

President's Report – BOV – 3Jun19

Your approval today of our Strategic Plan, *The Virginia Tech Difference – Advancing Beyond Boundaries*, represents a milestone in the advancement of Virginia Tech along a trajectory that will take us toward the generational aspiration for Virginia Tech outlined in *Beyond Boundaries – a 2047 Vision*. The delineation of four strategic priorities: 1) Advance Regional, National and Global Impact; 2) Elevate the *Ut Prosim* Difference; 3) Be a Destination for Talent; and 4) Ensure Institutional Excellence; will guide us in making sound and strategic decisions and investments. In good times, we can focus on building our momentum. In challenging times, we use these priorities to make difficult decisions that will keep us on track. We look forward to working with the BOV to ensure that we stay true to the spirit of the plan and make necessary adjustments as the world around us changes.

In terms of challenges, we have two that I would like to highlight. First, the unprecedented and unexpected demand for a Virginia Tech degree has resulted in nearly 8,000 students accepting our admissions offers, about 1,000 more than our models suggested would ultimately yield the desired class size of 6600 as determined during fall census. About two-thirds of the excess in acceptances is attributed to in-state yield, which on May 15th was nearly 6 percentage points - or 11 percent - above last year's yield at the same point in the cycle, rising from 47% to 53%. This is the highest in-state yield for Virginia Tech in the last decade and is an outcome that is in contrast with nationwide decreases in college enrollment, and with many institutions in Virginia missing or barely making their targeted class size.

Our International student yield was also the highest in the last decade, if not ever. 32% of those offered accepted, up from 23% last year. That's an increase of 8.4 percentage points, or 36%. This is completely counter to the prevailing narrative that international students are shunning US universities. Of course, many of our international students face additional hurdles this summer in obtaining the proper visas, but no one could have predicted this outcome.

Among the likely factors in the surging yield are: a significant increase in visits to campus by prospective students and their families; the statewide tuition freeze that we believe helped keep talent in the state at all of our institutions; a dramatically improved application process; enhanced financial aid; an overarching wave of interest in STEM; and the increased exposure of Virginia Tech in the local, national and international news during the recruiting cycle as a result of our Sweet Sixteen run and our part in attracting Amazon HQ2 to Northern Virginia.

Neither the Virginia Tech campus in Blacksburg nor the town of Blacksburg is fully equipped to accommodate a thousand more students than anticipated without disruption in the available housing. We are working with the Town leadership, including Mayor Hagar-Smith to consider all options, some creative, to ensure that every new and returning student has access to the high quality Virginia Tech experience that they expect. That said, the most effective way to mitigate this challenge is to incentivize accepted students to choose modified in-residence schedules, including a gap year, a semester off campus with residential summer sessions, or a first year at a Virginia community college. All of these options reduce the cost to the student.

It is too early to know how popular these optional programs will be, but we felt it was in the best interest of all of our students, our faculty, staff and the Town of Blacksburg to take this unusual if not unprecedented step.

Even with a bump in enrollment this year, we expect to be safely below our self-imposed 2023 cap of 30,000 undergraduates. Going forward, we will begin working with the Town this fall on projecting the ideal size of Virginia Tech in Blacksburg beyond 2023. It's more than student enrollment. We have to consider faculty and staff housing, instructional resources, and the expected retention and influx of talent to the Corporate Research Center as more companies seek to locate next to one of the Commonwealth's primary sources of talent. And with our Virginia Tech Carilion Health Sciences and Technology campus in Roanoke along with our Innovation Campus in Alexandria, we will have ample elbow room outside of Blacksburg.

The second challenge I would like to highlight is the culture on campus and in our society that has downplayed the significance of sexual violence. As we heard at our last BOV meeting, reporting of incidents to our Title IX office is up significantly in recent years, and while this may be a sign of trust in the process, it is also a call to increased action in education and prevention. This summer, three of our teams, Equity and Accessibility, Student Affairs, and the Women's Center are coming together with the Office of the President and student representatives to organize a series of forums aimed at "Ending Sexual Violence." Each forum will introduce a topic, and promote a conversation with the goal of identifying opportunities for sustainable culture transformation. We will certainly cover topics associated with compliance – for example, Title IX, Student Conduct, law enforcement - but the focus will be on education and prevention. We need the best ideas from our broader community to become a leader in ending sexual violence.

Now I would like to highlight some important opportunities. You have all heard about our Innovation Campus in Alexandria, the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative and the expansion of our Health Science and Technology campus with Carillion Clinic in Roanoke. We are also investing in Blacksburg. The data for our initial Tech-Talent Pipeline MOU have been submitted to the state. This partnership with the state will double computer science and related programs, and fund the lion's share of the Data and Decisions Sciences building, an important component of the Global Business and Analytics Complex. We have also made a commitment to grow the Corps of Cadets from 1100 to 1400 over the next several years. Thank you for approving the Corps Leadership and Military Science Building along with a third residence hall for the Corps of Cadets. And our AREC Master Plan will guide us in building new and modern capacity for our eleven Agricultural Research and Extension Centers around the state.

I'd like to welcome our new dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, Dr. Laura Belmonte. Laura will join us on August 1 from Oklahoma State University. We are also welcoming Reese Ramos, most recently from Sandia National Labs in California, as our University Ombudsman. You will enjoy getting to know both Laura and Reese.

We have several searches underway, including the Vice President and Executive Director of the Innovation Campus, and the Executive Director of the Commonwealth Cyber Initiative. We will keep you informed as these important searches advance.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our faculty and students who presented and lead discussions at "Virginia's Incomplete History – Race and Miseducation in Virginia" on May 8th. We had hundreds in the audience from Virginia Tech and the surrounding community. I think everyone took away several revelations and a new understanding of the complex history of race in the Commonwealth. We will look to build on this event in the future.

Our Global opportunities for students continue to advance, but this academic year was a transformative one. We set a record for Fulbright winners, including five students and two alumnae, and we also set a record with 1,400 students studying abroad, 15% more than last year. We were among 32 institutions receiving Institute of International Education Seal of Excellence for increasing participation.

I could go on and on about special achievements of the last two months, including FutureHAUS on Times Square, ACC championships for Men's Outdoor Track and Field and Softball, the CubeSat Constellation launch, Frank Beamer's great "parting of the rain clouds" speech at Commencement in celebration of the Class of 1969, the 50th anniversary of Virginia Tech in the National Capital Region, and Professor Sterling Nesbitt's remarkable announcement of the discovery of *Suskityrannus hazelae*, a cousin of T. Rex – but I'll wind this down with a "thank you" to the Board members who are completing their current terms after this meeting. CT Hill, Debbie Petrino, Robert Mills, Mehmood Kazmi and our constituent representatives, Rachel Iwicki, Zo Amani and Robert Sebek. You have permanently made this university a better institution through your service. We will have more to say about each of you at the end of today's meeting.

Thank you.

Tim Sands, President