

By now, all of you have heard about the loss of VT President *emeritus* Charles Steger. I wanted to briefly share with you a little background on the relationship between Charles and the VTCRI.

I first met Charles in 2009 when I was interviewed for the position as founding director of the research institute. I had worked with many accomplished leaders in academia and medicine over the years but I quickly realized that I was in the company of a unique person who embodied greatness at many levels. Charles not only had a masterful understanding, deep knowledge and appreciation of many disciplines ranging from science to engineering to the arts, he had a profound quality for listening and hearing what others were saying and a clear commitment and passion to accomplish important things on many fronts on behalf of Virginia Tech, SW Virginia, the entire state and the world. He knew how to think big but also how to incorporate people and their lives into big plans and especially how to get things done.

Charles was absolutely committed to the VTC concept with a major focus on establishing a truly world class biomedical research enterprise in Roanoke in partnership with Carilion Clinic. He let me know in no uncertain terms that he was committed to (and would accept) nothing less. I guess I felt the pressure but I also certainly felt the commitment and support and knew that he would be there to help navigate the challenges that would lie ahead. He never let us down – in many cases, working with VT's provost, Mark McNamee and Carilion's CEO, Ed Murphy, I was given the resources, guidance and latitude to allow the VTCRI to grow to what it is today. When Charles stepped down as president, he continued to keep in touch and offer his support and counsel. As many of you know, last year he agreed to serve on the VTCRI advisory board.

The many accomplishments that occurred under Charles' leadership at VT are outlined in detail on the VT News site. Perhaps his greatest gift was the combination of leadership, compassion and resolve that he demonstrated during and after the tragic events of 2007. I know from

many conversations how deeply he was affected by those events and how committed he was to leading the Hokie campus and nation through the tragedy and following years.

Charles often said to me that he was very proud of what we had accomplished at the VTCRI in Roanoke, putting VT on the map in the medical science world. Whenever we spoke, he asked me to catch him up on your backgrounds, recent accomplishments and future plans. Those conversations always reminded me of how proud and appreciative I am for every one of you – faculty, staff and students who have made this journey together to make the VTCRI what it has already become and will become going forward. As sure as I am that we are deeply indebted to Charles Steger for all that has occurred here in Roanoke, I am also sure that all of you were deeply valued and appreciated by him.

He will be missed.