Alex Parrish didn't set out to get involved with university governance when he came to Virginia Tech in 2008. In fact, he wasn't even sure how long he would stay at the university. But he soon realized that the New River Valley and Virginia Tech was exactly the kind of place he and his wife wanted to put down roots. Now, he says, he hopes to retire from Virginia Tech.

He said one of the things he likes most about working at Virginia Tech is that the university is large enough to afford people the opportunity to grow in their careers.

"The commitment that the university makes to staff development, the opportunities given in shared governance, and the feeling that you're working for a place that's known for excellence around the world… that really makes Virginia Tech a great place to hang your hat," Parrish said.

The Kentucky native earned a bachelor's degree from Campbellsville University in Campbellsville, Kentucky. He wanted to be a youth minister. When that didn’t work out, he worked in outside sales and fell into a graphic design career.

Parrish came to Virginia Tech in 2008 as an emergency hire graphic designer for the Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science (ICTAS), coming on full-time later that year. Six years later, he moved to his current position as the marketing team lead for the School of Biomedical Engineering and Sciences, where he works with various staff to promote the activities of the department.

Parrish founded a networking group for creative professionals across campus. The group meets monthly to brainstorm, share ideas, and get to know each other.

He’s involved with the Staff Senate and currently serves as the group’s vice president. In 2016, he’ll serve as president. Part of his responsibilities with the Staff Senate includes being the group’s representative to the Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs.

The desire to participate in the shared governance system at Virginia Tech wasn’t something he set out to do, but it is something Parrish said he’s developed a passion for.

People who need help with technical skills or departments that want assistance with team building can get it right here on campus. Those who need help managing their personal and professional lives can reach out to Hokie Wellness. Even folks struggling to get along with someone, Parrish explained, can get help from the conflict resolution program.

Parrish received the university’s 2013 President’s Award for Excellence for consistent excellence in job performance.

When he's not at work, Parrish and his wife, Heather Parrish, spend their evenings and weekends raising their 2-year-old daughter, Willow. Heather Parrish is an administrative assistant in the Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine.

Since they relocated to the New River Valley, the couple has dedicated much of their free time to nurturing New River Stage, a nonprofit theatre company in Blacksburg, Virginia. Parrish served as the Artistic Director from 2009 to 2012, when he was elected board president. As artistic director, he wrote many of the original productions the company produced. The Parrishes are actively involved in their church, Belmont Christian Church, in Christiansburg, Virginia, where they live.

Given his new position at Virginia Tech, his commitment to the staff senate, and his desire to spend more quality time with his family, Alex will end his time on the theatre board at the end of his current term, the end of this year.

That’ll give him more time, he explained, to focus on how he can best help his staff colleagues by sharing information and helping give them a voice.

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www.hr.vt.edu/extraordinary_employees/2015/alex-parrish/

Laura Neff-Henderson, APR, is the employee communications manager at Virginia Tech.

He said his involvement will allow him to better help his colleagues learn about the resources available to them and the ways they can make a difference.

"We don't have to want for anything at Virginia Tech," said Parrish.