

Throughout my tenure as a colleague and friend of Dr. Charles W. Steger I recognize him as a visionary leader who sought to position the university for change. He was sharply focused on realizing the changing environment of higher education while remaining fully committed to the history and tradition of Virginia Tech as a public land grant university. When contemplating the issue of how institutions can navigate this transformation in his inaugural address, Dr. Steger stated, “The key to success is changing the right things at the right time in order to preserve those essentials that define us.” (2000). Dr. Steger’s work as a faculty member, dean of the College of Architecture and Urban Studies, and as the 15<sup>th</sup> president of Virginia Tech reflected his commitment to this statement.

President Steger’s envisioned placing Virginia Tech among the top 30 Research Universities. This proved to be a major factor that enhanced the academic reputation of Virginia Tech. It was also an effort that proved to be central to building a solid financial foundation for the university while public support continually declined. Dr. Steger’s leadership and vision have positioned the university for many of the developments that have occurred in the last several years, and continue to flourish today. These developments included the establishment of the Virginia Tech/Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute. This partnership fostered by Virginia Tech and Carilion Clinic is slowly transitioning to a uniquely defined Academic Health Center that will be central to the improvement in human health and to the economic well-being of the Roanoke/New River Region as well as the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Dr. Steger laid the foundation for endowing the Honors College at Virginia Tech. He also championed the value and importance of strengthening the arts as a means of

educating the “whole person”. He stated in his inaugural address, “The study of the arts is compelling because it enables us to sort and select, to analyze and interpret sense data that structure experience in ways that educate us as rational thinkers and moral actors. We owe the student more than a preparation for life at work; we owe him or her the opportunity and means to educate themselves beyond work and after work.” (2000) This vision instilled the foundation for the Virginia Tech Arts Initiative that resulted in the Moss Arts Center and the Institute for Creativity, Arts and Technology (ICAT) coming to fruition on the Virginia Tech campus.

Charles believed in the importance of Virginia Tech and Higher Education to the region and the Commonwealth of Virginia. He worked to ensure that the university created impact on a national and international level. He can best be remembered for his belief that, “The life of the university is defined by the intellectual, emotional and physical well-being of our community. In that regard we must encourage an environment that fosters respect, stimulates debate, and provides opportunity for persons and groups to pursue mutual interests for the betterment of all. Moreover, we share an obligation to create a civilized and reflective environment. The university should, and indeed must, be a place that mirrors our broader society.”

Charles Steger, a gentleman, a visionary and a friend to the end.