

Undergraduate Student Constituency Report
Virginia Tech Board of Visitors
November 4, 2018

Presented by Rachel Iwicki, Undergraduate Student Representative

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

With the trees finally turning maroon and orange, autumn has finally descended upon Blacksburg. Since the last Board of Visitors meeting, we have enjoyed what seemed to be an extremely long and endless summer while getting back into the groove of classes and extracurricular activities. Many students have taken advantage of the warm weather by stringing hammocks along the Drillfield, going hiking with friends, staying active through intramurals, and of course, cheering on Hokie football. Although there are a couple games that go best unmentioned. As we have had time to settle into a routine, areas of improvement have become more identifiable.

Students continue to feel the effects of a larger student body with understaffed services that are doing their best to meet their employment needs. During the school week, it is often difficult for students to get on-campus food in a timely manner with lines in Turner--the only dining hall on the academic side of campus--extending throughout the building, creating long waits and sometimes the inability to grab lunch between classes. Food trucks have helped alleviate some stress on the system by adding more locations near academic buildings. Even with staffing challenges, Dining Services still maintains its superb quality and was awarded Food Management Magazine's 2018 Best of Show. This is no surprise with their great quality, unique events to try new foods and recipes, improvements on sustainability as demonstrated by the now free green to-go box program, and fun--yet somewhat painful--traditions such as the annual D2 Chili Challenge.

Full buses are another issue for many students commuting to school. Due to the limited amount of buses on each route and volumes of students commuting at peak times in the morning, some buses are often filled to capacity. Because of this, buses have to drive straight past students waiting at stops closer to campus, causing these students to wait for another bus to have space. Some students have cited that this has caused them to be late to classes even when they try for earlier buses than should be necessary.

On a different front, Zo and I have been privileged to serve on the Mental Health Task Force charged by Provost Clarke. As mental health has been and continues to be a

large concern for students, the work of this task force is considered to be of great importance. It has been truly eye-opening to learn about the breadth and scope of work the University does surrounding mental health. Additionally, it has been refreshing to see the Task Force's enthusiasm for and value put on engaging with students to understand any issues or barriers they may face with regards to mental health. With the attention to detail and talent in this group, I expect the task force to produce great results that will be truly impactful.

In my role, I try to gather as much information as possible and understand an issue well before presenting it. Unfortunately, due to the emerging nature of this next issue, I have not had the time to fully investigate it, but believe it should be mentioned now. Students are concerned about the University's capability to address Title IX cases in an appropriate and timely manner and about Student Conduct outcomes for sexual assault assailants. Given the national climate and heinous nature of sexual assault, I believe these concerns should be addressed and will work with students, administrators, and other resources to better understand the issue and related processes and policies. I hope to report back to the Board on this in March with more information.

Students have also been affected by the recent tragic events in Pittsburgh and Jefferson, KY. The campus has shown great support for the Jewish and African American communities with the SGA passing a resolution in support of President Sands' message to the Virginia Tech community. As another example of the support shown on campus, many Jewish and non-Jewish students have engaged with Hillel at Virginia Tech, a center for Jewish campus life. In partnership with Hillel, they have written letters of comfort and solidarity to those connected to the Tree of Life Synagogue and filled the Malcolm Rosenberg Center for Shabbat and memorial services this past Friday. The support and community shown in times such as these is something to be proud of and part of why Virginia Tech is such a special place.

Serving as the Undergraduate Representative has kept me very busy, but I cannot think of a more rewarding experience. I love all of the opportunities to speak with my fellow Hokies about their experiences, working with students and administration to make changes, and playing a part in major decisions on campus on behalf of the students. We all know how great Virginia Tech is and we all want to see it become even better. Through working together and utilizing the broad perspectives of our constituencies, I know we can push the university to the next level and I am excited to be a part of that. With that, I'd like to thank you for your time.