

VT CRC.COMmunications

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VTED links Tech & Community

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The Virginia Tech Expertise Database Gives Businesses Access to VT Faculty Knowledge.

By Deborah Sheldon

Suppose you need an expert on *xylan*, a gummy, yellow carbohydrate found in plant cell-walls. Or someone who knows about *tribology*, the science of friction, lubrication and wear of moving parts. Would you know who to contact? If you're like others in this community, your first thought might be "Call someone at Tech." An easy way to find that "someone" is through the Virginia Tech Expertise Database (VTED).

Virginia Tech houses a wealth of technical expertise through its faculty and students. Finally, there's a way to access that wealth. The Program Development Office of Research and Graduate Studies, with help from the Virginia Center for Innovative Technology, has created a campus wide database of faculty expertise. This database can be ac-

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Marketing Expertise Offered by BTC

Business/Technology Center Provides Marketing and Other Services to Technology Companies

by Herb Cork

Many small high-technology companies do not have the monetary resources or the staff to meet their company's marketing demands. The Business/Technology Center (BTC) can offer both financial assistance and professional marketing consultants.

The BTC assists small high-technology companies in Virginia by providing marketing research analyses and or access to marketing consultants. A company must meet several requirements for the BTC to provide marketing assistance. It must be a small business as defined by the Small Business Administration: 30 employees or less. The

See BTC, page 8

Up Front: New CRC/VT Liaison Program Announced

By Joe Meredith, Ph.D.

The CRC is quite proud of its recent award as "Best Practice in Technology Transfer and Research Centers" in an eight state region. This award was given by the National Council for Urban Economic Development (CUED). While we provided a lot of information to the CUED, we did not "apply" for the award. In other words, all research parks from Georgia to Pennsylvania were considered.

The thing that I believe differentiated us from the



Garvin Innovation Center, 1872 Pratt Drive

others was our continuing focus on programs that leverage the CRC and Virginia Tech's resources, for the benefit of companies in the CRC. Specifically cited in the CUED's report was our business assistance program, financial assistance program and the way we use our connections with Virginia Tech.

The business assistance program is implemented through the Business/Technology Center which is managed by Pamplin College of Business. Over 30 cases were handled by the BTC last year on the behalf of CRC tenants.

The financial assistance program has two components: the outstanding relationship that the CRC has developed with First National Bank, and the

growing relationship that we have with venture capital firms including Triad, InterSouth and SpaceVest.

Today, we are pleased to announce a new program for the benefit of companies in the CRC. The Virginia Tech/CRC Liaison Program is designed to help companies find assistance from within the university. This program was conceived by Dr. Len Peters, Vice Provost for Research and Dean of the Graduate School at Tech. Its purpose is to appoint one, or two in unusual circumstances, senior administrators to be company advocates or mentors on campus.

For example, the seven companies that have recently moved to the CRC from out-of-state do not have the campus

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“The mentor would know which faculty members at Tech would have an interest related to the company’s need.”

“network” to draw from for assistance. The mentor (e.g., Computer Science Department Head) would know which faculty members throughout Tech that would have an interest or expertise related to the company’s need. The mentor may also be aware of facilities or equipment that Tech may have that could save the company unnecessary capital expenditure.

The program might also be of benefit to companies who have strong relationships with one area of campus (e.g. computer science) but now are having short-term problems with another area of technology (e.g., materials).

The first step of the program is for a member of Research and Graduate Studies (RGS), Dr. Tom Caruso, to meet

with the company to determine their needs and interests. Then discussions are held among RGS and the CRC to identify the best person or mentor for the company. This person will most likely be at the department head or at the associate dean level in order to have the visibility required to be effective. Hopefully, a strong relationship then develops between the company and its mentor.

The program has been initiated with kickoff interviews with Exegetics, the Computer Resource Team, Software Licensing Corporation and Milagro Systems, Inc. If you think that this program could benefit your company and you wish to participate, please contact me at 231-3600 or e-mail to jmeredit@vt.edu.

“Up Front” appears monthly in this newsletter and is written by the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center administrative staff.

“The program might also be of benefit to companies who have strong relationships with one area of campus.”

CRC Delivers on New Mailbox System

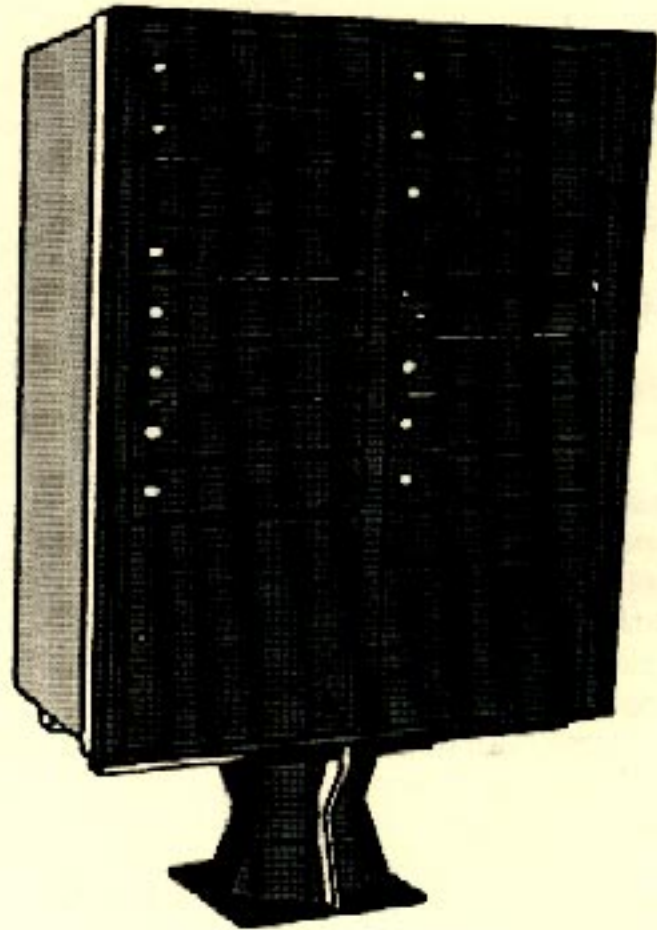
Exterior Mailboxes Will Ensure Security and Make Saturday Mail Delivery Possible

By Tracy Whitaker, Staff Writer

In response to a number of tenant requests for increased mailbox security and for Saturday delivery of U.S. mail, the CRC administration is planning to add exterior lock-secured mailboxes to each building in the park. At Garvin Innovation Center, the new boxes were installed in mid-June and tenants began using them during the last week of the month. Before the new system is implemented in other buildings, the CRC administration will evaluate its efficacy with Garvin tenants.

Campus and U.S. mail is distributed in open slots located in an unlocked mailroom or hallway in each building. The new system provides locked mailboxes housed in a "cluster unit" that only can be accessed by a mail carrier or the assigned tenant. Exterior mailboxes will allow Saturday delivery preventing over-the-week-end buildup of mail.

Eventually, the CRC will retrofit all of the existing buildings in the park with cluster units. New buildings and those currently under



The new mailboxes are housed in a 5' x 2 1/2' cluster unit. Each unit contains 16 customer compartments, two parcel lockers and an outgoing-mail slot. Customer compartments are large enough to hold most periodicals and flat mail. The parcel lockers are for larger mail pieces.

construction will be built with cluster units. Some of the buildings are proving to be harder to update than others, according to Paul Fleming, the Property Operations Manager

for the CRC.

"We want to place the units under shelter of some sort. While the Garvin Building already had an appropriate spot, some of the others don't."

One possible solution, suggests Fleming, is to place the units in the foyers of buildings that do not have a protected exterior area. The exterior doors would be unlocked, allowing the mail carriers to reach the units on the weekend. The interior doors that allow access into the corridors would be locked to secure the building.

The U.S. Post Office will assign mailboxes and provide each tenant with three keys. The CRC office will not keep a copy of keys to assist in lockouts. If a tenant loses a key, it will be necessary to deal directly with the U.S. Post Office to get a new key. Tenants will also work with the post office to get mailbox locks changed.

Mail pieces that will not fit in individual compartments will either be left in one of the parcel lockers or delivered to tenant suites. If a package is left for a tenant in the locker, the mail carrier will leave a note and key to that locker in the tenant's mailbox. The tenant will retrieve the package and leave the locker key in the parcel locker.

With this new system, it is especially important that incoming mail include tenant suite numbers in the address. Mail without a suite address will be sent to the CRC office, the suite number added and the piece rerouted. This could delay delivery for several days.

For more information regarding the new mail system, contact Paul Fleming at 1-3090 or e-mail to fleming@vt.edu.

TENANT UPDATE

New Arrivals

AEDAR (Advanced Engineering Design and Research Corporation), 1700 Kraft Drive, Suite 1050 / 540-231-3798 / jfabunmi@erols.com

AEDAR Corporation, a Landover, Maryland based R&D company, has recently established a new office at the CRC in order to facilitate close collaboration with professor Peter Athanas and his colleagues at Virginia Tech's Information Systems Center (VISC). Research and development activities at this office will focus on the development and demonstration of advanced configurable computers. AEDAR's current and previous customers include the ballistic missile defense organization (BMDO), the U.S. Airforce, N.A.S.A. and the U.S. Army. AEDAR's president and principal scientist is Dr. James Fabunmi.

Name Changes

"Virtually Done! Business Support Services" to Acorn Business Support, Inc., 1872 Pratt Drive, Suite 1804 / 540-231-4601 / acom@vt.edu

Acorn provides temporary services, administrative support, creative marketing literature, graphics design, business and technical writing. Tracy Whitaker continues as president and CEO. The name was changed to facilitate growth in the temporary personnel market.

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VTED, *Continued from page 1*

cessed by anyone with a web browser by going to the VTED website: vted.rgs.vt.edu.

The VTED was first created last October as a way to join faculty with business, industry, government, and media. It is linked with two other similar databases

naire asks for both a technical explanation of their expertise (using all the lingo and impressive terminology for that field) and a general explanation (for the layman). They also have a chance to enter information about their publications, professional memberships, patents and international

list of common topics is located at the bottom of the web page.

- **Department** lists all the departments at Virginia Tech that participated in the database population. There are over seventy-five departments listed from which to choose, including Computer

Science, Engineering, Finance and Marketing. When you select a department, all records available for members of that department appear in a list.

- **Detailed Search** allows you to combine the three previous fields into a single search.

All methods of searching provide partial matches. For example, a search for "sm," results in a list of every name in which "sm" appears. Searches are not case sensitive: "John" = "john".

Once you have entered your search criteria, and the database has retrieved matching records, you will see a list of records (or just one record) containing the first level of data on that faculty member. This data includes the person's

Database Websites:

Brainpower for Business	http://www.brainpower.org
Community of Science	http://cos.gdb.org
Research and Graduate Studies Department	http://www.rgs.vt.edu
Virginia Center for Innovative Technology	http://www.cit.org
Virginia Tech Expertise Database	http://vted.rgs.vt.edu

that cover all of Virginia.

The database has records for over 700 faculty members (of approximately 1400) and is growing. It is predicted to have over 800 records by the end of the year. According to Tom Caruso, from the Research and Graduate Studies Office, almost all of the faculty who are interested in working with industries are listed.

Faculty members who choose to participate fill out forms about their interests, experience, publications, and patents. The question-

naire asks for both a technical explanation of their expertise (using all the lingo and impressive terminology for that field) and a general explanation (for the layman). They also have a chance to enter information about their publications, professional memberships, patents and international

How do you use VTED?

The VTED interface, available through the World Wide Web, is very easy to use. When you open their web page, you are given four search options:

- **Topic** allows you to search for keywords within the records. A

name, department, position, degree, phone number, e-mail address, research areas, both the general expertise and the technical expertise and three of his or her publications.



If you click on the person's name, you will see a "detailed record." This record has all the information on the general record, plus any additional publications and the rest of the data that person entered.

The web page also provides the option to "Search Internal Records." When entering expertise data, faculty members have the option to limit record access to members of the Virginia Tech community. If they choose this option, their records are classified as internal and are available only to users with *vt.edu* user names through the "Search Internal Records" Option.

Other Databases

VTED is not a new idea. In fact, one of the reasons VTED was created was so that the members of the VT faculty could be listed on two existing databases without having to file separately on each one (the records from VTED are included in both databases).

Community of Science World Wide Web Server provides information on scientific expertise, funded scientific research, and funding opportunities for research.

The COS website provides links to several databases including the following:

- Expertise, Inventions, and Facilities
- Medline
- The U.S. Patent Citation Database
- Federally-Funded Research in the U.S.
- Commerce Business Daily
- The Federal Register
- Funding Opportunities Database

The other database that VTED is currently linked to is Brainpower for Business. Brainpower is a state-wide version of VTED, connecting over 30 state-funded colleges and universities. Brainpower separates its information into seven categories:

- Research and Development Capabilities
- Business Assistance Centers and Services
- Research Technology Parks
- Educational Opportunities
- Community Service Activities
- Hiring Opportunities
- Intellectual Properties.

Brainpower for Business, like VTED, was sponsored in part by the Virginia Center for Innovative Technology.



BTC, *Continued from page 1*

company must be a high-technology company or one that is starting to apply higher technology in its products or services. The company representative must prepare a one-to-two page document outlining the requested services so that the BTC has a clear understanding of the company's needs.

Companies may choose from alternate resource paths. The BTC hires Virginia Tech graduate students to perform marketing research analyses. The VT graduate student will research the situation/problem identified in the request and prepare a final product with conclusions and recommendations. The client may have to pay \$500.00 for this service.

The BTC has contacts with Pamplin College of Business professors or area industry experts who will customize their research and assistance at reasonable fees. The BTC may subsidize these fees on a varying percentage basis depending upon client circumstances.

The director may recruit a Small Business Institute (SBI) team of Virginia Tech business students to provide the

marketing research for a potential client at no charge. SBI teams will begin in September and complete their projects in November.

In addition to marketing research, the BTC offers start-up assistance, cash flow analysis, financial planning and legal advice.

BTC's funding agencies include the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT), the Corporate Research Center (CRC), the Pamplin College of Business, the towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg, Virginia Tech Intellectual Properties (VTIP) and the Virginia Tech Outreach Department. The money that the funding agencies provide allows the BTC to assist small technology-based companies in Virginia.

For more information regarding business services your company may require, call the director, Herbert V. Cork, at the BTC office (540) 231-2730 or e-mail him at cork@vt.edu.

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