MINUTES

BOARD OF VISITORS PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION FOR PROPOSED 2025-26 TUITION AND FEES

March 5, 2025

In accordance with *Code of Virginia* §23.1-307(E), requiring boards of visitors to hold public comment sessions prior to acting on any proposed increase in undergraduate tuition or mandatory fees, an ad hoc committee of Virginia Tech's Board of Visitors met in open session on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, in a virtual meeting that was livestreamed for the public on YouTube.

Present
Edward H. Baine (Rector)
Sandy C. Davis
Nancy Dye
William Holtzman
Donald Horsley
Anna L. James
Starlette Johnson
Letitia A. Long
Ryan D. McCarthy
John Rocovich
Jeanne Stosser

Also present were the following: President Timothy Sands, Kim O'Rourke (Secretary to the Board), Simon Allen, Al Cooper, Corey Earles, Kay Heidbreder, Tim Hodge, April Myers, Mark Owczarski, Lori Rose, Lisa Royal, Amy Sebring, Brennan Shepard, and Dee Dee Somervell.

During the public comment session, there were 42 concurrent viewers on YouTube and a total of 52 views.

Speakers: Ronnie Mondal (President of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate) and Alexander Efird (President of the Undergraduate Student Senate.

Rector Baine called the virtual meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. In accordance with *Code of Virginia* §23.1-307(D), a public notice of the proposed range of increase in tuition and fees was issued on February 21, 2025; the public notice included information about the public comment period. (Copy filed with permanent minutes and marked Attachment A.)

* * * * * * * * * *

TUITION WORKSHOP

The meeting began with a 15-minute tuition workshop presented by Amy Sebring, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. Ms. Sebring's PowerPoint presentation covered affordability and financial aid to Virginia Tech students, student success rates, the level of state support, how state support and tuition revenue are used, and factors influencing tuition development, as well as proposed ranges for 2025-26 tuition and fee increases. (Copy filed with the permanent minutes and marked Attachment B.)

* * * * * * * * * *

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Following the presentation, Rector Baine called on Ms. O'Rourke to review the guidelines for the 30-minute public comment period. Each speaker was allotted three minutes to speak and were to limit their comments to the topic of tuition and fees.

Two individuals from the Virginia Tech community pre-registered to speak: the president of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate and the president of the Undergraduate Student Senate. During the meeting, no additional individuals signed up to speak. In total, two individuals gave public comments, and those speakers submitted typed versions of their comments to be entered into the public record. (Copy filed with the permanent minutes and marked Attachment C.)

The public comment session ended at 4:45 p.m.

* * * * * * * * * *

The public was also given the opportunity to submit written comments through March 17, 2025. The Board of Visitors is scheduled to take action on the proposed tuition and fees for 2025-26 at its next regular meeting on March 25, 2025. All public comments will be provided to the Board in preparation for that meeting and will become part of the public record.

* * * * *

_____
Edward H. Baine, Rector

_____
Kim O'Rourke, Secretary

Board of Visitors to consider 2025-26 tuition and fees at March 25 meeting; virtual public comment opportunity scheduled for March 5

The Virginia Tech Board of Visitors will meet on Tuesday, March 25, at 1:15 p.m. in 2100 Torgersen Hall (620 Drillfield Drive, Blacksburg) to consider tuition and mandatory fees for the 2025-26 (FY26) academic year.

In advance of the March board meeting, Virginia Tech will provide a virtual public comment opportunity on Wednesday, March 5, at 4:00 pm. The link to observe this event or to pre-register to speak will be posted on the Board of Visitors website. Several members of the Board of Visitors will participate virtually as university officials provide an overview of proposed tuition and fees ranges and to receive public comment consistent with guidelines posted to the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors website.

Tuition and fees support the university's major strategic initiatives - Virginia Tech Global Distinction and the Virginia Tech Advantage - and serve as the primary source of operating revenue for delivering programs to our students. Tuition and fees are set in the context of university cost drivers and available state funding. Over the last several years, 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 outreach.

With a heightened focus on student affordability, the university launched the Virginia Tech Advantage program which leverages state, philanthropic, and university resources to reduce unmet financial need and increase support for students' basic needs, career preparation, and transformational learning experiences. In addition to the Virginia Tech Advantage, the university continues to mitigate tuition increases through the strategic alignment of incremental state funding, cost containment strategies, administrative efficiencies, and internal reallocations to maximize available resources.

As a result of these continued efforts, the Board has been able to limit the cumulative in-state undergraduate tuition increase to just 14% over the last five years while inflation has increased 23%. This was achieved while making a sustained commitment to advancing first-generation and low-income student enrollment, increasing institutional support for student financial aid, and advancing critical initiatives that enhance Virginia Tech's mission as a leading global land-grant institution.

For FY26, the university administration is modeling increases in tuition and Educational and General (E&G) fees from 0 to 2.9 percent, which is below the 4.9 percent increase included in the university's six-year plan approved by the Board of Visitors in November. Through Funds for the Future, Virginia Tech will provide incremental aid to undergraduate families with incomes below $115,000, sheltering them from tuition and fee increases in FY26. The university administration will also recommend increases between $0 and $186 for mandatory non-E&G fees to support mandated cost increases including employee compensation and benefits, support for Intercollegiate Athletics, and sustaining and enhancing student services including the transit system and student health/counseling services.

Virginia Tech maintains the lowest mandatory non-E&G fees among public four-year institutions in the Commonwealth.

March 5 public comment guidelines

Following an overview of proposed tuition and fees ranges at the March 5 virtual event, there will be an opportunity for public comment. Those interested in participating in the virtual public comment event must pre-register at the Board of Visitors website on a first-come, first-served basis **no later than Wednesday, February 26**. Speakers will be asked to specify their affiliation with the university (current student, parent, alumnus, faculty or staff, member of the public).

The public comment period will be held for 30 minutes with the option to increase up to a total of 60 minutes if there is sufficient demand. If time remains during the half-hour public comment period after the pre-registered speakers offer their comments, additional speakers may be offered the opportunity to speak during the remaining time. For those wishing to speak who did not pre-register, requests may be submitted via email to vppg@vt.edu between 4:00 and 4:45 p.m. on March 5.

In addition, there will be dedicated time slots for a representative from the Undergraduate Student Senate and from the Graduate and Professional Student Senate to provide a statement on behalf of their respective constituency. This does not preclude individual students from registering to speak during the public comment period or from providing written comments.

Each speaker will be limited to three minutes and must restrict their comments to tuition and fees only. Speakers wishing to have their comments entered in the public record must submit a typed copy via email to bov@vt.edu by March 17.

If you are an individual with a disability and desire an accommodation, please send an email to vppq@vt.edu or call 540-231-6232 during regular business hours at least 10 days prior to the event.

The March 5 virtual budget workshop and public comment session will also be live streamed for those who wish to observe (without offering comment). The link will be provided at the Board of Visitors website. However, those wishing to make comments must register in accordance with the instructions above.

Guidelines for written comments

In lieu of oral comments, written comments may be entered online at the Board of Visitors website or mailed to:

Kim O'Rourke
Secretary to the Board of Visitors
Virginia Tech (MC 0125)
800 Drillfield Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24061

Written comments must be received by Monday, March 17.

TUITION & FEE PUBLIC HEARING

AMY SEBRING,
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

March 5, 2025

VIRGINIA TECH

VIRGINIA TECH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Virginia Tech Advantage

Embodies our land-grant mission by bridging financial gaps for students, ensuring steady degree progress, and fostering holistic student success

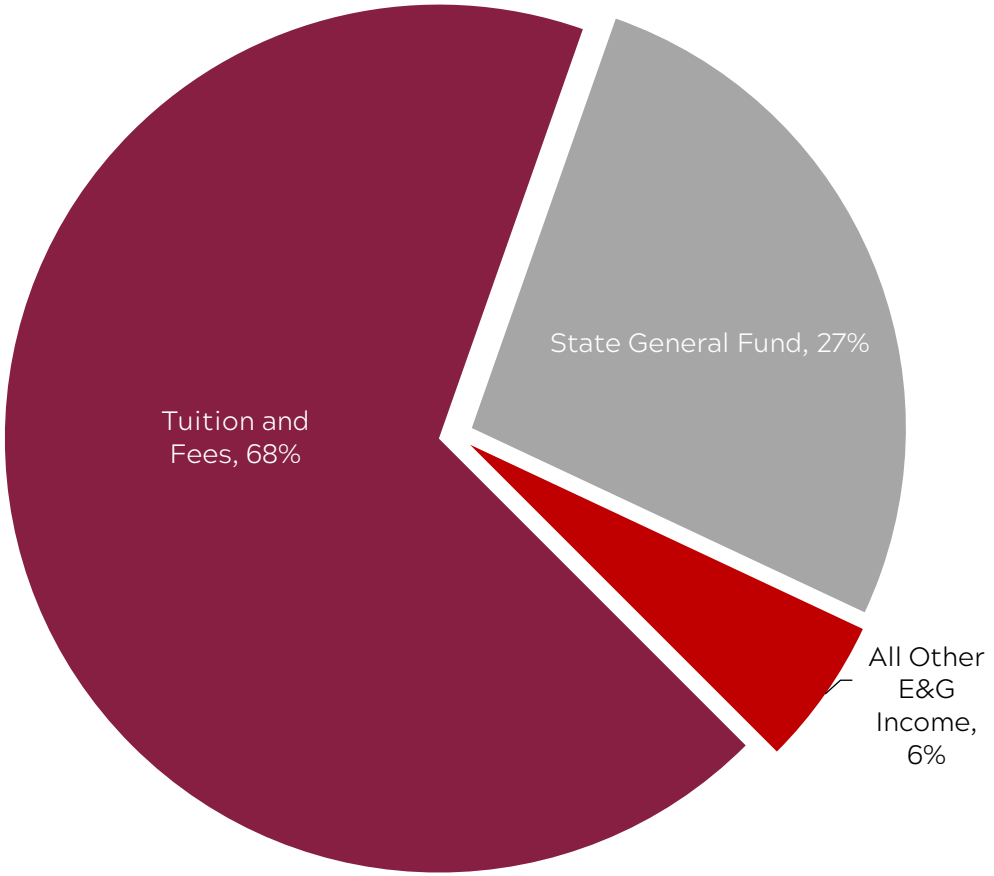
Global Distinction

A commitment to institutional excellence across research, teaching, and engagement that makes Virginia Tech a destination for the best faculty, students, and partners from Virginia, the nation, and the world

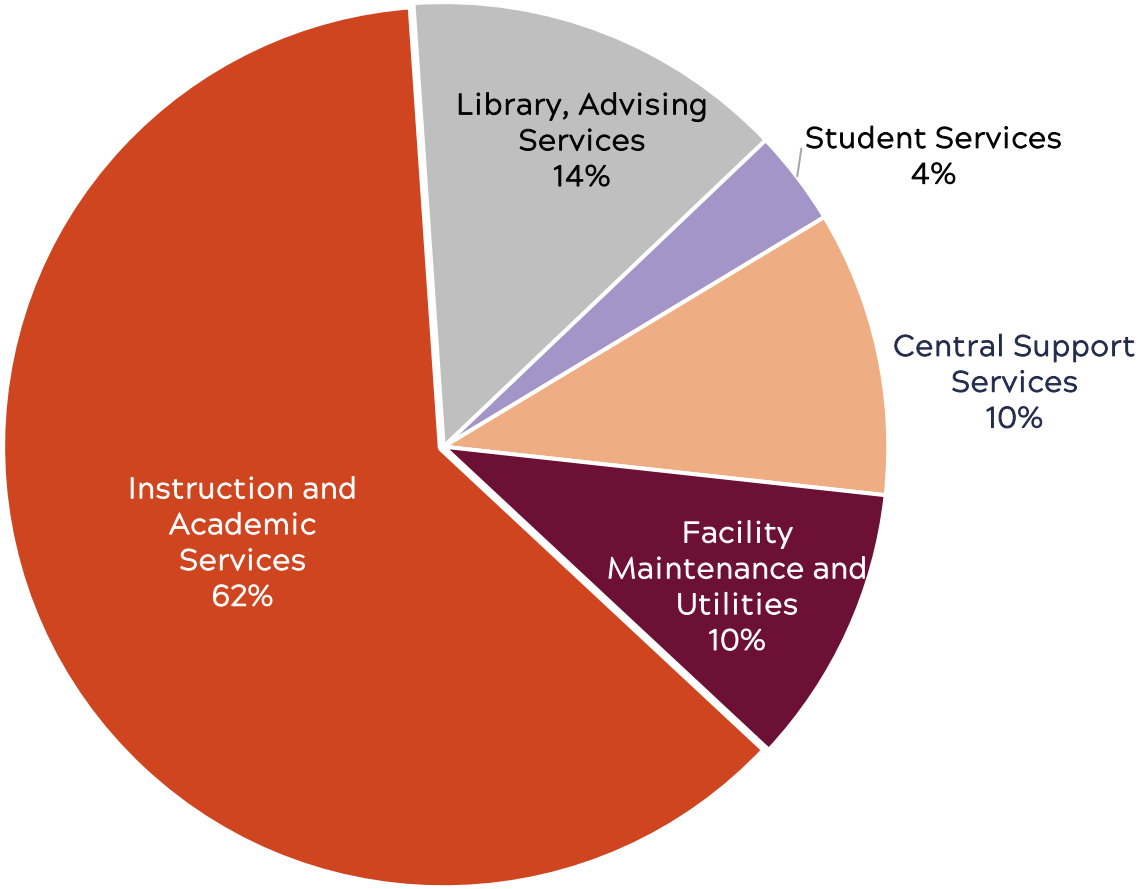
Tuition Drives Our Ability to Deliver Educational Programs

Educational & General Program

Revenue (sources)

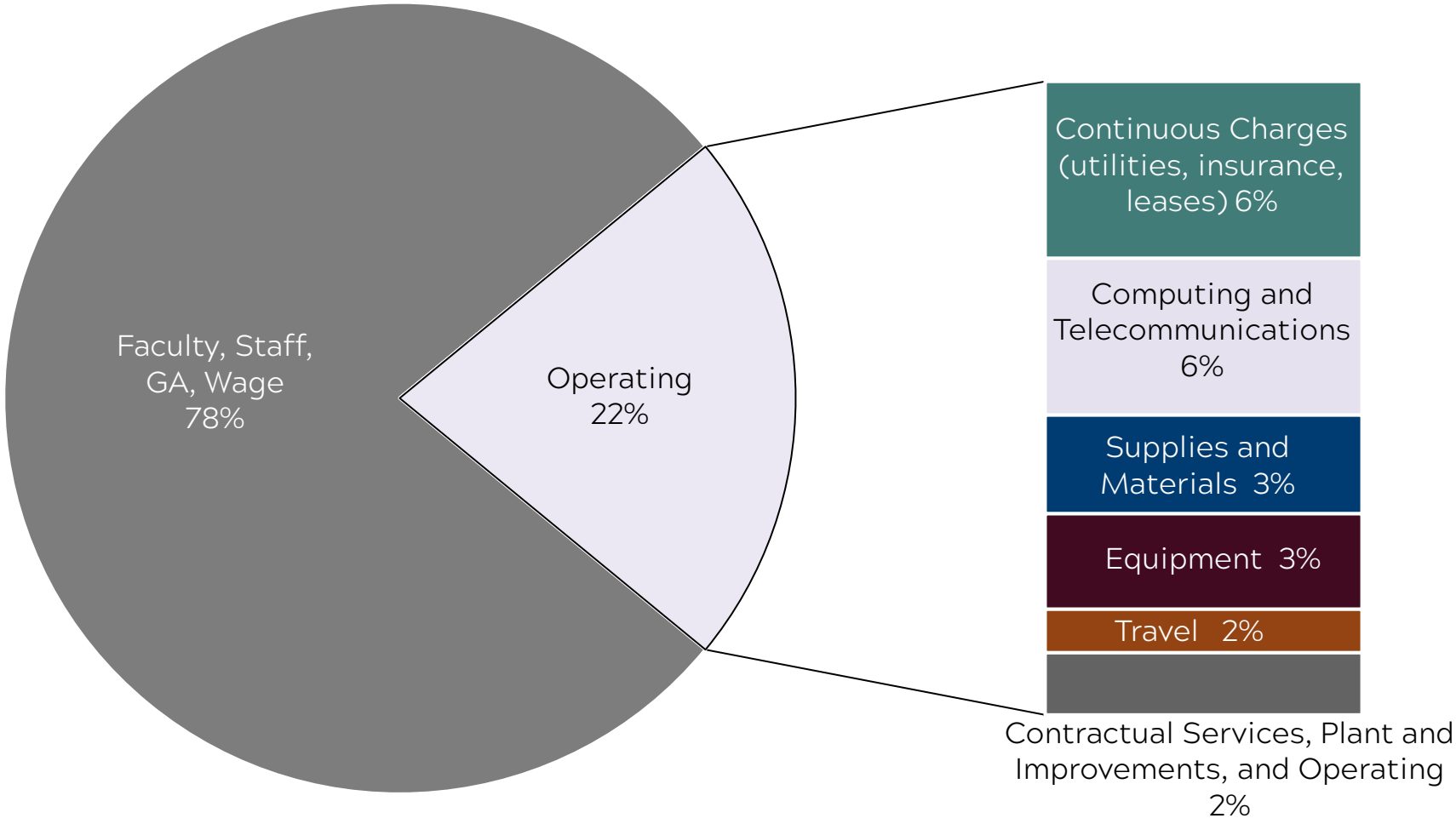


Expenditure by Function (uses)



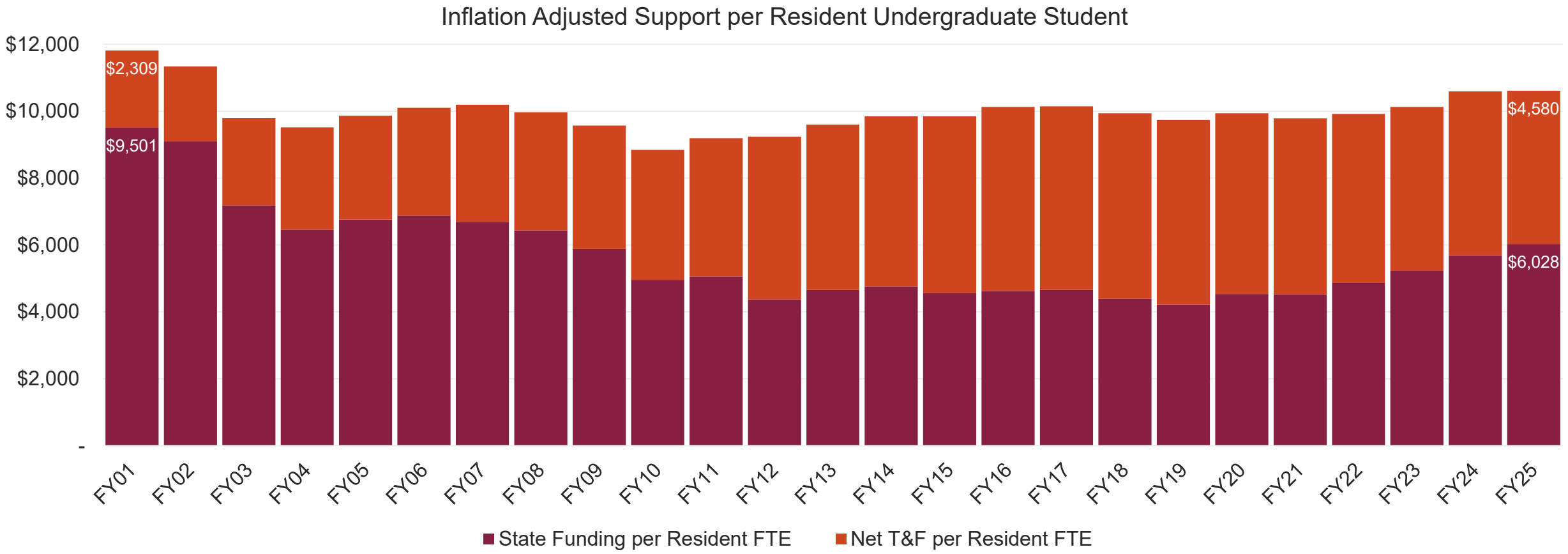
Higher Education is People-intensive

Personnel account for 78% of E&G costs



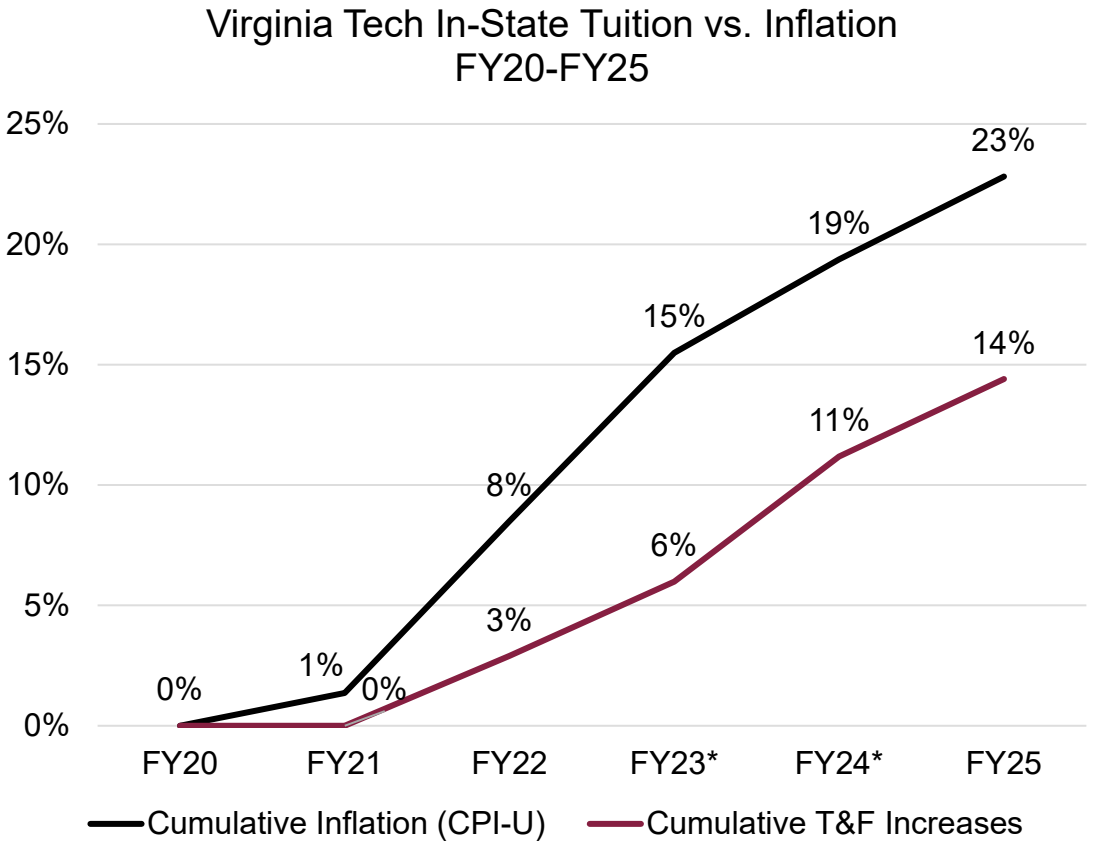
State Funding is a Critical Partner

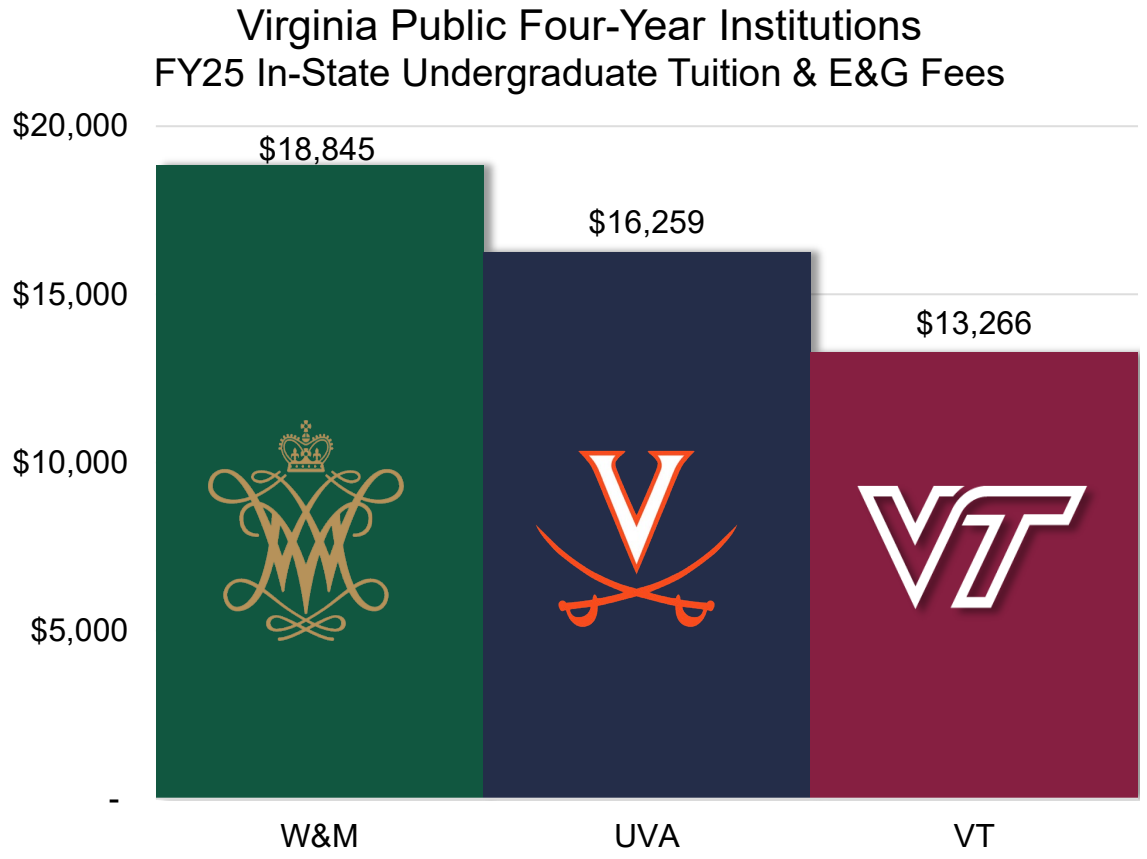
- The Commonwealth subsidizes the cost of Virginia resident undergraduate education
- State support has evolved over time, shifting the burden to students/families
- Despite recent state investments, adjusted for inflation, the university receives $3,473 less state support per resident student than in 2000



Since FY20 Cumulative Tuition Increases Have Been Below Inflation

- Over the past five years:
  - Consumer Price Index (inflation) has increased **23%**
  - In-State undergraduate tuition has increased just **14%**





** FY23 and FY24 In-state increase offset by one-time tuition mitigation scholarships.*

Excludes program fees.

Virginia Tech Advantage Expands Commitment to Affordability

Virginia Tech Advantage

- At scale, Virginia Tech Advantage will add $51.5 million annually in need-based gift aid.
- The 10-year fundraising goal of $500 million goal
  - *$400 million in endowed scholarships*
  - *$50 million in current-use scholarships*
  - *$25 million in endowed funds and another $25 million in current-use funds to meet:*
    - *basic needs such as food insecurity and emergency funds*
    - *support internships and enhance career preparation*
    - *offer transformational learning experiences including study abroad and undergraduate research*
- Private funds will leverage institutional and governmental support

Undergraduate Scholarships and Aid

- Virginia Tech provided $196 million in FY24, of which $91 million was need-based aid

Funds for the Future

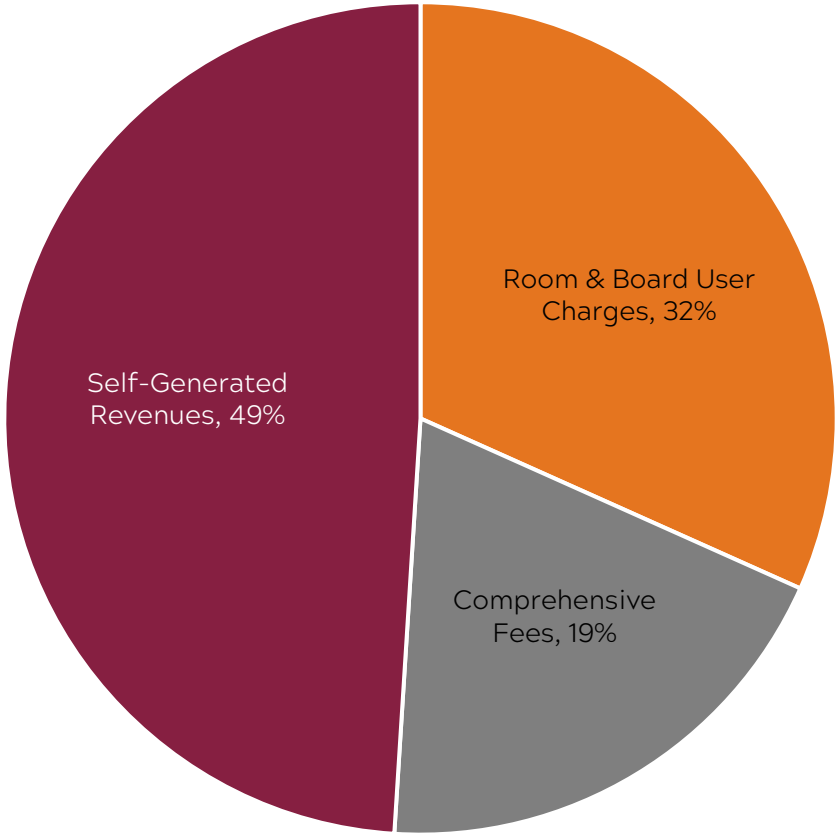
- Offsets tuition and fee increases for continuing undergraduates whose family income is $115,000 or less, ensuring they do not experience a net price increase over four years

Factors in Setting Tuition

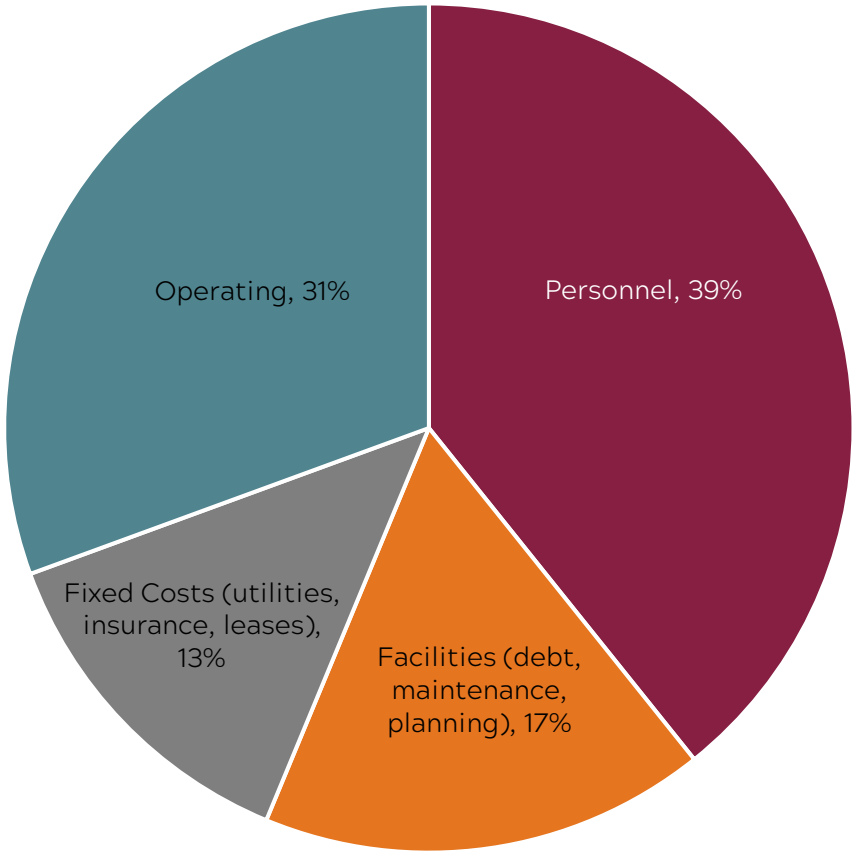
- Compensation (State requires the university to cover 62% of the cost of state-mandated compensation programs for E&G programs)
  - 78% of E&G expenses are personnel
    - Faculty, staff, graduate assistants, and wage employees
    - Competition for talent is increasing, raising labor costs
- State mandated costs including health care, retirement, property insurance, and codified waivers
- Level of recurring base funding from the state
- Unavoidable inflationary costs including utilities, insurance, leases, facility maintenance, and subscriptions
- Maintenance of academic quality
- Internal strategic reinvestments and efficiency gains

Comprehensive Fee is an Important Source of Auxiliary Enterprise Funding

Revenue (sources)



Expenditures (uses)



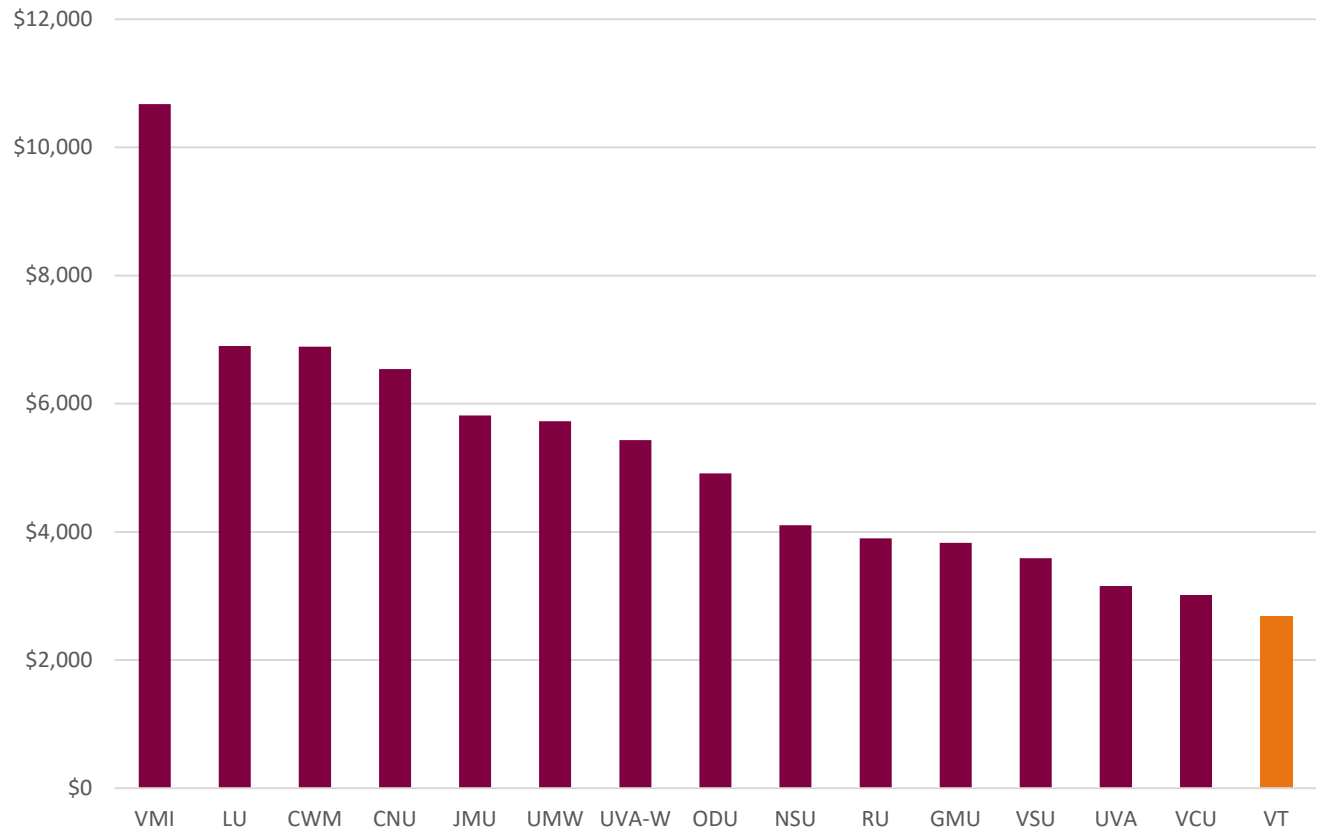
Auxiliary Programs Provide Key Support Services

The Comprehensive Fee supports:

- Student Health
  - Student health & counseling services
- Student Activities
  - Student activities, centers, & organizations
- Student Services
  - Transportation programs
  - Wireless service
- Athletics
  - Intercollegiate athletics
- Recreational Sports
  - Recreational programs, sports clubs, & facilities

Factors influencing fee development include state compensation and benefits, inflationary costs, health and counseling, transit operations, and facility maintenance.

VT has the lowest Comprehensive Fee of Virginia's public four-year institutions.



Ranges for 2025-26 Tuition and Fee Increases

	2025-26
Virginia Undergraduate Tuition	0% - 2.9%
Nonresident Undergraduate Tuition	0% - 2.9%
Virginia Graduate Tuition	0% - 2.9%
Nonresident Graduate Tuition	0% - 2.9%
Comprehensive Fee	$0 - 186

Student Success is Key to Return on Investment

Strong Undergraduate Graduation Rate

- 4-year: 70%
- 6-year: 86%

3.9 years average time-to-degree

- Shorter time lowers student cost
- Seven of eight colleges below 4 years

$70,000 - Median starting salary of 2023 graduates

VIRGINA TECH: VALUE AND QUALITY

Top 20 Best Colleges in U.S. - *Wall Street Journal/Pulse*

Top 25 Best Public Schools - *U.S. News & World Report*

Top 150 Best Value Schools - *U.S. News & World Report*

Top 300 World University Ranking - *Times Higher Education*

- Written comments will continue to be accepted through March 17

- All comments will be made available to the Board of Visitors prior to consideration of undergraduate and graduate tuition and fees

PUBLIC COMMENT

COMMENTS MADE AT THE MARCH 5, 2025, PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION

Honorable Members of the Board of Visitors,

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Ronnie Mondal, and I serve as the President of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate. I am here to voice the urgent concerns of Virginia Tech's graduate students regarding student fees and tuition.

Graduate students conduct research, teach courses, and support the university's mission of innovation and excellence. Yet, we continue to struggle financially. Our stipends remain below a living wage, and increasing tuition and fees will only worsen this crisis.

Our comprehensive fees have already increased. Most of our assistantships do not cover these fees—we must pay them out of pocket from our already stretched stipends. A further increase would amount to an effective **pay cut**, making graduate education more inaccessible.

This comes at a time of immense financial uncertainty. Inflation continues to rise, with costs for housing, healthcare, groceries, and childcare outpacing our stipends. Many of us have families and dependents to take care of. A fee increase will push many to take on additional jobs or even debt.

Coupled with shifts in research funding priorities, visa policies, and economic conditions, many students, especially international students, are unsure about their financial stability and future career prospects. A financial burden will make Virginia Tech a less attractive option for top talent and directly impact our reputation and ability to remain a leading research institution.

I urge you to consider alternative funding sources rather than placing the burden on graduate students who are already struggling to make ends meet. We ask that you **freeze student fees and tuition**, at least for this coming year, to prevent further hardship. Instead of increasing financial strain, let's work together to create long-term solutions that support students and strengthen Virginia Tech's research and educational mission.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

COMMENTS MADE AT THE MARCH 5, 2025, PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION

Good afternoon, everyone,

My name is Alexander Efird, and I am here representing the 31,035 undergraduate students here on campus as President of the Undergraduate Student Senate, our undergraduate student body government.

You have most likely heard, and will continue to hear from, many students on their own perspectives, but I wanted to provide you all some quick thoughts on what I've gathered from speaking with many of my fellow students.

First, I want to commend the Board for their efforts in past years to limit tuition and fee increases for students. While we've seen peer institutions in the Commonwealth and beyond heavily increase the financial burden that students face year-after-year, we've been fortunate here at Virginia Tech to see little to no increases in the cost of our educations.

In conversations I have with my fellow students, tuition and fees are always front-of-mind. As you would expect, the vast majority of students support keeping the current tuition and fees levels for the next academic year. One of the major concerns I hear from students every day is the financial burden they face because of tuition and fee costs. When students have to face these challenges, it can affect their social lives and their ability to join some of the over 800 clubs that we have here on campus. In some instances, students are so stressed that they cannot devote the attention needed to their schoolwork, leading to missed assignments and poor grades.

However, many of us understand that with the rising costs of living and operations expenses we all face, small increases may be inevitable. Yet, when the cost of education becomes less affordable, we all suffer. Students who are not privileged or who don't come from affluent backgrounds may be more inclined to reduce their involvement here on campus or may even take a step back from college entirely. That can deprive our Virginia Tech community from some incredible knowledge and perspectives that make us stronger as a whole.

That is why I also emphasize the financial aid programs that are at the disposal of students. These programs give students who lack the resources to achieve a full college education with the opportunity to do so. I've spoken with numerous students here on campus who have taken advantage of these programs, and they are all doing incredible things in their respective fields and will go on to represent the Virginia Tech name with pride and distinction. Continuing to expand these programs, including the Virginia Tech Advantage, will only enhance the quality of our community here at Virginia Tech and will provide students with the resources they need to be successful and accomplish great things.

Thank you all so much for your time.

Commentor	Affiliation	Comment
Camille Alvino	Student	I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed increase in student fees, particularly as it impacts graduate students who are already struggling with financial hardships. As a graduate student living on a fixed stipend, any additional financial burden exacerbates the existing challenges we face in maintaining a basic standard of living. Graduate students at Virginia Tech play a vital role in the university's research, teaching, and service missions. However, our stipends have not kept pace with the rising costs of living. In recent years, inflation has significantly increased the prices of essential goods, including housing, food, transportation, and healthcare. For many of us, our stipends already fall short of covering necessary expenses, forcing us to make difficult financial decisions or take on additional work, which can negatively impact our academic responsibilities and overall well-being. An increase in student fees would only worsen this financial strain. Unlike salaried employees, who may receive cost-of-living adjustments, graduate students have limited avenues to negotiate higher pay or secure additional personal funding. At the same time, rental prices in the Blacksburg area continue to rise, along with the costs of groceries and other necessities. A higher fee burden would effectively reduce our already minimal take-home income, making it even harder to afford basic needs. I urge the Board of Visitors to consider the disproportionate impact that fee increases have on graduate students, who contribute immensely to the university yet often struggle with financial insecurity. Rather than increasing fees, I encourage the university to explore alternative funding mechanisms that do not place additional burdens on those who can least afford them. Thank you for your time and consideration.
Emma Rice	Student	I am a PhD student at Virginia Tech and currently pay 3,149 per year on student fees. The proposed changes would raise this to 3,743, which is 10% of my annual income. This is not normal - as a master's student at Michigan State University, a comparable land grant institution, my annual student fees were $200 annually ($100 per semester). I believe raising student fees would have a disproportionate impact for graduate students living on stipends compared against the amount of income it would generate for the institution.

Madison Thurber	Student	I am a graduate student in the fish and wildlife department at Virginia Tech. I struggle every semester to pay the almost 2000 fees. I have to take out loans or sign up for the payment plan which takes out of my rent money. I find myself struggling to afford groceries and other living expenses because of this. I can not stress enough how much increasing this financial burden on me would be extremely stressful and detrimental to my academic career.
Braiden Quinlan	Student	I am a graduate student in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation. Last year, I made $26,682.03 after taxes and paid $3,446.66 in student fees. 12.92% of my yearly income already goes back to VT. Does any other job in existence require you to PAY your employer in order to work for them? That leaves me $1,903.78 per month to cover rent, food, gas, insurance, car payments, utilities, electricity, internet, etc. Further, with the current administration in the White House and the executive orders being signed daily, I could lose funding any day as many of my colleagues have. This makes our livelihoods even more vulnerable to increasing student fees. Low pay for graduate students has been an issue for decades across universities everywhere. I KNOW almost all graduate students are in the same boat that I am in- barely scraping by, having to have multiple roommates in your 20s & 30s to make ends meet. Increasing student fees would further strain our ability to provide research that the world depends on and VT profits off of. Increasing these fees will likely cause graduate students to drop out of their programs simply because they can no longer afford it- we are already at the precipice.
Mary Adebote	Student	The increase in tuition and fees will make it difficult for me to pay my rent, purchase food items, and utilize funds for basic needs that make me mentally balanced.
Tanis McDonnell	Student	As a graduate student at Virginia Tech, my fellow students and myself are extremely aware of the political and economic climate we are experiencing today. I am proud to be a graduate student at Virginia Tech however the lack of support and understanding we as graduate students receive from this administration is not only blatant, but embarrassing for a school with such strong ties to research and forward thinking. Graduate students have been extremely vocal in their need for diminished student fees, therefore increasing student fees once again is a clear demonstration of what Virginia Tech thinks of their students. We are expected to work to contribute to Virginia Tech's "greatness" with little pay and increasing fees will leave graduate and undergraduate students alike need for more support that Virginia Tech will never give.
Fang Chen	Student	I am an international PhD student living on a stipend, which already barely covers my basic living expenses. If the university increases fees, I will not be able to afford a reasonable standard of living in Blacksburg.
Matt Millar	Parent	I get the need to raise fees and I am supportive of ensuring a financially healthy institution. But folks, now is not the time. We’re getting killed out here.

Mary Grace Larson	Student	Please do not raise graduate student comprehensive fees, we can barely afford the cost of living here as it is. The current cost per semester is already untenable, an increase is absolutely unimaginable.
Zackary William Isenhour	Student	The robust increase in fees for graduate students is appalling. With current trajectory of being approximately an increase of $500 a year for a single graduate student, estimating an income of $30,000 in our department of approximately 1.7% of our total salary. 2.1% of our salary post taxes. For a single semester alone, I've already been paying greater than $1,600 a semester. At this rate we are expected to pay 12.3% of our total salary or 15.4% of our take home salary back to Virginia Tech. At an already extremely low salary, barely livable with roommates and astronomical housing costs, this increase in fees is intolerable from our administration.
Elaine Metz	Student	I am a graduate student who publishes research, teaches students, and participates in the VT community. The proposed increase in fees would be financially devastating to me. The increase would cost me nearly the equivalent of two months of my pay yearly. Meanwhile, I have seen my cost of utilities, groceries, and insurance all rise since arriving here at VT with no matching increase in salary. I budget every dollar I spend, and I am barely able to afford living here. Even though the increase may seem small to you, it is huge for me. I work hard, I am passionate, and I want to contribute to VT as an institution. Increasing the fees for the graduate students who work extremely hard and provide so much of the value (eg. research, teaching) that this institution touts as central to its achievements and goals is extremely disappointing. Please find another way.
Amanda King	Student	As a master's student on a graduate research assistantship, I was dismayed by the proposed increase in student fees. While I am fortunate to have an assistantship, my stipend falls below the national poverty line. With the proposed fees, I will be paying approximately 15% of my take-home income—excluding required parking fees. Many of the services covered by these fees are seldom used by graduate students in my program, as we have found free and more effective alternatives. Having previously attended and graduated from another land-grant university, I find Virginia Tech’s fees to be particularly burdensome and unfair to graduate students already struggling financially. This financial strain is further exacerbated by inflation and federal uncertainties surrounding research funding. I understand that the university has financial obligations, but for many graduate students—who function more as employees than traditional students—these fees pose a significant hardship on an already fixed and limited income. Thank you for taking the time to review my input.

Darby McPhail	Student	As a research graduate student who is the backbone of making Virginia Tech an R1 institute and furthering innovation on behalf of this school, I find this increase of tuition and fees extremely detrimental. We had to fight to increase our stipends to a living wage which we still do not have and on top of that we are supposed to pay more in times of severe inflation making our quality of life poorer and poorer. Please do not increase tuition and fees.
Amaryllis Medero-Vargas	Member of the Public	Increasing the tuition and fees after defunding programs like peace studies and violence prevention outrageous. Where is the money supposed to go if not towards programs that benefit the students who are already paying so much?
Mariana Castaneda Guzman	Student	As an international student, we not only face higher taxes, which reduces our net income, but we also incur out-of-state fees without the opportunity to switch to in-state tuition. The increase in fees severely affects our livelihood. Housing prices have skyrocketed, making rent nearly unaffordable given our salaries. The overall fees are exorbitantly high, and any further increase is simply unmanageable for maintaining our standard of living, even now it is incredibly hard to live off our wages. Graduate students should not have to pay check! fees are about 2/3 of one months earning, that is not okay. As international students, we face several financial challenges. Not only do we encounter higher taxes, which reduce our net income, but we also pay out-of-state fees without the option to switch to in-state tuition. The increase in these fees significantly impacts our livelihoods. Housing prices have skyrocketed, making rent nearly unaffordable based on our salaries. Overall, the fees are exorbitantly high, and any further increases are simply unmanageable for maintaining our standard of living. It is incredibly difficult to live on our wages as they stand. Graduate students should not have to pay fees that amount to about two-thirds of one month's earnings; this situation is unacceptable.
NULL	Student	I, along with several graduate students across departments, firmly believe these increases in fees would make it even more difficult to live off our current wages. Graduate students still receive little compensation for our work, and having to take out fees from our pay makes it even more difficult to afford things like food and housing. This is even further worsened for international students or students who have families. A further increase in fees would only serve to harm the student body.
Ziomara Medero-Vargas	Alumnus	I oppose raising tuition after hearing about defunding programs established after the 2007 Massacre, claiming they were DEI (for example peace studies, violence prevention, social justice studies, etc). Not only is this insulting to the history and legacy of Virginia Tech, eliminating these valuable programs (including other DEI programs and initiatives) will be to the detriment of incoming students who would benefit from the knowledge and opportunities these programs provide to prepare them for their futures.
Chandra Colbert	Parent	Why are there no black people on your board making decisions?

Bridget Re	Student	I am writing to express my deep concern about the proposed 3% fee increase and the additional $500 flat fee. As a graduate student, I am already struggling to afford basic necessities such as groceries and housing. With the rising costs of living due to inflation, supply chain disruptions, and other economic pressures, even a modest increase in fees feels overwhelming. Many graduate students, including myself, are unable to save any of our income, leaving us financially vulnerable. This added financial burden not only affects our well-being but also impacts the quality of work we are able to produce. Graduate students play a critical role in Virginia Tech's research, teaching, and innovation, and excessive financial stress hinders our ability to contribute effectively. A university that prioritizes student success must also consider the economic realities we face. I respectfully urge the Board to consider the long-term consequences of this increase—not only on individual students but on the broader academic community. A financially stable and supported graduate student body is essential for maintaining the high standards of excellence that Virginia Tech is known for. Thank you for your time and for considering the well-being of those who contribute so much to this institution.
Henry Stevens	Member of the Public	I am writing as a concerned member of the public to strongly oppose the proposed 3% fee increase and $500 flat fee increase for graduate students at Virginia Tech. These students are the backbone of the university—conducting critical research, teaching undergraduates, and contributing to VT's academic excellence. Yet, many are already struggling to afford basic necessities like food and housing. With the rising cost of living, this fee increase will only push them further into financial hardship. It is unacceptable for a prestigious institution like Virginia Tech to place such a burden on students who are essential to its success. Financially strained graduate students cannot perform at their best, which ultimately harms the university's research output, teaching quality, and reputation. Instead of increasing fees, VT should be working to support the well-being of its students. I urge the Board to reconsider this proposal and prioritize policies that ensure graduate students can afford to live and work without constant financial stress.
Emma Place	Member of the Public	This would cause extreme undue financial burden on your PHD students. At a time when their life's work is already under extreme attack by the United States government, they deserve support. Financial stress on top of the existential stress they are already experiencing will not only harm your students but the work they are able to produce.

Audrey Re	Member of the Public	Hello, I am writing as a concerned family member to one of your graduate students and a graduate student myself. The proposed increase in fees would disadvantage and financially burden your graduate students resulting in graduate students being unable to afford to live and eat in Virginia. Already, it is widely understood that graduate student stipends are barely livable on and many students have to turn to food vouchers or food pantries to survive. A recently published article in Nature outlines how stagnant stipends have resulted in a drop in PhD enrollment (https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00425-4). Enacting an increase in fees would worse living for your graduate students and directly impact the research that comes from the university, making it a less desirable place for PhD students to do their research, ultimately resulting in less impactful science being produced by Virginia Tech. In summary, this fee increase would have adverse repercussions not only on your student body but the university's research. Therefore, I am writing to implore you to not enact this fee increase. Sincerely, Audrey Re
Katherine Millar	Student	Increasing the cost of tuition and fees while the cost of living is high and continues to increase will make it even more difficult for people to afford a higher education. Please do not increase the cost of tuition and fees as this will have a great negative impact on students' ability to afford a college education and to pursue their desired career.
Alexa Zytnick	Unknown	This is a bad decision

Linbo Shao	Faculty/Staff	As an PI actively conduct sponsored research, I would like to comment on the Tuition of PhD-level students beyond their courses and purely enrolled in research courses. Other univiersity, from state universities, such as Penn State University, as well as private universities, such as Harvard, the full tuition is only charged in first two years, and only fees are charge when they only registered for "Research and Dissertation" (e.g. ECE 7994). PhD students at such level do not enrolled in technical courses should not be charged the tuition. Previous discount of 10% in tuition beyond preliminary is far below the peer universities. I would like to propose to exampt "Research and Dissertation" credits from tuition calculation. Current situition of high tuition for senior PhD students (>= 3rd year) results in a disadvantage of VT faculty compared to other R1 universities. Meanwhile, create a unfavourable situation for PhD students, especially for PhD students; some of them might choose to transfer to another university that PI at VT is collabrating with, to have a higher stipend due to no/much lower tuition paid to university. The univerisyt has to acknowledge the fact that most research programs has capped total budget, paying such high tuition will reduce the capability to keep talented students.
NULL	Student	Graduate students are struggling to get by, the only thing that should be considered is reducing or eliminating these fees. As a first year student relying on food pantries, living paycheck to paycheck, and not being paid for my work over school breaks, I have had to neglect urgent medical care because I can't afford it. These fees are an enormous barrier for low income students who don't have family support. It doesn't make sense that I pay taxes on "income" that doesn't even get to my bank account, it immediately goes back to my employer. The costs of these fees, health insurance, and parking put students well below the poverty line. A 0% increase is the least the BOV should be doing.
Emma Hultin	Student	While inflation has raised by over 20%, and tuition has increased by 14%, graduate student stipends have not increased proportionally. Despite having the lowest student fees of the large universities in Virginia, the graduate student fees are still several times higher than at comparable universities in the southeast. Grad students are already struggling to afford the cost of living on our stipends and will be severely impacted by increases to our student fees without any changes to our income.
Courtney Taylor	Member of the Public	Raising fees and tuition would strongly impact students who are already contributing significantly to the university. Virginia Tech should be a place where students are able to learn, research, teach, and thrive without undue financial pressures. Please consider not implementing these proposed changes.

Akea Cader	Student	Hello Board of Visitors, I am writing to express my fear about the potential increase in student fees. As is, I am already on a tight budget to be able to afford rent, groceries, and other bare necessities. I also work a second job so that I can pay my student fees without having to take out loans. With projections of increasing prices related to groceries and other material goods, I fear that this increase in fees will significantly impact my ability to provide for myself. As such, I am requesting that our fees NOT be increased at this time.
Amy Hagen	Student	Please consider a 0% increase in fees. Graduate students are already not making a living wage, and the current state of the economy is making it even harder to be a graduate student in Blacksburg. I realize that VT is also facing problems because of the state of our country right now, but putting the burden on students to make up this gap is, in my opinion, unconscionable. I would also like to point out that this year I will pay an extra ~$650 in federal taxes because the ~$3400 I pay in fees is included in my stipend. If you must continue to raise fees, please find a mechanism to take the fees out of our stipends before we are paid to avoid this extra tax burden. I receive this money and return it directly to you, so why must I pay so much in taxes?
David Lugo	Student	With the current political climate, inflation has continued to increase and compound the effects of being paid below a living wage in Blacksburg, VA. If student tuition fees are increased, it will damper the success of graduate students that promote VIRGINIA TECH across the world in cutting edge research. Living off of a couple grand a month is already hard enough.
Abir Jain	Student	I am an international graduate student and have already been having hardship with managing my funds and support myself. Out of my $2400/month salary. I have been paying $286 twice a month ($572/month) or ~1800 per semester as a part of my comprehensive budget tuition plan. This is already very high (almost x2 and x3 the amount) compared to other land grant universities I have friends in. About ~$850/month goes in paying the rent. And ~$350/month goes in groceries. These are bare minimum expenses. And there are always other expenses. Which barely leaves $628 a month! There is nothing left for savings. If I want to travel to my home country once a year - whatever little savings I have are gone. I again I didn't even add other miscellaneous expenses. Given the current anxiety around uncertainties about so many things including the funding landscape. I hope the university administration sees through the perspective of graduate students and take step to avoid hiking the fees. Thank you!

Zoie McMillian	Student	The proposed a 3% fee increase PLUS a flat increase of more than $500/year would severely harm my success as a graduate student here. That additional cost, without any mandated raises, would make it so that I could no longer afford to live in my current apartment, which would affect my ability to stay here and complete my degree. Additionally, our graduate student fees are already astronomically greater than many other VA state schools as well as the fees of public universities in bordering states. I sincerely beg you all not to move forward with such damaging action, especially during such uncertain times when many graduate students do not know if they will even maintain their current payment and funding (a particularly pressing issue in the fish and wildlife department).
Althea McMillian	Parent	As a parent of a graduate student that also attended VT for her undergraduate degree, I am opposing the fee increase. Through the years that my child has attended I have seen the fees increase exponentially. College tuition and fees are getting to be unaffordable for my family.
Jordan Mouton	Student	I am a current master's student studying at Virginia Tech, asking that the Board of Visitors reconsider their proposed changes to the institution's tuition and fees. Current economic conditions have placed undue strain on graduate students both personally and institutionally, and the proposed raises in tuition and fees will only serve to exacerbate this issue. I ask on behalf of myself and my fellow graduate students at Virginia Tech, who are the backbone of this institution's research component, that the Board of Visitors not approve a future increase in tuition and fees. Thank you.
Megan Zeger	Student	The student fees are already high enough and raising them without providing additional services seems excessive. As a grad student, we make barely above the minimum to apply for food stamps. The cost of my student fees were more than an entire paycheck from my grad stipend. The cost of living in general has increased at every aspect of our lives (groceries, rent, etc.), while our pay hasn't. Many of us are busy being students and having an additional job to pay for these fees is not possible for everyone. This is especially true for international students who are legally not allowed to work or have very limited hours that they are able to work. I have enjoyed my time at Virginia Tech, but the increase of tuition fees feels as though you're trying to squeeze as much money out of people who are already doing services (research, etc.) for the university.
Dayna Winograd	Student	The student fees are already much higher at VT than compared to other institutions. A fee increase would make it increasingly difficult for graduate students to thrive.
Julia Rohde	Student	I am writing to firmly voice my opinion that there should be a 0% fee increase, as this would a huge burden to me personally given my already strained resources and the exorbitant student fees already in place at this university. This would also place huge burdens on my peer and damage the productivity and cohesion of our graduate school program.

Amanda Steinberg	Student	Dear Board of visitors, On behalf of my fellow graduate students, I'm reaching out to request a 0% increase in student fees. In fact, we as student students have been striving to reduce the current fees, so an increase would be counterproductive to our mission. I feel immensely grateful to be a Hokie and to get to produce research that I'm passionate towards. However, the graduate student life does come with a big price and much of that price is within the student fees. With the high cost of living in a college town, it is difficult to even pay rent let alone have savings, especially when student fees are in the mix. Any increase in the student fees would make a severe impact on each grad student's life, who's trying their best to work hard and get by as it is. I seriously hope you consider these comments when making your decision, because again, we will be impacted by any %increase. Thank you for your time.
Gabby Patarinski	Student	I am a graduate student in clinical psychology. Due to the recent political upheaval and uncertainty plaguing universities across the US, my work has been affected by not only by increased financial strain due to rising inflation and a failing economy, but also by the uncertainty of funding to complete my doctoral research at this institution. Graduate students make far less in pay than we are worth, considering our degrees, experience, and the amount of labor we provide our institutions. Research, teaching, and outreach are not low-effort or cost-free activities, and we are certainly not paid enough to live in Blacksburg without the burden of financial strain constantly hindering our progress. Mandatory fees present an undue burden on the graduate students that this university relies on to function. Further, our advisors are prohibited from supporting us by covering these costs in most cases. Potential applicants are deterred by these astronomical fees, which represent a substantial percentage of the meager salary we are paid. It would be wonderful if VT could invest back into its graduate students the way we invest in VT's future. Please vote for a 0% fee increase. Surely, a university such as VT should be able to reallocate internal money, reduce administrators' salaries, spend less on athletics, or use some of the millions of dollars collected on our record-breaking giving days to figure out how to support vital university functions without actively harming it's graduate students with more fee increases and no increase in graduate student salary.
Allison Tobar	Student	Please do not raise fees for graduate students. I am not making a livable wage and most of my peers make close to the poverty line. Not only do we have regular expenses but our wage does not cover unexpected expenses like car repairs or medical bills. Increasing the fees will prevent me from being able to pay for my monthly utilities as 200+ per paycheck is already deducted with the payment plan but that can help pay for car payments and gas and food. I had to decline blood work from my doctor to check on my health because I wouldn't be able to pay for it since I was already behind on previous medical bills.

Cecelia Wood	Student	Dear BOV, Please do not increase the comprehensive student fees next year! With the ever-increasing cost of living, it has become very difficult to afford to live in Blacksburg. An increase of student fees would make it even harder for students to thrive and would drive away prospective grad students, imperiling the ability of VT to conduct top-tier research. Additionally, my very tubby cat is eating me out of house and home and an increase in fees means a decrease to her snack budget! My cat, Jolene, says thank you in advance for your consideration. Best, Cecelia
Avery Gendell	Student	I urge the BOV not to increase E&G fees for FY26. As a graduate student, fees are already a stressful financial burden at their current amount. I, and the average grad student at Virginia Tech make well less than the cost of living in Blacksburg, even before paying fees. I see many of my peers struggle with food insecurity, despite working for a high-ranking land-grant university that grows in value by millions of dollars each year. Raising fees will hinder student well-being and success, and I ask that you consider this sincerely.
Andrew Gunsch	Student	It is already so expensive to live in Blacksburg. Graduate students are not earning a living wage as it is. Please do not raise our fees.