Summer greetings from LDDI and Virginia Tech, and welcome to the July 2022 edition of the What’s Developing newsletter. LDDI first hosted a summer meeting of its “general membership” in 2007. Held on the Virginia Tech campus and at different Northern Virginia and Richmond venues over the years, the LDDI program and its membership have grown significantly since that first meeting. This year’s summer gathering in Arlington is a celebration intended to honor some special individuals who have contributed to LDDI over the past year, and to recognize LDDI’s founders whose collective effort and vision launched the program more than 16 years ago. Coinciding with the celebration is this special edition of our newsletter in which we highlight these individuals. I hope that you will enjoy reading about this year’s honorees, and that you will join me, Assistant LDDI Coordinator Claire White, and the LDDI Executive Board in thanking them for the myriad of ways in which they support LDDI.

Best wishes for a safe and enjoyable summer!

Kevin D. Young, PE, M. ASCE, VT LDDI Coordinator

**LDDI Recognizes Its Founding Members**

While it may be impossible to identify a singular start date for LDDI, the program’s origins are traced to late 2005 when then CEE Department Head Dr. Bill Knocke and Dr. Randy Dymond had a conversation to discuss the creation of an emphasis area in land development design within the undergraduate CEE curriculum at Virginia Tech. The catalyst for this conversation was repeated calls from industry to better prepare CEE graduates to work in the land development industry. Dymond’s own contemporaneous research of university placement statistics revealed that as many as one third of CEE graduates were entering the land development field, while at the time only a single, elective course covering the subject matter was offered to students. Further, that course was taught by an adjunct instructor, thus precluding expansion into a broader, more comprehensive curriculum.

To begin advancing this effort, Knocke and Dymond resourcefully tapped into the large network of Virginia Tech CEE alumni, specifically focusing on those who had achieved a level of prominence and notoriety in the land development industry. The two held outreach “Road Shows” in Northern Virginia, Richmond, Hampton Roads, and Roanoke to communicate what the department hoped to accomplish, and to solicit alumni support to help achieve those goals. Through these and other outreach efforts, Dymond soon identified a core group of professionals whose willingness to give back in service to their alma mater helped launch LDDI and establish the foundation for the growth and success enjoyed over the past 16+ years. Dymond fondly recalls working with this group during the early days of LDDI, and offers, “One of the things that impressed me most about this group was that, even though they were fierce business competitors, they readily came together to improve civil engineering education, specifically that of land development design, at Virginia Tech. I found it immensely inspiring to witness their collaboration for the greater good of the industry.” We recognize and thank the following individuals for their early vision and for helping to establish Virginia Tech as the national leader in undergraduate land development design education:

- Mr. Gary Bowman
- Mr. Doug Fahl
- Mr. Howell Simmons

- Mr. Derrick Cave
- Mr. Bob Jansen

- Mr. John DeBell
- Mr. Jeff Lighthiser
John and Connie DeBell Named LDDI Philanthropists of the Year

LDDI is proud to recognize John and Connie DeBell as this year’s inaugural recipients of the LDDI Philanthropists of the Year Award for their commitment to establish the following three endowments at Virginia Tech: the John and Connie DeBell Junior Faculty LDDI Fellowship, the John and Connie DeBell LDDI Scholarship, and the John and Connie DeBell LDDI Diversity Scholarship.

John DeBell’s support for Virginia Tech is nothing new, with his first involvement dating back to the early 1980s when, acting in his leadership role as President of the Virginia Society of Professional Engineers (VSPE), he coordinated with then College of Engineering Dean Dr. Paul Torgersen to promote professional licensure to engineering students. These efforts led to Torgersen ultimately extending an invitation to DeBell to serve on the college Advisory Board and to join the prestigious Committee of 100. Since then, DeBell has also been inducted into the Academy of Engineering Excellence, the Academy of Distinguished Alumni for the Via Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and the President’s Circle of the Ut Prosim Society. He has also been honored with the College of Engineering Distinguished Service Award. He is a past Chair of the Board of Directors of the Virginia Tech Foundation, the Via Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering’s Alumni Board, and the College of Engineering Advisory Board. It was during DeBell’s service on the CEE Alumni Board that the founding principals of the LDDI Program began. His service to the civil engineering profession is equally impressive as his commitment to Virginia Tech and includes stints as a Virginia National Director for the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) and as a member of the Professional Engineers in Private Practice (PEPP) Board of Governors. DeBell also served as State President for the VSPE, and has received the organization’s Young Engineer of the Year Award, its Outstanding Service Award (twice), its Distinguished Service Award, and its Engineer of the Year Award.

Following DeBell’s graduation from Virginia Tech in 1968, he served a 16-month tour in Vietnam where he became a decorated flight operations specialist. DeBell’s civil engineering career began in 1970 with a return to his hometown of Centreville, Virginia and landing a job with Dewberry. Four years later, DeBell and his then boss Paul Bengtson branched out to start their own firm, eventually bringing on a third partner, John Elkin. The firm of Bengtson, DeBell & Elkin enjoyed rapid growth, and by the 1980s boasted approximately 300 employees. In the late 1990s, Burgess and Niple, Inc. assumed 100 percent of the company’s stock, while DeBell remained on as an owner and Director of the Mid-Atlantic region as its Executive Vice President. DeBell also served on the Burgess and Niple Board of Directors until his retirement in 2012. DeBell’s career has seen him working with clients that include VDOT, Dominion Power, the National Park Service, various Fairfax County and federal agencies, and many land developers.

DeBell and his wife Connie have two sons, John, Jr. (also a Hokie) and Richard (a graduate of nearby Radford University). While Connie herself is not a Hokie, John is quick to point out her years-long involvement with the university, including serving with him on the steering committee during the last Virginia Tech capital campaign where the two led Northern Virginia fundraising efforts. Please join us in thanking John and Connie for their decades of support for Virginia Tech, the civil engineering profession, and their most recent gifts which directly benefit LDDI.
Notte Honored with LDDI’s Practitioner Involvement Award

Practitioner-student engagement is a foundational element of LDDI, with this engagement taking many forms, including design project mentoring, guest lectures in LDDI courses, networking opportunities such as LDDI’s Career Night Mixer, and others. It is a core program belief that practitioner-student engagement is an invaluable complement to the instruction students receive in LDDI courses. Since first becoming involved with LDDI in 2010, there is perhaps no individual who has made the trek to Blacksburg in support of practitioner-student engagement more than Dewberry’s Skip Notte, and we are pleased to recognize Skip as this year’s recipient of LDDI’s 2022 Practitioner Involvement Award.

Last year, Skip gave generously of his time through his service on LDDI’s inaugural five-member Executive Board. But those who know Skip know of his passion and energy, and it’s those attributes that motivate him to further support LDDI at the “ground level.” In addition to serving on LDDI’s Executive Board, Skip delivered a guest lecture in each of the four section offerings of LDDI’s junior-level Introduction to Land Development Design course and in each of the three sections of the sophomore-level Civil Engineering Drawings and Virtual Modeling course. Skip also served as a Professional Development Mentor in LDDI’s junior-level course. Outside of the classroom, Skip and Dewberry colleague Paige West organized and led LDDI’s spring semester Design Charrette & Competition, his ninth time in total leading this event.

Please join us in thanking Skip for his unwavering commitment to LDDI students both inside and outside of the classroom.

Industry Advisory Group and Young Member of the Year

LDDI’s new organizational structure includes an Industry Advisory Group (IAG) and Young Members Group (YMG). There are currently more than 70 industry professionals actively participating in these groups, and the past year has seen a flurry of activity and ideas emerge from them. LDDI thanks all those individuals serving on the IAG and YMG, and this year we are excited to name Caleb Hurst (Draper Aden Associates / TRC) as the IAG Member of the Year and Meghan Hekl (Kimley-Horn) the YMG Member of the Year.

Caleb has been instrumental in elevating LDDI’s visibility on Virginia Tech’s Giving Day, and each of the past two years he has worked to assemble a group of donors to incentivize others to give by establishing increasing match amounts as the total number of individual donors grew. The efforts of Caleb and others resulted in more than 140 individuals contributing to LDDI on this year’s Giving Day, compared to 81 last year and 37 the previous year. To better frame perspective on these numbers, the percentage increase from last year’s number of individual donors ranked LDDI fourth on the College of Engineering’s “Beat Your Best” final leaderboard. Beyond his Giving Day efforts, Caleb also currently chairs LDDI’s Special Events Committee.

Many will remember Meghan from her time as a GTA in LDDI’s senior design and sustainable land development courses. Since graduating, Meghan has remained actively engaged with LDDI, and over the past year she has served as a design course mentor, a presenter in the Sustainable Land Development Speaker Series, and she is currently working with LDDI Coordinator Kevin Young on major updates and revisions to the LDDI website. Meghan also serves as Co-Vice Chair of LDDI’s Brand Awareness Committee.

Congratulations Caleb and Meghan, and thank you both for your service to LDDI!
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Jim Bishoff Selected for Industry Outreach Award

First held in 2014, the Land Development Professionals Golf Tournament brings together golfers from all sectors of the land development industry, including consultants, developers and home builders, contractors, product manufacturers and vendors, members of the public sector, and others. The tournament has grown to be LDDI’s single biggest annual fundraiser, with the 2021 event featuring 25 corporate sponsors and more than 100 golfers. J2 Engineers’ Jim Bishoff has been a key organizer each year since the inaugural tournament, working directly with the Potomac Shores Golf Club on event logistics, as well as to arrange the tournament’s silent auction, banquet, and awards ceremony. An avid and skilled golfer, Bishoff has channeled his passion for the sport in a way that greatly benefits LDDI and we honor him with LDDI’s 2022 Industry Outreach Award.

We invite you to appreciate Jim’s efforts first-hand by joining us for the 2022 Land Development Professionals Golf Tournament, which will be held on Wednesday, September 21st, again at the Potomac Shores Golf Club in Dumfries.

Pennoni Named Mentoring Team of the Year

Making its debut in the fall 2006 semester, there is perhaps no singular program element more emblematic of LDDI overall than the student mentoring program in LDDI’s senior design course (CEE 4274). Here, student teams are paired with professional mentors from LDDI sponsoring firms who guide them through a design project delivered across five “learning modules” and that culminates with a final presentation. Since the 2006-2007 academic year, more than 100 professionals representing over 30 companies have participated in the CEE 4274 mentoring program. Each year, top-performing CEE 4274 student teams are invited to present at LDDI general meetings, and the team mentored by Pennoni during the fall 2021 semester presented at LDDI’s January 2022 meeting. While the nature of LDDI’s summer meeting precluded a student presentation, the student team mentored by Pennoni during the spring 2022 semester was a similarly strong team worthy of being extended an invitation to present.

CEE 4274 requires mentors to provide sound technical advice and design guidance to their student teams, but the most successful mentors also use the opportunity to help students develop their communication, networking, and “soft” skills. LDDI thanks Pennoni’s team of Greg Deubler, Laura Hall, Mark Liberati, and Sue Wolford for their outstanding mentoring of two CEE 4274 student design teams during the past academic year.