

Comments Made at the March 2, 2023, Public Comment Session

Caroline Lohr

Good afternoon Board Members,

My name is Caroline Lohr and I am the Undergraduate student senate president. Today I am speaking with you on behalf of the largest stakeholder in this issue, all 30,000 undergraduate students.

The concerns expressed to myself and the USS from students mainly stem from this campus and town not being affordable. We are in a crisis of affordable housing and the prospect of raising tuition puts even more pressure on undergraduate students who are already pushing themselves to their limit to try to afford education at Virginia Tech,

I have spoken with many pell-grant recipients as well as students who have financial aid and scholarships. They have shared stories of taking a full class load, while also having to work two jobs. Most of the time, the jobs they're working are part and full time. The overworking of students outside of the classroom in order to make ends meet has a damaging effect on their mental health and academics.

Undergraduate students are breaking themselves down to maintain the status of a successful full-time student at Virginia Tech. And while the Dean of Students offers financial aid through the student emergency fund, it is not enough to compensate for the amount of students on our campus in need.

I appreciate and acknowledge the accessibility and affordability initiative group that President Sand's has created. However, its student members, student advocates and the student body will not be able to see the full benefits of affordability, if the decision is to raise tuition extensively.

I am aware that because of the governor's freeze on in-state tuition increases last year, this year provides you all the opportunity to increase tuition to the point at which it would be if last year's freeze was not enacted. I need to express to you all how devastating to our students that would be. While you all are discussing this increase, I am asking that instead of prioritizing paychecks, sponsors and new facilities; you prioritize empathy.

You and I both will never understand what these students are going through. I am fortunate enough to converse with these students and have a little more insight, which I am bringing forth today. You are fortunate enough to make a decision that will have a longer lasting impact than an expanded facility or sponsorship. The impact of affordable education.

I believe that we all are focused on the same goal and want what is best for Virginia Tech students. One of the most impactful parts of this university is the culture surrounding the Hokie experience. It is my job to advocate that every single Hokie has an opportunity to feel this sense of belonging and to confidently call Virginia Tech home. It is devastating to hear testimonies of students who want to participate in this culture but cannot due to expanded expenses.

The best thing that you all could do and what I am advocating for, is no increase of tuition or fees. However, if that is an inevitability, please do not compound the increase for last year and this year or look to see if we could use the potential increase in resources for the student emergency fund.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I appreciate it and the work you all do.

Ben Beiter

Good afternoon. First I want to say thank you to the BOV for considering comments from the student body. As the students are who this University is here to serve, it is important to hear their voices before a decision is made that will affect the lives of tens of thousands of students.

As the president of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate, I try to work towards addressing issues that affect all graduate students. I can say, without question, that the highest priority issue that the graduate student body has been raising for the past several years is that of a living wage for graduate students. Or rather, being compensated for the work that they do at this University at a rate that covers the local cost of living. Tuition and fees are inherently wrapped up in this issue, as they are some of the largest costs that students face. Under the current cost of living in Blacksburg, including tuition and fees, students have expressed stories of struggling to afford food, housing, medication, and other necessities to live a safe and ideally happy life as a student. I know we can agree that this should be a goal of what our community offers to our student members.

The most common single issue we hear from students is about the mandatory fees that students pay. As a multi-thousand dollar cost, these fees are a heavy burden on students. There are constant and consistent complaints raised by graduate students of having to pay so much for services that they often do not use, and in the case of many students at remote campuses, do not have access to. Instead of raising fees, what graduate students want is an evaluation of the fees that are already charged. We want to understand what fees offer to students, how they are broken down, and where fee surpluses, for instance in athletics, can be reallocated to more pressing auxiliaries, such as Schiffert and Cook Counseling, amongst others. Raising the fees without looking at ways the current fees could be better utilized, transparently, fails to hear the voices of our graduate students.

Regardless of what the fees fund, raising tuition and fees for students represents an increase in the cost of just remaining a student at this University from year to year. We have recently concluded an almost year-long taskforce that has provided a report on the Cost of Living for graduate students at VT. The findings of that report clearly state that, at current compensation levels many graduate students cannot afford to live here at the University. Students are forced into situations that continuously burn-out, overwork, and drive them away from their academics, service, and research. The report makes recommendations for immediate actions that should be taken to raise support for our graduate students, and will undeniably improve the total graduate student experience. However the raising of tuition and fees goes directly against these goals, increasing costs for students who are struggling to afford what we already pay. Even for students on assistantships who do not have to pay tuition directly, increasing it drains resources from departments and advisors who are trying to manage and provide resources to support students. I strongly urge the BOV to consider these realities, and what other options are available when discussing increasing these costs to students.

Rachel Maizel

Thank you for this opportunity to speak, I'll be brief.

Increasing mandatory fees for graduate students by up to 8.8% will worsen an already dire situation. I currently pay ~\$360 monthly in fees and am draining my savings to survive. This is not a unique situation and is worse for international students (f1 visa restrictions) and those with dependents. Yesterday I spent the bulk of the day contemplating how long one can subsist on protein shakes and cereal. Increasing the fees will only further hurt your most vulnerable

population who are trying to abide by Virginia Tech's motto Ut Proism. We cannot serve anyone before taking care of our basic needs.

Increasing the fees if you do not plan to cover them in full will make this impossible. When going to the SNAPs program there is no spot to put Virginia Tech Comprehensive fees or student loans. All they see is the number we are making. You are going to make going to graduate school an impossibility for many people and lose out on unique and diverse thoughts which make Virginia Tech such a great research institution.

For undergraduates increasing fees will have a similar effect of decreasing diversity. Many undergraduates are forced to work jobs to afford to pay for housing and fees. There's an idea that undergraduates' only job is to do well in school however this is fundamentally false, especially for those who are not financially supported by their families. Even if you suggest they work longer hours to pay for this increase you will be unfairly punishing them by forcing them to take more time away from their studies just to survive. Thus creating further inequities in the higher education system. By increasing the fees you are just increasing the barrier for those already struggling financially.

If you want Virginia Tech to be a diverse and competitive institution do not increase the tuition and fees. The burden to shoulder these costs should not be on the most vulnerable populations.

Trevor Jeyaraj

I am Trevor Jeyaraj, a PhD Scholar at Alliance for Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Thought and an International graduate student.

During our conversation last evening, my fellow international scholar room-mate from Bangladesh mentioned that if only he had a little more research stipend, he could concentrate more or better on his lab work rather than worrying about the basics of food, late night bus travel and so on, basically he was touching on the day-to-day issues international students go through as graduate students here at Virginia Tech.

I want to touch on the non-availability of summer scholarship or research stipend as a major issue for international graduate students. The lack of research stipend (no stipend at all, to be specific) during summer months and the limited on-campus work opportunities means that we are forced to rely on loans on top of the loans we have already borrowed. This situation is ironic, as borrowing from fellow students going through similar issues is embarrassing. I keep hearing similar stories from international students, I've given up, for instance, the PhD program I was already enrolled in, back in India.

Furthermore, I have constantly worried even thinking about unpaid volunteering opportunities as it might somehow violate F1 norms and have given up countless summer opportunities for such reasons. Especially for someone who is passionate about volunteering and non-profit related causes and coming from a family of social workers, this is deeply disappointing and a saddening reality for too many international graduate students like me.

Such a situation comes as a surprise as around/almost 11% of Tech's student body and 40 percent of all graduate students here at Virginia Tech are international students, and I appeal to the Board to be empathetic in this regard to consider raising our monthly stipends and offering every graduate student a 12 month scholarship.

Thank you.

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
miller buchanan	<p>I am a class of 67(graduated 1968) alumnus. In my family there are almost 20 Tech graduates. My perception is college expenses inexplicably have risen at a rate second only to health care costs during my lifetime. You are supposed to be the ones imparting knowledge to the rest of us but seem clueless when it comes to controlling costs.</p> <p>I believe by law secondary schools have to be in session 180 days per year. The school year for colleges (VT) seems to start later, have a month more days of vacation and end earlier by 4 or 5 weeks than when I attended. I assume kids today are just a lot smarter than we were.</p>	Alumnus
Morgan Welker	<p>Tuition and fees should be reduced. It is obscene how much it costs to go to college versus what it did 20 years ago when I was a student. The rich kids can pay for it. The poor kids will get financial aid. The rest in the middle can forget it or be in debt forever. How come I can't recognize the campus? Why are there constantly new buildings constructed? And buildings with nothing wrong with them replaced? Stop wasting money on fluff and cut the costs so everyone has a realistic opportunity. I was lucky, when I went to Tech, my parents could afford it and I didn't have to take on any debt. If I was going there today, there's no way they would have been able to afford it and I would not have gone. At a bare minimum, do not increase anything.</p>	Alumnus
	<p>you know what? when reading about graduate students in california having to donate plasma to live, i immediately looked up the closest plasma donation center and the compensation.</p> <p>i'll think about all of these when i'm asked to donate as an alum. virginia tech is a bottom feeding carnivore preying on cheap grad student labor.</p>	None
Raj Sahu	<p>A tuition fees increase should also be accompanied by the wage for university employees such as Assistants, graders and other on-campus jobs. But it would still harm majority of undergrad students who are not allowed to take assistantships.</p>	Student
Sophie Rust	<p>A tuition increase would be a huge burden on students and their families who are already struggling to pay for basic things due to the current state of the economy. Please don't do this!</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
	<p>As a graduate student at Virginia Tech, I find the discussion of increased fees and tuition entirely unacceptable. As graduate students, we provide essential labor to the university and our stipends already do not reflect the reality, which is that the university simply would not run without us. Student fees are a HUGE burden on graduate students as it is; we already turning around and paying roughly 10% of our annual income right back to the university in student fees. An increase in fees would cause substantial harm to the graduate students who allow the university to run and is simply unacceptable.</p>	Student
	<p>As a graduate student, I know that increasing the fees will place a more significant financial burden on me at the start of each semester. Being worried about making ends meet for the semester after signing up for the prorated fee plan limits how much effort and time I can give to my job as a research assistant. The quality of my work surely diminishes as well. Even in the past year, my advisor marked my output unsatisfactory in the weeks when the payments occurs since worrying and applying for outside funding occupies valuable research time. I plead with the BOV not to increase tuition and fees so I can continue working on the research that I am passionate about and be able to disseminate the science to the public in the future.</p>	Student
Tommy Lam	<p>As a graduate student, I still do not understand why Virginia Tech doesn't have a significant tuition discount after preliminary exams. I don't see how the current 10% helps students either focus on research more or provide departments/professors offer more assistantships to students in need.</p> <p>This is something that's common at other institutions so I'm just confused on why even though this potential common tuition reduction for graduate students isn't present at VT do we not see many other benefits like a living wage to attract strong students or bring in diverse students.</p> <p>Another concern is if tuition increases for graduate students to try and offset our potential stipend increase. I understand our stipends have to come from somewhere but playing this inflation game seems to only hurt everyone so if there's any ways for the university to work with the town of Blacksburg or Roanoke to help keep other costs down (especially housing), I think this would be very beneficial.</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Brooke	As a student already paying out of state tuition the potential increase for me and other fellow out of state students would really effect our quality of living here at vt. With so many sacrifices to attend already being made the tuition cost change will certainly have me questioning my attendance as I'm sure many potential new out of state students deciding not attend in the upcoming academic year.	Student
	As a student of Virginia Tech, I have become increasingly concerned with the amount of money being pulled out from students. Many students, including myself, are struggling to be able to live in blacksburg. I am currently an out of state student, which raises my tuition even more than most students. I am only able to obtain this education through students loans. The tuition was increased my freshman year and to hear it being possibly increased again is frustrating. I hope the Board actually listens to the students that are breaking their backs to be a Hokie.	Student
Brian	Graduate students are your lowest-paid "employees" and cannot afford to pay higher tuition and fee rates, especially for services we don't even use! For example, please stop making us pay for your athletics fees when the majority of us don't even use these services! Leave us out of it! We're struggling in an institution where we were promised we would thrive both academically and financially.	Student
Morgan	I am a graduate student at VT. With Blacksburg's surge of new luxury apartments, rents all over have sky rocketed. I cannot afford to live here on my current stipend. I have \$45,000 in loans from my undergraduate degree at Virginia Tech. I am working two jobs and I'm so tired. Tuition fees should be waived not increased. Stipends need to be increased as well. Students are thinking about leaving their programs and others are considering not joining. We are in a crisis.	Student
Jasmine	I am against the increase of tuition. As a student, I want to continue to study here at Virginia Tech but I am already pushing the limits of how much I can afford to pay off my student loans in the future. Federal aid can only help so much and scholarships are available but never cover the complete cost of tuition. Tuition is already high, even for instate students, and I believe it should be a priority to maintain college education accessible to everyone, but with these increases, the opportunity of more students interested in being able to call VT home is taken away from them.	Student
Keylin Benavides - Reyes	I do not think tuition should be increased.	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
	<p>I'm against increasing tuition and fee. As an international graduate student, the monthly stipend can't afford my living expense in Blacksburg. My current monthly stipend is \$2490 pre-tax without covering 12% of health insurance and comprehensive fee. After paying the health insurance and comprehensive fee, I can only get around \$1500 per month. The rent is about \$750 in Blacksburg for an acceptable apartment and the rent is increasing each year. Also, the price for food and other life services is also increasing these years. I have no extra money for my car, clothes, and any other activities to make myself happy. If the tuition and fee increase without the stipend increasing in the same rate, I will not be able to support my life. I will have no energy to focus on my research as well.</p> <p>I know it's a hard time post-covid. But it's much harder for me to afford my basic living expenses. I discourage increasing the tuition and fee.</p>	Student
	<p>Paying for college is difficult enough for students. I understand employees of the university must fight inflation costs but so must the rest of us. Working countless hours as a student or post grad to make up for the 8% increase is not a feasible option for many. College is already not a feasible option for many and it just gets worse with higher costs. Lets keep tuition where it is in order to continue to make college accessible and make the money aspect as low stress as it can br.</p>	Student
Md Hasibul Hasan Rahat	Please cover fees for all grad students.	Student
Aum Patel	Please do not raise the tuition	Student
	Please don't increase tuition. As a student, I am strained as is with my finances.	Student
Dylan	<p>Please, do not raise fees. The fees are already very high, and as a graduate student, we are paid so little as is. I cannot even afford to get glasses in my new prescription, so I can barely see as I go through grad school. Have some compassion and allow us to afford to live, please.</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
	<p>Should fee increases be implemented next academic year, the board should strongly consider waiving fees for graduate students as a part of compensation packages. Many of us cannot afford to pay fees up-front each semester; having fees deducted from each paycheck significantly reduces our already-low income. This is especially unfair to international students, who cannot legally work outside of their graduate studies. Many international are students are not only supporting themselves, but their families as well. It is understandable that the university needs funding, and some of the services provided by comprehensive fees are useful to graduate and undergraduate students alike. However, it must be considered that these fees are a grave financial burden for much of the graduate student population.</p>	Student
Bridget	<p>The cost of tuition and student fees are hard to afford on the current graduate students salary. Until our salary is raise to be livable and count for inflation, the University is doing a disservice by raising it further.</p>	Student
Francis Reyes	<p>The increase in tuition is not an added financial burden students on this campus need. I understand there are reason for the consideration of increasing tuition, but if spoken to the students, an increase is just not feasible. I stand with the rest of the student body and firmly denounce any increase in tuition.</p>	Student
Jennifer Lopez-Perez	<p>The nation as a whole is in the middle of a crisis due to the amount of student debts that there are because of the amount that tuition costs across the board. Instead of VT being part of the solution, it is instead becoming more of the problem. A good percentage of the VT population is out of state and their tuitions are as high as it is and possibly raising it will not help. Many of us, like myself, are minorities where our parents struggle everyday to work to get money and the government and FAFSA does not give us any financial aid based on income just because they earn too much, not considering the living situations that some might be in and potential factors where there moneys goes to especially if there are other kids in the family. COVID affected all of us, people lost their education, their jobs, their homes and some even lost their family members. The pandemic created an influx in the prices of water and food, basic necessities because the economy was in shambles and people were out of work because of it. We are still in the aftershocks of COVID and some are still recovering from heavy losses that they experienced. A raise in tuition becomes more of a burden to students and to families, we are all struggling for the same thing and VT is not going to make it easier because of this increase.</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
	<p>The proposed increase to fees would substantially impact my ability to engage with my graduate program. As it currently is, I lose over a month's worth of income to fees every year, money that keeps me from filling medications that I need and doing other things that benefit my life as a graduate student. My partner has already had to leave his graduate program due to the financial burden of fees and I may have to leave as well if there is an increase. I understand that the university needs money to provide services, but there has to be a better way to raise this money. Putting more financial hardship on students is not the answer.</p>	Student
	<p>There's honestly not much to say. 8.8% is an inane and atrocious idea. I'm not sure exactly what the goal of that is, but all it's gonna do is make this school even harder for poor people to go to, which is almost all of us! we're college kids</p>	Student
Muzakkir Chowdhury	<p>Tuition fees going higher and higher every academic year is unreasonable when the quality of education we are receiving is pretty much the same, if not worse.</p>	Student
	<p>Tuition for VT is already very high for public college, does not offer a lot of assistance for help either. Raising tuition would only result in more students not being able to pay ultimately having to drop out or just not come at all. If drop our rates rise, less people will want to come overall.</p>	Student
James Poland	<p>Tuition is already astronomically high. Most kids can't even imagine going to college if it wasn't for scholarships that are already rare and lack equity for all students . This move directly shows more care for padding a salary than students on campus. You mention keeping tuition increases below the average inflation rate but fail to mention how the increases in tuition has far surpassed average inflation. I want to pursue grad school to earn a doctorate. I want to stay with Virginia tech because I'm a 3rd gen student and love the atmosphere of vt. Grad students are paid low as it and this will only hurt them more. If this money was to go towards the betterment of the students this would be no issue but vt seems more like a company than a sanctuary for education.</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Maya	Tuitions and fees should not be raised at all. With record levels of inflation and a low minimum wage, many students can't afford an increase. The state should be subsidizing tuition and Virginia Tech should be increasing financial aid. The reason why students can't afford college like the previous generation is because the state actually decreased how much they pay public institutions. A lot of people I know are not going to Virginia Tech because tuition is too expensive and the school offers little assistance. In addition, 1/3rd of Virginia Tech students are food insecure. I don't understand how you can fathom increasing tuition when the 33% of the students that attend this institution currently can't afford to consistently eat. No one should have to choose between their physical health and their education. Please do not raise tuition. I want people to experience the Virginia Tech I know and love. They can't do that when tuition is more expensive. In addition, you are going to be hurting the minorities especially at this school by raising tuition. You can't have a mission to increase diversity and then adopt a tuition increase that would disadvantage minority students.	Student
Chen Qian	We can not afford the increase in the fees!	Student
Caroline Begley Begley	What non monetary options have you considered outside of raises for graduate students? Have you considered a stipend, on campus housing, or food plans?	Student
Onnr Grogan	There are multiple different signs posted from various graduate students hanging in HABB1 at the Blacksburg campus about the financial disparities and struggles that we must face.	Student
Carlos Hinojosa	Out-of-state tuition is already over 2 times the amount of. In-state tuition. Increasing the tuition would put an undue burden on individuals of all backgrounds, but especially first-generation and out-of-state students.	Student
Angelique	I am a senior at virginia tech and this tuition and fee increase is the last straw. my experience at this university has been consistently awful. staff are untrained and rude, teachers are clueless as to what's going on, the amount of staff bloat is ridiculous, and cook counseling is STILL off campus. nobody at this "school" cares about its students, Virginia tech is a corporation who only cares about how much money you can squeeze out of your students.	Student
Kexin Xie	If you would like to increase the fees an tuitions, please increase the corresponding wages for graduate students, otherwise the graduate students can not cover their basic living expenses. Please be considered and pay your careful attention to graduate students' study and life.	None
Little deen	Lower the f***** tuition	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Skye Weichbrodt	Just raise it more, come on, don't be shy!	None
Jackie Mitchell	Doing this will hurt so many students	Student
Bianca Campoverde	Raising tuition goes crazy, especially in this day in age.	Student
Laura	As a first-generation student from a single mother household, it has already been a struggle being able to afford to go to VT. I have worked a job since freshmen year which was at a dining hall, this year I am a Residential Well-Being Student Leader which helps with the costs. I am already working constantly to afford this and with prices being raised would mean I would have to work more to be able to pay it off. It is not fair, we already pay enough.	Student
Nakea	I feel as though Virginia Tech should not increase tuition because it is already bad enough that we have to pay out hundreds of dollars for textbooks and computers. Some people can't even come back to tech because they can't afford it right now so the best idea is to not increase it.	Student
Connor Gocke	Many of my peers would be greatly affected negatively if tuition is increased.	Student
Sofia Palma	As students, paying the current tuition is already hard enough. If changes and developments want to be made, it is up to the university to find the funding and it is unfair for students to have to face the consequences of increased tuition for reasons that are not up to them.	Student
Olivia Batten	Being at Virginia Tech has been a dream of mine. I love this place. I love the people. I love the school. However, I lose my dream and I lose the connection to this place I love with an increase in tuition. I just cannot afford it.	Student
Jeb Brown	If tuition is increased by as much as proposed, I may not be able to afford tuition and will have to drop out.	Student
Olivia Ramsey	Please do not raise tuition, it is not fair to the lower middle class tax bracket where you categorize them to be able to afford tuition even though it is not possible. It is also not fair to claim that only instate people will receive a scholarship to offset the cost. Out of state students already pay way more than instate does. It should be waived for out of state students because they chose tech, chose to travel many hour and leave their families to be here, and spend extra on travel expenses on top of extra thousands of tuition. It is not fair that students will have to take more out for students loans which will cause more student debt. That does not seem like equality to me and it is not very Ut Prosim to treat people differently based off of their home or income.	Student
Abdullah Khurram	Please lower the tuition and pay the grad students a fair wage	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Branden Aguilar	Paying out of state tuition is lucrative in itself with paying almost double the amount as someone who is coming from an in state high school. And to have people back home working so hard to give me an education just for them to be faced with an increase in price for no reason is actually disrespectful. This feels like a punishment when in reality we have done nothing wrong.	Student
Jennifer Alexandra Thompson	I'm a graduate student and I would so hugely benefit from comprehensive fees being covered. I have to take our bank loans to pay for them and my bills every year, but having those covered would better help me pay bills.	Student
Alison Moura	Stop being greedy. These tuition raises are excessive. Milking students for all they are worth and coercing them into decades of debt is just plain wrong and y'all know it.	Student
Andrew Cummins	Hello, An increase in tuition is not only unnecessary but unacceptable. That is just about an additional \$3,000 dollars per student . This increase along with the increased fees would push a considerable amount of students away from the institution. To prevent this, the institution would have to give out more scholarships and students would have to get more financial aid. For the students who don't get scholarships or financial aid, which would put them into considerable student loan debt. These are just some reasons that this increase in tuition is not the right decision.	Student
Andrew Gunsch	I don't doubt that you understand the financial trajectory of the university better than I do, and I know that you aim to consider all ramifications before making a decision regarding the proposed tuition and fee increases. To that end, you need to make use of all of the information available to you. I only ask that you do so. To be more specific, I ask that you consider again the statements made on the March 2nd meeting and those submitted in writing. Consider the circumstances in which many students find themselves. Then consider that these are only representative of those who can take the time to practice and deliver a spoken live statement or draft a written statement for the public record. Ask yourselves: What goes unspoken? Who is silent? What do we want higher education to be? And will the proposed tuition and fee increases take the university in that direction?	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Anna Klewicki	I will never be able to fully convey how important Virginia Tech is to me. As an out-of-state student, finding my home away from home at this amazing institution was such a privilege. It is very sad to think that if I was faced with the tuition and fee increases being currently proposed, Tech would have been out of reach for me. I would have never had the opportunity to complete 250+ hours of service with my service sorority, present at multiple research conferences about a topic I love, receive a \$2,000 grant, be voted Student of the Year of my department, and understand what it's like to be a part of perhaps the greatest college community in the world. There are not many schools as special as Tech in the United States. I can assure you I would have never been as happy as I am now if I had not had the opportunity to come to Virginia Tech. Please consider how the trajectory of someone's entire life could be changed with the decision to increase tuition.	Student
Ashlyn O'Neill	I'm an out of state student paying for tuition MYSELF! I'm a first Gen both my parents don't have degrees but I came to VT for engineering because we're the best there is. But is the best really that great if I can't even afford my groceries compared to the cost of going to school here. Tuition should not be raised FOR ANYBODY. It's ridiculous it's even being considered in light of things that have happened the past 3 years. Not to mention since I'm out of state I get little to no financial aid instead having to use merit scholarships and apply for everything possible. I need to transfer if you increase tuition at all. The fact you're considering up to 9 percent makes me want to curl up in a ball defeated. Have I worked this far to simply be outed from my education by an over privileged board of visitors that isn't in touch with the students?	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Mahatub Khan Badhon	<p>I'm deeply concerned about the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors' proposal to raise tuition and comprehensive fees. Concerns and issues about rising living costs in Blacksburg have been shared on multiple occasions by many graduate students, including myself. This proposal, if approved, will become a financial burden for graduate students and impact their productivity negatively at VT. It could also create additional stress on international students, who may already be facing challenges related to adapting to a new country and culture. These students often have limited financial resources and rely heavily on scholarships and other forms of financial assistance (TAs/RAs) to pursue their academic goals.</p> <p>The proposed increase in fees could result in some students being forced to work longer hours to cover their expenses, which could affect their ability to focus on their studies and perform well academically. This, in turn, could have long-term implications for their future careers and prospects. In light of these concerns, it is essential that the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors carefully consider the impact of this proposal on all students, particularly those who may be more vulnerable to financial challenges. It is essential that the university provides a supportive and inclusive environment that enables all students to thrive and achieve their full potential, regardless of their financial circumstances.</p>	Student
Muhammad Usman Baig	<p>Members of the Board,</p> <p>I am a first year international grad student at the department of Physics at VT and I strongly oppose any proposed increase in tuition and other fees. As somebody who has no savings right now for any emergency and is barely making ends meet, further increase in cost of living and fees would be catastrophic for me. Instead, please look into other means to reduce costs and provide for the needs of the university. Furthermore, I strongly urge that the Board approve the suggestions of the Graduate Student Assistantship Support Task Force report, and cover fees for all graduate students on assistantships by next fall so we can do what we're here to do i.e study and research without constantly worrying about feeding ourselves.</p>	Student
Becca Halm	<p>Although I understand why tuition and fee increases must happen due to the state of the economy, it would be appreciated by most if not all Hokies if the increase was minimal rather than a significant jump. If rates/tuition increase, I would also hope more resources would be allocated to tuition/fee assistance options so that there is a chance for lower economically standing individuals to be a Hokie.</p>	Alumnus

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Brad Catron	Being an Alumnus, and parent of an Alumnus, we were able to obtain our educations without the onus of student loans or debt. I also see what is an ever changing physical environment in Blacksburg and on campus. The constant construction and erecting of new buildings. Why keep building when our efforts should be more on affordable education? It seems to me that helping fund needy students' educations would help diversify our educational system more so than "popping" up a million dollar drone cage. We have a duty to help people (Ut Prosim), not hamstringing them with debt in hopes of a brighter future. This is frustrating to see, and I sincerely hope we can funnel money to helping those who need it, rather than a business "grow or go" strategy.	Alumnus
Megan Bronson	I am a grad student and Virginia Tech, and I live in Christiansburg because I cannot afford to live in Blacksburg due to rent prices. This year my rent went up by \$75 dollars. That's a \$900 annual increase. While I do not have the ability to submit a public comment to my landlord, I do have the ability to submit one now to the BOV as my employers seeks to raise the fees I put on a credit card every semester and work off incrementally, never really catching up. The bottom line is that I cannot afford every area of my life to keep rising in cost and be expected to be able to commit the same amount of time and attention to my studies as required, because I have to pick up freelance projects to make ends meet. Raising fees and tuition becomes a barrier to my success as a scholar, in addition to contributing to my inability to pay rent, buy food, and pay for medical copays. It just doesn't seem very ut prosim to work against the grad students who do so much labor for the university.	Student
Brooke Gannon	I'm a student who pays their own tuition and an increase in tuition, especially this much, will add much more financial stress. Please think of the students who have to pay their own tuition.	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Cameron Warren	<p>Dear members of the board,</p> <p>I am a staff member in the Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise and I strongly oppose the proposed tuition and fee increases. Virginia Tech's funding needs can surely be met in a different way that doesn't affect the livelihoods of our most vulnerable populations: the undergraduate and graduate student population</p> <p>To speak more specifically about our graduate student population, I do think it's a great dishonor and shame that our graduate students share these horrific stories of not being able to afford rent, groceries, medical trips, etc while they bring in millions of dollars to the university in research grants. The big grants always make it in the VTX and get spread through local and national news while our graduate students suffer. It's disgraceful and I think Virginia Tech can do better than that, and in fact, be a leader in providing a LIVING WAGE to our graduate students. Additionally, I urge the BOV to follow the recommendations outlined in the Graduate Student Assistantship Support Task Force Report and cover the fees for all graduate students on assistantships by the next Fall semester.</p> <p>Also, while we're talking about living wages, I support the need to raise wages for ALL Virginia Tech employees. When graduate students started fighting for their right to a living wage, can you believe the nerve of some faculty members to utter the words "well if we pay our graduate students more, we'll have to pay our staff more", as if that was an actual argument. This is hardly an argument. If anything, it's a statement that recognizes that the university takes advantage of graduate students AND staff members and this does not sit well with me. I've sat in meetings where department heads have pleaded with faculty to treat staff members better because "faculty are replaceable and staff are not". If that were the case, why isn't my pay reflected to match my value? And why is my pay then used as a line of reasoning to keep graduate students under Virginia Tech's boot?</p> <p>In conclusion, don't add fuel to the flames of the student debt crisis, come up with another way to support Virginia Tech's funding needs, cover graduate student fees, and provide</p>	Faculty/Staff
Camila Gamarra Zuniga	<p>There are so many students here that work hard to make the money needed to go to school here. Adding more money would be a disservice and would not reflect the care I know Virginia Tech as for its students. It could result in someone not being able to go to school and make a better life for their family</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Camille Basilio	Do NOT raise tuition please. Finances are struggling more most families and they cannot afford a raise in tuition this coming academic year. A moratorium on tuition raises can be afforded by this institution to be put into place.	Student
Carly Marshall	People already pay enough to go to this school. Do not raise tuition.	Student
Caroline Begley	<p>We have discussed in the past that the budget is one of the main setbacks to increasing the living wage. One alternative would be providing free on-campus housing for graduate students. This would be internal finance that could be resolved easier than increasing the budget. In this, graduate student could afford to live without having to increase their stipend.</p> <p>*What are your thoughts on this alternative?</p>	Student
Christian Ramos	As a student with an EFC of \$0, I receive maximum consideration for financial aid. But that is still not enough to pay for textbooks, supplies, housing cost, groceries, gas, and many other bills that I need to survive and function as a student and human being. I work every academic break the university provides (summer, winter, and spring) 40 hours a week to save up and have money for those expenses. A 8.8% in tuition would severely hurt my ability to pay for those expenses and take months of finances away from me. I will not be able to be a student at Virginia Tech with such a devastating increase in cost. Please reconsider that action.	Student
Connor L Brown	<p>It is frustrating as graduate students that we need to turn over ~5-10% of our salary from tuition remissions back to the school for fees.</p> <p>The system seems to be disproportionately designed to boost the ability of the athletics program to sell tickets to football games.</p>	Student
Dante Fuoco	VT student fees greatly - and negatively - impact my ability to stay afloat financially. They are fees I essentially never access, as I am not an undergrad and do not take advantage of according facilities. I say this especially as someone who endures three months in the summer without pay.	Student
David Giovanni Delacruz	In accordance to the consideration of increasing tuition, I am writing to suggest against this. In leu of economic challenges and recession this is a very difficult time for many. Please suggest against the vote.	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Define	I think it is absurd to be increasing tuition by so much. I understand adjusting for inflation, but this is too inflated. If this increase happens, I truly hope a majority of it is used for the benefit of students in the form of scholarships, lower parking costs, decreased class fees, etc. But I doubt that will happen. It is very saddening that VT has essentially become a money hungry corporation when those in power could skip a promotion for a year and come up for these costs.	Student
Diego Andr�s Vega-Nazario	A tuition increase will place an even greater burden on middle to low class income families. Both my parents work two jobs in order to afford my college tuition and expenses. They also live paycheck to paycheck since they are supporting me. I applied to as many scholarships I was eligible to apply to, and after earning a few one-time small ones, affording college tuition is still a hassle. Raising tuition would place an unnecessary burden on many middle class Hokie families that support their children's future career through a college education.	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Dasha M	<p>As the DEI graduate student representative in my department, I hear the stories of my fellow peers that talk about how the comprehensive fees add an extra burden on top of paying (1,000\$ or more rent), car repairs, healthcare costs, and food. There are students in my department on Food Stamps because of what we are paid. The international students in my department face additional challenges.</p> <p>I personally live in Christiansburg so my rent is cheaper (650 a month) but I have to pay car maintenance costs and gas money. I was lucky enough to receive a small scholarship to cover my comprehensive fees this year and it has made a big difference in my life. Every graduate student should not have to pay this fee. This upcoming May, because I didn't have to pay the comprehensive fee, I have now scheduled my wisdom teeth removal that I have delayed for two years because I couldn't save up enough money. I also babysit on the side for a family in Blacksburg for gas money. I am ashamed to admit this because I know I could be spending that time on my project and school related work. If graduate students did not have to pay the comprehensive fees and received fair compensation, students like myself wouldn't have to work extra jobs.</p> <p>I urge you to not raise tuition and fees and to cover fees for graduate students. I believe this a DEI equity issue. My peers that have entered other institutions such as East Carolina University make the living wage for the areas that they live in, but graduate students here do not. Tuition and fees need to NOT be increased.</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Doug H	<p>Most graduate students don't utilize all of the services included in the comprehensive fees. It feels like we are being compelled to take out loans for things we don't use, or that the BoV is concerned with cash flow back into the university. Money that goes out to pay us must come back in, if students can afford the payment plan, or must be brought in by loans to keep the university balance sheets positive.</p> <p>It's frustrating that people who are aware of our stipend amounts and have been repeatedly alerted to the cost of living challenges 1) refuse to increase our stipends to match the cost of living and 2) resist the urge to simply scale fees with increases to stipends. I'm not sure what other surveys, reports, or documentation are required for a meaningful change in university policy.</p> <p>Graduate students need a raise, without coordinated increases in fees, parking permits, etc. Beyond a cost of living "adjustment," we need a genuine raise in pay without the university tax.</p>	Student
Emma eisenbeiss	commenting on tuition increases. tuition is already unaffordable for most college students. And at that, having a campus that is constantly under construction so we can't enjoy the full facilities, it feels unfair to increase tuition anymore.	Student
Jiayi Lian	<p>Hi,</p> <p>I am a graduate student. The living expense is drastically increasing recently. After the tax and the reduction for comprehensive fee, I receive about 1,700\$ per month. The living expense is about 1,600\$ per month, including 650\$ for the rent, 120\$ for electricity, 60\$ for the internet, 700\$ for food, and 100\$-200\$ for the other cost. These expenses do not involve the transportation fees such as the insurance for my car, property tax and gas. In such situation, I sometimes choose to eat less or cheaper to afford the extra expenses. It makes me quite disappointed. The proposed Tuition and Fee increases will destroy my financial condition. Please do not raise them and help us graduate students to maintain a descent life.</p> <p>Best, Jiayi</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Meghan Dillon	<p>As an out of state student I know firsthand how detrimental increased tuition can be for someone's future. As of now I will be paying off my loans till i am probably in my 40s. It should not be realistic that someone who is wishing to pursue an education should be paying even more than I am at this point. The education at virginia tech should be accessible for people to experience.</p>	Student
Emily M Burns	<p>the board has prioritized the affordability of a virginia tech degree while making targeted investments that enhance the value of a Virginia Tech education to both students and the Commonwealth and continue to position the university as a leader in teaching, research, and innovation.</p> <p>To further advance affordability, the university will continue to grow philanthropic support and increase student financial aid programs, including the Funds for the Future program, which offsets the cost of tuition and fee increases for returning students with family incomes up to \$100,000</p> <p>For the 2023-24 fiscal year and consistent with the university's six-year plan approved by the Board of Visitors in November, the board will consider tuition and Educational and General (E&G) fee increases between 0 percent and 4.9 percent for Virginia resident undergraduates, non-resident undergraduates, and on-campus graduate students.</p> <p>The board will also consider increases between 0 percent and 8.8 percent for mandatory non E&G fees to support mandated cost increases including employee compensation and benefits, sustaining and enhancing student services enhancements including the transit system and student health/counseling services.</p> <p>Virginia Tech maintains the lowest mandatory non-E&G fees among public four-year institutions in the Commonwealth</p> <p>If you are an individual with a disability and desire an accommodation, please send an email to vppg@vt.edu or call 540-231-6232 during regular business hours at least 10 days prior to the event.</p> <p>tuition and fees at public institutions in Virginia are higher than national medians for similar institutions</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Emma Stern	<p>I am an out-of-state undergraduate sophomore studying Clinical Neuroscience at Virginia Tech. I chose Virginia Tech for the amazing STEM programs, the wonderful community, and the opportunities this school provides. I have a single mother paying for my tuition and it is difficult on her. I do not receive much aid similarly to many other students. So, I took on student loans. I live in an off-campus apartment with one of the biggest leasing companies in Blacksburg, CMG Leasing. Price gouging student apartments is cruel and unfair. These massive corporations are profiting off of students solely because they know they have no other choice. My mother is paying for my apartment in addition to my tuition because she wanted to me to focus on my studies and I'm beyond grateful. Unfortunately, she cannot provide my rent anymore because of the financial strain it has put on her. My major is strenuous and I struggle every week to make ends with my schoolwork, it's extremely stressful. However, I now work full-time in the Emergency Department with the Lewisgale Regional Health System to pay for my rent, groceries, and other necessities. All on top of being a STEM major like the majority of Virginia Tech students. I feel like the walls are closing in on me and I'm having trouble balancing my life as-is. This tuition increase would be devastating to me and so many other students, families, and the Hokie community as a whole. We love this university, please reconsider and think about the detrimental impact this will have on Hokie Nation.</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Fez Fessenden	<p>Dear Board of Visitors,</p> <p>First, I want to express my gratitude for your taking our comments. I and many of my graduate student peers come to you to request an increase in funding, and avenues for communication like this are integral to our advocacy.</p> <p>Second, I want to say that we ask for an increase in funding out of necessity, not greed. Particularly, we cannot afford to pay the comprehensive fees with our current stipends. Though it may seem like a small percentage of our stipends, the comprehensive fees that we pay severely affect the amount of income we have per month. This semester, I could not afford to utilize even the payment plan for the comprehensive fees, because the \$200 per paycheck that it takes would have left me without the money to pay for my rent and car payment, let alone groceries and utilities. Instead, I had to take out a third party loan to pay for the fees up front. Beyond the fees, because we do not have opportunities for summer funding, I and my peers will need to supplement with enough jobs to pay for the rising cost of living in Blacksburg, and if we cannot find enough work in this town, move elsewhere. Personally, I will need to move back to my hometown for the summer in order to afford the rent that I cannot stop paying here. I implore you to consider an increase in funding for your graduate students. I can only speak for myself, but I love this town and student body and am so grateful to be a student and instructor here. However, without an increase in funding to cover the cost of living, I will be unable to continue my studies and teaching at Virginia Tech.</p> <p>Thank you again.</p> <p>Sincerely, Fez Fessenden First year MFA in Poetry</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Xander Gershberg	<p>I've observed, both for myself and others in my program, that the financial stress of our low stipends directly impacts graduate students ability to stay in the program and to succeed there. I regularly hear my classmates describe coming to class hungry, weighing the cost of textbooks versus groceries and rent, opting out of medical and dental care because of the cost, taking menial jobs that take away time from their research and professional development, and getting burnt out quickly from juggling their basic needs with their academic and professional goals. Virginia Tech's role in my success often feels paradoxical. While I'm here to specialize and professionalize in my field, the lack of compensation and resources at Virginia Tech disincentivize me from getting the development I can from the program or from even remaining at Virginia Tech. Adopting the report's recommendations as soon as possible will alleviate my and many, many others' struggles and better ensure all graduate students success in the program.</p>	Student
Gianni Gambino	<p>An increase of 8.8% is ridiculous and will cause less people to attend our school as well as push many ppl over the edge on their loans. 8.8% is a massive increase.</p>	Student
Han Chen	<p>Dear Board of Visitors,</p> <p>As a Ph.D. student and instructor of undergraduate statistics classes at Virginia Tech, I urge you to consider the financial challenges that graduate teaching assistants face when proposing tuition and fee increases. Currently, graduate teaching assistants are only covered with 88% of health insurance costs, and we are required to pay a comprehensive fee of approximately \$1400 per semester. Unfortunately, the rate of inflation outpaces our salary increases, making it difficult to afford these expenses without proper salary increments.</p> <p>I respectfully request that the board take these concerns into account when considering any future tuition and fee increases. As graduate teaching assistants, we are an essential part of the university's academic mission, and it is vital that we receive fair compensation for our work. Thank you for your attention to this matter.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Han Chen</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Ivanna Guzman	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I am reaching out in regards to the potential tuition and fee increase. I am a current undergraduate student at VT. Currently a senior, I have struggled the past two years since transferring to VT to be able to financially pay tuition and rent all the while being a full time student and secretary founder for my sorority here on campus. I've had to work two side jobs totaling an additional 30 hours on top of the 40 hour commitment to attend classes and complete course material. These things do not account for the extra time that is needed to dedicate towards the maintenance of a home, food, healthy extracurricular such as forming lasting bonds or activities to serve in volunteer initiatives, and most importantly one's own mental health. I urge the board to not go through with this increase as I do not wish to know that other younger people may suffer worse financial pressures than I have.</p> <p>Please. Some students do have receive parental support and aid in the manner or amounts that you would think. An expected report of my Fafsa for parental support was to exceed thousands of dollars when in reality no money was afforded to contribute to my education or rent because of the large size of my family. This partly goes to show a system that does not take into account the person circumstances of individuals as one would like, and ultimately results in less financial aid that only increases the urgency to have to work multiple jobs. I ask that you reconsider for the students to might suffer as I have.</p> <p>Best Regards,</p>	Student
Jack Dillow	Tuition is already too high as it is. Raising it would only cause negative results within the student body.	Student
Jennifer Garcia	I am against this. There is already enough burdens on students to increase economic burden even more.	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Jingbin Xu	<p>Dear Board of Visitors:</p> <p>Hope this email finds you well.</p> <p>Greetings from Jingbin Xu. I am a thrid year Ph.D. student at Virginia Tech.</p> <p>"Just a few months ago, about 48,000 unionized academic workers across the University of Californiaâ€™s 10 campuses walked off the job on Nov. 14, calling for better pay and benefits. The workers include teaching assistants, postdoctoral scholars, graduate student researchers, tutors and fellows and perform much of the teaching and research at the stateâ€™s premier higher education system. They are demanding significant pay increases."</p> <p>The living cost in Blacksburg is inflated in recent years. Given that most grad students are already not paid a living wage, increasing these makes it that much harder for graduate students to afford the basics.</p> <p>I disagree on the tuition and fee increase proposal.</p> <p>Kind regards, Jingbin</p>	Student
Jesse Janoski	<p>Dear Members of the Board,</p> <p>My name is Jesse and I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Biological Sciences. I strongly oppose the proposed tuition and fee increases as students face rising costs of living and inflation during an ongoing pandemic. I urge you to find an equitable way to meet Virginia Tech's funding needs and support the need to raise wages for Virginia Tech employees to a living wage. Graduate students are integral to the university's research portfolio and land-grant mission, and should be treated and compensated fairly accordingly.</p> <p>Sincerely, Jesse</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Jillian Krinsky	For a place that I love so much, it's losing its charm. If I were to handle a .08% increase, that's the difference of paying off my loans for 30 years vs 40. don't be greedy.	Student
Jordan Vargas	Do not raise tuition please I am very poor	Student
Joseph Taylor	I'm begging you to please not increase student fees. The Blacksburg area has become so expensive and I hardly make any money as it is. I eat plain peanut butter out of the jar for most lunches because I don't have any money AND I have to give a huge chunk of the money I do have (12% of my annual stipend) back to the school anyway in student fees. Please don't increase the fees anymore. I have no money left in my bank account at the end of each month almost entirely due to student fees and housing expenses. It's impossible to focus on my education when I'm constantly stressed about my finances. Please don't raise the fees anymore.	Student
Julia Armstrong	Your graduate students are proud and grateful to be a part of this institution, but they consistently struggle to make ends meet. Many of us have taken second and even third or fourth part-time jobs to be able to afford food, rent, and medication, and even then, the cost of living continues to rise. Ensuring that graduate students receive a living wage, in accordance with the astronomical cost of living in Blacksburg and the surrounding areas, is a high priority, perhaps the highest set before you today. Please lend credence to this issue: we do not ask out of greed, but out of desperation and necessity. Thank you for your time and dedication to this university; please govern with urgency and compassion.	Student
Katelyn Steide	Any raise in tuition could become detrimental to students like me, who must pay our way through college. I know I made the right decision when I chose Virginia Tech. I have found a supportive and vibrant community in Blacksburg that has allowed me to grow. If tuition increases, my ability to continue taking advantage of opportunities on campus will become severely inhibited. Students like me would be disadvantaged when we begin a career burdened with thousands in loan debt. Please allow all Hokies to thrive by opposing increased tuition.	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Kat M. Gray	As a graduate student, I wish to comment on the hardship that increasing fees represent. I lose thousands of dollars to fees every year, and this reduces my already low wage to the point that I have needed to take out loans for five years to meet cost of living for myself and my partner, who is disabled and can only work part-time. In addition, fees at Virginia Tech don't compare favorably to fees at peer institutions - even among universities that still charge grad student fees, Virginia Tech's are some of the highest I have seen, and they have repeatedly gone up during my time here. Finally, graduate student fees represent a special hardship for international students, who often end up with extra costs as they arrive in the country and are surprised with fees prior to their first paycheck at the university. Graduate students are certainly students first, but our work also provides great value to the university - faculty consider us junior colleagues. These high fees feel like being asked to pay to work here, especially during the last three years, when I have been out of coursework and working on my exams and dissertation project.	Student
Kaustubh Deshmukh	Any increase in the fees should be compensated with an increase in the pay scale. That is only logical. And not just this for this year, but the pay scales should be firstly adjusted according to all the fee hikes that have been done in past few years as well. Graduate stipends are barely a living wage if you don't have any dependents and with any fee hikes, it puts a higher financial strain on the students with assistantship contracts. This will allow all such students to focus all their energy on their duties as an assistant. I hope the BOVs accept the wage increase plea and/or keep the fee hikes in check. Thank you.	Student
Mingang Kim	I really disagree with increasing a fee unless there is decent amount of increase in graduate student salary. There are so many things to spend money such as rent, insurance, gas and food. News about increasing a fee made me so frustrated. I already think fees are expensive.	Student
Louis Genovese	Don't increase tuition	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Mary Byrne	<p>To the Board,</p> <p>I was recently informed of your intention to raise tuition and fees at the university. I am a current student at the veterinary school as well as an employee at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital. Despite working part-time as much as I can, I already struggle to make ends meet with the maximum amount I am able to borrow from the federal government. I am a non-traditional student, nearly 10 years older than my classmates, and I do not have a spouse or parent to assist me with expenses. I share my small apartment with two other vet students in order to cut costs, as well as frequenting the food pantry at the vet school. Increasing tuition would not only negatively affect my financial status, but also my mental and physical health as I will be forced to choose to pay for either rent or food each month. In a time where inflation has already made graduate student life very financially difficult, I implore you to defer raising tuition until housing and food costs return to some kind of normalcy.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration, Mary Byrne, LVT</p>	Student
Melissa Gomez Villalta	<p>For students who are paying for their education with little to no aid from their families, this would make it even more difficult to find the funds to attend this great institution. I am paying for my education alone with no help from my family and If there is an increase I would have to fight to come up with the money to return the next academic year. I hope this does not go through.</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Miles Abernethy	<p>Hi, I'm a current senior and just accepted an offer from our History Department to continue as an M.A. student. An increase in tuition presents additional complications to this personally and I think sends the wrong message to potential undergraduates and postgrad/professionals.</p> <p>Although I've been accepted with an assistantship that covers my postgrad tuition - would this status change with a tuition increase? I believe it would also impact the living costs of postgrads, whose compensation the Board is also considering. I love VT and the History community - but considering my other educational options as well if an increase without due compensation becomes policy.</p> <p>I pride myself on being in the know as a student when it comes to the University's future goals. So when Beyond Boundaries aims for the retention of postgrads and attracting more around the world - and now considers a tuition increase - it seems like the vision and plan are at cross purposes. We just celebrated 150 years of being an institution that lifted economically and racially marginalized communities up, and we should respect that tradition.</p>	Student
Emily H	<p>The university has a lot of fat it could trim before considering tuition and fee increases. Students take on enough debt already, don't burden the next generation because of your financial mismanagement.</p>	Alumnus
nataly lopez	<p>I do not agree with the tuition increase. I come from a low income Hispanic family and I'm already in over \$20,000 in debt from loans because unlike other higher income families, I can't afford to pay off my tuition monthly. This is completely unfair for the minorities here at Tech, especially those who are first generation students from financially struggling families. I see no point in raising the tuition.</p>	Student
Ninie Asad	<p>As an RA, I listened to residents come to me scared about how they were going to pay for their dining plans last year when there was an increase in the cost of meal plans last semester. In increasing the cost of tuition even more, it is only further burdening these students as well as creating barriers for first generation students who are already struggling as it is.</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Peyton Gentry	Fees for graduate students should not be raised. Having to take out over \$20,000 for three semesters is already a ridiculous amount, and yâ€™all want to raise the price? That is how you will lower admission numbers across the board. EDUCATION SHOULD NOT BE THIS EXPENSIVE	Student
Prescott Vayda	I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech. While I understand that tuitions and fees are necessary for the university to run, increasing fees will only hurt graduate students. I appreciate everything that our fees help pay for. I take advantage of many things like the buses, the rec center, sporting events, and student organizations that would not be possible without the help of student fees. But simply put, graduate students cannot afford an increase in fees with the current stipends. Many graduate students are already making significantly less than the cost of living in Blacksburg. Student fees represent almost \$4000 a year that graduate students have to pay out of their stipend (this could be nearly 20% of their yearly stipend for many students). That is 20% of our taxable income that is immediately taken back by the university. The fees we pay are not tax deductible. Graduate students are already forced to stretch their stipend for the simple necessities like rent and food. Further, graduate students are forced to pay the out of state fees. I have changed my residency to Virginia. I have a Virginia license. I vote in Virginia. I pay Virginia taxes. Yet the university does not consider me a Virginia resident to get reduced fees. Graduate students simply should not be a source of income for the university after all the other services we provide in teaching, research, and outreach. Please consider how a fee increase will negatively impact graduate students.	Student
Rachel Inman	I am going to be a full time grad student next year. I am saving up to pay for tuition and housing. I do not want to sacrifice my education due to high tuition/living costs. Please think about student who do not have help from family, have to work while taking classes, etc.	Student
Md Hasibul Hasan Rahat	Please do not increase. Moreover, please all the fees for graduate students	Student
Md Rejwanur Rahman	I am graduate student and I have to pay insane amount of comprehensive fee each semester.	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Riley DeHority	<p>Dear BOV members and representatives,</p> <p>My name is Riley DeHority, and I gave a public comment at your March 2 meeting. I figured that was probably enough, but then I realized that it was best to take every opportunity to state in unequivocal terms, that I strongly oppose the proposed fee increases. Like I said in my live comment, as a graduate student working in a biotechnology lab, I work every day with ingredients that are more expensive than my annual fee bill, and I believe that the inability to look for creative ways to cover fees for all grad students on assistantships is simply a lack of imagination. I urge the BOV to follow the recommendations in the Graduate Student Assistantship Support Task Force report, and cover fees for all graduate students on assistantships by next fall.</p> <p>Thank you, Riley DeHority</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Shaheer Malik	<p>Respected board members,</p> <p>As an international graduate student, I appreciate the opportunity to share my voice in this forum, and would like to reiterate my pride in VT and my gratefulness for the support and love I have received at this institution.</p> <p>For a community of scholars to thrive, graduate students need to be able to participate in knowledge creation and education without the threat of poverty hanging over them. With inflation at an all time high, and the rent in Blacksburg and nearby localities shooting up to record numbers, graduate students like myself simply cannot continue to serve to the best of our abilities without the elimination of student fees for GTAs, as proposed in the living wage resolution which I hope will be passed this year.</p> <p>I fear that without effective and immediate action to the effect of eliminating fees for GTAs, this community of scholars will not be able to uphold its commitments to the students and communities that we serve, and the prestige of VT as an institution may be severely jeopardized.</p> <p>Thank you for your time. I wish you the very best as you strive to safeguard our precious VT community.</p> <p>Sincerely, Shaheer Malik</p>	Student
Suzzudul Islam Shuvo	<p>Potential grad students often ask me about the cost of living and all the fees and immediately gets discouraged. I hate to discourage prospective students like this but that's unfortunately the truth. I fear that we'll lose more potential students if the fees are increased. We barely have enough to go through the month after paying all the insane amount of fees and rent.</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Tyna Gaylor	<p>How in the world does increasing tuition contribute to the goal of "access and affordability"? Affordability is achieved by reducing costs, not increasing costs and raising tuition. Likely there are activities and programs that are unnecessary and costly, like the millions of dollars spent to change the logo.</p> <p>How about eliminating the \$7 million DEI program?</p> <p>How about accepting students who are prepared for college to reduce the costs of remedial education and leave that to community colleges?</p> <p>Many families are struggling with higher costs. Any tuition increase adds further to their burden.</p>	Alumnus
Katie Davenport Davis	<p>As a 2002, 2002, and 2005 graduate of VT, a teacher in Montgomery County, the spouse of a VT employee, and the mom of an incoming member of the Class of 2028, I implore you to refrain from further raising the cost of tuition and fees any further. As it is, the cost is unmanageable for our family living in Montgomery County on a VT Salary and an MCPS salary with 3 children. While the FAFSA calculates our EFC as 50% of my MCPS salary, that is not at all realistic. With direct loans capped at the same \$5500 that was available when I attended VT as an undergrad from 1998-2002. At that time, I was able to live on campus and have a full schedule of 18 credit hours in engineering for a TOTAL of \$4110.50, with the tuition portion being \$1396, yet now the tuition alone is \$6349, and the Direct Loan limit does not even cover a single semester's tuition. At a time when families are already struggling so much, I urge you to look to options other than tuition to increase revenue. If you must increase the tuition by a certain percentage, I certainly hope that my spouse will see that same percentage coming back in wages so that our family can afford for my son to attend as planned in the fall. His job and savings from the last 4 years (since his 14th birthday) at Kroger will only go so far.</p>	Alumnus

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Wesley Woo	<p>Dear Board,</p> <p>As a first year PhD student, I am concerned with what the increases in tuition mean to the rest of my Virginia Tech experience. When I decided to move to Blacksburg, I felt that I was taking a risk -- not only was I moving to a new place, but I was saying no to other programs and jobs that offered more financial security. With increases in tuition and fees, I feel worried that an unplanned sickness, injury, or trip to the emergency room might put me in a position of financial hardship. Tuition might be covered by department funding of PhD students, but I find the existing comprehensive students fees unreasonable, especially considering how little student programming is offered to the graduate community. Any increases on top of this existing ~\$350 a month student fee (which is more than I spend on groceries to feed myself each month) would be absolutely ridiculous. The BoV should be working to serve the public by making graduate and doctoral student education more affordable.</p>	Student

Commenter	Comment	Affiliation
Xuxin Tang	<p>Dear Virginia Tech,</p> <p>I am writing to express my deep concern and objection to the proposed increase in tuition and fees for the upcoming academic year. As an international student, I was disheartened to hear this news, as it will have a significant impact on my ability to support myself financially while pursuing my education.</p> <p>While my tuition is covered by a scholarship, the amount of money I receive after deducting taxes, insurance, and other fees is already barely enough to cover my living expenses. The prospect of a further increase in fees makes me anxious about my ability to continue my studies and maintain a decent standard of living.</p> <p>Additionally, I would like to raise the issue of certain mandatory fees, such as the Recreational Sports Fee and Athletic Fee. These fees are included in our tuition without giving us the option to opt out. Other universities, such as MIT, offer their students the choice to pay the athletic fee and recreational sports fee. I believe that giving students the option to choose which fees to pay would be fairer and more transparent.</p> <p>I urge you to reconsider the proposed increase in tuition and fees and explore alternative solutions to address the financial challenges facing the university. As international students, we already face many financial barriers to education, and any increase in fees will only exacerbate these challenges.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration of my concerns.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Xuxin Tang</p>	Student
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