

**Undergraduate Student Constituency Report**  
**Virginia Tech Board of Visitors**  
**August 27, 2018**  
**Presented by Rachel Iwicki, Undergraduate Student Representative**

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

I am excited, grateful, and truly humbled to officially be serving the undergraduate student body during such a pivotal time in the university. Given that I am at the beginning of my term, I'd like to share some of the excitement that comes with the beginning of the academic year.

Over the past few weeks, students have been flocking back to Blacksburg, eager to be back among friends and Hokie Nation. Although it probably goes without saying, the sense of community is unmistakable. A walk through campus at this time of the year is an incredible experience. You may see students excitedly reuniting for the first time in months, hanging out on the drillfield, or happily helping out the freshman who looks like they are having just a little bit of trouble finding a class. Laughter and smiles are prevalent and it is no surprise that Virginia Tech rose 5 spots to #14 for happiest students according to the Princeton Review.

Students have also noticed some changes to campus that were made over the summer. There are a few new options for physical activity including the new Venture Out Challenge Course, recently installed ROAM NRV bikeshare hubs, and the construction of a Fitness Park in Prairie Quad. Students were also happy to find new study spaces on campus, such as the variety of tables and outlets recently installed in Hancock Atrium. Having powered study areas is important to students and these areas quickly became occupied as students returned.

Also new to campus are over 6,400 freshmen. This year, we welcome Virginia Tech's sesquicentennial class: The Class of 2022. This class is also the first to pursue the Pathways to General Education. While some students are still unsure about the mechanics of the the new program, they seem excited about the variety of ways they can meet the requirements. Many of the freshman also came to campus excited about the opportunities available at Tech and took advantage of the myriad of activities offered as a part of "Welcome Week." GobblerNights, a movie night on the Drillfield, and the Community Kickoff put on by the Cultural and Community Centers were some of the

most popular events. Having events such as these really help students transition to the college environment and were well-appreciated by the new students.

The new students also did not have to worry about issues experienced last year. Between the smaller freshman class size and the re-opening of O'Shaughnessy Hall, last year's housing concerns appear to be behind us. This year, Resident Advisors do not have roommates, giving them the space to provide quality support to residents and on-campus students are no longer living in temporary housing. While housing concerns were addressed, other recurring concerns still remained at the forefront of students' minds.

One of the most talked about events of the summer for upperclassmen was the addition of signage indicating that commuter parking passes would no longer be valid in the Perry Street parking areas. News about the changes spread quickly through various social media platforms as students speculated what changes were being made. Soon we found out that a limited number of premium parking passes would be offered for the Perry Street area at a price of \$389, which is \$100 more than the standard commuter passes. The premium passes sold out in a matter of days, leaving many students frustrated, especially carpoolers whose passes were no longer valid in the prime area. Even with frequent transport offered from the Duck Pond Lot to the academic portions of campus, commuters are still concerned about how transportation will pan out in their lives. Many of the concerns cited full buses when commuting to campus and less frequent public transport options for those who stay on campus late. With student feedback and help from Parking and Transportation, I believe we can address many of the concerns.

I have also begun to meet many incredible students and university leadership to discuss the various aspects of the university's operations and student feedback. While there is a lot to love about this university, these meetings reinforced that there are also many areas that we can improve upon. Students remain concerned about growing enrollment, diversity and inclusion, space on campus, and the aforementioned parking. We have gaps of understanding between students and administrators due to a lack of effective communication. This year I would like to focus on opening up communication channels between students and administrators as well as increasing understanding of student desires and university governance through writing columns or finding other effective methods or media outlets. I am in the process of meeting more and more groups to figure out how we can best address concerns and how information can be better communicated. So far, responses have been great.

Over the course of the year, I hope to challenge and engage both sides to work together effectively as the university pursues its Master Plan. I hope that this effort will set a precedent for student engagement in governance for years to come. Outside of the increased engagement, I am eager to help students in any way possible, so please contact me if you think there is something I can help with. I look forward to updating you on our progress during the next meeting, but for now, thank you for your time and go Hokies.

# Virginia Tech Board Of Visitors

Attachment CC

August 2018 Board Meeting

Graduate Student Representative: Lorenzo “Zo” Amani

## Constituency Report #1

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### **Introduction:**

1. I'd like to thank President Sands, Board Rector Mr. Treacy, Board members, University leadership, and the graduate student population for entrusting me to be the Graduate Student Representative to the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors for the academic year 2018-2019.
2. First, I'd like to share a little bit about myself. My name is Lorenzo but most people call me Zo. I'm a team player, self-starter, problem solver, and my self-knowledge and emotional intelligence keep me focused and balanced. This fall marks my fourth year in my PhD program in the Center for Public Administration and Public Affairs. My academic and career interests are in public management, personnel, organizations, and workforce development. For the last two summers, I've worked at the Federal Reserve Board of Governors in Washington D.C., I'm a Graduate Resident Fellow in West Ambler Johnston Hall on campus, and I'm the Graduate Student Representative to the Board of Directors for non-profit called the National Forum for Black Public Administrators.

### **Focus Areas:**

3. Since I started my tenure, I've held several meetings with prior BOV graduate representatives, university faculty, staff, and administrators, and graduate students to determine the best approach to make a quantifiable impact during my tenure. Primarily, I plan to advance the understanding of our current resources on campus and our valuable “Transformative Graduate Education” curriculum to graduate students, the Board, and to the Virginia Tech Community. I expect that more efficient communication about our Graduate School's current resources will satisfy most concerns or questions, so I'll continue to learn of our current resources in great depth.
4. In addition to my primary efforts. Thus far, I've decided to focus on two areas while representing any additional concerns voiced to me by graduate students.
  - a. Career and Professional Development
  - b. Student Health and Wellness
5. I plan to fully address one major opportunity that can advance graduate students career and professional development, which is to consider methods to advance the Transformative Graduate Education Fund - particularly the GSA Travel Fund Program, so students can have more opportunities to share their scholarly work at conferences, which could foster better career and professional development outcomes by improving their public speaking and presentation skills, and to help them gain exposure to scholars, practitioners, resources, and career opportunities in their respective fields.

### **Conclusion:**

6. In conclusion, I plan to work closely with my partner, who is my wonderful and trusted colleague Chelsea Lyles, a PhD student in the Higher Education program to work effectively towards fulfilling the responsibilities of this role. My role is to adequately represent the voices of Virginia Tech's graduate student population to the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors and vice versa. Throughout my tenure, I plan to uphold this valiant responsibility as diligently as possible. My constituency reports will represent my full efforts and I'll remain vigilant in seeking other perspectives to strengthen my report.
7. I look forward to working with everyone in this room to advance the graduate student experience, while simultaneously growing as a leader. Thanks again, and GO HOKIES!!!

**Staff Senate Constituency Report**  
**Virginia Tech Board of Visitors**  
**August 27, 2018**  
**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 has already begun planning for a year of growth and continued exploration of issues affecting our lowest paid employees. We welcomed new senators to our July meeting and have reached out to areas not yet represented in Senate. I have met this weekend with staff from the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and the Research Institute to ensure they can fully participate in shared governance and decision making processes.

The Senate's child care committee is actively working on multiple proposals to improve access to affordable child care in the New River Valley. We will hear from local government representatives in September about access to affordable housing—an increasing concern among staff as older Blacksburg apartment complexes convert to luxury housing for affluent students, pricing out staff who have previously lived there. As the student body continues to grow, housing pressures close to the university result in staff living farther away, increasing their commuting expenses. Staff Senate has highlighted discounted parking options and alternative transportation services as a means to alleviate these costs.

We are excited to work with our new Vice President for Human Resources, Bryan Garey, when he starts in September. Under the Restructuring Act of 2006, university staff could have more options in terms of compensation, benefits, and leave than could classified staff limited under the state system, much as faculty employees long have had. In the past 12 years, the only change made for university staff has been the addition of merit raises in years when there has been no statewide raise. However, the other two institutions under the restructuring act, UVA and William & Mary, have implemented many changes to compensation ranges, available benefits, and leave programs. Senate leadership wants to work closely with Vice President Garey to explore similar changes that could be implemented here at Virginia Tech. These changes can improve our ability to recruit, retain, and develop staff who will support programs across the university as it continues to grow and improve.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Sebek  
President, Staff Senate

**Faculty Senate Constituency Report  
Virginia Tech Board of Visitors  
August 27, 2018  
Presented by John Ferris, Faculty Senate President**

Time. I have 3-5 minutes to talk to you about time. I'll give you the first punchline: there is no excess faculty time. The idea that small additional tasks can be added to faculty workload without any negative effects has long past. Those days are over. The low hanging fruit has been picked. The bucket is full. If you add even a drop, then some other drops will splash out.

Faculty are accustomed to working long hours. Before coming to the university, faculty work hard to establish themselves as experts in their field, then go through a year-long vetting process to be given the opportunity for a 6-year interview (the tenure process). Faculty are extreme type-A personalities. We need no charging. We need no winding. We come to the university revved up and ready.

However

- According to SCHEV the total undergraduate enrollment has increased about 13% in the last 4 years while the number of faculty has only increased by half that amount.
- There are numerous initiatives being implemented, EFARs, the PIBB, SGAs, DAs,
- There is training ranging from the changing software tools (Blackboard, to Scholar, to CANVAS) to how to handle conflicts of interest.

Teaching is essential, the initiatives are laudable, and the training is important. But be aware that they all require faculty time, and, like it or not, the bucket is full and some other important things will splash out.

We can discuss methods for improving efficiency, but the fundamental issue is that the faculty engine has been running at the red-line for too long. This is coupled with general unrest and uncertainty due to turnover in administration and a multitude of initiatives for which we have little real input or information.

If research expenditures decrease or teaching evaluations are less favorable, that should come as no surprise.

This is not complicated. We don't need more charts. We don't need more people and resources dedicated to inventing new ways to measure those of us who are performing the central mission of the university: the creation and dissemination of knowledge

through teaching and scholarship. Students love Virginia Tech because of their interactions with faculty, staff and each other. Faculty love Virginia Tech primarily because of their interaction with students. We believe in the mission. Remove the hurdles. Let us focus on creating and disseminating knowledge.

I ask that every time you hear about some new initiative or program that will just take a small drop of faculty time, you consider the grant proposal that doesn't get written, the paper that doesn't get submitted, or the office hours that are cancelled.

Want faculty to be more productive? Help free us up to do our actual work: Research. Teaching. Service.

Specifically

- Faculty should focus on jobs that only faculty can do. Everything else should be done by someone else. Shouldn't someone else do the data entry required to move the information in my dossier to a database?
- When faculty time is required, sufficient planning should be done to minimize the demand. Can 2 hours of training be completed in 30 minutes?
- Let faculty manage their own time. How do you strike a balance between faculty participation and overburdening us? Ideally, participation should be open to all and required of none. Maximize transparency and access. Minimize requirements of faculty time outside our central mission.

This is critical because, as business leaders will attest, quality is most strongly a function of time and money devoted to the enterprise. We don't have excess time. We don't have excess money. We don't want quality to decline. We have to focus on the central mission.

The Faculty Senate is here to help. Last year we established a strong communication channel with the President and Provost. We recently initiated a Faculty Soundboard to learn about what is on faculty members' minds. During the next year we plan to provide concrete ideas to strip away all but the jobs that are essential to the health of the academic enterprise.

Stay tuned. More to follow.

Thank you.