

Report from the Undergraduate Student Representative to the Board of Visitors-Jamal Ross

Hello, Madam Rector Long, Vice Rector Baine, Virginia Tech Board Members, President Timothy Sands, and guests.

It's wonderful to be back! The first part of the Representative Ross Report, or the Triple R, has arrived, and it is even more thrilling to bring in some new views from our Virginia Tech undergraduate student body. With the help of multiple fellow student leaders, I've been able to hit the ground running with various projects and successes since our previous meeting. I discovered my passion and drive in advocating for and listening to others, which has driven me in the preparation of the report I present to you all today. Connecting with students, but also college deans, administrators, and campus partners, and beginning to interweave the dialogues to create a broader scope that allows undergraduates to be open and chatting with one another, has worked wonders. As a result, this has allowed me to be a force of nature! I intend to provide comprehensive updates about the undergraduate student body.

We have experienced and enjoyed numerous activities during the academic year, including the Gobbler Trifecta, Homecoming, and weekends filled with the delights of Virginia Tech football. Once a Hokie, Always a Hokie is a saying that stays true. Campus engagement is at an all-time high. Opportunities to meet new people and enjoy campus life have never been better. Students have commented that they are always busy, whether with academics or extracurriculars, but they say Virginia Tech has always provided them chances to unwind and rejuvenate, and it is always wonderful to find something to do off campus that sparks a new passion or pastime. Throughout the first several months of the fall semester, I sought to assemble a variety of stories, experiences, thoughts, and concerns to form the foundation of my report. This personifies the 30,000+ undergraduate Hokies who want to tell their experience today. I am

their storyteller since they are now composing their Hokie narrative. My recommendations for today's report center on the Triad of Mental Health, Safety, and the Overall "Hokie Student Experience". I've discovered that students' experiences consist of these three interwoven parts that put them in control of their undergraduate journey.

Let us now go deeper into the issues at hand. Let us begin with mental health. The usage of mental health professionals has increased, which is great since we can all agree that a happy hokie is a healthy hokie, which includes mental, physical, and emotional health. Many factors impact a student's abilities and behavior both in and out of the classroom. Many of our students are affected by this because of their mental health. The undergraduate student body has been introduced to a new project, and we would want to express our gratitude to you all, the board, for your assistance in bringing this to our campus. Timely Care is a successful and unique approach to mental health on the Virginia Tech campus. It is a program sponsored by Virginia Tech and other universities in the Commonwealth that is beneficial in improving mental health and is used by students from all over campus. Students like the variety of providers available, particularly the wide range of providers from varied backgrounds who reflect the undergraduate student body. Furthermore, international students lauded the program's availability in nearly 250 languages. We must also discuss the opposite side of this scenario and begin to debate the school's efforts. From insufficient service and subpar reactions to crisis-level circumstances to students being unaware of campus options, students feel confused in their search for aid. Overall, more aid is needed for undergraduate students, and we, the Board, must take another step ahead in offering additional resources to the undergraduate student population.

To solve this, we need to make a change. Students feel alienated since on-campus resources are inaccessible and turnaround times are excessive, particularly in emergency

circumstances. Because they had never heard of Timely Care, our off-campus students felt "left out of the loop." We must address communication to all students since, whether on or off campus, undergraduate students confront comparable mental health challenges. We must consider external issues such as academic stress, the transition to college for first-year and transfer students, along with assistance for our student leaders. During my discussions with student leaders, I observed that they have been providing assistance in these capacities but have also experienced vicarious stress and trauma as a result of assisting their peers through challenging situations. We. Need. Change.

Stay with me as we shift our focus to another undergraduate student concern: Safety. This impacts both students who commute and those who live on campus. I've heard students express how unsafe they feel on campus time and again. Modes of transportation, campus illumination, and emergency management and response all fall within the purview of safety. I recently presented in front of a large group and heard multiple experiences of students who did not feel comfortable on campus owing to a lack of illumination on their path. Today, I'd want to ask you how we might provide a "breath of fresh air" for our undergraduate students as they commute around our campus and feel at ease. As a board, we must address this issue because, as the campus develops, we must transform and make appropriate modifications to maintain and prioritize campus safety. We request that extra safeguards be put in place so that we can go from one side of campus to the other without fear of losing sight of our surroundings. Another issue raised by students is campus congestion, particularly along sidewalks and crosswalks. We've had a number of safety issues in our campus buildings, which have resulted in a substandard or no response, putting our students' well-being on the back burner. Students have said that they do not believe the institution has addressed these issues in a timely manner. We must solve these issues

now, in 2022, whether we are looking at the university's future infrastructure in 2042 or not. We must address and ensure that our existing students in 2022 feel comfortable and safe on our campus. This puts to the forefront the need for reforms within the university's safety procedures and actions. Students want answers and improvements. I've come to you today to urge that the dialogue begin and that you provide recommendations on how to proceed. I believe we can work together to effect change on the existing campus so that Virginia Tech may go forward with confidence into the future.

Finally, there's "The Hokie Student Experience." As undergraduate students, we aspire for success and big accomplishments as we progress through the institution. The university's assistance has been wonderful in terms of possibilities, networking, and an overall sense of well-being within our Hokie community. Students believe that the institution has achieved admirably within the parameters of engagement. As we enter the "post-pandemic" period, engagement is at an all-time high, mirroring pre-pandemic turnout levels. The students wish to thank you for your assistance throughout the pandemic, and while we recognize that it was difficult, we all appreciate your leadership during those unprecedented times. Many factors impact our experience, and students have reported that they feel heard in certain situations but would want to be heard in others. We must consider the influence of Virginia Tech's undergraduate student body. We want to be viewed as more than just students, but as key stakeholders in our university's enterprise and community as a whole. The undergraduate student body desires purposeful and effective communication among everyone, I'd want to encourage them by issuing a call to action to the Board to start those conversations and prepare for a future in which the Hokie experience is filled with what I term "Hokie joy." We must recognize who the Virginia Tech undergraduate student body is, and as time passes, we must adapt. Our student body is

diverse in terms of change agents, future stakeholders, and game changers. We can accomplish it together, and I hope you will continue to support me during my term. As always, Go Hokies!

Live long and prosper!

Thank You.

Report from the Graduate Student Representative to the Board of Visitors

Anna Buhle

Hello Rector Long, Vice Rector Baine, members of the Board, President Sands, and other guests.

I have two topics I would like to touch on today – the medical school and the status of the graduate student assistantship taskforce.

First, the medical school. Before I get started, I would like to thank Dean Learman for meeting with me to discuss current state and future directions of the medical school in preparation for this meeting.

As the first medical student representative to the BOV, I feel that I can offer a perspective on the medical education offered at VT that many of you may not have heard before. Let me first, briefly describe undergraduate medical education and the process of training physicians. Entering medical school requires a rigorous application and interview process that is highly selective. VTC is among the most selective programs in the country, this year, we had 6916 applications for 49 positions – an acceptance rate of 1.3% compared to 4.9% (VCU) and 8.5% (UVA) and 3.4% (EVMS). This is amazing! Clearly we are offering an exceptional medical education.

Upon starting medical school, we have 2 years of “preclinical” training, that is training that’s done in the classroom not the hospital. Following the two years of classroom based medical training, students move into the clinical component of their curriculum. Third year medical students rotate in each of the “Core” medical specialties, gaining skills that they will use regardless of their chosen career path. We complete all these core specialty rotations at Roanoke memorial hospital or other local outpatient Carilion affiliated clinics. To give you an idea of what a typical day looks like, a medical student will be assigned to a team for a

week or more, for example the team might be the labor and delivery team on OBGYN. The student will act as a member of that team, getting there early in the morning to round on (look up and meet) the patients, help create diagnosis and plans for each patient, write notes, and be present for any care that the patient. As a student rotating here, the experience offered by our program is unique and exceptional. And we have metrics to support this - our students rate their clinical training in each specialty at or above the national average. As a personal anecdote, I believe one quality that allows us to have such success is our small class size, one of the smallest in the country. This permits students to have one on one time with physicians for teaching and gain more clinical experiences that they do not have to share amongst other medical students. These experiences prepare us to enter the workforce, ready to care for you, your family, and the community. I say this with the knowledge that the medical school plans to expand its student body, intending to double it in the coming years. While I am excited for the growth of our incredible program, I hope that it will be done with the unique experience that VTC offers in mind, knowing that students seek out our program for its size and ample opportunities for mentorship, growth, and success.

I have a few more comments on the intended medical school growth that I would ask the board to keep in mind moving forward. First, medical school enrollment has increased steadily and significantly but residency positions, a required next step for physicians, have not increased at a similar rate. In 2021, there were over 42,000 applicants for residency programs a record number, but only around 35,000 first-year residency positions.¹ Thus, as we continue to grow our medical school, we must answer the question – why. Is it to address the physician shortage our country is faced with? Because expanding enrollment has shown not to be able to address this need.² There are advantages to growth as well such as giving VTCSOM the opportunity to send its graduates across the country and expand the footprint and prestige of the school. If I seem undecided about how I feel about our medical school expanding, it's

because I am. I am excited for the future of the program and look forward to following the thoughtful decisions that will be made.

Next, I want to touch on affordability. As physicians, we will not immediately be equipped to start repaying our debt. Residents (the next required step following medical school), on average, make a \$69,000 salary in Virginia. When considering the costs of living and having families, the amount we can put towards our debt is exceedingly low in the years following medical school. To put it in perspective, the average medical student debt is upwards of \$200,000.³ At Virginia Tech, the average medical student debt, meaning total educational debt, is over \$213,000. This puts us at the 68th percentile for medical student debt across the country. While we have made great strides in recent years in reducing this number for our students, more work still needs to be done. While VTC is now officially a college of Virginia Tech, students here do not receive government funding to reduce in-state tuition. This not only sets VT behind our peers at UVA, VCU, and EVMS but also makes VTC inaccessible for many students within the Commonwealth. As we continue to work towards obtaining this funding, we are also working towards attracting a future physician workforce to stay in VA as well as providing the opportunity for more diverse candidates to come to our program.

Switching gears, I would like to briefly mention the graduate student assistantship taskforce which has been meeting regularly to address the mismatch in the local cost of living and the stipend that graduate students receive to come to VT. Graduate students give a great deal to the university, as we have discussed just at this meeting. They bring unique ideas and perspectives. They help teach. They do research that they present and publish - growing the footprint of VT. They bring in grant money thus attracting even more talented faculty and graduate students. And the university does an incredible service to them. Not only do they receive an incredible degree, personal and professional mentorship, and career advancement, but their cost of attendance is covered and they are paid a stipend in return for their contributions.

However, we are doing graduate students a disservice, and frankly causing them harm, when the stipend that they receive does not cover the minimum cost of living, as they were assured it would when they chose to come to Virginia Tech. The task force has been meeting regularly, and I am truly inspired by the dedicated people (both faculty and students) who have devoted so much time and energy to assure that we address this issue. When the task force presents its recommendations (which have not been decided yet), what I ask of you is to consider the urgent needs that the graduate students on campus have right now and take action, financial action, to address the food and housing insecurity that they are facing. While the cost to address these needs will clearly be significant, please consider the value that graduate students bring to the university, the trust that they place in VT when they arrive, and the VT experience that we aim to give to each of our students.

Thank you.

1. <https://www.vox.com/22989930/residency-match-physician-doctor-shortage-pandemic-medical-school>
2. <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/medical-school-enrollments-grow-residency-slots-haven-t-kept-pace>
3. Youngclaus, James, and Julie A Fresne. AAMC, Washington, D.C., 2020, *Physician Education Debt and the Cost to Attend Medical School 2020 Update*.

Staff Senate Constituency Report
Virginia Tech Board of Visitors
November 13 -14, 2022 Presented by Serena Young, Staff Senate President

Rector Long, members of the Board of Visitors, President Sands, administrators, and guests: Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you about Virginia Tech's staff.

At our last board meeting I left you all with a bit of a cliff hanger. Not nice of me I know and some of you cheated a little and asked around to see what the three forthcoming HOT announcements were. I'll forgive you because it's always exciting to hear good news, not to mention it's hard to wait sometimes.

Many of you may already know what the three announcements are but, for those of you who do not know, allow me to give you a brief overview.

The first announcement is, Virginia Tech has increased the minimum starting pay for full- and part-time, benefits-eligible staff employees to \$15 per hour. In addition, other staff employees received salary increases to align with the university's new staff pay structure. This was a big ask because this was slated to take place in increments by 2026.

The second announcement is a new mental health program which has been started in addition to existing mental benefits for faculty and staff. The name of the program is TimelyCare. It's a virtual health service available to full-time faculty, staff, and non-student wage at no cost. Employees may access TimelyCare services regardless of their location in the United States.

TimelyCare offers employees three services:

- TalkNow, which connects you with a mental health professional to address issues promptly. It provides immediate care during a crisis when you need someone to talk to right away.
- Twelve (12) scheduled counseling appointments per academic year with counselors licensed in the state where you are located.
- Health coaching, which provides information and guided sessions on well-being topics such as dealing with conflict, time management, exercise, sleep, nutrition, and mindfulness.

Additionally, TimelyCare accommodates more than 250 languages and offers translation services. The service's app and website comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Employees can connect to TimelyCare by computer, tablet, or smartphone using their Virginia Tech email address. Both phone and video sessions are available.

The third announcement is a backup care service for children and adults. Over the next year Virginia Tech is piloting the backup care service with Care.com. Care.com provides a solution to help when your regular care is unavailable. Full-time faculty and staff across all Tech campuses will be able to use up to 10 days of backup care. Care Specialists with Care.com includes former teachers, nannies, and autism specialists; social workers; and gerontologists—all who have, at minimum, a bachelor's degree, and an average of six and a half years of experience. Once the pilot is complete the benefit may be extended to other employee groups.

All three of the announcements/programs come in direct response to years of conversations, committee meetings, board meetings, and at times a lot of sweat and tears. These have been and still are major concerns for staff here at Tech. It's always nice to know that staff voices have not fallen on deaf ears. In academia most of us know everything is a process and things take time, there is no magic wand to waive or fairy dust to sprinkle, it's just part of the journey we are all on. In the words of one of my favorite songs:

I've had bad days, and I've had hills to climb.
I've had some weary days and some sleepless nights.
But when I look around, but I think things over.
All the good days, outweigh the bad days, I won't complain.
-Rev. Paul Jones

Let me say, thank you to all Board Members, President Sands, Leadership, Bryan Garey and team, and countless others, for listening, championing, and caring for staff here at Virginia Tech. My heart is filled with Gratitude towards you all. For all of those who came before me in this position shedding light on these complex issues, Thank you! This is what it's all about, being a part of change and progress for a better future.

These are wonderful and exciting accomplishments, and they should be celebrated. Let us remember we still have work to do. We will continue to work on finding parking cost solutions for all staff including our non-student wage staff, and options for new hires to have short term disability during their first year of employment for those unforeseen things that can come up. We are also looking at ways to increase future participation in Staff Senate and the shared governance system.

On behalf of Staff Senate, I would like to thank you for listening today. I appreciate your attention today and I thank you for the opportunity to share Staff thoughts. I look forward to sharing our ongoing progress and collaborating with you all to make this year the best one yet!

Sincerely,
Serena D. Young

Administrative and Professional Faculty Constituent Report

November 14, 2022

Presented by Holli Gardner Drewry, A/P Faculty Senate President

Good afternoon, Rector Long, board members, President Sands, Provost Clarke, administrators, and guests. I am honored to be here to represent more than 2,300 administrative and professional faculty members.

Since we last met, the A/P Faculty Senate has held regular monthly meetings. We continue to receive monthly updates from HR on the Job Architecture Project. Also, we have received updates and an opportunity for feedback on the Academic Freedom/Freedom of Expression Task Force work from our representative to the group, Janice Austin.

The Commission of Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs, or CAPFA, reports to the A/P Faculty Senate in the new Virginia Tech governance structure. CAPFA is gathering suggested updates to the A/P Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws. As mentioned in my August report, there are minor updates to constituent definitions, election procedures, and updates to align the documents with the new governance structure. In addition, during the review, we identified the need to define how the senate will handle the academic-year transfer of senators or officers between constituent groups.

The A/P Faculty senators continue to support our philanthropic project. I am excited to share that the senators selected the Beyond Boundaries Scholarship fund to support this year. I am working with Advancement to launch the appeal with a goal of 100% senate giving by the end of 2022 and to raise enough to qualify for a named Beyond Boundaries scholarship prior to launching our public appeal to A/P faculty during Giving Day in February 2023. With more than 2,300 A/P faculty members at Virginia Tech, the senate is hopeful that we can raise significant funds. It remains my goal that this will be a continuing project in future years.

Other work this academic year will include:

- Reviewing the A/P faculty section, Chapter 7, of the faculty handbook, with particular attention to the Grievance and the Allegations of Unprofessional or Unethical Conduct processes.
- Continuing our outreach to A/P faculty working outside of the New River Valley to learn more about their work situation challenges and possible opportunities for improvement.
- Working with the other senates to examine potential recommendations regarding holiday break and first responder leave options.

The A/P faculty senators continue to embrace the opportunity to be active in university governance. I welcome your feedback and look forward to sharing additional updates on the work of the A/P Faculty Senate.

Faculty Senate Constituency Report
Robert Weiss, Faculty Senate President
14 November 2022

Rector Long, President Sands, other members of the Board of Visitors, and senior members of the administration, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you from the faculty perspective. This semester has been very exciting and interesting for faculty. As you know, we are in the first year of the new shared governance model, and I am happy to report that Faculty Senate held its first vote about a resolution that is working through the governance process. Furthermore, faculty are very happy to be fully back in the classroom and to resume class room instruction. At the moment, there are some challenges with student absences and faculty struggle to accommodate absences and the resulting make-up work that have resulted from illness such as COVID, the flu and RSV. However, I am positive that we can and will overcome these (and you will appreciate how remarkable it is to be positive as a German). Looking ahead, it is essential that we take what we learned over the past three years to improve our ability to be more resilient as individuals, a community and entity in the future. I would like to use my time to discuss linked topics surrounding academic freedom, the future of Virginia Tech, and faculty temperature.

1. Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is an important topic that is on the forefront of faculty's mind. Academic freedom is a complex topic and is related to and yet different from the first amendment right of freedom of speech. However, academic freedom is generally not well-understood by the faculty as well as other members of the academic community as well as those outside of higher education. Academic freedom is essential for scholars to be able to seek and generate knowledge in an area of expertise. The faculty senate is pleased with the statement on freedom of expression and inquiry that we reviewed and for which the campus community provided feedback. Limiting academic freedom will impact the scholarly work of faculty as well as the education of our students. If faculty are not able to speak freely about their area of scholarly expertise both within and outside the classroom discovery and learning will be negatively impacted. Faculty have diverse opinions on almost every topic. The discussion in the faculty senate surrounding the statement on Freedom of Expression and Inquiry was robust and demonstrated the varying views. While the discussions were difficult and there was no consensus it was a wonderful example of the importance of having these discussions in a positive environment in which everyone listens respectfully and is willing to consider the views of others. The faculty are positioned to lead by example as we begin challenging discussions at the university surrounding freedom of speech and academic freedom.

2. The Future of Virginia Tech

We heard yesterday from our Athletics Director that we now have the opportunity to design our future athletics program while in the few years, the design will be pushed onto us. I argue that this is true for the entire university. Faculty are

looking forward to helping the university as a system to dream about what our future at Virginia Tech should look like. It is fascinating to look at some of the emerging innovations and what potential they might have to transform higher education. Whatever the future of Virginia Tech looks like it is important to acknowledge that faculty represent a fortified conduit between knowledge and the students through education and research. This means that we not only need to think about the future of Virginia Tech in terms strategy and programs, but we also need to deliberate about the community that underpins these strategic developments.

3. Faculty Temperature

Faculty are thrilled to be back on campus and engaging with students in the classroom, in the field and in research labs. There is a sense of pride in how we have worked to transition back to the classroom environment while still utilizing the best of what we have learned over the last few years. It is essential to also understand that for many of the faculty priorities have shifted as we have returned to campus. There are many faculty who are “quietly quitting”. These faculty are still exceptional in the classroom and willing to be engaged with students, however, they are no longer willing to go above and beyond the responsibilities of their role at the university. As we envision a Virginia Tech of the future it is essential that we think about how faculty will engage in that future and what we are asking of them especially as we plan for the expansion of experimental learning. Faculty have been actively leading experimental learning and need to be resourced to provide students with the experiences that will prepare them for their future outside of Virginia Tech.