



# VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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## Educating for the Global Workforce

Dr. E. Gordon Gee, President  
West Virginia University

Currently serving for a second time as President of West Virginia University, Dr. E. Gordon Gee has been a higher education leader for more than three decades. In 2009, *Time* magazine named him one of the top-10 university presidents in the United States. In addition to his service at West Virginia University, Dr. Gee served as President of The Ohio State University (twice), Vanderbilt University, Brown University, and the University of Colorado.

Born in Vernal, Utah, Dr. Gee graduated from the University of Utah with an honors degree in history and earned his J.D. and Ed.D. degrees from Columbia University. Before starting his career in higher education, he clerked under Chief Justice David T. Lewis of the U.S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals and was a judicial fellow and staff assistant to the U.S. Supreme Court, where he worked for Chief Justice Warren Burger.

He has written widely on law and education, and is the co-author of 11 books, including *Law, Policy and Higher Education*, published in 2012. His service on education-governance organizations and commissions is extensive.

Imagination is the fuel that powers the 21st century's global economy. At West Virginia University, we have one overriding goal – to help our students and all West Virginians thrive in that economy.

These are challenging times for our state and our nation. The economy has been undergoing a fundamental transformation.

In the early 20th century, America's wealthiest people – the Carnegies, the Vanderbilts, the Rockefellers – made their fortunes from manufacturing and the hard work people did in their steel mills, coal mines and oil fields.

Now, in the 21st century, a person like Bill Gates owes his fortune to ideas – ideas and technology developed at our nation's universities. Imagination today is what steel was 120 years ago – the very building block of progress. Meanwhile, the forces of globalization have made our world smaller.

Some people fear these changes, but I believe moments of great challenge are moments of greatest opportunity. What this moment demands is for colleges and universities to exercise their power as the central force in the creation of progress. We can out-think the rest of the world, but not by closing in on ourselves.

Amid turmoil of a civil war, Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862, which transformed the promise of higher education in this country. Our land-grant mission has always called upon us to improve lives and enrich communities.

Our obligation today is to apply our resources to immediate and pressing problems, in West Virginia and around the world. Global engagement is a natural extension of our



fundamental purpose. In a time when actions taken on one side of the globe have an immediate and profound impact on the other side, we simply must reach out beyond national borders.

West Virginia needs a global strategy. West Virginia University is the vehicle for executing that strategy.

By the numbers, West Virginia University is rapidly becoming a more global university. Last fall, we enrolled more than 1,800 international students, an increase of more than 10 percent from 2012. These students represent more than 100 different countries. Having students from other countries on campus helps all our students experience other cultures and perspectives.

Our community also includes more than 250 international research and teaching faculty. Having international faculty on campus helps us to promote the exchange of knowledge, perspectives and commerce between the State of West Virginia and its global partners.

We also send more than 800 of our students to study abroad every year. Engaging as many students as possible in study abroad programs is especially important. What is travel to a faraway place, but an immersion in the lessons of culture, communication, language, problem-solving and teamwork?

Today's college students simply must experience the world firsthand. It is not just a matter of understanding the interconnections of the world, of appreciating other cultures and other perspectives – although those are all important.

Learning to navigate in unknown territory challenges us in critical ways. We grow from it.

We gain confidence. We learn skills that last a lifetime.

Each scholar on this campus – whether mathematician, philosopher, poet, engineer or attorney – must fully appreciate that our place in the community and in the world has changed profoundly. Our faculty, staff and students have the expertise needed to improve cybersecurity at a time when identity theft has gone global; to develop sustainable energy sources; to help governments prevent terrorism; and to advance health care around the world.

Our faculty members are doing research abroad, as political science assistant professor Cyanne Loyle recently did at the Peace Research Institute in Norway. She is one of our more than 70 faculty members who have earned Fulbright Awards for international scholarship.

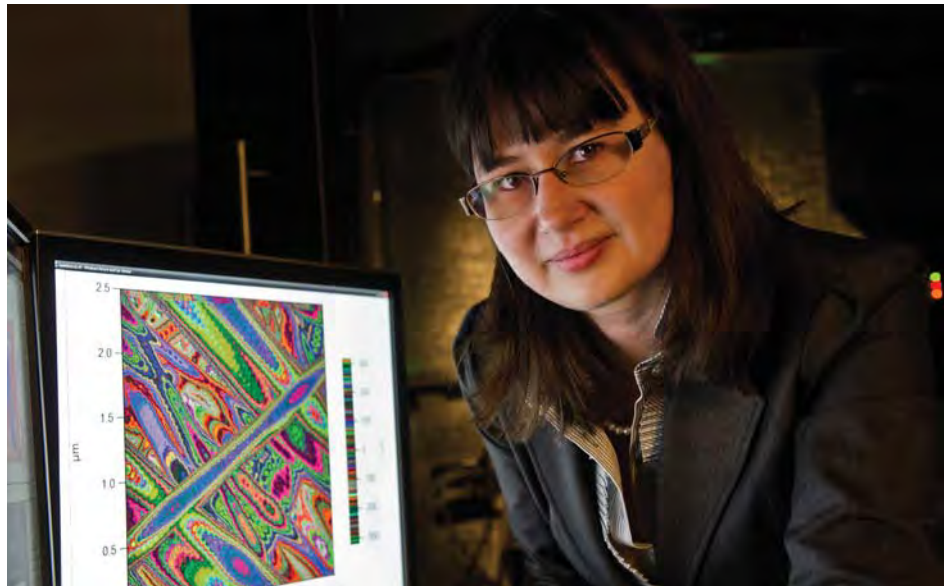
Our students are putting their knowledge to work in overseas service projects, as members of Engineers Without Borders did to improve water quality in a remote village in Fiji.

Faculty and students are providing health care in areas from Guatemala to Ghana through our Global Health Program.

Record numbers of our students are earning prestigious scholarships for study abroad. The six students who won the Gilman Scholarship this year are from West Virginia – representing Morgantown, Winfield, Martinsburg, Beckley, Wheeling and Philippi. The Gilman Scholarship will open new worlds for them.

Today, we can reap incomparable benefits of teaching a global perspective to the next generation of our state's thinkers and doers. West Virginia University has always been, and always will be, West Virginia's university. What has changed since our founding is this: West Virginia's future depends on creating success in a diverse, global marketplace.

We best serve the needs of West Virginians by ensuring that our students, our businesses and our citizens compete successfully in the world economy. ▽



*Cerasela-Zoica Dinu, Ph.D. engineering, is one of WVU's 250 international research and teaching faculty.*



*Students gain hands-on experience in the WVU Student Engineering Research Lab.*



*Students in the James V. and Ann Pozega Milano Reading Room in West Virginia University's Wise Library.*