



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES  
**SCHOOL OF PLANT AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES**  
VIRGINIA TECH.

**School of Plant and Environmental Sciences**

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May 8, 2023

Dr. John Galbraith

Professor of Soil and Wetland Science; Extension Soil Specialist

**RE: Establishing the Virginia Tech Soil Judging Team Endowment**

As the coach of Virginia Tech Soil Judging Team, I urge you to help in the establishment of a Virginia Tech Foundation endowment to support the "Soil Judges". The Virginia Tech Soil Judging Team is the second most successful team in the history of soil judging in the USA, and is the most involved school at the International Union of Soil Science soil judging contest (Please review the appendix of past accomplishments of the team). The Soil Judges are a registered student club that meets twice each week to practice and learn more about soil judging. Currently, there are about 22 members in the club, and at times we have had over 30 students participating. The students are often among the best students academically in the School. In 2023, four of our five senior members received College Awards as Outstanding Students.

The club is diverse and has members from not only the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences but also Geology, Biology, Forestry, Engineering, and Resource Management. There are no club dues, and only minor costs to attend contests, because of the Soil Judges fundraising efforts through sales of merchandise and donation letter campaigns.

In addition to the individual and group field activities, by way of the competitions, the students have the opportunity to network and interact with students and soils professionals from different universities throughout the nation (and the world!). The observed result is the development of leadership and team-building experience, as well as further interaction in social activities, all with a common soil science theme. Their experience and skills often lead to job and graduate degree offers.

As a student club there is limited university financial support, with the majority of the resources for club activities coming from donations and from student participant fund raising. Our annual budget has been growing and often exceeds \$12,000, considerably more in years when air-travel is required. As costs have risen over the years, the advantages of establishing an endowment through the Virginia Tech Foundation to support future activities becomes clear. We do not want any students to be excluded from attending these contest trips because they do not have the financial means to do so. In 2023 we drove two vehicles and took 14 students and two coaches to the national championship contest in western Oklahoma (near Woodward). You can imagine how expensive air travel would have been.

We are behind many of our peer Universities in having no endowment. Establishing an endowment will make it easier for future administrators and coaches to continue to support the program, ensuring its permanence. Therefore, we are launching a campaign to establish a soil judging endowment at Virginia Tech.

The fundraising campaign will likely take on several steps. At present, a donor has pledged \$20,000 in matching funds to donors who make a large donation in 2023, up to that amount. That should put us at \$40,000. Next is to offer that \$40,000 in matching funds to match smaller donations. Hopefully, we will be at \$80,000 by the end of 2025. The final effort will be to continuing fund-raising activities and seek further donations to bring the total up to and past the \$100,000 minimum amount required to establish the endowment.

The endowment will be managed by the Foundation at Virginia Tech. Information on how to make the donation is on the following page. Once the endowment is formally established, it is hoped that the available interest earned will cover almost half of the annual operating expenses of the Soil Judging Team. The rest of the funds will be raised by club members annually. Besides a yearly outlay to the Team, endowments are managed by the Foundation for growth of the principle.

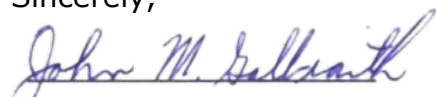
Please consider a financial contribution to the Virginia Tech Soil Judging Team Endowment. All donors will receive a receipt that can be used for income tax deductions and a thank you letter from the Foundation.

Here is a quote from one of the current members of the Soil Judging Club.

*"I joined the team in the fall of my freshman year after seeing it at our club fair. I was nervous to join, as I had absolutely no experience with soil science, but the coaches and returning members were so welcoming that I pushed through my doubts and regularly attended club meetings and practices. I soon realized that there is no better way to gain practical classification and interpretation experience than to be out in the field with my hands in the soil. Being a member of the Virginia Tech Soil Judging Team has been the single most influential experience of my academic career thus far, and the rest of my team agrees that this invaluable opportunity should not be kept to ourselves. We want all students, from botanists to engineers, to have the opportunity to join us and discover what soil judging has to offer."*

Feel free to reach out for more information. My cell is 540-392-1184. I appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Dr. John M. Galbraith, coach of the Soil Judging Team

## **How to Make a Gift to the Soil Judging Team**

### Gifts by check:

Please make checks payable to Virginia Tech Foundation  
In memo line, please include fund #**871548**

Mail checks to:

Virginia Tech Advancement Division  
Office of Gift Accounting  
University Gateway Center (0336)  
902 Prices Fork Road  
Blacksburg, VA 24061

### Gifts online:

- Navigate to Virginia Tech's giving website, <https://give.vt.edu>
- Click on maroon "give one-time" button (ignore other questions until next screen)
- On next screen, "one-time" should be automatically selected under "gift frequency"
- Under "select a gift amount" click or enter your desired gift amount
- On the right-hand side of the page under "area" choose "College of Agriculture and Life Sciences" from the drop-down menu
- Under "select a fund" choose "other" from the drop-down menu and a new "designation" box will appear
- Enter fund #**871548** in the designation box
- Ignore the "search for an area to support box" – do not enter anything in here
- Click "add this gift to your cart" and proceed with payment information

Advancement Contact at Virginia Tech: - For questions on other ways to make donations, contact

Shepherd Cronemeyer  
Associate Director of Development  
Virginia Tech College of Agriculture & Life Sciences  
Email: [carysc@vt.edu](mailto:carysc@vt.edu)  
Mobile: (706) 410-5477

## **History of Soil Judging at Virginia Tech (since 1999)**

### **National Championships at ASA/SSSA Contest (12)**

**Overall Champion** 1987, 2005, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2022

- 15 additional top 5 finishes (place 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>)
- 6 overall championships, tied with Auburn and Maryland for 2<sup>nd</sup> place all-time

**Group Judging Champion** – 2006 @ Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, 2018 @ Tennessee-Martin, 2022 @ Ohio State University

- 8 additional top 5 finishes (place 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>)

**High Individual Champion** – 2005 Doug Frisco @ Auburn, 2019 Sabrina Vladu @ Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, 2022 Ben Atkins @ Ohio State University

### **Other National Championships (3)**

NACTA (National Association of College Teachers of Agriculture) – 2009

ASA/SSSA Virtual Contest – Overall Champion, 3<sup>rd</sup> place group judging – 2020  
(Held In lieu of official field contest because of the pandemic)

ASA/SSSA Pedology Contest - Individual Champion – 2022 Clare Tallamy

### **International Union of Soil Science (IUSS) International Championships**

**Overall Champion** – USA Team B 2014, USA Team B 2018, USA 2022.

- There was a Virginia Tech judger on each of those teams. No other school has accomplished that.

**Group Judging Champion** - USA Team B 2014, USA Team A 2018, USA 2022.

- There was a Virginia Tech judger on two of those teams.

**High Individual Champion** – 2022 Clare Tallamy (competing for Team Australia)

- Virginia Tech has had more participants (5) qualify for the USA team than any other school.
- Dr. Galbraith has qualified as USA coach in 2014, 2018, and 2022 (the only US coach to do so. No other coach has qualified more than once). He won first place overall in 2018 and 2022, and second place overall with USA Team A in 2014. In 2014 and 2018, he won second place in Group Judging event. In 2015, he voluntarily coached the Serbia-Croatia ad hoc team the 5<sup>th</sup> place in Group Judging.
- In 2022, Coach Jaclyn Fiola of Virginia Tech coached the Australian team to 2<sup>nd</sup> place.

### **Southeast Region (II) ASA/SSSA Contest Championships (18)**

1959, 1968, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1993, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2021

- Most of any team in the Southeast Region, the largest Region in the country with 15 schools
- Numerous Individual champions