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# The C. Bascom Slep Foundation and UVa-Wise

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## *A Partnership for Excellence*

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**J**ohn T. Casteen III, President Emeritus of the University of Virginia, once said, “Precious to those who believe higher education to be a transformational social good is the Slep Foundation’s support of The University of Virginia’s College at Wise. Through the advancement of the college, one can catch a gratifying glimpse of a future in which the people of Southwest Virginia are engaged in meaningful work, the economy is productive and Appalachian culture, flourishing.”

For decades, the C. Bascom Slep Foundation has been a strategic partner in the upward trajectory of The University of Virginia’s College at Wise. The Foundation’s scholarship support for hundreds of students, as well as its essential role in academic enhancements and capital improvements, have provided tangible evidence of the transformational social good envisioned by President Emeritus Casteen. This fall, the Slep Foundation provided two gifts to the college that propelled its academic enterprise to an even greater level of excellence.

### AIMING HIGH

The Slep Foundation awarded the first private gift in the history of the college’s Appalachian Inter-Mountain Scholars (AIMS) program. Through the AIMS program, the college is changing the way higher education is administered in Southwest Virginia.

“The AIMS program can be simply described as a blueprint for families and students to obtain a college degree,” said Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management Rusty Necessary ’87. Established in 2002 with only two students, the access and affordability initiative has grown and prospered to include 28 full-time students last fall who attended UVa-Wise during their

junior and senior years at no cost. “The investment by the Slep Foundation has far reaching implications. We know that students who earn a degree here are far more likely to stay in the area as professionals,” Necessary said.

Students eligible for participation in the AIMS program come from schools in Wise, Lee, Scott and Dickenson counties and the City of Norton. More than 70 percent of these students are the first in their families to attend college, and their retention rate at UVa-Wise is 93 percent.

### THE BIG PICTURE

The college also received support from the Slep Foundation to enhance its developmental biology program. The Foundation provided funding to purchase eight new stereomicroscopes for student research in teaching laboratories. Four of the microscopes have cameras, which allow students to take pictures of their experimental work. Robin Cook-Hill, assistant professor of biology, said UVa-Wise had a need for the microscopes.

“Prior to the Slep Foundation funding, we did not have enough of the right kinds of microscopes to allow each student to actively participate in a range of actual research projects,” she said.

The Slep Foundation’s generosity

also provided funds for a new color printer so the photographs can be further analyzed. The money also made possible the purchase of a new lens for the college’s Leica microscope, along with a new state-of-the-art computer equipped to process the work done using the microscope’s camera and software. With these innovative new tools, students who take developmental biology will better understand the underlying mechanisms that regulate such processes as fertilization, embryogenesis, differentiation and morphogenesis.

Cook-Hill summarized the significance of the gift by saying, “the overall capacity of the department to both conduct research and expand our courses and laboratories has significantly increased due to the generosity of the Slep Foundation.”

The C. Bascom Slep Foundation’s steadfast support of The University of Virginia’s College at Wise is crucial to Southwest Virginia’s quality of life and future prosperity. Through its ongoing partnership with the college, the Slep Foundation continues to transform lives in the region, ensuring meaningful work, a productive economy and the flourishing Appalachian culture President Emeritus Casteen speaks of with such fondness.

– Thomas Galyean