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Undergraduate Representative

### March 2021 Constituent Report

Spring of my freshman year, I sat down on the first day of class next to someone that looked friendly. We started chatting, he asked about my week, and I mentioned that I had recently been to Souvlaki's. "What's that?" he said.

"What is *Souvlaki's*? The falafel place? THE falafel place?" I couldn't believe he hadn't heard of it.

I have had this moment, or versions of it, countless times throughout my college career at Tech -- proud laughter while describing the feeling of a Lane Stadium football game, or the instant embarrassment of not getting a reference to an infamous part of town. In recent months, I've been thinking a lot about these moments. Why did I feel the need to act as though my version of Virginia Tech was the only correct one? Why did I feel so inadequate when others knew things about the university or local culture that I didn't?

Logically, at a school of 30,000+ students, there are people and communities that make all of us feel welcome. There are more than enough open office hours and research positions to get us those stellar resume highlights and letters of recommendation. But not all of us actually experience that. It's not from lack of effort or resources from the administration -- sure, we should always be striving for improvement, but I have seen firsthand the effort and genuine enthusiasm for the student body that makes this school consistently on the list of happiest campuses. Thus far in my term as undergraduate representative, I've come to understand that often, the biggest barrier for students is simply not knowing what is available to them and therefore not being in the right place to reap the biggest benefits from higher education.

A recent article from the *Atlantic* discussed why students, parents, and politicians alike were so willing to push for an in-person return to university -- in other words, what this thing is that we call the "college experience."<sup>2</sup> It is an education, but not just in an academic sense. It is why we miss college so much right now, even though we're still enrolled in a full semester's worth of classes. It is through this out-of-classroom experience that we gain cultural competence, professional networking skills, how to sign a lease, the strength to handle mistakes, and so much more. This leads me to two main questions:

#### What is at the core of this mythical experience, and how can we steer students towards it?

Community. Opportunity. Exploration. I won't go into the specifics of these because all of you work everyday to make these goals a reality and could definitely explain them better than me. What I am most interested in is the issue of students needing guidance and not getting the direction they need. For instance, if students typically form stronger bonds and get the chance to learn more about their own values in Living Learning Communities (LLC), perhaps there are similar tactics we can use in other residence halls so that students who chose a less niche housing option can still have those same opportunities. On the flip side, more efforts could also be made

to ensure that students in LLC's get to meet others with differing perspectives or interests from theirs, so that they can get outside of their comfort zone and learn to communicate with a variety of people.

One metric of a student's success in college is their life after graduation. Well-being and contentment are much more than a career path, but a good salary, a large network of contacts, and a sense of purpose sets a strong foundation. In recent conversations I've had, undergraduates have expressed anxiety as companies shrink their number of hires and graduate programs take the year off from accepting students. On the national scale, 85% of college freshmen reported that getting a job was among the main reasons they attended school, but only 34% said they felt ready to navigate the job market by graduation.<sup>3,7</sup> Further, 40% of students graduate and end up in jobs that don't even require a bachelor's degree.<sup>10</sup> For many undergraduates, it can feel like you are missing some family connection or industry secret as you watch your classmates end up in dream positions with seemingly no effort. Other universities have also reported this issue of students not fully utilizing help from the career center, so I believe there are a number of practical tweaks we could make to help students feel fully informed and empowered to make an impact in the workplace.

#### What happens if a student's experience doesn't go according to plan?

Coming into college, a place where the social pressure can feel intense, there are a lot of ways to feel like an outsider. This is why it is so vital to showcase the many ways that our students can be Hokies and live out the *Ut Prosim* motto without having to adapt to an overarching culture. The value that Virginia Tech brings to its students and the world goes far beyond football games, amazing chocolate milk, and studying on the Drillfield. The reason that Virginia Tech is so valuable is that there are so many interests, academic advancements, and ways of being that come together at this school. Of course, we must go beyond that and continue to back up words with demonstrable actions. However, the effect of simply seeing your lived experience acknowledged and validated cannot be overstated. To see evidence that other Hokies are being celebrated for their unique accomplishments. To see that those same students have struggled with academics or mental health and aren't afraid to admit when times get tough. To see the racism or other systemic injustices perpetrated against your community be discussed openly. These are the sorts of actions that win over students that weren't convinced that Virginia Tech could be "home" for them.

Finally, we have to continue striving to eliminate or diminish barriers that can hinder students from fully realizing their potential in college. As tuition is the forefront topic of this meeting, I wanted to address that and add a bit of undergraduate perspective to the conversation. The way I see it, if the university would like to raise tuition slightly, then the university also needs to commit to raising wage positions, graduate student assistantships, and other student roles by the same percentage. If not, we are quite literally making it less feasible for a student to afford their education. I know that there are already conversations in the works related to salary issues, particularly for faculty and staff, but I would just like to urge you all to not leave

undergraduates out of that conversation. Financial difficulties may seem less common or look a bit different for undergraduate students, but those problems are still very much present and deserve our attention and support.

I wanted to end with another story -- I recently received a text message from a friend that I felt would be greatly appreciated by everyone here today. For context, she's talking about a classmate of hers: "[his] whole family of Hokies [surprised] their grandfather with a replacement class ring because it [was] stolen 20 years ago... People love this school so much and it has such an impact on people's lives and I just want to remind you that Tech is the best place ever and I'm grateful for the work you do." This message extends to all of you and beyond, to anyone who plays a role in university functions or student life. This is what motivates me to keep looking for areas of improvement, because in another twenty years, I still want to be part of the college with the alumni so in love with their school that they can't shut up about it.

## Resources &amp; Citations

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Good afternoon all. In serving in this role for 9-months, it's clear to me that you all hear us and want to support the student interest as much as I do. In my report today, my objective is to inform you on the perspective of Virginia Tech's commitment to diversity and inclusion, especially as it relates to graduate and professional students. It only feels appropriate to continue the discussion of diversity – of race in our country and in our community, coming out of last week's continued violence against Asian American communities. I ask that we observe a brief moment of silence to honor the 8 victims from last week's tragedy.

I'm going to be offering three recommendations, but before that, I have an overarching message I want to raise.

A diverse student body is beneficial to students and the university at large. By having a representative student body, our students will feel included and like they belong at Virginia Tech. Simultaneously this will help us to attract the talent necessary to bolster our reputation on the world stage.

We are living in an incredibly divisive period in time. An era where saying the wrong thing or supporting the wrong cause can cost a reputation. I'm not going to pretend that this does not create a minefield in which the university must carefully navigate or else lose thousands, maybe millions in funding. This is no revelation, by any means. I raise it to tell you, I understand it.

As the board of visitors, you carry the profound weight of balancing the concerns of race, class, and privilege with the responsibility of ensuring that our university is serving and operating within a competitive, global market with competing priorities. Every action sets a precedent and every inaction displays complacency. When I say that, I mean that we, the students notice and appreciate when the university takes a [firm stance against bigotry](#) ([See also more recent](#)). Simultaneously, we also see inaction and complacency as equally loud messages. We notice when the university is [not willing to name](#) when Black and Brown students in our community are hurting. In speaking with the Black Graduate Student Organization, they explained that university information dissemination often feels like it disregards Black students. We notice when we [fail to provide adequate reparations](#) for the descendants of the Tutelo and Monacan people who were shepherds to this land before Virginia Tech. I notice when we continue to uphold practices that are oppressive to transgender students.

Now, I raise this because I want to emphasize the importance of taking a stance. The best way that we will make progress for minoritized and underrepresented communities is to have those difficult and critical conversations on those subjects. When voting on policy, is it considered how it might impact a student of color? A non-binary student? Students with disabilities? Indigenous students?

I'm here to offer that consistent reminder that the work is not done. Students will continue to raise these, because it is our duty to ensure that those who are at Virginia Tech feel it is home to EVERYONE, not just the majority. I offered a few personal opinions above, but I also come with three recommendations. These recommendations were created through a thorough process that was conducted by the Diversity Sub-committee of the Graduate Student Assembly.

The 2019 climate survey confirmed that fewer Underrepresented Minority (URM) graduate students agreed their advisor was helpful with their dissertation research compared to non-URM graduate students. Only 39% of URM graduate students agreed their advisor was helpful with "advice in writing and revising the dissertation or thesis," compared to 52% of non-URM graduate students

- **Action item #1: Create and implement mandatory faculty training on the [Expectations for Graduate Education](#) by 2026.**

Upon reviewing the expectations for graduate education, they are quite robust. It is important that faculty and those who supervise graduate students have a strong understanding of these, as well as that new faculty are informed. This should be annual or bi-annual training.

There is [variability of enrollment](#) in numbers of URM graduate students across colleges, with some colleges disproportionately enrolling higher numbers of URM graduate students than other colleges.

- **Action item #2: Strive for recruitment and enrollment levels of URM graduate students by college that reflect the overall VT enrollment numbers of URM graduate students by 2026.**

This area has certainly seen improvement over the years. Some programs are more balanced than others, with some not having any URM graduate students. The resounding message from the school at large is that we should have a more diverse graduate student population, let's ensure that the

The graduate school's Office of Recruitment, Diversity and Inclusion (ORDI) has one position to support both enrollment and retention of *all* graduate students. As a catalyst for supporting enrollment and retention of graduate students, the ORDI leaders could put more time and effort into supporting URM graduate students if they had additional employees.

- **Action item #3: Create a full-time A/P Faculty or Staff position within the Graduate School focused solely on graduate student recruitment by 2026.**

If we could find the initiative and funds to expand this department, I am confident that our diversity numbers would improve. More importantly, our underrepresented students would feel more at home if this office had more outreach. We must begin to answer the age-old question of "Okay, we have a diverse student population, now how do we make them feel supported while they are here?"

Virginia Tech is moving forward and has made strides to improve in our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. I am so pleased to see the progress that has been made. Please understand that this report is not to be taken as an accusation, but an ask that we never lose sight of making ALL students at Virginia Tech feel included.

Before I conclude, I want to offer a final thought. I am not blind to the challenges that come with balancing a budget as massive as Virginia Tech's and at the same time, am willfully persistent that there is always more that can be done to prevent raising tuition. I hope we will continue to pursue our land-grant mission of accessibility in the future and work to be pioneers - forerunners, in large state school affordability, as much as we can. Thank you to the Finance and Resource Management Committee for your work to establish a plan. Please remain diligent as we face the continued challenge of higher education affordability in the future.

## **Staff Senate Constituency**

March 20 & 21, 2020

Presented by Tamarah Smith, Staff Senate President

Good afternoon Rector Valeiras, Board of Visitors members, President Sands, Provost Clarke, Administrators and distinguished guests.

I am grateful to be here today to present on behalf of our staff. It's hard to believe we are now in year two of this COVID journey that immediately put the world into a whirl wind of change. I would like to share comments with you today on four topics of particular interest to staff. These topics are telecommuting, mental health, diversity, and racism.

For employees, telecommuting during the pandemic has meant continuing to try to balance work and home life. Several issues that continue to come up are homeschooling, child care, mental illness and pressure from job and financial insecurities. Staff Senate hosted Dwayne Pinkney, Kevin Faust, and Brian Garey, to address some staff concerns. Mr. Garey shared the work that has been ongoing with telecommuting and reiterated the fact that permission to telecommute is up to supervisors. Having supervisors approve telecommuting results in inconsistencies in departments across the university – which some staff experience as unfair. This fact has caused upheaval amongst staff. Staff that are already in positions where supervisory practices present morale issues among staff view this as one more issue that will not be addressed. While telecommuting has been great for some staff and staff are grateful, others have felt penalized: having to pay for and install internet, pay extra to increase their internet speed, find workspace at home, and in some cases working while helping their children with homework or caring for elderly parents.

It's not surprising that mental health<sup>1</sup> support is needed now more than ever with so many people being cooped up in homes and having to distance themselves from friends and family. Having Virginia Tech acknowledge their support and offer resources is encouraging.

As the staff representative of Virginia Tech, I advocate for all employees. On the admissions side we are making great strides with our enrollment numbers of underrepresented students. Work is still needed however on assisting our underrepresented, faculty, staff, and students feel included, valued, and treated with equal respect (see Virginia Tech's Principles of Community<sup>2</sup>). The university needs to continue to build up our diversity in faculty and staff hires in order to help build a community that feels they belong.

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<sup>1</sup> March is mental health awareness month and the March 25<sup>th</sup> session will focus on workplace mental health. The link below has information on how to register and to submit your questions to our three experienced panelists.

<https://vtnews.vt.edu/notices/hr-2021-employee-zoom-workplace-mental-health.html>

<sup>2</sup> Virginia Tech Principles of Community | InclusiveVT | Virginia Tech:

<https://www.inclusive.vt.edu/Programs/vtpoc0.html>

Recently we are excruciatingly aware of the violence against the Asian community, that has played out worldwide; and we should be aware and acknowledge that Racism is astonishingly high at Virginia Tech. Although we have strategies in place to address racism, we need to continue to ask ourselves: Are we doing enough to make people feel safe and included at Virginia Tech? The caucuses at Virginia Tech, which are comprised of faculty, staff, and students to advocate for particular members of our university community, play an important role in addressing, advocating, and suggesting solutions on ways we can work together to make our work places more inclusive and add value to the missions of the university. As quoted in the Roanoke Times Article, March 23, 2021, *We will build community by seeing each other*<sup>3</sup> by the Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) members in Roanoke and the New River Valley, “what we need is to see one another through building community and building bridges. We need to stand up for each others’ rights to live in a just society and a just system free from discrimination and fear. To do so, we must learn to truly see each other.” By participating in these conversations we can make positive strides in supporting a healthy university environment.

As a white woman in a privileged position, I cannot even imagine what my friends, colleagues, community members, faculty, staff, and students of color experience every day in this world where they are not treated with the same respect and care as that of the majority at Virginia Tech. As the great poet and author Maya Angelou has said and bears remembering: “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” We are Virginia Tech!

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<sup>3</sup> Theodore Lim, Vincent Wang, Nina Ha, Jennifer Sano-Franchini, Bonnie Zare, Carola Haas, Clara Suong, Jim Tokuhisa, OTHERS? (23, March, 2021) *We will build community through seeing each other*. Roanoke Times. (attached to back of this article)



**Roanoke Times, March 23, 2021**

**We will build community through seeing each other**

Theodore Lim, Vincent Wang, Nina Ha, Jennifer Sano-Franchini, Bonnie Zare, Carola Haas, Clara Suong, Jim Tokuhisa, OTHERS?

The rise in reports of violent attacks against Asian Americans across the nation are a reminder of the long history of anti-Asian violence in this country. High profile examples of violence and murder, including the recent targeted killings in Atlanta and attacks on Asian elders, such as 84-year-old Vicha Ratanapakdee, are part of a trend of racial targeting that has intensified over the past year as Asians have been scapegoated as being “responsible” for the devastation caused by COVID-19. [Organizations](#) that track anti-Asian hate crimes note that attacks and harassment have been intensified by politically-motivated rhetoric, such as referring to the coronavirus as the “Chinese virus,” and COVID-19 as “kung flu.” However, even with the recent change in the nation’s leadership, these disturbing trends continue and many in our community believe they will persist, given political and economic competition between the United States and China.

Over the past year, we, members of the Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) community in Roanoke and the New River Valley have experienced considerable anxiety about being targeted in public places, have been singled out for wearing masks early during the pandemic, have been harassed in public spaces, and have worried about children being bullied in schools, simply for being of Asian descent. The past spate of physically violent incidents therefore represent a horrific culmination of stressors of nearly a year of scapegoating for all of the hardships and tensions COVID-19 has brought on our country.

The APIDA experience in the NRV/Roanoke region is distinct from that of the large cities where the high profile acts of anti-APIDA hate have occurred. Unlike in larger US cities that have long-standing racial tensions, particularly between Asian and Black Americans due to injustices fueled by racially exclusionary housing and business lending practices, in this region, Asians are a smaller demographic with different histories. Here, many of us are affiliated with the colleges and universities in the region. For example, in Blacksburg, APIDAs make up approximately 13% of the overall population. However, there is also a history of refugee resettlement in Roanoke and the Appalachian region, and APIDAs have settled in the region for many other diverse reasons. Overall, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, APIDAs are one of the fastest growing ethnic minorities, yet our voices in social matters are seldom heard.

The “model minority myth” designates APIDAs as “honorary whites,” giving most a degree of privilege, and is therefore a status that is accepted by some in the APIDA community. Culturally, the “model minority” designation tends to confirm immigrant values of hard work, persistence, and independence, as well as a deep longing to belong to a society that is a true meritocracy— the “American Dream,” that

tells us that as long as one works hard, anything can be achieved. However, the recent examples of violence show how easily this “honorary” position of perceived safety and privilege can be stripped away and how quickly our community can be used as a scapegoat when politically convenient. This is why it is so important for our community, and for others outside our community, to *reject* the suggestion that the pain of the APIDA community is due to another minoritized group. Whether this be the present growing attention to physical violence against us, historical pains of urban working class communities competing against each other to gain an economic foothold in this country, or in the pitting of APIDAs against other groups in affirmative action in education, we cannot buy into any system based on racial hierarchies. We cannot buy into a system that wedges minoritized groups against each other because this prevents the dismantling of the underlying racialized system. Instead, we reject violence against any minoritized group, and therefore stand in solidarity with those against anti-Black violence, anti-Trans violence, anti-Native violence, and violence against women. If violence—both physical and systemic—against any of these communities is condoned, then we are all at risk.

Instead, what we need is to see one another through building community and building bridges. We need to stand up for each others’ rights to live in a just society and a just system free from discrimination and fear. To do so, we must learn to truly see each other. To support the APIDA community during these difficult times, groups such as the APIDA Caucus (for faculty, students, staff) and Asian American Student Union at Virginia Tech are working to make the APIDA community more visible, and to see our relationships to other communities more clearly as well, starting with the [VT community](#), but expanding beyond to our presence in Roanoke/New River Valley.

### **“How Can We Raise Each Other Up?”**

Presented by Eric Kaufman, Faculty Representative to Virginia Tech’s Board of Visitors

Like many faculty, I find advising students to be an important and fulfilling part of my work. I thought you might be particularly interested in an advising session I had with a Master’s student last month. We were meeting in my office, and he was sharing that his coursework was challenging him to read the equivalent of a book per week. Another faculty member, Dr. Paul Siegel, was walking by my office door, heard the conversation, and asked if he could interject. Dr. Siegel shared that as a graduate student, he made a commitment to read a book a month that was unrelated to his research. The commitment was in response to advice from his father, who said, “there is more to life than chickens and genetics.” Dr. Siegel explained to me and my advisee how helpful it has been for him to have read books on a wide variety of topics, and he continues—decades later—to read a book a month.

Dr. Paul Siegel is one of the longest working professors on our campus.<sup>1</sup> He began his career with Virginia Tech in 1957, and the University has not paid him since he retired in 1999.<sup>2</sup> Even still, he continues to devote a self-estimated 50 hours a week to his work, including conducting research and mentoring students.<sup>3</sup> Although I cannot certify his hours, I regularly see Paul Siegel on the second floor of Litton-Reaves Hall, where we both have an office, and his commitment to mentoring was apparent in the brief interaction with my graduate student. Dr. Siegel is one of the icons that makes Virginia Tech a great place to study and work, and I am grateful my student was able to interact with him during his time at Virginia Tech.

So, what does this have to do with Virginia Tech faculty in general? I don’t expect all faculty members to keep investing 50 hours per week when they are 88 years old, but I do believe Paul Siegel exemplifies the commitment that occurs when the University provides faculty with the freedom and support to do what they do best and serve the greater good. Indeed, Virginia Tech faculty have demonstrated their commitment to the greater good through contributions to the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign<sup>4</sup> and Virginia Tech Giving Day<sup>5</sup>, with both programs exceeding their goals over the past year. (While Giving Day may be heavily geared toward alumni giving, you may be interested to know that roughly 10% of this year’s donors self-identified as faculty. With approximately 25% of faculty members contributing to Giving Day, faculty already exceed the goal for alumni giving.<sup>6</sup>)

<sup>1</sup> “The Chicken King: Virginia Tech professor reflects on more than six decades of teaching,” by Annie Schroeder, WSLs, October 7, 2020,

<https://www.wsls.com/news/local/2020/10/07/the-chicken-king-virginia-tech-professor-reflects-on-more-than-six-decades-of-teaching>

<sup>2</sup> “‘Chicken guy’ Siegel reflects on decades of work with students,” by Jane W. Graham, *The Delmarva Farmer*, August 5, 2019,

<https://americanfarmpublications.com/chicken-guy-siegel-reflects-on-decades-of-work-with-students>

<sup>3</sup> “Virginia Tech’s king of Chicken Hill keeps 61-year experiment alive,” by Robby Korth, *Roanoke Times*, November 3, 2018,

[https://roanoke.com/news/education/virginia-techs-king-of-chicken-hill-keeps-61-year-experiment-alive/article\\_4343ee3c-073c-5681-b6d3-691e8b1f1234.html](https://roanoke.com/news/education/virginia-techs-king-of-chicken-hill-keeps-61-year-experiment-alive/article_4343ee3c-073c-5681-b6d3-691e8b1f1234.html)

<sup>4</sup> “Virginia Tech employees donate more than \$404,000 to charity,” January 15, 2021,

<https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2021/01/cvc-2020-campaign-exceeded-goal.html>

<sup>5</sup> “More than 12,000 Hokies come together to raise over \$6.1 million for Virginia Tech on Giving Day,” February 25, 2021,

<https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2021/02/giving-day-2021.html>

<sup>6</sup> Alumni Giving Strategic Planning Metric, University Data Commons, <https://udc.vt.edu/spm/data/excellence/fund/alumni>

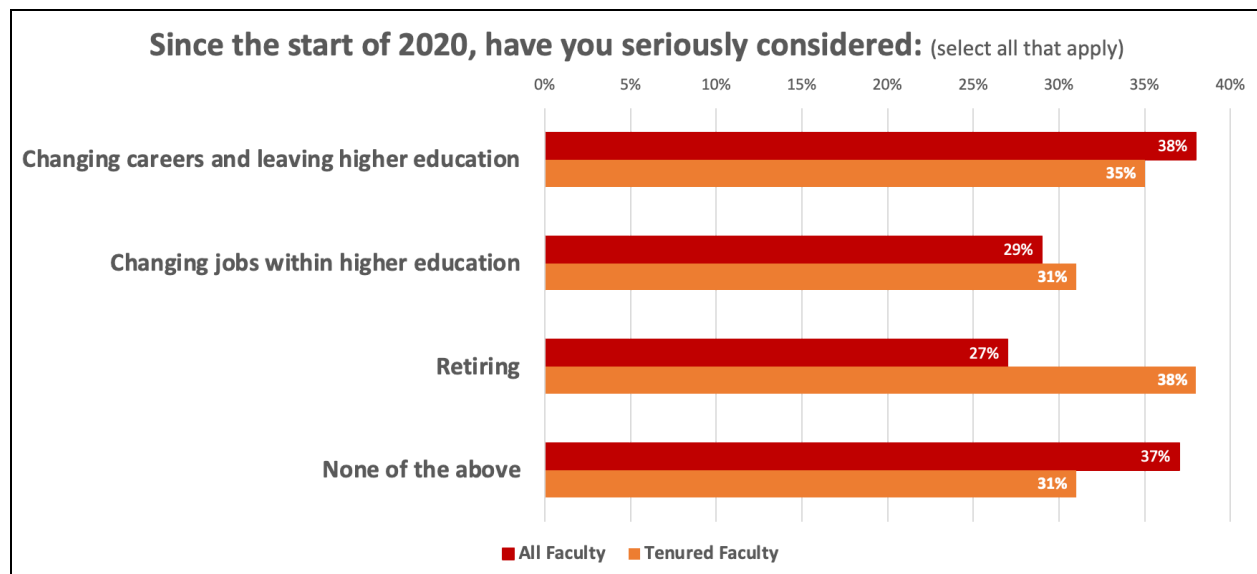
While Dr. Siegel embodies an ideal, what is unfortunate is evidenced by research recently conducted by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Survey findings suggest that many faculty members may be “On the Verge of Burnout.” Fidelity Investments funded the study, and their executive vice president identified the following noteworthy findings:

- “The majority of faculty are experiencing elevated levels of frustration, anxiety, and stress”;
- “More than two-thirds of survey respondents are struggling with increased workloads and a deterioration of work-life balance—particularly female faculty members”; and
- “More than half of all faculty are considering retiring or changing careers and leaving higher education, with tenured faculty members even more likely to retire than others.” (p. 2)<sup>7</sup>

These are troubling assertions, and I am particularly concerned that more than one-third of faculty (including tenured faculty) have seriously considered “changing careers and leaving higher education” during the past year (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Faculty Departure Considerations from a National Survey on Faculty Well-Being and Career Paths, Conducted in October 2020.<sup>8, 9</sup>



The Chronicle research was a national survey, and results are shaped by the pandemic. However, the stress and pressure to perform was already on the rise for faculty members prior

<sup>7</sup> “‘On the Verge of Burnout’ Covid-19’s impact on faculty well-being and career plans,” research brief by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and Fidelity Investments, [https://connect.chronicle.com/rs/931-EKA-218/images/Covid%26FacultyCareerPaths\\_Fidelity\\_ResearchBrief\\_v3%20%281%29.pdf](https://connect.chronicle.com/rs/931-EKA-218/images/Covid%26FacultyCareerPaths_Fidelity_ResearchBrief_v3%20%281%29.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> “Faculty Well-Being and Career Paths: What College Leaders Need to Know” Virtual Forum, November 16, 2020, <https://connect.chronicle.com/rs/931-EKA-218/images/FacultyWell-BeingandCareerPaths.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> “‘On the Edge of Burnout’ A Chronicle survey finds many faculty have considered changing jobs, leaving academe, or retiring,” by Maura Mahoney (2021), in *Burned Out and Overburdened: How to Support Faculty*, <https://store.chronicle.com/products/burned-out-and-overburdened>

to the pandemic, as highlighted in Virginia Tech's 2020 COACHE Survey of Faculty Job Satisfaction.<sup>10</sup> And, in recent months, I have spoken directly with Virginia Tech faculty who are leaving the University this year—some for retirement, but others that have become disenfranchised by higher education and are changing careers.

The impact of faculty departures is not mitigated simply by hiring new colleagues to replace those that have left. Departures create circumstances in which there are fewer people available to compete for open positions. The reduced supply of qualified faculty contributes to increasingly aggressive recruiting efforts from our peers, and there is poaching of faculty members currently at Virginia Tech. Additionally, our own efforts to recruit high quality faculty require more and more salary and start up funds because candidates frequently have multiple offers to consider.

So, what can we do? Certainly, financial support helps. And, a culture of mutual respect also goes a long way. Findings from a recent Gallup poll confirm that “when faculty have the materials and equipment they need, feel cared for at work, and feel connected to their leaders and colleagues, they are able to invest discretionary effort that improves the student experience” (Marken, 2021, para. 7).<sup>11</sup>

In January, I participated in an international colloquium on Collective Leadership and Leadership-as-Practice.<sup>12</sup> The event explored a particular question: “How Can We Raise Each Other Up?”<sup>13</sup> This question resonates with me in much the same way as I am inspired by Virginia Tech's motto, *Ut Prosim*; it commits us collectively to leadership as practice as we advance Virginia Tech's missions through shared governance. So, I encourage you to consider: “How can we raise each other up?” There's no simple answer, but there are a variety of ideas worth considering.<sup>14, 15, 16</sup>

I look forward to a future at Virginia Tech where we have faculty members, like Paul Siegel, who continue to invest in the lives of those around them. To accomplish that vision, it is important for the Board of Visitors to support policies and budgets that empower the faculty to succeed. Let's all commit to “raise each other up.”

<sup>10</sup> COACHE Survey of Faculty Job Satisfaction, Virginia Tech Faculty Affairs, <https://faculty.vt.edu/faculty-development/coache-survey.html>

<sup>11</sup> “Faculty Engagement Linked to Better Student Experience,” by Stephanie Marken, *Gallup Education*, March 2, 2021, <https://www.gallup.com/education/330167/faculty-engagement-linked-better-student-experience.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> “Collective Leadership & Leadership as Practice January 2021 Colloquium,” <https://januarycolloquium.wordpress.com/>

<sup>13</sup> “How can we raise each other up?,” Collective Leadership for Scotland, <https://collectiveleadershipscotland.com/2020/11/11/how-can-we-raise-each-other-up/>

<sup>14</sup> “Faculty Members Are Suffering Burnout. These Strategies Could Help.” by Emma Pettit, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 25, 2021, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/faculty-members-are-suffering-burnout-so-some-colleges-have-used-these-strategies-to-help>

<sup>15</sup> “Findings from the First Ever Multi-Institutional Survey of Faculty Retention & Exit [Infographic],” The Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education, March 26, 2018, <https://coache.gse.harvard.edu/blog/findings-first-ever-multi-institutional-survey-faculty-retention-exit-infographic>

<sup>16</sup> “Pandemic Toll: More Than Half Of College Faculty Have Considered A Career Change Or Early Retirement,” by Michael T. Nietzel, *Forbes*, February 26, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelt Nietzel/2021/02/26/pandemic-toll-more-than-half-of-college-faculty-have-considered-a-career-change-or-early-retirement/>