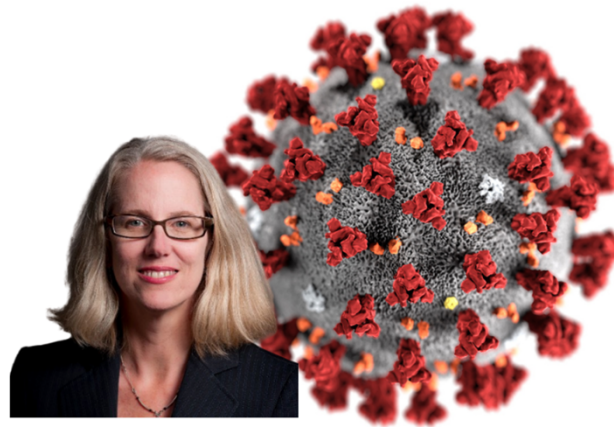
- Engage alumni and friends with faculty (and students when appropriate)
- Highlight alumni leaders in the industry
- Provide timely & useful information
- Highlight the impact of teaching, research, and Extension programs
- Fill void of cancelled in-person programming





EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT **THE BIOCHEMISTRY OF CORONAVIRUS**

WITH DR. GLENDA GILLASPY
Professor & Department Head
Department of Biochemistry



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Engagement Success

545 registered to attend and over 2,300 viewed the program
through Facebook Live



MONTHLY EVENTS FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS
JOIN US ONLINE
2ND WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH AT 2PM



FOR MORE INFO ON UPCOMING EVENTS & PAST EVENT RECORDINGS VISIT
[CAL.S.VT.EDU/ALUMNI/VIRTUAL-EVENTS](https://cals.vt.edu/alumni/virtual-events)

Monthly Series

After overwhelming success on the second program. We created a monthly series!



Engagement Success



- 12 months & 11 programs later, we led the University in virtual programming offerings & registration/attendance.
- 3,431 registrations with 2,612 unique constituents
- Reached 43/50 states

(Missing ND, ID, RI, SD UT, VT, WY)

Nuts & Bolts of Production

Program Development



- Identify the topic
 - What's the takeaway?
 - What is timely?
 - Ex. Home gardening tips amidst grocery store supply shortages, Understanding your credit amidst financial concerns
- Preparing speakers
 - At least one meeting a month prior to the date of their program

Nuts & Bolts of Production

Day of Event



- Reminder email
- Zoom Webinar
- Introductions
 - Elevator pitch for CALS Alumni Organization
 - Ask audience to share where they are joining from along with major and class year

Marketing

- Established visual identity for series
- Focus on the takeaway – what will attendees get?



10 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL HOME VEGETABLE GARDEN

Alex Hessler, Director, Homefield Farm



WHAT'S IN YOUR WATER?

APPLIED RESEARCH, EXTENSION OUTREACH & EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING



Promotion

Email Invitations

- Emails sent 2 weeks prior to programming
 - CALS alumni
 - VT Daily email
 - Personal invitations from advancement colleagues
- Mass appeal programs elevated to university-level all alumni emails



Social Media

- Marketing began 1 month prior to programming
 - Facebook event
 - Targeted Facebook ads
 - Speaker spotlights
- **Strategy: TAG EVERYONE**
 - Most content originated on CALS Alumni Org page but partnered with college, departments, affiliated groups.

Stewardship of Speakers



- Handwritten thank you note and appreciation gift



Participant Follow-up



- Thank you email within 24-48 hours
 - Survey
 - Recording
- Registrations tracked through BlackBaud CRM so engagement is tracked and fundraisers can follow up with attendees and follow prospect interest

The Virtual Difference



- Engaged those who haven't and may never return to campus
- Engaged those who reside in areas of Virginia, the US, or the world that we would not include in our off-campus event plans
- No cost option of engagement
- Variety in topics yields a wider range of majors and class years
- Convenient for participants – join live or watch the recording
- Chat box was a fun way for participants to connect
- Diversity of content to increase social media engagement
- Helped us move the needle on the university's goal of 22% participation by 2022

What's Next?



- Quarterly virtual program in addition to in-person programming
- Hybrid programming where appropriate
- Engaging high profile alumni as speakers



Takeaways

What worked

- Program focus needs to be a takeaway for the attendee
- Establishing a visual identity
- Reliable schedule for events from promotion to follow up
- Create sample emails and templates for fundraisers to send to prospects

What didn't

- Show and tell programs didn't see the engagement
 - Lower registrations/lower attendance rate





Virtual Engagement Development Events



Cultivation/Stewardship

Welcome the Department Head with a Toast



When Life Hands You Lemons...
MAKE LANE STADIUM LEMONADE

We would much rather be gathering in person, but we look forward to seeing you online and welcoming Dr. Dwayne Edwards to the Department of Biological Systems Engineering with a toast.

Lane Stadium Lemonade by Preston's Restaurant at the Inn at Virginia Tech
1.5 oz vodka | .75 oz triple sec | 2 oz lemon juice | 4 oz lemon lime soda | Splash of orange water flavoring



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Cultivation

Alumni and Stakeholder Forums



AGRICULTURAL, LEADERSHIP, AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION ALUMNI & STAKEHOLDER FORUMS



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Solicitation

Virtual program in support of campus garden



2 major gift donors engaged
289 alumni and friends registered

\$11,043 raised in support of the garden
\$2,500 from each speaker
\$6,043 in gifts from alumni & friends



Questions?

