

FAQ's About the Coordinator Endowment

Q. Who are the contacts for the Endowment if I have questions?

A. The Endowment Chair is vacant. For questions about making a donation, go to <http://vmga.net/endowment.php>

If you have questions about giving a gift or want some counseling about a larger gift, please contact:

Emily Wong, Associate Director of Major Gifts, (540) 231-6975, ewong03@vt.edu, OR:
Crystal Graham, VCE Development Administrator, (540) 231-3360, csgraham@vt.edu

Q. What is an endowment and how does it work?

A. A sum of money (called the corpus) is invested along with other endowment funds, as large sums of money make more money in returns. The funds are managed so that there is steady flow in returns. Once the corpus is fully funded, the interest income is available annually to be used for the purpose in the Agreement.

Q. We 'endow' VT's support through our individual efforts and out-of-pocket expenses. Doesn't the state owe us in return at least one salaried faculty position?

A. In the greater scheme of things, our MG program is relatively unimportant compared to health care, education and transportation. It would be great if Master Gardening was recognized as important enough to be funded by the state. But with taxpayer attitudes, competing state budget and university priorities and up and down trends in the economy, it is unwise to consider this as even a remote possibility.

Q. Why is Tech pushing us to do this?

A. Tech is not pushing us to do this. The idea of an endowment was suggested by a Master Gardener who recognized that it would give us power over our program. VMGA took the suggestion to VCE/VT leadership, who were surprised and so pleased that they pledged their support. Tech does have professional development officers who are available to VMGA and to potential donors for their expertise and resources.

Q. Shouldn't VT be paying for this?

A. *At this time, the Department of Horticulture and VCE are funding a position which is dedicated to our program for 50% of his time, and funding an Assistant Coordinator position. In effect, we have 1.5 full time staff. The State Coordinator and his Assistant have been able to do so much for our program! No longer is it a situation where just the basics are tended to, but we are seeing work on long-overdue projects and new initiatives!*

Q. So if the position is currently paid for, why establish an endowment?

A. That the State Coordinator is not grant funded has only come about in the past several years. In the past the position was funded through grants. Both grants and, yes, the state funds now used are tentative; neither is guaranteed. Funding for human services is always a target for budget cuts, and adult education is not as high a priority as K-12 and university funding. The endowment ensures that the

Master Gardener program will continue *independent* of budget constraints. Our experience tells us that when budgets are cut as they have been several times in our program's history, we cannot depend – or expect – that our program will always have an administrator.

Q. Won't this increase the likelihood that the university will cut funds to the Master Gardener program even farther?

A. Just the opposite. A funded position shows that the program is popular. VT and VCE leadership have told VMGA that they are more willing to fund the position because we are working to fully fund the Endowment. The saying, 'Better to bet on a willing horse' is applicable here!

Q. Isn't it a conflict of interest for the current state coordinator and assistant coordinator to be involved with VMGA's Endowment Committee?

A. The Coordinator and Assistant share VMGA Board Liaison responsibilities, and have willingly helped with the work of the Endowment Committee. The endowment will benefit the Master Gardener program long after the individuals in the positions have moved on. Finding ways to support the Master Gardener program is part of their job, as well.

Q. Our unit is small and doesn't have a treasury to afford to support the endowment. What's expected from us?

A. Direct donations will benefit the endowment most, but there are many, many ways to pitch in. The Silent Auction benefits the Endowment – your unit could contribute items for auction. Profits from MG Gear sales go into the Endowment – help us sell merchandise in your unit. Committee members travel to make presentations to local units and association – invite us to come visit. Maybe MGs in your unit know of philanthropic businesses or individuals who may want to contribute – ask them if we may provide Endowment information. And the Endowment Committee always welcomes new members – promote committee involvement to your members.