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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES  
**AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY**  
VIRGINIA TECH.

## NEWSLETTER

Summer 2019

### Greetings Alumni and Friends!

I welcome you to the Ag Tech newsletter for summer 2019! Since we have concluded the school year, it is our privilege to highlight some of our recent successes. We have many accomplishments to share with you.

The 2018-19 academic year went well. We had a group of 73 new students join the program with 132 students in total. The quality of incoming students continues to be high with an average GPA of 2.98. We boast having our most diverse population of students yet with the age range from 18 to 50 years old. We had five veterans in the program as well as an international student. We served 20 first generation students. Additionally, we had two students join us who had previously completed a BS degree. These two students came to our program to receive the education and training they need to be prepared for their career goals. We are proud to continue our tradition of high quality teaching and we enjoy working with our students.

Faculty continue to apply experiential learning methods and provide all of our students with opportunities to “learn by doing”. These approaches enhance the learning process and help students apply the knowledge and skills they are acquiring to real agricultural and green industry problems. Industry partners are helping us teach with the most updated technology in several areas such as precision agriculture, modern dairy industry techniques, drones, and more. The collaboration with industry and stakeholders is valuable to the program and has a large potential for future experiential learning opportunities. Additionally, some Ag Tech students participated in research projects sponsored by Pratt Senior Research Scholars, and participated as part of the team at PLANET week. The program is contributing internationally in the Catalyzing Afghan Agricultural Innovation (CAAI) project for presenting good experiential learning models in Afghanistan. Outside of the classroom, our faculty participated in scholarship of teaching and learning activities including presenting research papers at national and international conferences.

This year we had an external review on the quality of the program. A team of five high quality professionals spent two days on the Virginia Tech campus reviewing our work and interviewing faculty, staff, students, alumni, and stakeholders receiving opinions on the quality of our work. They presented us with a report of their recommendations and we look forward to implementing some of their suggestions to make our incredible program even better.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your interest in, and support of, the program. If you plan to be near campus, we would be delighted to see you; please stop by for a visit!

Thank you,

*Parli Mykerezzi*, Director



# Agricultural Technology Director is on Team Aimed to Help Afghans Improve Agricultural Education and Respond to Agricultural Challenges



*Pavli is participating in an experiential learning exercise with a project team member.*

Agricultural Technology Program Director, Pavli Mykerezi, played a major role on a Virginia Tech interdisciplinary team who facilitated a workshop on Afghan agricultural innovation. Using a “train the trainer” approach,

Virginia Tech presented strategies for improving teaching and other skills and building relationships with a range of clients in Afghanistan’s agricultural innovation system. The Afghan staff will share these approaches

and tools with local agricultural researchers, educators, and extension agents so they can better respond to challenges faced by Afghan farmers and agribusinesses.

## Bryce Carter Named 2019 Outstanding Graduating Senior



Bryce Carter, spring 2019 graduate from the landscape and turf management option, has excelled academically with dean’s list recognition. He was a member of the Honor Society of Agriculture, Gamma Sigma Delta. His stellar GPA has placed him at the top of

his graduating class.

As an Agricultural Technology Ambassador, Bryce represented the program to future students, the industry, and the public. Beyond the Virginia Tech campus, Bryce volunteers in his hometown of Stuart’s Draft, Virginia, where he works with the local food pantry through the Cavalry United Methodist Church.

Additionally, Bryce maintains the landscaping of the local SPCA, volunteers for local youth football camps, and supported the remodel of his high school’s athletic field house.

Upon graduation, Bryce will return to the Old Trail Golf Club in Crozet, Virginia, where he also completed

an internship, to take over several responsibilities, including irrigation of the course and nutrient management planning.



*Bryce Carter pictured with Pavli Mykerezi (Director, Agricultural Technology) at the Outstanding Senior Reception held Thursday, May 16, 2019*

Congratulations to Bryce! He is deserving of this honor and recognition and we wish him continued success in his future!



## VT Team Competes in National Collegiate Landscape Competition

In March, the Virginia Tech National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) team returned to Colorado State to participate in National Collegiate Landscape Competition. The team had a terrific time while turning in an excellent performance, finishing 8th out of 64 schools, with several 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place finishes.

The Ag Tech members of the team were 2nd year students Robert Armstrong, Tyler Rigsby, and Brandon Walters, as well as 1st year student Keri Knott. They all performed admirably, with Tyler and Robert teaming up to finish 3rd in the Truck and Trailer competition. Robert, Tyler, and Brandon have since graduated and are with Brightview, Ruppert, and Valley Landscaping respectively. Keri is completing her internship at Longwood Gardens this summer.

A special thanks to all the people

and companies who support us on this trip each year. Without each of you it would be impossible for our students to attend this terrific event.

**Now, buckle your seat belts and get ready for NCLC to be hosted at Virginia Tech in 2021!!**



## THANK YOU to '18 Alumnus, Brady Louk, for His Generous Donation



Brady Louk, AT class of 2018, made a generous donation of a Qunatix drone to the AT program in the fall of 2018. This drone captures normalized difference vegetation

index (NDVI) imagery. NDVI is a useful remote sensing tool that provides imagery that is used as an indicator of plant health. We are currently using the Quantix drone to record imagery, on a monthly basis, at the Giles County Agricultural Land Lab as part of our ongoing Pratt undergraduate research project. Brady's gift is valued at \$16,500 and is a great addition for both the Grain Crop Management and Precision Agriculture classes.

"Joining the Ag Tech Program was one of the best decisions I ever made. It's proof that people who didn't initially plan to go to college

have a chance at higher education. Through Ag Tech, I made some of my best friends and amazing business contacts. These are the reasons I decided to donate the Quantix drone to the program. I think the technology the drone provides will be used to greater benefit the AT Program than it would have been to me. It makes me happy to know my donation will be used by students for years to come." Louk states.

**AT extends a huge thank you to Brady Louk for his support!**



# Alumni Spotlight

## Agricultural Technology Alumn Receives Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award!



Casey Hurd, '08

This was an especially exciting year as a 2008 Ag Tech graduate, Casey Hurd, earned the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award! Casey, owner of Greenscapes Land Care LLC in Worton, MD, was on hand in Fort Collins to receive his much deserved reward. His success is an inspiration to our students, as well as his former Ag Tech instructor! Congratulations!

## Making an Impact



Daniel Judkin '07

Daniel Judkin is the Farm Manager at Isle of Wight County Schools

Agricultural Land Lab and a 2007 graduate of the Agricultural Technology Program. The IWCS agricultural land lab is a school-owned 30-acre working farm that services the agriculture classes at Isle of Wight County Schools. Working with IWCS, Daniel was tasked with starting this land lab from scratch and has built it up from a vacant piece of land to a working farm with several different species of livestock and the facility you see below.



Daniel's work is having such a positive impact on hundreds of students and we know he will continue to make us proud with this great work!

## Carley Pavan's Event Sets Records

Carley Pavan is an agriculture teacher for Culpeper County schools and a 2014 graduate of the Agricultural Technology Program. Carley earned her bachelors in Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education and a masters in education. Carley recently hosted a very successful ag science day with nearly 900 students involved.

Carley was featured in a Culpeper Star-Exponent article on April 11, 2019 by Clint Schemmer titled Culpeper School's Ag Science Day sets a statewide record. An excerpt from the article states:

'More than 200 students from Binns' agricultural-science classes and 646 students from all grades at neighboring Sycamore Park Elementary School took part in the day long affair, which occupied all of Binns' practice field. It was the largest field day for education that Binns had hosted, by far.' The article also states that Pavan's motivation for coming up with the Ag Science Day was "to help better connect the community. Culpeper is a unique county because it does have the best of both worlds when it comes to farm live and city life." She goes on to note that "a large number of my students didn't know where the majority of their food came from, and how almost every single thing they do and touch on a daily basis is made from agricultural products...The students also didn't know that the very town they live in is a huge contributor for many agricultural commodities." She saw the Ag Science Day event as a way to show how the children's lives were intertwined with agriculture.



Carley Pavan '14

We are so proud of Carley and are excited to follow her as she continues to excel!

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# Outstanding Alumni Awards

## Congratulations To Our Outstanding Alumni

We had the pleasure of honoring four of our alumni as part of the CALS Celebration of Ut Prosim! This year the awards included alumni from both industry and academia. We are so very proud of all our alumni and excited we were able to recognize these four outstanding individuals for the significant impact they are making in the world of agriculture!

He is a sales rep for Tidewater Seed, Inc. This practical knowledge and experience is invaluable as a teacher and allows him to connect with his students more deeply. In his community, his leadership and service shine as an Eagle Scout, a Farm Bureau Young Farmer, a Caroline County Fair Board Member, and as a 4-H Leader.

His work as an agriculture teacher and with his own farm is of great benefit to his community and our future!

area. This day-long field trip has provided invaluable experience for so many students who would not have otherwise had the opportunity to visit and learn about a dairy of this type and size. For students to see a young graduate of their own program doing so well is extremely beneficial.

Mitchell earned his degree to broaden his knowledge and with an outstanding work ethic, has become successful in a very challenging industry.

### Outstanding Recent Alumnus in Academia



*Hunter Gravatt '08*

Hunter Gravatt has been an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor for Caroline County Public Schools since 2012, where he teaches agronomy, agribusiness, and livestock management.

Hunter, like many of our students, came to Ag Tech with a farm background and continues now as a manager and partner on his family operation, Elam Hill Farm, where he oversees daily farm operations, commodity sales, nutrient management plans, seed selection, and records.

### Outstanding Recent Alumnus in Government or Industry



*Mitchell Motley '12*

Since graduation Mitchell Motley has been working with his family dairy in Pittsylvania County. They are currently milking about 520 cows in a new 12 robot Lely facility. Mitchell manages the employee schedule, breeding program, mixing of rations, and the installation and operation of the robotic milkers. As a skilled mechanic and welder, he also performs maintenance on the farm's equipment, including heavy machinery.

Mitchell hosts Ag Tech's Dairy Management class at his farm every year and coordinates tours of several other dairies in the

### Distinguished Alumnus in Academia



*Stephen Janoschka '02*

Stephen Janoschka is a 2002 graduate of the Agricultural Technology Program. He earned a bachelor's in Agricultural and Extension Education and two masters in education from Virginia Tech and Radford University.

He is currently an instructor and the department head for Franklin County High School's agriculture department. In this position, he teaches five classes and mentors new teachers.

Prior to this position, he established an agriculture education

# Outstanding Alumni Awards / Outreach

program for Craig County's school system and created curriculum for six classes. He also launched and advised Craig County High School's FFA chapter. As an agriculture teacher, Stephen serves both his field of expertise by mentoring new teachers and his community by teaching our next generation about agriculture.

We know that his teaching efforts will only strengthen agriculture in Virginia and beyond for years to come!

## Distinguished Alumnus in Government or Industry



Nate Aker '01

Nate Aker is an operating partner in his family's farm, Wolf Pen Dairy, owns his own farming operation of cow/calf pairs, stockers, and several crops, and is a seed rep for Hubner Seed.

Nate's degree is enhanced by his previous schooling as a diesel mechanic and machine technician through John Deere Technical School, as well as completing the Ag Biz Planner course through Farm Credit.

Nate serves as a board member for the Wythe County Agricultural

Education Committee, as Farm Bureau county board president, chaired a committee for the state Farm Bureau Young Farmers, and chaired Virginia Farm Bureau's Young Farmer Committee.

Their farm hosts educational tours for elementary schools and recently, for ag tech's Dairy Management class. Accolades from local, state, and national agricultural organizations recognize his role as a leader and advocate for agriculture.

## CALLING ALL ALUMNI



If you are alumni of the Agricultural Technology program we would love to hear what you are up to. Please share photos and information by emailing [agtech@vt.edu](mailto:agtech@vt.edu).



Ag Tech faculty were active during the FFA Convention that was held recently on the Virginia Tech campus. Joe Guthrie was a judge of the Ag Selling Career Development Event (CDE) and Sam Doak was a judge in the Turfgrass CDE. This was the first time a Turfgrass CDE had been offered at the state level. Joe and Sam also teamed up to talk with FFA students about the Ag Tech Program. They met with a group of about 10 students from Lee County and also spoke to over 100 students who were competing in the Ag Mechanics CDE. Ag Tech faculty are always looking for opportunities like this to help with ag youth development events and to also spread the word about Ag Tech to those students.

If you are aware of an event that Ag Tech faculty could assist with or could utilize to speak to high school students, please let us know.

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# Featured Classes



## Alumnus Leads Irrigation Lab



*Agricultural Technology graduate, Matt Jones, of Ruppert Landscaping setting up irrigation situations for a problem solving lab in the irrigation class.*



## Precision Agriculture and Data Management Class Trip



On April 25 the Precision Ag and Data Management class, taught by Wesley Gwaltney, visited the farms of 2018 Ag Tech graduate, Justin Light, and Bottomley Evergreens and Farms. Bottomley Evergreens and Farms, located in Ennice, N.C., is a family owned business that has grown tremendously over the years. They employ many modern technologies and utilize precision agriculture in their operation. They raise a variety of crops including pumpkins, cabbage, broccoli, commodity grain crops, and evergreen trees. While at

Bottomley's the class toured the cooling and packing facility used to process produce. The students also took a look at the machinery used to plant, tend, and harvest their crops. The class learned about all aspects of the farm business, including employee management, diversifying operations, shipping, and marketing.

After lunch, the class met Justin Light at a farm near the Blue Ridge Parkway in Carrol County, VA. Justin and his crew were transplanting cabbage on beds that he made utilizing a tractor with GPS guidance and autosteer.

After graduating from Ag Tech, Justin took a larger leadership role on his family's farm. He is managing the operation's beef herd and crop production which includes cabbage, broccoli, summer squash, snap beans, and pumpkins. Justin has added organic hemp production to the operation. He is growing all of his cabbage organically.

Justin had this to say of his time in AT, "My time spent in the Agriculture Technology Program at Virginia Tech helped prepare me to manage and operate our 100-acre vegetable and beef cattle farm. The classes I took helped me to better understand the business aspects of farming as well as the day to day operations that would be facing me in the future."

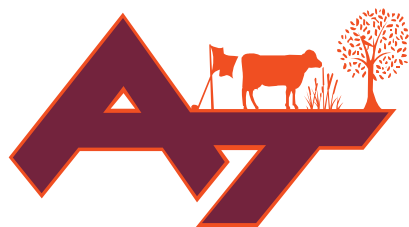
The timing of this trip could not have been better. The majority of the students on the trip graduated on May 17 and it was a great motivation to see a young alumnus taking on such great responsibility and doing so well. Kurt Bulgrain, Spring 2019 graduate said, "It was great to see a fellow Ag Tech student like Justin keeping his family farm thriving after his graduation. I'd be interested to go back in a couple years and see how well he has done with some of his new business ideas like hemp production."

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# Student Spotlight



**Agricultural Technology**

## **Congratulations to all of the students on the Deans List!**

### **Fall 2018**

- Austin L. Carter
- Thomas D. Faron
- Zane M. Forbes
- Kaylee E. Frye
- Mikala S. Liptrap
- William E. Looney
- Brayden K. Morris
- William B. Potter
- Mead W. Stolarz

### **Spring 2019**

- Mark Bulgrin
- Zachary Croft
- Luis Del Campo Benitez
- Charles Fariss
- Camden Franklin
- Christopher Green
- Trevor Guy
- Dakota Hall
- William Hurley
- Kevin McDonald
- Cody Stallard
- Alfred Stephens
- Adam Walton
- William Ziletti

### **All YEAR**

### **Both Fall 2018 & Spring 2019**

- Madeline C. Apel
- Joseph A. Berry
- Kurt R. Bulgrin
- L. Bryce Carter
- Laura E. Clingenpeel
- Ethan R. Cundiff

- Jeffrey M. Estienne
- Jarod T. Faris
- Zachary C. Gray
- Blake H. Haislip
- Aleksandro Halili
- Jacob L. Harvanek
- Amy F. Horton
- Keri N. Knott
- Alan D. Lerch
- Abby R. Leschinger
- Brian K. Price
- Austin T. Ralls
- Patrick W. Smith
- Jeremy F. Stevens
- Zachary D. Wall
- Joshua R. Witt

## **Congratulations to the 2019 Spring Graduates**



- Jordan Alexander\*
- Robert Armstrong
- Alexander Bates
- Mark Botkin
- Kurt Bulgrin
- Thomas Butler\*
- Johnathan Buzzell
- Logan Carter\*
- Preston Caton
- Hunter Clifford
- Zachary Croft
- Ethan Cundiff
- Joseph D'Amato\*
- Luis Del Campo Benitez
- Charles Dellaripa\*
- David Dyer
- Nicole Eisert
- Alton Fallin
- Jarod Faris
- Thomas Faron\*

- Charles Farris\*
- Camden Franklin
- Caleb Galbraith
- Zachary Gray
- Christopher Green
- Blake Haislip
- Aleksandro Halili
- Dakota Hall
- Brandy Harris\*
- Jacob Harvanek
- Corbin Herdt
- Michael Herrity
- Austin Hinton
- William Holcombe
- William Hurley
- William Leggett
- Alan Lerch
- Jacob Long\*
- Brandon Loving\*
- Ricardo Luck\*
- Justin McDonald
- Kevin McDonald
- Vernon Meredith\*
- Hunter Newell
- Benjamin Nunnally
- Gregory Pitts
- Jenna Prater\*
- Brian Price
- Tyler Rigsby
- Austin Robinson
- Aaron Smith\*
- Frankie Snider\*
- Jeremy Stevens
- Zachary Stuart\*
- Ross Tiaba\*
- Matthew Tribble
- Antonio Villa Gomez\*
- Brandon Walters
- Adam Walton
- Caleb Webb
- Sloan Williams
- Joshua Witt
- William Ziletti

*\* Students walked in spring commencement but either completed their degree during a previous semester or are scheduled to receive their degree in the near future.*