

August 2023 BOV Meeting

President's Open Session Remarks

Let me start by welcoming our new BOV members, Nancy Dye, John Rocovich, Bill Holtzman, Don Horsley, and our new constituent representatives, William Storey, Emily Tirrell, Joseph Merola, LaTawnya Burleson and Janice Austin. I'd also like to welcome Saonee Sarker, our new dean of the Pamplin College of Business, and Lu Liu, our new dean of the College of Architecture, Arts and Design. And thanks to David Raymond for stepping up into the role of Interim VP of Information Technology and CIO.

The new academic year is off to a roaring start. The campus has never looked better. We have an incoming class of over 7,000 – very close to target, plus about 1,000 transfer students. This incoming class has the highest mean high school GPA – 4.08 - in our history. Seventy-one countries are represented – also a high – from among about 400 entering international students. We will have final numbers after census in September.

Extramural research expenditures for FY23 are preliminary, but we are seeing nearly a 13% increase over last year and a 28% increase over the past two years. This metric, more than any other, is a strong indicator of our future ranking among global research institutions. We have an opportunity to build on our land-grant role of bringing talent and partners from all over the nation and the world to the Commonwealth. You all know about our contributions in bringing Amazon HQ2 to Virginia. At any given time, we are engaged in several similar efforts – perhaps not at that scale - but important to the future of Virginia, nonetheless. What makes us attractive to talent and partners? Fundamentally, it is the quality and impact of our research and innovation mission. Being among the top academic institutions worldwide in an emerging or established discipline brings the best talent our way, which in turn, attracts leading employers. Those employers also benefit from world-leading expertise at Virginia Tech.

A differentiating enabler for our mission is philanthropy. Despite global financial headwinds for the first half of the year, FY23 was our second strongest year in philanthropic giving, with \$225M in new gifts and commitments and \$200M in philanthropic cash. Both figures have exceeded our goals. Our three-year average

of \$231M in new gifts and commitments is an indicator that we have achieved a sustainable level of giving that is almost three times the level of a decade ago. Most importantly for our future, we reached a 22% undergraduate alumni giving level for the second year in a row. This year, Virginia Tech was recognized by CASE, the Council on Advancement and Support of Education, as a CASE 50 Institution, the top tier in university advancement. Congratulations to SVP Phlegar and his incredible team!

This fall, we are celebrating the opening of our Data and Decision Sciences Building. This project, funded by the Commonwealth as part of the Tech Talent Investment Program, brings together three colleges - Pamplin, Science and Engineering - to address the common opportunities and challenges presented by a world that is increasingly dependent on transforming data into actionable information. We have also opened a new residence hall on the Upper Quad for the Corps of Cadets, and the Corps Leadership and Military Sciences building. Many more projects will be completed within the next year or so, including the Town of Blacksburg's Multi-Modal Transit Facility, Hitt Hall and a dining center, the long-awaited Undergraduate Science Laboratory Building, the renovated War Memorial Gym, and the first academic building of our Innovation Campus in Alexandria. After growing by about 5,000 undergraduates between 2015 and 2019, we are now finally catching up on infrastructure to support those students.

Clearly, Virginia Tech has emerged from the pandemic stronger than ever. If we look at the metrics for student demand, research growth and impact, and financial stability, it would be hard to find another public university in the country whose trajectory is powered by so much momentum. That said, the overall environment for higher education has never, at least in recent history, faced so many seemingly existential threats. The public's loss of confidence in our institutions, the shrinking pool of college-ready students in the Northeast and Midwest, the destructive culture wars, assaults on free speech and academic freedom, and the affordability crisis are all around us. Although Virginia Tech may be sitting pretty at this moment, we would be foolish to ignore the larger trends. We are fortified and resilient, but we will be impacted.

Where are we most vulnerable? I think it is in the arena of affordability and support for underrepresented and underserved students. We've got to get this right – it is a land-grant imperative. I am pleased with where we are with our

ambitious Virginia Tech Advantage initiative. We have committed to increase student financial support by just over \$50M/year in current dollars. This will bring unmet financial need for Virginia resident students – about 5,500 of them – down to a level that could be addressed by working half-time at the prevailing minimum wage. The resources will come from philanthropy, additional state and federal aid, employer partnerships, and internal budget reallocations. We are just getting started but have already identified about \$9M in new recurring resources for the current fiscal year.

We are heartened at the news coming out of Richmond last week that the FY24 budget will likely be revised with additional funding for tuition moderation and financial aid. The General Assembly still must approve, and the Governor must sign, but the budget conferees appear to have struck a compromise. Financial aid is important, but we are also ramping up our academic support for these students, so that they can benefit from the full Virginia Tech experience while reducing time-to-degree.

With respect to the Supreme Court decision banning the explicit use of race in making admission decisions, we have complied by removing race and ethnicity as a factor in holistic admissions. Those evaluating applications will not be able to see self-reported race or ethnicity. Although this change is significant, our success in recruiting underrepresented minority and underserved students over the last several years has been driven by reaching out to school districts that had not been sending students our way, creating pathways for those students, lowering barriers in the application process, and our visible commitment to InclusiveVT. None of that will change as a result of the Supreme Court Decision, and our commitment to the Virginia Tech Advantage will make Virginia Tech more affordable for low-and middle-income students from Virginia.

As part of our annual review of the past admissions cycle, we decided to eliminate legacy status as a formal factor in admissions. Legacy status had not been used for several years, and those students compete very well within the application pool. This was an opportune time to make that change in time for the Fall 2024 cycle, which began on August 1st. We also took the opportunity to remove the Early Decision option. That option commits the applicant to accepting an offer of admission before they receive information about financial aid. We expect that those who would have applied to Early Decision will apply to Early Action instead.

As we do every year, we will review and discuss admissions and enrollment management with the Board at the November meeting.

I hope everyone is ready for some football! After a summer full of realignment and NIL chaos, it's thankfully time to get back to sharing the Lane Stadium experience with 66,000 of our closest friends. Go Hokies!

I'd be happy to take any questions you might have.