The University
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (popularly known as Virginia Tech) was established as a land-grant university in 1872, and has since developed into a major research university with an enrollment of approximately 31,000. Virginia Tech’s 2,600-acre main campus is located in Blacksburg, Virginia, 40 miles west of Roanoke. There are also campuses of the university located in the Hampton Roads, Piedmont, Central, Roanoke, and Southwest and Tri-Cities regions of Virginia. The graduate program in Higher Education is offered on the Blacksburg campus only.

The University serves the state, nation, and world through its instruction, research, and outreach efforts. As one of the top research institutions in the nation, it is an institution that firmly embraces a history of putting knowledge to work. That tradition is rooted in our motto, Ut Prosim: “That I May Serve,” and our land-grant missions of instruction, research, and solving the problems of society through public service and outreach activities.

Program Overview
The Higher Education (HED) preparation program educates entry-level professionals about the essential knowledge, skills/experiences, and disposition necessary for practice in higher education. Graduate students are prepared to work as student development educators and administrators in higher education. Specifically, students may expect employment in residential programs, campus activities, career planning, judicial programs, counseling, admissions, financial aid, student orientation, multicultural services, and related campus programs.

Degree
The HED program is one of four programs in Leadership, Counseling and Research. The LCR faculty is part of the School of Education that is housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. Graduates are awarded an M.A.Ed. in Higher Education and Student Affairs.

Program Philosophy
Graduate professional education is concerned with enhancing a broad spectrum of talents in students. Some of these talents are addressed by structured, in-class activities determined primarily by faculty, while others are addressed by out-of-class activities that often are student-directed. Both types of learning opportunities are incorporated into each student’s Plan of Study (described in the following pages).

The program assumes colleagueship between faculty and students throughout the period of graduate study. Each student and faculty member is expected to act professionally and to share responsibilities and duties of professional life. Developing active partnerships is encouraged, though each student ultimately is responsible for learning. Faculty serve as teachers, advisors, colleagues, and mentors to students.

Accreditation
The University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The School of Education is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

The HED program is designed to meet the standards for master’s level preparation in student affairs of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). A full copy of the CAS Preparation Standards and Guidelines for Masters-Level Student Affairs Professional Preparation Programs can be obtained at http://standards.cas.edu/getpdf.cfm?PDF=E86DA70D-0C19-89ED-0FBA230F82F3F41.

Admission
Admission to the Master’s program in Higher Education is determined by an admission committee composed of program faculty. An earned GPA of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) for the last 60 semester hours of undergraduate study is required. TOEFL scores are required of all international students whose first language is not English, except those applicants who have graduated from an accredited university where English is the language of instruction. TOEFL scores are not required of US permanent residents and US naturalized citizens. IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is also accepted; a 6.5 minimum score is required. International applicants should consult the Graduate School web page for more information about the TOEFL and or other application requirements. Additional admission procedures are determined by the HED Admission Committee.
The initial application includes the following elements:

1. The Graduate School on-line application, including the supplemental materials
2. Remission of the application fee to the Graduate School
3. An unofficial transcript(s) of all previous academic work
4. Three letters of recommendation, at least one from a college professor who knows the quality of your previous academic work, and at least one from a professional reference, such as a current or former employer
5. A current resume
6. A brief (1-2 page) personal statement focused on academic and professional goals

For full consideration, all application materials must be received by January 15. Meeting this deadline is important so that you may participate in subsequent deadlines leading up to Interview Weekend, including submitting a writing sample and applying for GA positions.

Upon receipt of your application, program faculty will review your file and determine whether further consideration is warranted. Qualified applicants are then invited to an Interview Weekend at the end of February each year. Invited applicants will be asked to complete a writing assignment used to assess writing skills. Once completed, this exercise becomes part of the application file. (See the FAQs on the HED website for more detail.)

During the Interview Weekend, candidates will interview for admission as well as for graduate assistant (GA) positions. Subsequent to Interview Weekend, faculty members consult with GA supervisors to make a final decision about the candidate’s admission and GA status. The program faculty contacts the candidate indicating whether admission has been recommended. The candidate’s official notification of admission status is sent from the Graduate School. Applicants who are invited but are unable to attend the Interview Weekend may still be interviewed for admission and GA positions. Applicants are strongly encouraged to visit the campus for these interviews. Phone interviews and/or interviews at national conferences can be arranged for applicants who cannot travel to Blacksburg, however.

Generally slots in the cohort are filled by candidates whose applications are submitted by the January 15 deadline and who attend the Interview Weekend. Late applications may be considered if space is available.

**Program Requirements**

All master’s students are required to accomplish the following:

1. Satisfactory completion of at least 48 semester hours of graduate level course work, independent study, and supervised experience maintaining a minimum GPA of 3.0 throughout the program.

2. Membership in the Virginia Tech Higher Education Association (see details below).

3. Membership in at least one national professional association, such as ACPA – College Student Educators International or NASPA – Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education.

4. Satisfactory completion of a Final Examination. Details on the examination are provided elsewhere in this guide.

**Plan of Study**

After completing 12 hours of academic credit, all HED students are required to complete a Plan of Study form listing all the courses the student intends to complete for the degree. The Plan is completed in consultation with the faculty advisor. Once signed by the advisor and two other faculty members, it is approved by the School of Education and the Graduate School. Once approved, the Plan serves as the student’s academic contract with the university. Successful completion of all courses and other requirements listed on the Plan of Study ensures that the degree will be conferred. Changes to approved Plans of Study can be made by submitting additional paperwork.

**Curriculum**

The master’s curriculum consists of courses in four areas: Research, Foundations, Concentration, and Cognate. A total of 48 credit hours is required for the master’s degree. Given the delivery of the curriculum, students are required to register for classes during at least one summer term.

Specific courses and requirements are listed in the next section of this Guide. An asterisk (*) next to a course indicates that it is a requirement of the HED program.
Foundations
EDHE 5304 Intro to Student Affairs Profession*
EDHE 5314 Theories of College Student Development*
EDHE 6064 Higher Education in the United States*
EDHE 6274 Higher Education Law*

Research
EDHE 5105 Assessment in Higher Ed I*
EDHE 5106 Assessment in Higher Ed II*

Concentration
Below is a partial list of classes that might be used to fulfill these required hours:

EDHE 6054 College & University Administration*
EDHE 5334 The College Student & the College Environment*
EDHE 5284 Practicum* (6 units required, details below)
EDHE 5404 Staffing Practices*
EDHE 5604 Seminar: Inclusive Practices in Ed*
EDHE 5974 Independent Study* (3 hours required)
EDCO 5214 Theories of Counseling & Consultation
EDCO 5224 Counseling Techniques
EDCO 5234 Group Counseling
EDCO 5244 Counseling Diverse Populations
EDCO 5254 Career Development & Information Services

Cognate (6 required hours)
The cognate requirement calls for 6 hours of graduate level coursework in a discipline outside Higher Education and normally outside the area of education. Sociology and Human Development are frequently selected fields for cognate studies, for example. Numerous other fields are possible, such as Psychology, Management, or Instructional Technology. Students should consult with their advisors about these choices.

Practicum (EDHE 5284) (6 hours)
Each student is required to complete at least two practica for a total of six semester hours of credit. These credits are variable and, hypothetically, can be taken in any combination of credit hours although typically two 3-credit practica are completed. Students must intentionally select 3 credits when registering for practicum hours (by changing the default credit hours from 1 to 3). All decisions pertaining to the planning and conducting of a practicum experience must be completed in consultation with a site supervisor, the practicum coordinator, and the student’s advisor, generally at the end of the academic term preceding the practicum experience.

A practicum consists of supervised experience under the guidance of a qualified practitioner in student affairs administration or higher education. Site supervisors for practica are chosen carefully for their skills in educating graduate students in the art and science of administration. The work of the site supervisor and the student is overseen by the practicum coordinator, a faculty member who coordinates the class each term.

Procedures and requirements of the practicum are updated continuously. All students should consult carefully with the practicum coordinator for final requirements of practicum during the term(s) they actually are completing the experience(s).

Independent Study
Independent Study (EDHE 5974) units are available every semester and enable students to explore academic interests not addressed elsewhere in the curriculum. All students are required to complete at least one, 3-credit Independent Study project under the supervision of faculty. The required independent study involves the preparation of an e-Portfolio that demonstrates the student has acquired the learning, skills/experiences, and disposition necessary for successful professional practice. The e-Portfolio serves as the basis for the Final Examination that all students are required by the Graduate School to successfully complete (see details below).

The Graduate School and School of Education require that students register for Independent Study units by submitting to the advisor a form that describes the work they will conduct to earn those units. The form is available online or from the Program Office and must be filed at least three weeks prior to the start of the semester in which the student plans to enroll for Independent Study units.

Typical Two-Year Curriculum

Year 1 – Fall semester
EDHE 5304 – Intro to Student Affairs Profession
EDHE 5314 – Theories of College Student Development
EDHE 6064 – Higher Education in the United States
EDHE 5105 – Assessment in Higher Ed I

Year 1 – Spring semester
EDHE 5284 – Practicum
EDHE 5334 – College Student & College Environment
EDHE 6054 – College & University Administration
EDHE 5106 – Assessment in Higher Ed II

Year 1 - Summer I
EDHE 5284 – Practicum
EDHE 5404 – Staffing Practices
Year 2 – Fall semester
   EDHE 6274 – Higher Education Law
   EDHE 5604 – Seminar: Inclusive Practices in Ed Cognate

Year 2 – Spring semester
   EDHE 5974 – Independent Study
   Cognate
   Elective

The Final Examination
A Final Examination is required of all students and usually is completed during the student’s last term of full-time enrollment. The Final Examination is a University requirement. This means that the exam must be scheduled with the Graduate School and with the School of Education. Forms to schedule this exam are available online.

Three eligible faculty members serve on the examination committee. All members of the committee must be present at the exam. The Final Exam consists of two parts—a presentation of the e-Portfolio and an oral exam about that presentation. Students will provide committee members with access to the online e-Portfolio three weeks before the date of the Final Examination so that committee members can review the portfolio. On the day of the exam, the student will formally present the e-Portfolio to committee members who will then ask questions about the presentation and engage the student in a discussion of his/her preparedness for professional practice and the areas in which further professional preparation is warranted.

Faculty
The HED faculty includes full-time and affiliated faculty members. Affiliated faculty members are full-time administrators at Virginia Tech who teach, supervise assistantships or internships, and serve as administrative mentors and committee members for the HED program.

Full-Time Faculty:
Joan B. Hirt, Professor and Program Leader, Higher Education, College of Liberal Arts & Human Sciences
Steven M. Janosik, Associate Professor, Faculty Chair – Leadership Counseling and Research, College of Liberal Arts & Human Sciences
Claire K. Robbins, Assistant Professor, Higher Education, College of Liberal Arts & Human Sciences
Gabriel R. Serna, Assistant Professor, Higher Education, College of Liberal Arts & Human Sciences

Affiliated Faculty:
Sharrika Adams, Affiliated Assistant Professor; Associate Dean of Students & Director of Student Advocacy
Catherine Amelink, Affiliated Assistant Professor; Director of Graduate Programs and Assessment, College of Engineering
Cynthia Bonner, Affiliated Faculty, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs
Donna Cassell-Ratcliffe, Affiliated Faculty; Director of Career Services
John Dooley, Affiliated Assistant Professor; Chief Executive Officer, Virginia Tech Foundation, Inc.

Martha Glass, Affiliated Assistant Professor; Director for Assessment and Professional Practice, Division of Student Affairs
Rodd Hall, Affiliated Assistant Professor; Senior Associate Director for Administration, Virginia Tech Transportation Institute
Michael Herndon, Affiliated Faculty; Director of University Summer and Winter Sessions
Patricia Hyer, Affiliated Faculty; Associate Provost Emerita, University Provost’s Office
David Knight, Affiliated Assistant Professor; Assistant Professor, Engineering Education
David Kniola, Affiliated Assistant Professor; Visiting Assistant Professor, Educational Research and Evaluation
James Orr, Affiliated Assistant Professor; Director, Undergraduate Honor System
Patty Perillo, Affiliated Assistant Professor; Vice President for Student Affairs
Ellen Plummer, Affiliated Assistant Professor; Associate Vice Provost for Academic Administration
Karen Eley Sanders, Affiliated Assistant Professor; Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs
Frank Shushok, Affiliated Associate Professor; Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
Ken Smith, Affiliated Faculty, Vice Provost for Resource Management and Institutional Effectiveness
Kimberly Smith, Affiliated Assistant Professor; Director, University Academic Advising Center/University Studies
Edward F. D. Spencer, Affiliated Associate Professor; Vice President Emeritus for Student Affairs
Other faculty in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences and in colleges from which students complete cognate course requirements teach classes taken by HED students and serve as GA or practicum supervisors or on student committees for examinations. A complete list of faculty is provided in the Graduate Catalog.

**Advising**

All HED students are assigned an academic advisor who is a full-time faculty member in the program. The academic advisor assists students with course selection, plans of study, and other curricular issues. Additionally, all HED students have the option of working with a professional advisor who is an administrative faculty member. The professional advisor serves as a professional mentor for the student, assisting with career guidance, job search skills, and assimilation into the profession. Students who are interested in working with a professional advisor should consult with their academic advisor.

The advisor-student relationship is a vital ingredient to success in the program. Advisors are expected to be knowledgeable about university procedures, program requirements, and professional issues and to share these insights with students regularly. Students are expected to seek consultation frequently with advisors about program plans, personal or developmental issues, and professional concerns. The goal of the relationship is to teach, to learn, and to develop collegueship.

Advising is teaching in out-of-class settings. Faculty commitment to the process is unequivocal and all matters pertinent to teaching and learning are subjects for advising action. Attention is given to both challenge and support of students. Monitoring of student progress is a regular part of advising.

**Virginia Tech Higher Education Association (VTHEA)**

The Virginia Tech Higher Education Association is a local professional association devoted to graduate student opportunities for professional development and education. Its members include graduate students, faculty, and professional practitioners from Virginia Tech and nearby colleges and universities. Its purposes parallel the intentions of any professional association but VTHEA concentrates its programming on graduate student interests and needs. Its officers are elected graduate students. No other category of membership may serve as officers of the Association.

All Master's level graduate students in student affairs administration are required to hold membership in VTHEA and to take an active leadership role to assist the organization in achieving its goals.

**Financial Support**

There are two forms of financial assistance for students in the HED program: Graduate Assistantships (GAs) and wage positions.

GA positions require that students work (normally 20 hours per week) on campus in some pre-professional capacity. In exchange, the hiring department pays the student’s in-state tuition and a stipend during the 9-month academic year (a few are 12-month positions). All GAs are considered in-state students for purposes of tuition. There are a number of GA positions funded by departments in the Division of Student Affairs on campus. HED students receive priority consideration when these positions are awarded. HED students frequently compete successfully for GA positions funded by other departments on campus, such as the Provost’s Office and the Student Success Center. Varying GA positions are open to students each year and hiring is competitive.

Students on wage positions work for an hourly rate in an office on campus. No tuition is provided to wage employees, but the wages provide support for living expenses. Students in GA positions may work up to 10 hours per week in a wage position with permission from their advisor and the Graduate School.

The overall goal is to provide all HED students with both tuition and a source of income through a GA position. In recent years, the HED program has been able to accomplish this goal, although there is no guarantee of support to any student. Finally, students should be advised that GA positions do not cover student fees so students should calculate this expense into their budget, along with expenses for books, living costs, etc.

**Student Progress**

Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA to remain in good standing in the program. In accordance with procedures of the Graduate School, students will be placed on academic probation when they fail to maintain this average and will be allowed only one term to remedy the performance deficiency. Additionally, all students are required to complete a Progress Toward Degree form each spring semester reporting what actions they have undertaken to complete degree requirements. Faculty of the program regularly review student progress and recommend that students be placed on or removed from academic probation. They also recommend continuation or discontinuation of enrollment in the program. Notification of any action related to academic standing will be made in writing (electronic or hard copy) to the student.
From time to time, students may find it necessary to interrupt their study in the Master's program. For example, students may find it necessary to take an official Leave of Absence for family or health issues. Such requests must be made in writing to the Faculty Chair or Graduate Program Director for the unit before submission to the Graduate School. It is the student's responsibility to execute these forms accurately and on time. Students should consult with their advisors when questions arise about the need for and the use of these forms. Most forms can be obtained from the Program Office, the School of Education website, or the Graduate School website. When completing forms, students should use only the last four digits of their student ID number to protect the security of that ID number.

Other unforeseen circumstances may cause a student to be unable to complete the requirements of a specific course or courses. An Incomplete (I) grade, which is not calculated in the GPA, may be given when the requirements of a course have not been completed because of illness or extenuating circumstances. It is at the discretion of the instructor whether the circumstances warrant the assignment of an Incomplete. Unless otherwise agreed to, Incompletes should be removed by completing the course requirements within the next two academic semesters.

Records of previous student persistence, graduation, and employment files are maintained in the Program Office. The program leader is available for consultation with any prospective or current student relative to these matters.

**Ethics, Professional Behavior, and Principles of Community**

Ethical conduct is expected of all faculty and students. The preparation program adheres to the principles and standards of ethical conduct of the American College Personnel Association and the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators. Copies of these ethical statements are available from the Associations’ web sites.

No form of academic, intellectual, professional, or personal dishonesty will be tolerated. Plagiarism by students, for example, is an offense likely to result in dismissal from the program. Students and faculty are expected to be fully aware of ethical principles and standards of the profession and will be held personally accountable for violations of these standards.

To help create a common understanding about these issues, the Graduate School requires all students to participate in a program on scholarly ethics and integrity. Participation in this program is mandatory. Student attendance and satisfactory completion will be verified on the student’s Plan of Study.

In addition, the HED faculty strongly encourages students to review, adopt, and practice the [Virginia Tech Principles of Community](https://www.vt.edu/about/principles-of-community.html). These Principles are vital to the University’s ongoing efforts to improve access, equity, diversity, and inclusion in the Virginia Tech community.

**Program Evaluation**

The HED program is periodically reviewed and evaluated by the faculty to ensure that the curricular and administrative requirements reflect current issues in the field and are consistent with the missions of the School, College, and University. Student comments about the program are sought during this process and incorporated into the evaluation.

**Computers**

All graduate students in the School of Education are required to own a laptop computer. Details about this policy can be obtained from the School of Education office, 220 War Memorial Hall.

**Checklists and Forms**

Virtually all transactions between students and the University require the completion of an appropriate form. It is the student's responsibility to execute these forms accurately and on time. Students should consult with their advisors when questions arise about the need for and the use of these forms. Most forms can be obtained from the Program Office, the School of Education website, or the Graduate School website. When completing forms, students should use only the last four digits of their student ID number to protect the security of that ID number.