

**Board of Visitors Constituent Report  
Gabriel Cohen, Undergraduate Representative  
November 6th, 2016**

Good afternoon Rector Chapman, President Sands, members of the board, administration, and distinguished guests. Thank you again for this opportunity to give you a glimpse into the undergraduate climate at Virginia Tech.

I would like to begin this report by thanking President Sands. As many of you may know, on September 30th, President Sands delivered the inaugural State of the University address. This was an incredible opportunity for students, faculty, and staff to look at Virginia Tech through the lens of President Sands. He talked about the transformation of Virginia Tech from its beginnings as a land grant institution, where we are now as a community and a university, and where we hope to go in the future. He touched on why research has been so important for growth and the great impact Virginia Tech's research has on our community and our world. One of my favorite examples was a project started this semester that used drones to deliver burritos. This program leveraged corporate partnerships with Google and Chipotle in an effort to engage hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students while garnering national attention. Projects like this allow Virginia Tech to be a leader in autonomous vehicle development and grant us the opportunity to examine the application of these technologies in commerce and in the arts. President Sands also challenged Virginia Tech to become more inclusive and diverse. An initiative titled, VTUnfinished, started this semester to spark conversations about difference and identity. The sharing sessions are held in the War Memorial Chapel and have gained large support and participation from students. I look forward to attending the next one on November 9th from 12-1 PM. The State of the University was a great way to inform various members of the Virginia Tech community about current issues and future aspirations and I look forward to hearing more of these in the coming years.

Virginia Tech is currently undergoing the master planning process and this semester has been very busy for our contractor, Sasaki. Student input and feedback has been critical in this process as the university culture and landscape begins to shift. Virginia Tech has done a great job of listening to students and has allowed myself and other campus leaders, to serve on Master Plan committees. One of the highlights of my semester was when Sasaki came to Virginia Tech in early September. They wanted to hear student input regarding various aspects of the university, and held an open info session for both graduate and undergraduate students. Those who came were able to voice opinions about everything from campus mobility and parking, to classroom availability and campus safety. I have since been touch with various student leaders who are looking forward to addressing similar ideas and opinions when Sasaki visits again in the Spring.

Additionally, a new working group has been created to examine space availability and usage on campus. The group will examine ways in which to make academic space available when classes are not in session, as well as how to make these spaces more desirable for student use.

A member of my advisory board, Jeremy Smith, working alongside SGA members, Tristan Jilson and Austin Hannon, has been hard at work this semester creating a green RFP proposal. They wrote a resolution for a campus bike share program and it was passed by the legislative branch of SGA this past week and signed by SGA President, Alexa Parsley. SGA has also partnered with the Office of Alternative Transportation on

this initiative. The students in favor of the bike share program want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment signed by President Charles Steger. This resolution could not come at a better time for the university, as the building development on campus begins to push parking further from the academic buildings.

The recent successes of Virginia Tech Athletics has undergraduate students more excited and engaged with Hokie sports now than I have seen in the past four years. I want to congratulate Coach Fuente on a fantastic start to his first season as head coach and I look forward to seeing what he has in store for us in the future. Basketball season is just around the corner and after an impressive second season at Tech, students are gearing up to show strong support for Buzz Williams and our team.

The Corps of Cadets has also gone through many changes this year as they welcomed their newest member, Growley II. Also known as Tank, this three-year-old Labrador retriever inherits a rich tradition from the depression-era where the commandant had a dog names Growley. Tank has been seen at all home football games and has quickly become a student favorite. The new Corps residence hall, formerly Brodie, is expected to be completed in March and students are looking forward to the upgrade.

Looking towards the future, there is still a great deal of work that needs to be done. The last time we met, I talked about wanting to create an environment where students were more informed. Virginia Tech has had challenges connecting with students through traditional methods such as social media and email. Both graduate and undergraduate students use a website known as 'Canvas' to access all of their academic information such as homework assignments, class notes, syllabi, even to take quizzes. I believe the home page of this website, accessed by students over ten times a day, can be a landing page for important information. Over the past few weeks I have met with several key stakeholders and will continue to move forward with this initiative in hopes of having another update on this topic at the March meeting.

Thank you again for your time and attention and please do not hesitate to reach out for any reason.

Ut Prosim,  
Gabriel Cohen

Constituency Report  
Tara D. Reel  
Graduate Student Representative to the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors  
November 6, 2016

Good afternoon Rector Chapman, President Sands, distinguished members of the board, administration, and guests.

During our last meeting, I introduced a few initiatives I would be working on this year including discussions regarding student health, graduate assistantships, and student leadership. Most of my time has been spent speaking with other students trying to get their feedback and to define the issues better by listening to their collective voice. This effort has included offering one-on-one meetings and joint Town Halls co-hosted with the Graduate Student Assembly. In a few moments, I will update you on some student health initiatives, but I want to first to share some of their stories with you.

The stories I heard have included parents who started doctoral programs. They highlighted for me a common struggle among our graduate students with families. They often try to make ends meet while tackling the demands of graduate school, but, most importantly, look for ways to provide care to their children on a tight budget.

Another story is that of students from other campuses who are excited about the future of Virginia Tech and know they are part of building the foundation for that future now. These include our students in Roanoke who are performing cutting-edge research at the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute. I know our administrators are working toward building teams now that will help bridge services and support for students in the future.

I have also heard from students who see our university at the precipice of new growth and diversity and yearn to usher in inclusiveness. It has been a great honor to hear from all of these voices. More than anything, they share their stories realizing that they are advocating for change for future Hokies. In my conversations with administrators here, it has been my top priority to try to provide a profile of a graduate student. As I alluded to in my prior report, we wear many titles, and our needs can be just as diverse.

As for student health, I would like to thank administrators and staff for their efforts regarding the Affordable Care Act. Our nation's leaders, including Senators Tim Kaine and Mark Warner, advocated for universities to continue to provide subsidized student health insurance coverage for graduate students without penalty.

I will share two initiatives I have been working on regarding student health. During the Master Plan process, there were ideas regarding self-care spaces for our students. These spaces are becoming popular resources on campuses such as James Madison University. These rooms provide quiet spaces for students to unplug for a few moments throughout the course of a busy day. We figured that there could be no better test group for this concept than graduate students.

I have been coordinating this effort with Dean Karen DePauw and the staff at the graduate school along with Chris Wise, the Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, and his graduate assistant Monica Goyanko. I have also formed a visioning group of graduate students who will ultimately provide the blueprint for this project.

We are also in discussions about the possibility of coordinating a pop-up clinic geared specifically toward graduate students and their families. While we are in the preliminary discussions of this project, we hope to create a program that would allow families access to basic health and dental care while being complemented by services already provided by Hokie Wellness. I would like to thank Dwight Shelton, Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer at Virginia Tech, for his encouragement of these ideas.

I wanted to share with the board an experience I had regarding an event that is part of InclusiveVT. The Office of Inclusion and Diversity, overseen by Dr. Menah Pratt-Clarke, recently launched a series of "gathering for sharing" sessions, known as VTUnfinished. I saw both graduate and undergraduate students, school administrators including our president, and members of the Blacksburg community in attendance. The venue allowed for the sharing of experiences regarding identity and difference. It is the hope of many students that we can continue having open discussions about our past and future.

In closing, I have enjoyed getting to know each one of the members of the board and chatting with you at the football games. I appreciate your engagements with the students who attended as my guests and those students you have met here today. Many of you have shared you would like to spend more time on campus getting to know our facilities and administrators, but I would also like to extend the opportunity to engage our students. I know I speak for myself and Gabe when I say we would be happy to provide more opportunities for you to engage them when you are visiting our beautiful campus. Please let us know how we can accommodate your schedules. I will end by saying that I look forward to keeping these conversations going.

Ut Prosim,  
Tara D. Reel

**Staff Senate Constituency Report**  
**Virginia Tech Board of Visitors**  
**November 6, 2016**  
**Presented by Alex Parrish, Staff Senate President**

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

With the holiday season approaching, many of the staff at Virginia Tech pursue service to the community at large. Projects providing aid to families in need, such as the Angel Tree, are very common among departments, and many who are in need have gifts under their tree on Christmas morning because of these efforts. In most cases, these are staff-led initiatives from organizing and collecting to delivery of the collected items into the hands of the nonprofit groups who distribute them.

Outreach isn't only for the holiday season. The College of Science Staff Association has a year-round program that provides connections to senior citizens, visiting with residents of a local living community. Staff visit the residents monthly to play checkers and chess, or just sit and talk to the residents.

Efforts in the Staff Senate itself have been focused on building conversations and community across the campus. To this end, we have worked diligently to improve our direct communications, facilitate discussions between the leadership of Staff Associations, and aid in the development of Associations who may experience difficulty finding representatives. The results have been higher awareness of activities between groups who previously had no interaction. Picking up ideas from one another to foster engagement has given strength to both established and developing associations.

We were honored to host Rector Chapman at our October Staff Senate meeting, an open forum-style discussion that allowed staff to directly address concerns that they may have. Principal among those concerns was the budget outlook for the state, and how that might impact staff pay raises. The Rector did an excellent job of explaining the state process in general, providing a better understanding for the big picture.

The results of the campus climate survey, taken a few months ago, are of high interest to our group. Once this becomes available, both Staff Senate and the Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs plan to take a deep dive into the contents to find possible issues to address, and strengths to help grow.

There is much talk among staff about diversity. Many are pursuing the certificates being offered by organizational and professional development. To this end, I often hear of the receipt of certification as a diversity ally, diversity advocate, and a diversity ambassador. These are becoming badges of honor among employees, in no small part because they come with a trophy or two.

It is an exciting time to be a Hokie; whether student, faculty or staff. While many changes are underway, it feels like big things are coming. Balancing the butterflies in your stomach with the excitement of the prospect of better things can be difficult, but at the end of the day, we're all doing everything in our power to make this a better place to live and learn.

Respectfully submitted,

Alex Parrish  
President, Staff Senate

**Faculty Constituency Report**  
**Virginia Tech Board of Visitors November 6-7, 2016**  
**Monty Abbas, President-VT Faculty Senate**

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

I am honored to represent the Virginia Tech Faculty again in delivering my second report to the BOV today. We do have some challenges, as is always expected, but that is what keeps us sharp and creative. Faculty members are still concerned about salaries and compensation, as we are falling behind our peers, and as we have salary compression and inversion issues. We are interested in having a faculty club that can foster a collaborative and collegial environment at VT. We know that it is challenging to meet these needs at a time of declining funds, but we trust in our upper administration to seek and provide solutions to these concerns.

The Faculty Senate continues to meet twice a month, and we continue to invite and engage several entities on campus to brainstorm and share our feedback on important faculty-related issues. Since the last BOV meeting, we have discussed the needs for enhancing the Student Perception of Teaching (SPOT) system, the VT online open access and collaborative tools, the faculty roles in the school of Medicine, the VT new business engagement model, and the research and innovation activities at VT. We had the pleasure of having Rector Chapman and President Sands in one of our Faculty Senate meetings last month. We certainly appreciated their engaging thoughts during our interactive Q/A session—all 80 minutes of it. On behalf of the Faculty Senate, I'd like to thank Rector Chapman and President Sands for their visit—it was very much appreciated indeed.

We are making progress in the establishment of the Ombuds office that will serve faculty and staff beginning Fall 2017, and we plan to present a resolution to the BOV this year. In our efforts to further improve professional development opportunities for our faculty, we have formed four task forces that focus on research, scholarship, teaching innovations, and tenure and promotion issues. Our task forces will be further engaged in the next few months. We have come a long way in understanding ways to increase our efficacy in balancing faculty time among demanding and conflicting efforts. We anticipate further planned meetings and discussion with the office of the Provost and the Office of Research and Innovation.

The Faculty Senate is involved with the new budget model conversations. We will also be meeting with Provost Rikakis next week for further discussion around the Destination Areas. We are learning more as these efforts evolve, and we will continue to share our ideas and the feedback that we collect from our constituency. The new atmosphere that engages all constituencies and incorporates their feedback is most certainly welcomed and appreciated.

Thank you all for the opportunity to share our thoughts with the BOV today. I look forward to sharing our ongoing progress and new endeavors with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Monty Abbas