

## **SUMMARY**

### **Alumni Distinguished Professor**

**March 24, 2025**

The Alumni Distinguished Professorship (ADP) is a preeminent faculty appointment recognizing faculty members who demonstrate extraordinary accomplishments and academic citizenship through substantive scholarly contributions across all three of Virginia Tech's core mission areas of teaching, research or creative activity, and engagement. Each ADP is expected to continue to make scholarly contributions in the university's three mission areas at the same high level as at the time of appointment.

Nomination of a faculty member to become an ADP is the culmination of an extensive vetting process that involves review by department and college honorifics committees, a specially convened university committee, the executive vice president and provost, and the president. The Board of Visitors confers upon an individual appointment as Alumni Distinguished Professor for a period of 10 years, at which time the appointment may be renewed. Currently, 10 ADPs may be appointed, and there is no quota by college, department, or department (Faculty Handbook, Section 3.2.2). The appointment carries with it a base salary supplement from the endowment established by the Alumni Association and operating funds for scholarly support.

Having followed the established protocol and consistent with the recommendations received from the university committee, Executive Vice President and Provost Cyril Clarke recommends the appointment of Dr. Katrina Powell as Alumni Distinguished Professor. This recommendation has been endorsed by President Timothy Sands and the Executive Committee of the Alumni Association Board. Dr. Powell is an exceptional scholar and educator whose achievements have been recognized nationally and internationally.

## **ALUMNI DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR**

Dr. Katrina M. Powell is a professor in the Department of English and the founding director of the Center for Refugee, Migrant, and Displacement Studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences at Virginia Tech. Since joining the faculty in 2006, Dr. Powell has made profound contributions to the university's teaching, research, and outreach missions, integrating scholarly excellence with a deep commitment to engaged scholarship and public impact.

Dr. Powell is an innovative and highly effective teacher who has inspired and mentored students at all levels. Her career has been characterized by a strong teaching record that demonstrates her dedication to preparing students for engaged citizenship and professional success. She has developed innovative courses that combine theoretical understanding with practical application and played a pivotal role in designing the Pathways Minor in Displacement Studies. She was recognized for her excellence in teaching and mentorship by receiving the Diggs Teaching Scholar Award and the ASPECT Outstanding Graduate Faculty Award. Her mentorship also extends beyond the classroom as she has served on more than 60 graduate committees across multiple programs, with many of her doctoral advisees securing academic positions at prestigious institutions.

A highly regarded scholar, Dr. Powell has authored or co-edited eight books and published more than 40 articles and chapters, bridging academic and public audiences. Her scholarship is deeply interdisciplinary and has been supported by major grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Social Science Research Council, the American Council of Learned Societies, and a \$3M award from the Mellon Foundation for the "Monuments Across Appalachian Virginia" project which is one of the largest humanities grants in Virginia Tech history. This project has brought together scholars, community partners, and local organizations to document and commemorate the histories of displacement in the Appalachian region. Through extensive research, public engagement, and the creation of new historical markers and digital archives, the initiative has deepened public understanding of regional history and contributed to long-term historical preservation efforts.

Dr. Powell's leadership extends beyond research and teaching to substantial contributions in university service and community engagement. She has held key administrative roles, including as the director of the doctoral program in Rhetoric and Writing. As the founding director of the Center for Refugee, Migrant, and Displacement Studies, she has cultivated partnerships that provide meaningful learning opportunities for students. Through initiatives like the Virginia Consortium for Refugee, Migrant, and Displacement Studies and the Mellon-funded Monuments project, she has fostered collaborative research and public engagement that embody Virginia Tech's land-grant mission.

Dr. Powell's unique contributions are demonstrated through her ability to integrate all three missions of the university in ways that create lasting impact. She ties her work to her commitment self-defined goal of bridging academic research with community interests

and needs. This commitment is highlighted through her outreach to communities throughout western Virginia through multiple channels including scholarly publications, film screenings, public lectures at libraries, historical societies, and film festivals, a media interviews, and integration into her teaching.

An example of Dr. Powell's community impact is through her work with Shenandoah National Park, which earned her a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship and influenced park policy and public understanding of displacement history. Her commitment to public scholarship is also evident in her creation of various digital platforms and archives that serve both academic and community needs. As co-founder and director of VT Stories, she has helped preserve and share important institutional histories while creating opportunities for student learning and training through undergraduate research. She has given numerous community presentations, conducted workshops for various organizations, and regularly contributes to public discussions about displacement and social justice. Her work has been featured in various media outlets, demonstrating her ability to communicate complex ideas to broad audiences.

Dr. Powell's scholarship, teaching, and service exemplify the university's motto, *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve). Her interdisciplinary research, commitment to pedagogical excellence, and dedication to public engagement have had a lasting impact on Virginia Tech and beyond. Her work in displacement studies has not only advanced knowledge in the field but also directly benefited communities through public scholarship and historical preservation.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Dr. Katrina M. Powell be appointed Alumni Distinguished Professor for a period of ten years, effective March 25, 2025.

March 25, 2025