

Name	Affiliation	Comment Attachment C
Deborah	Student	<p>I guess I am just wondering when the tuition and fees increases are going to stop? You keep increasing the cost of attendance to Virginia Tech but the fact is, there is not a commensurate increase in compensation across the country. This include in my graduate student stipend. You have talked constantly about increasing diversity and being inclusive at Virginia Tech but simultaneously make it impossible for people with financial barriers to attend or keep attending your institution. And people with financial barriers are more often than not the case for those diverse people you say you want on your campus. So I ask you, when will the increases stop?</p>
	None	<p>We hope everything will be done not to raise tuition and/or fees. We were paying full tuition but with many cases this year not receiving the full benefit of full time instruction. Almost all of our son's classes for the past 2 semesters were asynchronous online. In several instances the professors taped only one lecture for a week and students were to watch on their own, obviously not being able to ask questions.</p> <p>Living on campus this year, our son has not used the classrooms nor many of the services for which we have paid full price. We have had to pay grub hub fees for 2 semesters on top of everything else. Many of us feel that we have not received value for what we have paid particularly with regard to instruction.</p>
Tracy Franco	Parent	<p>Hello ~ I would just ask the Board to consider that for the 2020-2021 school year undergraduate students paid over two thousand dollars total (Fall & Spring) for fees such as rec sports fee, student activity fee, student cultural activities and athletic fee. This was all during the pandemic when activities were limited, virtual or non-existent. In the Spring of 2020, the change was sudden and unexpected, but this current school year, adjustments should have been made for some fees. I understand that fees such as the health fee or library fee are necessary. Please consider the extent of what students paid this year for fees given the pandemic and what may or may not occur for the upcoming year. At minimum, no fee increases should be permitted. Thank you for your time.</p>
Charles Parker	Student	<p>I understand the fact that it takes a considerable amount of resources and capital to operate a university as large as Virginia Tech. We offer a variety of programs that are invaluable to students and the world they will go on to serve. What I do not understand is why the University believes it necessary to increase costs while the country is in a continued state of economic crisis. Students and their families are already stretched thin with costs as it is. Has the University considered pursuing business initiatives that could help to finance operations and alleviate economic pressure on students? We are a land-grant university, not Harvard. If our goal is to educate the masses, why are we only making it harder to do so?</p>
Kase Poling	Student	<p>I am writing to encourage the Board of Visitors to keep current tuition and fee rates the same for the upcoming year. Please do not increase the cost of tuition and fees. While it is important to properly fund things like facility maintenance and improvements, faculty and staff raises, and other important expenses, it is equally important to keep a Virginia Tech education affordable and not increase the financial strain on undergraduate and graduate students alike. This has been a challenging year for everyone and I encourage you to please not put any additional financial hardship on students. Sincerely, A passionate Hokie</p>

Joseph Kozak	Student	<p style="text-align: right;">Attachment C</p> <p>Dear members of the Board of Visitors,</p> <p>It is an unfortunate case to learn that our BoV is looking to increase the fees for graduate (and undergraduate) students, especially now in a time of crisis that is striking the financial stability of many students and families. And since this issue is returning for a second year, I would like to reiterate my own previous comments.</p> <p>I hoped to share a small part of my experiences as I chose to come to VT to become an expert in my field, and help develop technology that could be utilized in many industrial applications (I am an electrical engineer). One of the major considerations that I factored while comparing various universities included the stipends, comprehensive fees, cost of medical insurance, and cost of living. Right now Blacksburg is having a spike in increase of cost of living which is caused by the expansion of the University population. In addition, this expansion is causing an increase in our fees. If I look back and was considering to come to VT over other institutions...I would have serious pause to recognize that the comprehensive fees have increased numerous times over the past few years while stipends have not matched this increase.</p> <p>While I am very fortunate to attend this institution, and to learn from my advisers and educators around me, I am burdened financially by the overall "grad tax" that these fees represent. I try to do my best to represent my lab and VT to the greater community and my professional field, but it is difficult to feel a sense of support if that community is asking for more and more from me without providing additional support- I have had opportunities to work in multiple national laboratories and present my work at top tier conferences nationally and internationally. As of right now, the graduate comprehensive fees are about 10% of my overall income and general livelihood. So, I find myself with serious decisions each month after paying my comprehensive fee.</p> <p>With all the issues that have been raised and recognized by the University in the past year, especially food security for students, as well as now the impact that the COVID-19 outbreak is adding to already stressed students, I hope the BoV looks for solutions that will add support to the graduate student population. Recognizing the issues that graduate students face and providing gestures of support will reverberate throughout the university as we make up much of the foundation of success - we support students as teaching assistance, we mentor students in research initiatives, and we conduct cutting edge research in the laboratories.</p> <p>We graduate students chose to attend VT because of the community and sense of UT Prosim that reverberates across campus. We want to be successful and speak of the great experiences we have had attending games at Lane stadium, walking around the duck pond, and presenting our work at conferences; and so I hope that you hear our voices and our stories with regards that the continued financial stress of the comprehensive fees bring. While this increase in fees might be necessary, the overall lack of support experienced in the graduate community will echo into future years of research, teaching, recruitment, and retention.</p> <p>I thank you all for your consideration and patience to all graduate student stories, as well as your service and dedication to ensure VT remains a premier institution.</p>
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Samantha	Student	<p>I will first state that that tuition and fees should not be raised. Virginia Tech already costs way too much. For a student like me who does not receive any financial support from Tech or anyone else, only federal loans, a decision to raise fees will only hurt me. I can barely afford the expenses I have now. I rarely have any money left over at the end of the month to be able to buy food for me to eat. I survive on 49 cent macaroni and cheese as my food because I can not afford to buy anything else after rent and utilities are paid. Raising the fees will only cause me and other students more pain. The only aid that I qualify for is federal loans from the government. Whatever it does not cover, it is left up to me to find a way. I receive no support from my family and I have to pay for everything. I have many times went hungry or without just to be able to afford a monthly payment of tuition that Tech wants me to pay. So while you voting on if you should raise the tuition, think about me and imagine if your daughter was in a situation like mine and living off macaroni because she can not afford anything else.</p>
Noel Norris	Parent	<p>I would ask the university to first and foremost look internally for areas where cost can be reduced before automatically implementing a increase in tuition. I read a statement from one of the local news outlets stating that professors needed a 5% salary increase. Considering the cost that the university and students have incurred as a result of COVID I think a 5% raise is ludicrous. I have spent 25 years in the healthcare sector in upper management roles. Some years the organization could only offer 1 or 2% raises and in other years when we were highly profitable the organization was able to pass along 3 to 5% increases. It appears that the university is selecting to pass a cost of living increase onto its employees and not taking into consideration the students cost of living. Housing is not cheap by any means in Blacksburg. We are stuck with 12 month leases when our students are elsewhere working or doing an internship on the summer. I would ask the university to think outside the box and ask your employees to share where they see waste and use those ideas to improve processes and reduce expenses before increasing tuition. Offer an incentive for winnings ideas; it is a win win for employee moral, the university and its students. The university should also think about creating a Finance Innovation program where business students could be involved in creating and implementing Lean Six Sigma projects that are aligned to reduce waste, keep the university fiscally stable and allowing VT to be a leader in innovation. The faculty and students are equally important to the university therefore increases in salary and fees/tuition must be equally aligned.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
Anonymous	Student	<p>As a freshman at Virginia Tech, having a sham of a freshman year and still paying full price hurt. Now you are thinking about raising the prices on something I have yet to experience. Shame on you.</p>
Manisha Chaudhari	Parent	<p>As an out of state parent, I do not want tuition or fees to go up. Can the endowment fund (\$1.2 Billion) be used to help? Thank you for your time.</p>

<p>Larkin Rae</p>	<p>Student</p>	<p>Coming from a low income family to Virginia Tech, relying solely on student loans, there is a lot of financial stress in my life that makes attending higher education difficult and stressful. When I look at my current tuition and fees, I already question why I am being charged for some of the things charged. There are already hefty fees for things like the Recreational sports fee, which quite honestly I don't have the time to engage in because of my course load. So there I find issues with justifying fees that I don't engage in. It is especially thought provoking that 30,000+ students pay these fees for the small portion of the community that have time to engage in recreational sports or student cultural activities, etc.</p> <p>It is hard for me to understand why more money should be taken from students who are already struggling.</p> <p>Thank you for your time if you read this.</p>
<p>Julie Hollis</p>	<p>Parent</p>	<p>Dear BOV of Va Tech,</p> <p>Please take into consideration the lack of instruction and accessibility to an adequate education that the students have endured for the last two and one-half semesters when the issue of raising tuition is discussed.</p> <p>Professors/instructors can claim to have provided enriching and engaging instruction over the course of the last two and one-half semesters however, this has not been the case. Professors have uploaded PowerPoints for students with no additional discussion or in-depth instruction happening. Others have assigned chapters to read from the textbook and then never once provided any instruction on the material prior to a quiz or test. While your argument for having to raise tuition is due in part to having to increase employees' benefits per the state, I have to ask has the university been fiscally responsible with the millions that it received from the CARES Act in 2020? If the university is filing for a second draw, that money can also be used for salaries/benefits instead of increasing tuition. In our current economic times, when so many parents and students have lost income due to an over-the-top reaction to a cold virus with a 99.4% survival rate, an increase in the already exorbitant cost of attending Va Tech is a hard pill to swallow.</p> <p>In addition, students have had to pay thousands in fees for services and activities that they have not been allowed to access. There has been no indication that Timothy Sands, or anyone in the administration, has gone to Richmond to advocate for the students. Instead, the administration has shamed, guilted, isolate, and called for students to turn on one another. The Va Tech campus and community have been nothing but subjects in research that the university received millions to conduct.</p> <p>Instead of considering a tuition and fees increase, consider fully opening the university back up to the students which will, in turn, raise revenue. Universities across the country have already stated that classes will be in-person in the fall, and all student activities will resume at normal levels. My rising Junior and incoming Freshman need to know if they need to commit to Va Tech for the fall, or if they need to look at other universities where they will be allowed to be college students and access all that tuition and fees cover.</p> <p>Sincerely, Julie Hollis</p>

Kela Rosario	Parent	<p>I am a parent of a freshman, a part time wage employee and a spouse to a staff member at VT. I feel strongly that our students and their parents have carried the heaviest burden of change at VT during this pandemic with largely virtual and asynchronous courses, required to pay for housing that at times they have not been able to use as students have returned home due to virtual courses and isolation in the apartments and dorm rooms. They have continued to take loans to pay for fees and services as well as tuition as if it was a normal year. To ask the students and their parents to pay additional tuition at this time is insensitive and not equitable.</p> <p>Other universities have asked the management staff to accept a step back in salary of a small percentage to help make the necessary budgetary adjustments for the coming year. As someone who has witnessed multiple appointed (ie not through a hiring search) high level positions continue to be created during this time - including many that, at least in my perspective, represent a redundancy in our administrative systems, it seems there are other places that the necessary funds could be identified without further burdening the students, many of whom may come from families that have been specifically impacted by COVID impacts. Thank you for your efforts in keeping a college education affordable.</p>
Nancy Rider	Parent	<p>I write to urge you not to increase tuition or fees for the coming year:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Many families are still struggling financially from the pandemic and cannot afford additional expenses. 2. Instead please utilize savings from operational expenses, such as utilities, janitorial services, and maintenance, that accrued while most of the campus was shut down for a year. 3. Forty billion dollars is set aside for colleges and universities from the Covid Relief Bill, in addition to generous transfers to the commonwealth. This money should be used toward meeting next year's plan rather than increased tuition and fees. 4. Finally, the education value for this past year has been abysmal. If anything, students should receive a partial refund for tuition. <p>Thank you, Nancy Rider</p>

Miles Guth

3/8/21

BOV Speech: Tuition and Fees

Good Afternoon Members of the Board of Visitors and university officials,

My name is Miles Taylor Guth, and I have the honor and duty of serving as the Student Government Association president for this semester. As SGA President, it is my responsibility to represent the voice of the 29,000 undergraduate students at Virginia Tech. Recently, I released an anonymous survey to the students, on behalf of SGA, that allowed them to share their thoughts and opinions on the proposed tuition and fee policy for the upcoming academic year. My speech today is entirely based on the comments received in this survey and other discussions with my colleagues in governance.

Before asking the students any questions about the proposed policy, we asked if they had read the article released in the VT news about this topic, in order to make sure the student's comments were well-founded and based on factual knowledge of the policy. 92.5% of the respondents indicated that they had read the article in its entirety. We then asked students about their approval of the policy, and 93% chose the answer stating "I am not in support of the plan. I do not understand why Virginia Tech needs to increase the cost of tuition and I would like a smaller increase or none at all."

Students also voiced that they feel as though they do not know where the money goes and what it is used for. Many respondents indicated that they would be much more comfortable with the proposition if they understood what the university uses their fees for and how that helps the university operate. Based upon the suggestions I have heard and discussed with other university officials during meetings, I think a beneficial action, could be an Official VT release of details for the finances of the institution. This could explain where, how much, and why the fees are needed. By releasing this information, the greater VT community will develop a better understanding of the university's financial allocation policies, and thus a greater appreciation for the rationale behind the institution's financial policy decisions.

Before closing my statement, I would like to share my personal thoughts on this proposition. The most challenging part of this choice is the difficult balancing act that is necessary. On one hand, the university functions much like a business. We have operating costs and we have revenue sources to cover those costs. Altering our financial policies ensures that the university can operate effectively for the students, faculty, and staff. However, there is also the importance of the student's input and feedback. Even more challenging, though, is that no student comes from the same financial situation. No two students are going to think the same way about this policy, because every student will be impacted differently by it. Trying to make the correct choice and satisfy both sides is quite difficult, and I commend you for listening to the voice of the students.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak with you and represent my fellow students today. I firmly believe that, when making difficult decisions, listening is half the battle.

Thank you.

March 8th, 2021

To the Members of the Board of Visitors,

It is with distinct pleasure that I, Maruf Hoque, have the opportunity to represent the graduate and professional student body of Virginia Tech as the President of the Graduate Student Assembly. I wish I were able to bring positive news in my update today, but I would like to use the next minute to describe the status of graduate life at Virginia Tech.

First, the stipend data obtained from the Graduate School and Dean DePauw, indicates that the average graduate student at VT has a monthly salary of \$2,155 (9 months). About 3 weeks ago, the GSA launched a survey to gauge the Cost of Living of a graduate student at VT. The survey currently has 970 responses. We will be collecting responses for another week and will release our results by the end of the month. Our preliminary data states that on average, graduate students are paying: \$827/month for rent, \$228/month for utilities (water, heat, electric, internet, & cell phone), \$255/month Federal/state income taxes, \$367/month for comprehensive fees, \$120/month in health/dental insurance premiums, much more in monthly out of pocket medical costs, and \$200 month for commuting (parking, auto insurance, gasoline, & vehicle tax). This leaves the average graduate student only \$158 a month to get groceries and plan for any potential emergency that may happen. This also does not factor in 3 months of pay that many graduate students do not receive due to lack of a 12 month assistantship.

Furthermore, market reports (obtained from VP Student Affairs, Frank Shushok) indicate that rent in the New River Valley is projected to increase approx. 3.3% annually, outpacing the national average. Increasing rents in the NRV, tagged with a 3% increase in tuition, and \$90 increase in comp. fees further cut into the \$158 that graduate students are left with.

Advancing Beyond Boundaries presented several strategic goals deemed essential to advancing VT's reputation and position for the next decade and beyond. Of the goals cited in the strategic vision, a number are directly dependent on the activities and work of our graduate teaching and research assistants. We must ask ourselves will the final take-home pay of \$158 allow us to recruit and retain future talent to VT's graduate programs.

As a community, we cannot be in the same place year after year. We ask that you take a serious look at graduate stipends and compensation packages to make VT more competitive and to achieve the initiatives presented by Beyond Boundaries. We ask that the Board of Visitors along with the Graduate School:

- 1) Create a timeline for the implementation of the 14 recommendations recommended by the Graduate Education Task Force Report,
- 2) Convert all 9-month assistantships to 12-month assistantships,
- 3) Provide multi-year stipend offers to all accepted graduate students, and most importantly,
- 4) Offset any increase in tuition/fees with an increased stipend for all graduate students.

Respectfully,

Maruf M. Hoque
President, Graduate Student Assembly (2020-2021)

Good morning, board members. Last year, Virginia Tech elected to freeze tuition in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The student body is thankful for that and it tells us that you hear us, the students, when we have something to say. I hope that you will maintain the freeze and not raise our comprehensive fees in the next academic term.

I don't tell this story often, because I'm not looking for sympathy, but I think it articulates our need to ensure that we are approaching college from the lens of access. I stayed in Blacksburg this summer and had to pay just under \$5000 for my summer tuition. Living from stipend to stipend, I had to ensure I was living on a budget. So I picked up the cheapest sub-lease I could find. This meant I was sharing a 4-bedroom apartment with 6 other roommates. Two of my roommates were hard drug users and would stay up late into the night screaming at each other while experiencing bad trips while I hid behind a locked bedroom door 3 feet away. I never knew who would be coming in and out of the apartment and would often wake up to find strangers passed out on the living room floor. My diet consisted of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and noodles for most of the Summer, as I attempted to cut costs. To top it all off, my 9-5 was spent working my internship and my nights were spent working at Wendy's, to make a little extra cash. This is what I could afford.

Think back to your college days and how much a break on tuition would have meant to you. To not have to work those extra hours late into the night to make rent. It was an uncomfortable situation. I didn't always feel safe, but I made it work. This articulates a simple fact. Students are the most vulnerable population to be drawing from while we continue to suffer the throws of the pandemic. I lived there for two months. I got out of it. My roommates did not. Neither did my neighbors. There is a reality that many students are living paycheck to paycheck to make their dream of receiving an education from Virginia Tech a reality.

If we are to truly embody the spirit of Ut Prosim that we all hold dear to us, then I ask you, please spare us another fee. These costs are adding up. And sometimes attracting the best and the brightest to our institution doesn't mean having the newest and the shiniest technology. It just means ensuring that others can afford to come here.

Thank you for your time.

Sabrina Sturgeon
Graduate Student

Good afternoon and thank you for allowing me time to speak today,

I know I only have 3 minutes so I will keep my comments brief. My name is Kase Poling and I am a masters student in the civil engineering department.

I have the pleasure of representing my fellow civil engineering graduate students in the Graduate Student Assembly, and all of my fellow masters students on the Commission on Student Affairs.

This year has been one of incredibly trying circumstances for everyone, but perhaps no one more than college students. We have had to face being isolated from our peers, the difficulties of online classes, and serious financial strain due to the pandemic. You see, the industries hardest hit by the pandemic are also the industries where many students, especially graduate students, work to help make ends meet. Additionally, many students have had internships and co-op's cancelled. While the various stimulus packages have helped our nation through these times, not all of the stimulus packages have applied to college students because of various differences in legal and taxation statuses. All of this is simply to say, many college students are hurting.

Now, I recognize that the university is also facing financial strain and that there are a lot of expenditures important to the university's operations that are in need of funding. I understand the desire to meet these needs by simply raising tuition and fees, but I implore you to reject this thinking and vote to keep tuition and fees at the current rate for another year. Please ask yourselves this question: "What is the central mission of Virginia Tech?". I have come to know Virginia Tech as a university that puts immense value on not only students' learning, but also their quality of life and wellbeing. Many students are not able to afford basic necessities because of the skyrocketing costs of tuition, fees, educational materials, not to mention the impacts from the pandemic.

Members of the Board, please vote to keep Virginia Tech students' education and wellbeing as the university's top priority and keep tuition and fees at the current rate for another year.

I sincerely thank you for your time.

Kase Poling
Graduate Student