

Undergraduate Student Constituency Report
Virginia Tech Board of Visitors
March 31, 2109

Presented by Rachel Iwicki, Undergraduate Student Representative

Good afternoon, Rector Treacy, President Sands, members of the Board of Visitors, and distinguished guests.

While all eyes may be on our Men's Basketball team as they have their most successful March Madness appearance to date, a lot has happened at Virginia Tech since our last meeting in November that is worth noting. While I can assure you that parking is still an issue on a lot of students' minds, I would like to bring attention to other conversations happening across campus.

In November, the Innovation Campus was announced. Today—roughly six months after the announcement—students still are unsure about how the Innovation Campus will benefit the undergraduate population and have questions about the use of resources. While it has been said in meetings and some articles that the Innovation Campus will bring more resources to Blacksburg and benefit students beyond those studying STEM fields, that message has not reached a significant portion of students. Even with a planned town hall style event happening on April 4th, questions about the Campus will likely persist.

In Blacksburg, students also have questions and concerns about space at the university; not only about having enough space for the increasing population of students, but also for the quality and availability of spaces for a variety of uses. While we were fortunate to have Commonwealth Ballroom come back online for Ring Dance this weekend, we are aware that this space likely will not be available long-term. Additionally, this space has already proven inadequate for needs on our campus. Only a small proportion of our university can gather together in the space, there is competition for its use, and organizations already feel limited in the programming that they can offer by the size of the venue. Beyond this, Old Dominion Ballroom—one of our larger venues—is scheduled to be taken offline for use as an event space in January 2020. Because Old Dominion Ballroom is still widely used for a variety of purposes, student organizations are unsure whether they will even be able to offer the same programming as they do now.

The Master Plan does not outline potential large event spaces, such as ballrooms, making it a source of student concern. The Inn's ballrooms have been identified as replacements for large spaces that are going offline, but they are not economically viable for many organizations as fees for their use are significantly higher than the ballrooms in Squires. For example, one two-day career fair reported that operating at the Inn cost them an additional \$15,000 despite having less space. Large event space is important to students for a variety of reasons. We use it to welcome new students and families at orientation, enrich the lives of students through cultural programming, continue university traditions, and provide professional development opportunities that generate revenue that is given back to students. In addition to all of this, improved and larger venues can also allow organizations to build Virginia Tech's reputation by giving

organizations the ability to host conferences as well as allow companies that would normally be waitlisted at career fairs to come to recruit our amazing students.

While large event venues are a major topic of conversation, they are not the only space-driven concern of students. With War Memorial Hall being taken offline for much needed renovations, a variety of organizations who use space within the building for meetings, practice, and storage of their equipment are uncertain about how they will continue through the offline time. For just one example, a variety of martial arts clubs, such as the MMA Club, Bujinkan Taijitsu, Tae Kwon Do, Aikido, and Kendo clubs, use War Memorial not only to train, but also to store safety equipment such as mats, gloves, and headgear. While these organizations have reported working with Event Planning to identify alternatives, they still are concerned about suitable, practical spaces that will allow future students to benefit from these activities as they have. It also raises a larger question about how we can ensure that the student experience is minimally affected by changes in campus facilities going forward.

Switching gears, my constituent report last meeting included student concerns about the university's abilities to address Title IX cases and subsequent student conduct resolutions. While we have just heard a presentation about Title IX, I want to recognize student efforts and findings as well. The Student Government Association formed an ad-hoc committee to look into processes and policy surrounding Title IX. Key concerns discussed by this group include: insufficient staffing that prevents the growing number of cases and investigations from being completed within the 60-day time frame, accessibility issues surrounding the website and materials provided to students, and the understanding and appropriateness of student conduct resolutions. A Title IX Student Advisory Board has also been formed this year and has met once with an additional meeting planned before the end of the semester.

Unfortunately, I can't talk about everything that has gone on in the past six months in one report. To wrap up, I would like to express gratitude to the different people and groups with whom I have had the opportunity to work. First, I would like to thank the Mental Health Task Force for all their effort, dedication, and thought that they have put into such an important issue for students. I would also like to thank Dr. Chris Kiwus for helping coordinate a Campus Safety Walk in January. This effort was spurred by a student comment about dark paths and evolved into a walk through campus, not only looking at path lighting, but also lighting in other outdoor spaces, bike safety, and crosswalk safety. We had participants from VTPD, Environmental Health and Safety, Facilities, and Operations and I want to thank them as well. Additionally, I would like to take a moment to thank President and Dr. Sands for having our first casual lunch with students at D2 that was open to the community. Finally, I would like to thank all those who I have not yet mentioned but have helped me in my role, especially all the students with whom I have met and have expressed their thoughts and concerns for the university. I am truly humbled by everyone's passion for Virginia Tech and am extremely grateful for the opportunity I have to serve in this role and work with such amazing people.

Virginia Tech Board of Visitors

Graduate Student Representative:
Constituency Report #3

Spring 2019



Good afternoon to all members of the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors, university leadership, and special guests here today. I'm honored to address this audience once again to deliver my third constituency report. First, I'd like to inform everyone that I passed my qualifying exams over winter break. I will take a few classes in fall 2019, then finish my preliminary exam before I move forward with the dissertation phase. My last constituency report was essentially a "highlight reel" which described events and programming that were widely implemented by the Graduate School and attended by numerous graduate students. Since then, I've worked with the BOV social media accounts and the communications team in the Graduate School to push out information to remind and encourage students to take advantage of these valuable opportunities. Here, in this report, I'd like to build upon that momentum to illuminate the substantive conversations that I've had with graduate students, staff, and faculty members.

Last semester, student leaders met with the budgeting team to understand how potential increases in staff wages and benefits could aid our graduate experience, and to assess how Virginia Tech's campus expansion affects the value of our education. Additionally, we discussed what the Innovation Campus means to graduate students outside of Computer Science and Engineering. The Graduate Student Assembly met regularly and discussed the observance of Indigenous Peoples' Day at Virginia Tech, a new full-time candidacy status, better religious holiday observance for students, and divestment from fossil fuels amongst many other topics. Additionally, students are not completely satisfied with the increased parking rate and the subsequent limited parking spaces, specifically in the Perry Street parking lots.

When my schedule allowed, I worked with the Mental Health Task force to complete the mental health report and I brought graduate students in to provide valuable perspectives. During lunch with President Sands, Dr. Clarke, Dean DePauw, and Dr. Perillo with graduate students, students revealed concerns about advisor-advisee relationships, the proliferation of post-doc appointments and their seemingly preference over graduate students due their lower costs. Moreover, students discussed some excessive and potentially unreasonable workloads, ideas for the Innovation Campus, and concerns about competing for jobs in a global labor market; however, students were pleased to learn how university leadership works to address their concerns.

The graduate student climate survey was recently administered by the Graduate School. The BOV Selection process went well, we had a typical sized applicant pool of students who had

impressive backgrounds. Last week, we had Graduate Education week with many events. Most prominent were the GSA Research Symposium & Exposition, the Combat Imposter Syndrome program, the Graduate Education Week Awards Banquet, and the finale, our Big Cookout!

With the brief time that I have left, I would like to share my plans to advance the graduate school experience. After much consideration, I've decided to focus on communication. I would like to find better ways for graduate students to communicate and interact with each other across all of our campuses. Also, I would like to better share stories from graduate students as it relates to their successes and challenges; and to describe how the Graduate School and university leadership interacts with them. So far, I have had discussions regarding campus wide communication with graduate students and leaders on all three campuses. Additionally, I have worked with Dawn Jefferies from University Relations, Dean DePauw, Cathy Grimes, and others to develop a day-in-the-life video series to capture unique stories of graduate students for the Board. Instead of footage of our most prominent students, I intentionally selected three typical students, two who are international students and two graduate student mothers. Furthermore, for the future, instead of telling you how graduate students in Roanoke commute to Blacksburg for classes, events and other extracurriculars. My plan is to capture videos and narratives to show you all what it is really like. Perhaps it will become embedded in your minds, more so than the words from constituency reports. So as university leadership considers how to best support us, there are some powerful and accurate visuals that are readily accessible to add meaning to discussions. At the summer Board meeting, I'll share the complete video series, discuss our plans for dissemination, and prospects for connecting graduate student leaders on all three campuses. I hope that regardless of the focus areas for the forthcoming BOV rep, they work to advance how we understand and share the graduate school experience.

'Tis the season for dissertation defenses and it's almost time for graduation. I would like to inform the Board that graduate students have their concerns and challenges, but most seem to be thriving beyond measure. As some of us miss our families dearly, spend countless hours in the lab, have persistent sleepless nights, are hungry and afraid to tell our peers. Some are working extra jobs to make ends meet, unsure if they will land their dream jobs or if they are even strong enough to finish their degrees, some suffer from imposter syndrome, some are struggling to find their identity and are even soul searching. Nonetheless, graduate students have shown me that they are stronger than you can imagine, we are resilient and supportive of our undergraduate

peers. Many of us have great mentors and institutional support. we and value our vibrant learning community. We are eager to fulfill the university's mission through our research, instruction, and volunteering contributions. I am PROUD to represent the graduate student body at Virginia Tech. I'm asking you to please remember our vital roles to the fundamental mission of the university as you make policy decisions. We value your continued support now and in the future!

Thank you,

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Faculty Constituency Report
Virginia Tech Board of Visitors

March 31, 2019

John Ferris, President—VT Faculty Senate

Good afternoon Rector Treacy, President Sands, members of the Board, Provost Clarke, and all others gathered here today.

Thank you.

You demonstrated not just in words, but in deeds, that Virginia Tech values every employee, including those with the least voice and the greatest need. Through your initiative and the great work by Dwayne Pinkney's Total Compensation Task Force, over 500 of our lowest wage employees will have a pay increase and nearly 1000 will have an annual supplement of \$500 that can be used for expenses such as medical care, child care, and parking.

So, again, thank you for demonstrating your commitment to every Hokie and confirming what we've seen time and again: what makes Virginia Tech special are the people, the personal interactions, and how we choose to nurture our shared community. We have seen this in the student survey in which we found that students love Virginia Tech because of their interactions with faculty, staff and each other. We have seen this in the Employee Climate Survey in which we found the most positively responded items were our Principles of Community, our feeling of safety, and the friendliness of our community.

I think the conclusion is clear: the people that compose our community is what makes us special. And this is as it should be. After all, our duty is service and our uncompromising principle is the inherent dignity and value of every person.

So then, beyond our unflinching duties and principles, what is our guide, the lens through which we should judge success in all of our initiatives and in turn drive the distribution of resources?

The purpose of any university is the creation and dissemination of knowledge.

But may I propose that the unique purpose of Virginia Tech is the shared experience of creating and discovering new insights, inspiration, and innovation.

May I further propose that everything done at our university should be assessed with respect first to our principles, and second to the positive impact on our university purpose with respect to alternatives for the resources expended.

What do I mean.

Consider two themes among the Beyond Boundaries priorities: expanding facilities (creating the Innovation Campus in Northern Virginia and expanding the Blacksburg Campus) and international recognition (Becoming a Top 100 Global University). Do I support the Beyond Boundaries priorities? Yes. But not as an end in themselves.

Building the facilities has instrumental value in advancing Virginia Tech's purpose, but is not the goal itself. If the facilities promote a richer learning experience than could have been created with a different deployment of resources, then this initiative is a success.

Being on a list of top 100 universities is one measure of advancing Virginia Tech's purpose, but is not a goal itself. It is one measure of success that must be weighed with respect to resources deployed.

Our success is not found at a ribbon-cutting ceremony or in the accolades of a list-maker. Success is found in our continual pursuit of our unique purpose and faithful adherence to our principles.

And so, it must always come back to how we relate to each other and express the principles and priorities that define us. I'm grateful to the Board of Visitors for all they have done and for all I have experienced as a faculty representative, and hope that I will continue to serve our community.

Again, thank you.

Staff Senate Constituency Report
Virginia Tech Board of Visitors
April 1, 2019
Presented by Robert Sebek, Staff Senate President

Good afternoon Rector Treacy, members of the Board of Visitors, President Sands, administrators and distinguished guests. It is an honor to present to you updates from staff at Virginia Tech.

Staff Senate hosted over 200 staff employees last week at our annual James McComas Staff Leadership Seminar. This year's theme was Empathic Leadership, and our speakers explored leading others while considering those followers' needs and concerns, an interest that has guided my leadership of the Senate. The day-long seminar was well received and planning has already begun for next year's seminar.

Today I am asking for Virginia Tech to invest in its future. We have done a great job investing in our students: we have amazing residence halls for our students to live in, award-winning dining halls where they can eat, innovative classrooms and laboratories where they can learn, and outstanding networks and technology for them to communicate and collaborate. It's now time to invest in the employees that support those endeavors: the custodians who keep those residence halls clean, the chefs, cooks and nutritionists that make those award-winning meals, the grounds workers who clear the snow to allow students to get to the classroom buildings, the lab managers who set up equipment and guide students in its use, and yes, the faculty who teach, advise, and collaborate with our students.

Last August, the Board discussed means to budget for increasing faculty and staff salaries, to increase faculty percentile placement among our peer institutions and staff salaries to market levels for this area. At the November meeting, you directed the administration to report on compensation levels, parking, and child care access.

I served on the Total Compensation task force that reviewed full-time and part-time staff wages and parking issues. The university seems to have committed to raising the floor of our lowest salary bands to a market level of \$12/hour. I appeal to the university administration to commit to similar pay reforms for our part-time staff. Our *Principles of Community* state that, "We affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding." Paying part-time staff, who are doing the same work as full-time staff, significantly less does not affirm their value, nor respects their contributions to our campus.

Many of our part-time employees have worked in those positions for years—they are not transient employees. Some choose to remain part time because they cannot afford afterschool child care. Others are waiting to move into full time positions as they become available. Still others work in areas that are not active 12 months of the year, like Dining. [I understand the Division of Student Affairs is planning to review select, long-term, part-time positions in Dining for conversion to 9-month, full-time positions, which I highly endorse.]

Raising part-time wages is more complicated, since part-time positions are paid from operating budgets. Any solutions needs to account for this difference in funding to ensure departments and auxiliaries can afford market-level wages without a significant decrease in work force size.

On the other hand, no similar university task force investigated access to affordable child care. I have directed the Staff Senate's child care committee to continue to research solution proposals. I will present at tomorrow's Governance and Administration Committee session to follow up on my November presentation to the Board on access to child care, including the suggestion to form a similar university-wide task force to continue exploring short- and long-term solutions to the problem on access to affordable child care in the New River Valley region.

The need for child care options only continues to grow as the size of our work force and student body increases. The ability to recruit new faculty and graduate students with families will be impacted by the lack of capacity in the New River Valley as well as the lack of affordability. I understand any solution will cost the university money, but it is an investment that will pay off in terms of recruitment and retention of quality employees and students, better engagement and loyalty of employees, and a more productive work force.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Sebek
President, Staff Senate