

President's Open Session Remarks
BOV Meeting
June 4th, 2018

The close of the 2017-18 academic year was eventful – it was a time for celebration, reflection and remembrance. In May, we lost president emeritus Charles Steger. We have since celebrated his achievements in advancing Virginia Tech as a global land-grant research university. As his successor, I am thankful every day for the tent-poles he raised, and the foundation he solidified.

In May, we also celebrated a year that launched nearly 8,400 graduates. 30,000 attended May commencement exercises to hear the inspiring words of Governor Ralph Northam, and what will be known as his “Save the Baby” speech. He challenged our graduates to step up and take the wheel, and to trust the preparation they have received and earned while at Virginia Tech.

While we reflect on this past academic year, we are also preparing for the next. This fall, we will welcome our most diverse and best-prepared class ever. The pool of talent attracted to Virginia Tech is becoming broader and deeper with each cycle, and I appreciate the hard work of our faculty, staff and especially those who work in enrollment management. You are gradually leaking the best kept secret in higher education, and making a Virginia Tech education an aspiration and a reality for many who would not have had this opportunity before.

With the new year, we will also welcome new faculty, staff, graduate students and, of course, the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine as our ninth college.

I am especially looking forward to introducing you all to our Senior Vice President, Dr. Dwayne Pinkney, who will join Virginia Tech on August 1st from UNC-Chapel Hill.

The General Assembly session in Richmond is now almost complete, and I am pleased to report that Virginia Tech fared well, especially considering that the needs of higher education were in competition with the desire to enhance the rainy day fund to maintain top bond ratings for the commonwealth. The result was that the first year of the biennium will see us lose ground in appropriated General Funds per enrolled in-state student in real dollars, with promise for at least partial recovery in the second year. A combination of enrollment growth, increased philanthropy, and improved productivity will allow us to bridge gracefully through next year, while restricting growth of tuition and mandatory fees for in-state undergraduates to 2.9% for the third year in a row.

The General Assembly session brought two significant advances for which Virginia Tech had positioned itself well. The first is the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative, which is funded at the level of \$5M in the first year and \$20M in the second year. Virginia Tech has been asked to lead this statewide effort to address research opportunities, business creation and workforce development at the confluence of data, security and autonomy. Virginia is rich in assets in this

emerging domain - in its universities, its burgeoning technology industry and in the federal government. We are now in a position to help organize, coordinate and diversify this foundational confluence for the benefit of Virginia and the world.

Virginia Tech is in this position because of the world-class people and programs in its institutes, destination areas, departments and colleges. The Hume Center for National Security led by Charles Clancy, the Virginia Cyber Range, the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, The Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science, the Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership, the Integrated Security Destination Area, the Intelligent Infrastructure for Human-Centered Communities Destination Area, the Data and Decisions Destination Area, and LINK, our business engagement center, are all right at the core of our strength at the confluence represented by The Commonwealth Cyber Initiative.

Reflecting on a conversation I had last year with our leadership team, we will look back at this time as the era of **collective autonomy**, when networks of machines and networks of people learned to work together to make better decisions. Either we will do this right, or we will make some tragic mistakes of great consequence to humanity. This is exactly why we created Destination Areas at Virginia Tech, transdisciplinary platforms for research, learning and engagement that bring a human perspective into fields that have been enabled by science and technology. We first ask, how can we improve the human condition? No technology can succeed without consideration of how that technology will be used by humans, and how society will benefit. The Commonwealth Cyber Initiative is not about cybersecurity – building a better firewall. It is about bringing people and machines together to affect positive change in the quality of life for everyone.

Although the beginnings of the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative will be modest – a hub in northern Virginia, with spokes out to centers of excellence around the Commonwealth, don't be deceived by the \$25M figure. We expect that the investment in the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative will exceed \$300M from all partners in the first five years, and will grow exponentially thereafter. The state is catalyzing the first stage of this initiative.

The second feature of the biennial budget that is new and aligned with Virginia Tech's priorities is the authorization of financial support for internships through SCHEV, the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative and the allocation of state financial aid through our universities. Working with our partners at the Virginia Business-Higher Education Council (our rector, Dennis Treacy is on the Board), we have strived to elevate the concept of VT-shaped learning to a statewide effort to ensure that all of our students have the opportunity to participate in experiential learning that reinforces what they learn on campus, reduces debt and prepares them with the skills they need to transition into a successful career. With state support, we have a better opportunity to keep talent in Virginia by building pathways between our universities and employers operating out of Virginia. I am challenging our Virginia Tech faculty and staff to use this opportunity to lead the way toward the Beyond Boundaries vision of the undergraduate experience at Virginia Tech.

Finally, I would like to recognize those BOV members whose terms are expiring at the end of this month: Mike Quillen, Wayne Robinson, Mehul Sanghani and Horacio Valeiras. Each of you has contributed a unique and valuable perspective that has irreversibly altered and elevated Virginia Tech's aspirations for the future. Thank you! And while three of you are eligible for a second term – I understand we will hear from the governor soon – one of you is not. Mike, thank you for onboarding me as my first rector. Your guidance in those first weeks, and ever since, has helped me understand the life-blood of this great institution. Your love for Virginia Tech and for the communities of southwest Virginia is inspiring, and we look forward to your leadership as a partner and collaborator going into the future.

This concludes my report.