



2026 Annual
General
Meeting

from the President



Dear colleagues, friends,

When SOMP welcomed me as a new member in 2012, I could not have imagined what a special community I was joining. This has become my professional home—a network of exceptional people who share a passion for mining and minerals education and, as importantly, a passion for collaboration across institutions and borders. Working alongside such talented and generous colleagues is so very rewarding. I am humbled by your trust and grateful for the opportunity to serve as SOMP's President this year.

Our guiding theme for the year is ***Leading Together*** and I am really excited to see these words in action during our 2026 Annual General Meeting. The meeting will be hosted by the Department of Mining and Minerals Engineering at Virginia Tech between July 19-22. We cannot wait to welcome SOMP members and friends to our iconic campus in Blacksburg, Virginia. We are confident the program will be both engaging and productive—with plenty of space to spark new connections and strengthen the partnerships that make SOMP so effective. We are also organizing a parallel program for partners to explore the beautiful New River Valley and experience the local culture. Between July 23-24, we will also offer an off-campus field trip focused on professional development and visits to regional mine sites.

Looking forward to our time in Blacksburg. Until then, Glückauf!

Emily A Sarver

Emily Sarver

Stonie Barker Professor of Mining Engineering, Virginia Tech
2026 SOMP President

4 Organizing Committee

5 Host Institution & Location

8 Travel &
Accommodations

10 Meeting Agenda, Program
Highlights & Registration

13 Partners Program &
Field Trip

15 Other Details & Updates



2026 Organizing Committee

Prof. Emily Sarver, Virginia Tech, USA

Prof. Vladislav Kecojevic, Queen's University, Canada

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Elisabeth Clausen, RWTH Aachen University, Germany

Prof. Serkan Saydam, University of New South Wales, Australia

Prof. Zach Agioutantis, University of Kentucky, USA

Prof. Emeritus, Michael Karmis, Virginia Tech, USA

Prof. Domingo Javier Carvajal Gomez, University of Huelva, Spain

Hon. Prof. Angel Tobar Escudero, Technical University of Madrid / Epiroc, Spain

Prof. Oscar Jaime Restrepo Baena, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Colombia

Ms. Sandra Nowosad, Curtin University, Australia

Assoc. Prof. Veiko Karu, Estonian Business School, Estonia

Dr. George Barakos, Curtin University, Australia

Prof. Godfrey Dzinomwa, Namibia University of Science and Technology, Namibia

Prof. Andrea Brickey, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, USA

Prof. Wei Victor Liu, University of Alberta, Canada

Assoc. Prof. Nga Nguyen, Hanoi University of Mining and Geology, Vietnam

Prof. Harmony Musiyarira, Namibia University of Science & Technology, Namibia

Prof. Oliver Langefeld, Technical University of Clausthal, Germany

Assoc. Prof. Li Liu, Chongqing University, China

Assoc. Prof. Bahareh Nojabaei, Virginia Tech, USA

Assist. Prof. Rohit Pandey, Virginia Tech, USA

Assist. Prof. Amy McBrayer, West Virginia University, USA



Virginia Tech is a public land-grant research university. The institution prides itself on being an inclusive community of knowledge, discovery, and creativity which aims to prepare leaders and problem-solvers. True to its motto-'**Ut Prosim' (That I May Serve)**- Virginia Tech is known for a culture of service and a dedication to improving the quality of life and the human condition within the Commonwealth of Virginia and throughout the world.

Founded in 1872 as Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College under the Morrill Act, the university has grown from its rural, teaching- and military-focused origins into a comprehensive institution offering more than 280 degree programs and 38,000 students across undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels. With more than 2,500 faculty and annual research expenditures above \$500M, Virginia Tech is today among the major research universities in the U.S. The university is especially recognized for its College of Engineering, which consistently ranks among the top engineering schools in the nation. Virginia Tech's flagship campus is located in Blacksburg on some 2,600 acres, and it also has multiple multiple regional campuses and and international sites.





we look forward to hosting you

The Department of Mining and Minerals Engineering at Virginia Tech occupies a special place in the university's history and identity: The very first engineering degree conferred by Virginia Tech was in mining engineering, establishing a tradition of technical excellence that has endured for more than a century. From its earliest years, the department has combined education, research, and service to advance the mining profession and contribute to the responsible development of natural resources. Today, the department continues to play a vital role at the leading edge of engineering innovation.

Widely recognized as a major research engine of the university, the department is home to the Center for Advanced Separation Technologies (CAST) and the Virginia Center for Coal and Energy Research (VCCER), which expand its reach and impact across industry and government. Faculty and students lead cutting-edge work in mineral processing, mine health and safety, automation, and sustainable resource recovery. With the newly renovated Holden Hall providing state-of-the-art labs, classrooms, and collaboration spaces, the department is well positioned to prepare the next generation of engineers and to ensure that mining remains not only a proud legacy at Virginia Tech, but also a vital part of its present and future.



BLACKSBURG

Nestled in the scenic New River Valley on the edge of the Appalachian Mountains, Blacksburg offers the quintessential “college town” experience. With Virginia Tech at its heart, the community thrives on a vibrant mix of culture, innovation, and Hokie spirit. Downtown Blacksburg features locally owned restaurants, coffee shops, and live music venues, creating an energetic yet welcoming atmosphere.

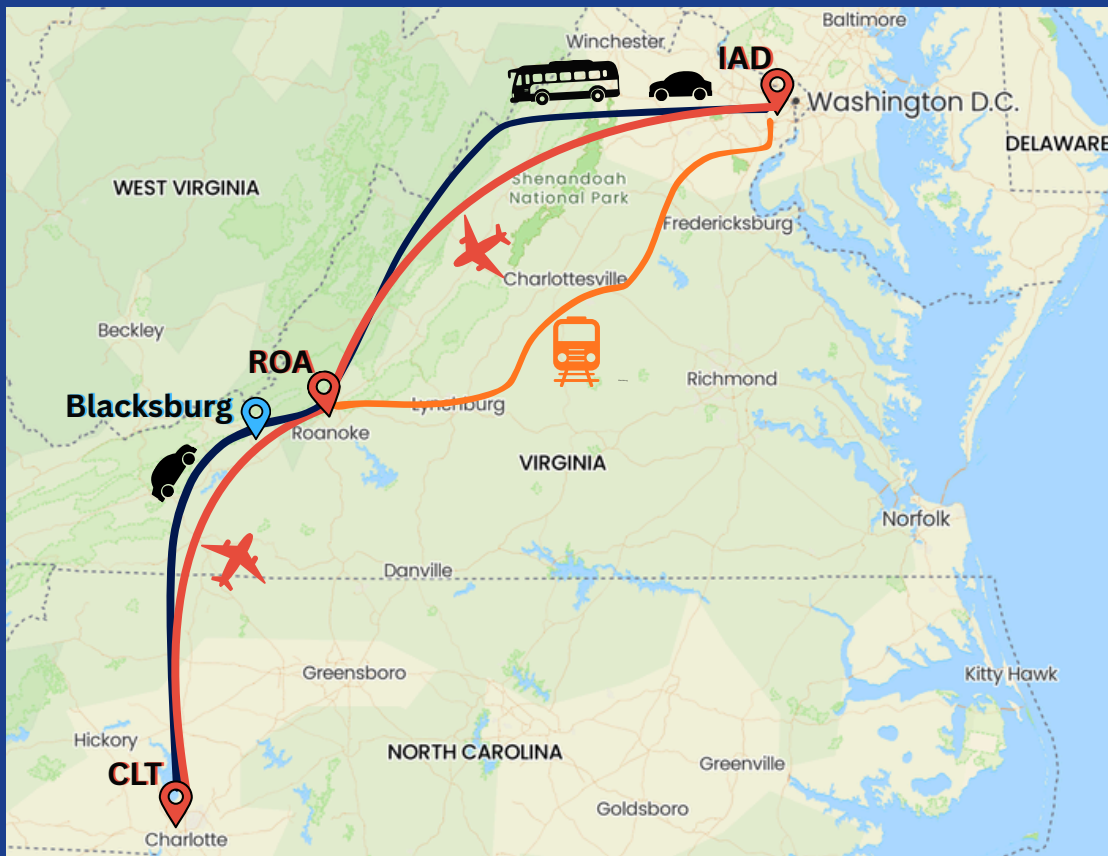
Regularly ranked among the best small towns to live in the United States, Blacksburg combines natural beauty and outdoor recreation with a strong sense of community. Its walkable downtown, dynamic arts scene, and proximity to hiking and biking trails make it a destination that balances academic excellence with quality of life. For visitors and residents alike, Blacksburg captures what it means to live, work, and learn in a true college town.

BLACKSBURG



GETTING

HERE



It is recommended to fly into one of several international airports in the mid-Atlantic US. Washington Dulles (IAD), Charlotte (CLT) and Atlanta (ATL) all offer connecting flights to the Roanoke Regional Airport (ROA), which is about a 40-minute drive to Blacksburg.

Notably, arrival to IAD offers the most flexibility with options for: direct *Virginia Breeze* bus transfer to Blacksburg, connecting regional flight to ROA, or *Amtrak* train from DC Central Station to Roanoke (note you must take metro from IAD to DC Central Station). From ROA and the Roanoke Amtrak station, there is a direct *SmartWay* bus transfer to Blacksburg.

For those wishing to rent a car, expect drive times of about 4.5 hours from IAD or 3.0 hours from CLT.

HERE

STAYING



The Inn at Virginia Tech is the preferred hotel for the SOMP 2026 participants. The Inn is situated on the northwest corner of campus and is co-located with the Skelton Conference Center, where AGM sessions will be held July 20-22. It is a short walk from other key locations, including the main academic buildings like Holden Hall—home to Mining and Minerals Engineering—and the athletics complex.

A “SOMP 2026” room block with a special nightly rate has been made at the VT Inn. Rooms may also be available at other nearby hotels, including the Residence Inn by Marriot and Hyatt Place which are also within walking distance.

2026 SOMP AGM

AGENDA *at a glance*



Sat July 18	Sun July 19	Mon July 20	Tue July 21	Wed July 22
Arrive to Blacksburg	Council & Committee Meetings	AGM Sessions	AGM Sessions	AGM Sessions
	VT campus tour, lab tours, Social Media workshop			
	International Night Mixer & World Cup Final watch!	Outreach Night Dining & Entertainment	Awards Night Dining & Entertainment	Farewell Evening Mixer & Flag Ceremony

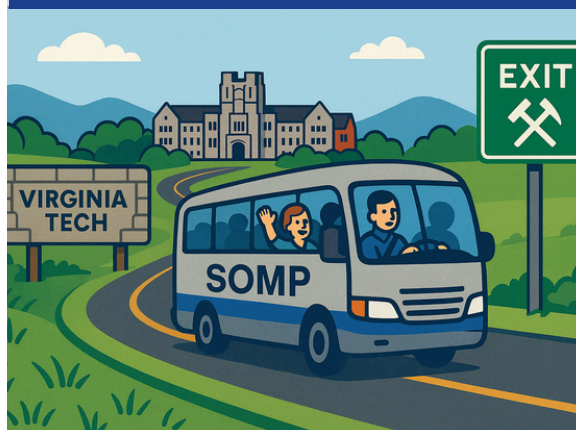
Optional Field Trip

hosted by



LUCK COMPANIES

IGNITING HUMAN POTENTIAL



Thu July 23

Leadership Workshop (Richmond, VA)

Engage in a fun, focused workshop on leveraging individual strengths for collaboration and innovation

Fri July 24

Site Visit at Bull Run (near IAD Airport)

Tour the first site deploying autonomous hauling and drilling in quarry operations

Trip departs from VT Inn on Thursday, with option for drop off near IAD on Friday; fee covers Thursday night accommodations, meals and transportation

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



We received more than 60 abstracts from SOMP members for 2026!

The program will include engaging sessions on...

- Mapping and Building Capacity in Mining Education
- Designing and Delivering an Impactful Curriculum
- Integrating New Competencies into Mining Education
- Collaboration Stories in Mining Education
- Regional Perspectives on Enrollment and Student Demand
- Networks and Partnerships for Mining Research

Plus, we'll have a poster session and contest...

- Showcasing Research Across the SOMP Community

And interactive workshops on...

- Inspired Approaches for Outreach and Recruitment
- Innovative Strategies to Teaching and Learning
- Collaborative Online Teaching
- Use of AI/LLMs to Support Teaching and Research
- Social Media Content Creation



REGISTRATION

early bird rate before May 15!

Registration	Early (before May 15)	Regular (after May 15)
Regular members	\$750	\$900
Members from developing countries or regions (OECD definition)	\$500	\$600
Junior members	\$500	\$600
Non-members	\$900	\$1,080
Partner program participants (all social events + special programming July 20-22)	\$500	\$600
Field trip (July 23-24, includes meals, transportation, overnight accommodation)	\$500	\$600

join or renew your membership to save!

All rates shown in US dollars



A special partners program will highlight the unique character of the region. Participants will enjoy themes centered on nature and wellness, local arts and culture, and the vibrant life of the Virginia Tech campus. Tentative plans include...

Sun July 19	Mon July 20	Tue July 21	Wed July 22
Free	Spend a day at Mountain Lake Lodge—filming location of the 1987 classic Dirty Dancing. Enjoy a tour, lunch, and dance lessons too	Start your day with gentle yoga, followed by an immersive experience at the VT Arts Center, lunch at the Hahn Gardens, and some art therapy	Explore local caverns, learn about regional agriculture with a visit to a working farm, and enjoy Appalachian cuisine and local brews
VT campus tour, lab tours, Social Media workshop			
International Night Mixer & World Cup Final watch!	Outreach Night Dining & Entertainment	Awards Night Dining & Entertainment	Farewell Evening Mixer & Flag Ceremony

partners PROGRAM



take a Field Trip

hosted by  **LUCK COMPANIES**
IGNITING HUMAN POTENTIAL

As an add-on to the 2026 Annual General Meeting, participants may register for an optional two-day professional development field experience hosted by Luck Companies. Day 1 will feature a custom-designed, fun and focused leadership workshop centered on leveraging individual strengths for collaboration and innovation. Day 2 will include a site visit to the Bull Run Quarry, where Luck is pioneering to bring autonomous hauling and drilling to the aggregates industry.

The group will depart by bus early on the morning of July 23 from the Inn at Virginia Tech, and stay overnight in Richmond, VA. Following the site visit on July 24, participant drop-off will be offered at Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD) to support onward travel. Additional logistical details and registration information will be shared as they are finalized.



other details

weather and attire

Blacksburg in July tends to be warm, with daytime highs between 75–90 °F (23–31 °C) and overnight lows averaging 65 °F (18 °C).

Expect 'business casual' dress for all events, except for the Awards Evening which will be more formal. Participants on the partners program can dress casually and with comfortable shoes for some walking. Participants on the excursion should wear long pants and closed shoes for site tours.

official invitation letters

If you anticipate needing an official invitation letter from Virginia Tech for the purpose of obtaining a travel visa to the United States, please complete **this form** as soon as possible.

inquiries

Please direct inquiries to our team at **info@somp2026.com**



for updates
www.somp2026.com

