

**Constituency Report**  
**Gabe Cohen**  
**Undergraduate Student Representative to the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors**  
**August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

Good afternoon Rector Chapman, President Sands, members of the Board, administration, and distinguished guests. I am honored to have this opportunity to speak on behalf of the undergraduate students and look forward to both working with and learning from all of you all over the next year.

The 2016-2017 school year is shaping up to be very busy as Virginia Tech continues to grow and innovate amid high expectations. Everything from athletics to Cook Counseling, and the Corp of Cadets to Dining Services, is having to change in unanticipated ways. Since the Board last met in June, a new freshman class of just over 5900 excited students has moved on to campus and are already beginning to define their collegiate experiences. The policies enacted this year by the Board of Visitors will greatly impact the future of these students, as well as the generations of students and families that come after them.

Thanks to the recent efforts from all members of the faculty, staff, and administration, Virginia Tech is moving forward with great momentum this school year. Students have long anticipated the arrival of the Virginia Tech food trucks. After just one week of classes, the trucks are already very popular and yielding long lines. It is creative efforts like this that consistently keep Virginia Tech at the top of campus dining rankings, and the type of innovative thinking that can be adopted by other divisions across this university. The New Classroom Building has just been completed and social media has been swarmed with students taking their first tours and getting a glimpse of what the future holds for Virginia Tech facilities.

I am very excited about the upcoming master plan committee meeting on September 13th, and cannot wait to get to work with Jason Soileau on how to get more undergraduate students involved. Over the next year, the master plan committee will face many challenges as they try to integrate initiatives such as InclusiveVT and Beyond Boundaries into the long term growth strategy of Virginia Tech. All of this, while creating a plan that allows for projected enrollment growth, efficient transportation, better utilization of existing space, and maintains the high quality of education that a degree from our university exemplifies. This process will be an evolving conversation over the next year and I hope to connect with many students, as well as rely on my advisory board, for important feedback and suggestions on how Virginia Tech can continue to grow and advance.

I am thrilled to announce the creation of my student advisory board. Their unique backgrounds bring perspectives to situations that are critical to solving today's complex problems and their involvements span widely across Virginia Tech. These students represent various colleges and clubs as well as a variety of ages. I am hoping the

addition of a sophomore student to my board will bring fresher eyes to new issues and can help me connect with the visions and goals of the class of 2020.

Hokie football is going through unprecedented changes as students say goodbye to Frank Beamer. His 29 years as head coach has created an everlasting legacy that is important to both current students and alumni. We truly cannot thank him enough for all of the memories he has created for this university. At the same time, we are looking forward to seeing Coach Justin Fuente take the reins and work with Bud Foster to transition into the new football era. Students are very animated about the game against Tennessee in the coming weeks as we compete in the largest collegiate football game ever, with over 150,000 fans expected to attend.

The Intercultural Engagement Center hosted a community kick-off event this past week with hundreds of students in attendance. It was a great opportunity to showcase the 3 new cultural centers that were created over the summer, representing and supporting the LGBTQ+ community, the Hispanic and Latino community, and the American Indian and Indigenous community. We are growing more diverse every year and it is crucial for Virginia Tech to remain engaged and support issues facing underrepresented communities. As the undergraduate representative, I hope to serve as an additional resource for these communities engaging in frequent communication and connections. Despite the progress made last year through InclusiveVT efforts and other initiatives, we must remember there is still a great deal of work to be done and I plan to help with these advancements anyway I can.

As the year progresses, there are several key areas I plan to address and improve. The first area being connections between students and alumni. We all know that Virginia Tech has one of the best alumni networks and Hokie alumni are more than twice as likely to have a strong emotional connection to this university, compared to any of our peers. The data from Gallup also showed that alumni who believed Virginia Tech prepared them well for life after college, were more than five times as likely to have an emotional connection. By connecting the Alumni Association, Career and Professional Development, and the student body, we can encourage stronger alumni involvement while helping to place students on quality career paths. After speaking with Dr. Perillo, I learned of the recent advancement of President Sands recommendation to move forward with the creation of a mentorship initiative. I look forward to joining the inaugural team to design a program where current students can interact, network with, and receive career advice from alumni in their field.

The second area that I intend to focus on is how to communicate with students the roles, responsibilities, and importance of the Board of Visitors. I have quickly learned that conversations with undergraduates generally start with what the Board is and how the decisions they make affect life at Virginia Tech. I believe the solutions to these problems is a well-designed and student centric newsletter that can be sent out after each board meeting. The newsletter will focus on helping students understand what the Board of Visitors is, what happened at the recent board meeting, who the student representatives are, and how each student can get involved and make sure their voice

is heard. A more informed student body will lead to higher engagement and better results in the future. I look forward to working with Tara Reel this year on ways to better engage both graduate and undergraduate students.

In closing, thank you all for the opportunity to speak today and present just a glimpse of the current undergraduate climate at Virginia Tech. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you ever need anything at all, and while there is plenty of work to be done this year, I look forward to collaborating with all of you.

Constituency Report  
Tara D. Reel  
Graduate Student Representative to the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors  
August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Good afternoon Rector Chapman, President Sands, distinguished members of the board, administration, and guests. Since this quarterly report will be my first to the board, I believe the best place to start is by expressing gratitude. I am grateful to so many of the wonderful Virginia Tech administrators who have met with me over the past few weeks to debrief me prior to this meeting, and provided support and encouragement at the beginning of my journey. I appreciate the opportunity and consider it a sincere honor to serve as the voice of the graduate student body.

As I began to write this report, I did what any good researcher would do and started reading through past reports from previous Board of Visitor representatives. I found that many reports captured similar themes of the graduate experience, and everyone began with a re-introduction. Since most of you have already heard about me from the interview selection process and my predecessor, Mohammed Seyam, I thought I would share with you another aspect of my life as a Hokie and tell you about a place that I have come to know as home. I have spent the last two years living in the Graduate Life Center, otherwise known as the GLC. As a student studying urban planning, you will often hear planners discuss creating a "sense of place." Many scholars will tell you that sometimes this term goes beyond geography and is a feeling or perception an individual has regarding their environment. Recently, several students were part of a Gallup poll regarding their experience at Virginia Tech. When the students replied to questions regarding what makes Virginia Tech unique, time after time, students stated they felt a "sense of community." The GLC is the heart of the graduate community at Virginia Tech. I have had the exciting opportunity to participate in master planning meetings for the campus during the summer months and look forward to envisioning the plan of the entire school and how to provide for our growing graduate community well into the future.

Since our appointments are for a one-year term, I have been meeting with

administrators regarding a few initiatives that I would like to spend my time working on this year. I attended graduate school orientations on the Blacksburg and Northern Virginia campuses prior to the start of classes. Being new to this position, I was pleasantly surprised when I started immediately receiving emails from students and experienced lines outside of the Board of Visitor office in the GLC in my first week. I'm not sure if this trend will continue, but I felt fortunate to have such a great start at connecting with my fellow graduate students. I felt that somehow my words might have struck a chord with them, and it certainly proves the value of our positions as students. Our fellow students may feel more comfortable approaching a peer to share their experiences first.

I have received guidance from both Dr. Perillo and Dean DePauw from the outset and have determined a few issues that I would like to focus on this year, and while they may be some that are familiar to you, they are still important to the graduate community as a whole. As I shared in my initial interview, the health and well-being of our graduate students are important to me. We wear many hats during our time here as researchers, colleagues, parents, advocates, and often serve a dual role as both teacher and student. Dean DePauw has been teaching us that the graduate experience is not about how to survive but how to thrive during our time here. It is not just about creating balance but creating work/life harmony. During a future report, I hope to share information from a "white paper" written by Student Affairs on the state of health and wellness of students and provide data regarding the graduate student population. I hope to continue meeting with Chris Wise, Assistant Vice President for Health and Wellness, and to build opportunities for advancing graduate student health initiatives as well as exploring how to use the GLC - the heart of our community - as a conduit for this mission.

I would like to continue discussions regarding graduate assistantships with my fellow students. A source of funding for graduate students is often vital to our continued success at the university. There are many different experiences and challenges that we face, and while I do not believe there is an easy solution to every issue that may arise, I hope these discussions will add value to the larger discussion of graduate education. Those experiences may range from simply

understanding opportunities and how to pursue them, or discover ways to make the process itself more transparent.

Last, but not least, given my background in graduate student government and our larger commitment to our motto, Ut Prosim, “That I May Serve”, I have started discussions regarding how to advance the principles of community and teach graduate students about the shared governance model at Virginia Tech. The idea is to create learning opportunities geared toward graduate students to encourage their presence and advocacy in positions on committees and commissions, and to encourage them to pursue future opportunities such as the position that I fill today. I feel that this initiative would go beyond the boundaries of this institution and create the VT-shaped graduate students we have been discussing through shaping the leaders of tomorrow and inspiring future contributions to society.

As I have shared my ideas and enthusiasm with university administrators, I am excited to begin working on these initiatives, and staying engaged with the graduate community throughout the coming school year. I will be working with the Graduate Student Assembly much like my predecessors in this position. Having seen this organization triple in size since I have been here and seen our community grow, I am excited to work with our incoming President Chelsea Corkins as we work on plans to engage the broader graduate community through a series of town halls. I have also spent the summer speaking with my fellow undergraduate representative, Gabe Cohen, and we have begun working on joint ventures including a newsletter to educate students on the work you do here. I look forward to working with everyone in the room today and the entire graduate community.

Ut Prosim,  
Tara D. Reel

**Staff Senate Constituency Report**  
**Virginia Tech Board of Visitors**  
**August 28, 2016**  
**Presented by Alex Parrish, Staff Senate President**

Good afternoon Rector Chapman, members of the Board of Visitors, President Sands, administrators and distinguished guests: it is an honor to speak on behalf of fellow staff in the presence of University Leadership.

The summer is a time to catch up and re-evaluate direction for the busy time of the upcoming academic year, and Staff Senate has been no exception. Since the last report, we have been working toward improving internal communication to senators, identifying senators who may have rotated off, and centralizing the focus of the Staff Senate to the vision of Virginia Tech. To this end, we hosted Dr. Scott Geller, who spoke at length about the Actively Caring for People campaign. This worldwide initiative is woven through the fabric of *Ut Prosim*, and it is our hope that we can garner a deeper vision of serving our fellow staff by participating in the groundwork of this great program.

The McComas Leadership Seminar Committee has been actively developing the 2017 conference, tentatively titled, "Servant Leadership." It is sheer coincidence that this occurred around the same time as the initiative with Dr. Geller, as they took the idea from a video that Buzz Williams posted on the topic. He is also one of the confirmed speakers for the day, and Provost Rikakis will be the keynote speaker.

Changes in the language of the Staff Senate by-laws and constitution are currently under review, those changes will be making their way to this body sometime this year.

The College of Engineering Staff Association led an initiative which picked up support from across the University to provide flood relief in Rainelle, West Virginia, in cooperation with Americorp. The two days of work, July 28 and 29, included the tearing out of a good amount of wood and insulation in five houses around Rainelle. Staff led the initiative, led by AP faculty and research faculty from the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, and Research Division.

Virginia Commonwealth University is hosting a gathering of Staff Senate leaders from around Virginia, with Virginia Tech invited. The summit will take place in October, and Virginia Tech Staff Senate plans to send a representative to join the discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Alex Parrish  
President, Staff Senate

**Faculty Constituency Report**  
**Virginia Tech Board of Visitors August 28-29, 2016**  
**Monty Abbas, President-VT Faculty Senate**

Good afternoon Rector Chapman, President Sands, Provost Rikakis, members of the Board of Visitors, and all esteemed guests.

I am humbled, and honored, to represent the Faculty today as I deliver my first report to the BOV. I also deliver it with both excitement and hope, as I continue my feeling of rejuvenation that started with the arrival of President Sands, Provost Rikakis, Drs. Theresa Mayer and Menah Pratt-Clarke, and other new members of the VT family.

As I step in to lead the Faculty Senate this year, I had to pause and reflect on what we (the Senate) have achieved so far and where we need to be going. This is my fifth year of service on the Senate, and I have seen significant changes during my tenure there. We now meet twice a month, and our cabinet meets in between the senate meetings. We have been busy, and we don't expect to slow down any time soon.

In preparation for this address, I skimmed through past Faculty Senate reports. I was a bit bewildered to see that several issues kept manifesting themselves throughout the years: faculty salaries, a desire for a faculty club, challenges related to increased enrollment, the roles and impact of research institutes, increasing demands on faculty time, and budget-related issues. Some of these issues have become so familiar to us they may not leave us any time soon, and yet we have to find a way to overcome these challenges and more.

However, I must report with pride that the Senate is as of now in a very good position to face these challenges. We have shown this past year how engagement with the Faculty Senate can have a positive impact on university governance—changes in shared governance procedures; introduction of the Collegiate Professor series; and involvement with several commissions so as to devise a plan to address faculty needs, especially with regards to research challenges. This year, the Faculty Senate will have a three-pronged plan, and we will carry out our meetings accordingly: we will act in a proactive role, a responsive role, and contribute to policy-making.

The Faculty Senate will be on the qui vive on all issues related to faculty. We will be engaged and ready to participate and respond to ongoing issues and movements on campus, such as faculty involvement in the Destination Areas and Beyond Boundaries initiatives, changes in promotion and tenure procedures, budget and assessment metrics. We will also continue the dialogue initiated last year with the Vice Presidents and the Provost. On this note, I would like to thank Provost Rikakis and several VPs for engaging the Faculty Senate in research, budget, and diversity-related issues right at the onset of the new academic year. Provost Rikakis asked me if we will be able to rise to the challenge of devising and providing solutions as we move forward. Provost Rikakis: Yes...We...Can.

With the new role of the Faculty Senate in governance, we plan to interact with different commissions and committees to provide guidance on faculty-related issues. Along this line, we aim to establish an Ombuds office that will serve faculty and staff beginning Fall 2017, with a plan to integrate the Graduate



Students Ombuds at a later time. Our plan includes passing a resolution through governance and present it to the BOV this year.

We will come up with creative ways to improve climate as well as professional development opportunities for VT faculty; in this regard, we will focus on tenure and promotion issues, research, scholarship, and teaching innovations. We will work with the provost office to define targets and timelines to implement the needed changes. We will need methods and resources to increase our efficacy in balancing faculty time in the face of fast-increasing demands.

I will share a secret with you: the Faculty Senate is an intelligent organism, a living network of 70+ senators that excels at finding solutions for issues that come our way. Granted, we didn't come from the future, but *we will* invent the future.

On behalf of the Faculty Senate, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts with the BOV today. I look forward to sharing our ongoing progress and new endeavors with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Monty Abbas,