

Staff Senate Constituency Report
Virginia Tech Board of Visitors
March 23, 2009
Thomas Tucker, Staff Senate President

Rector Lawson, members of the Board of Visitors, President Steger, administrators and guests. Again, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you regarding the Virginia Tech Staff. As always it is my honor and privilege to share with you information on the activities and initiatives of the Staff Senate.

Promotion of Diversity: In its support of the values expressed in the “Virginia Tech Principles of Community”, the Staff Senate continues to conduct and support programs to generate greater awareness and understanding of the diverse cultures that exist in Virginia Tech Community. In the January Staff Senate meeting, Dr. Kevin McDonald, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion, discussed diversity initiatives and the “Advancing Diversity at Virginia Tech Workshop”. Dr. McDonald thanked the Staff Senate for its support and attendance at the workshop. Senators also offered suggestions for future Workshop topics. Dr. Susanna Rinehart, Director of Education for Diversity and Inclusion, presented at the March Staff Senate meeting. Dr Rinehart discussed her new position within the University and processes for staff members to utilize her office to promote diversity and inclusion in all facets of University life.

Community Service through the VT-ENGAGE Program: The Staff Senate continues to provide volunteer service and support to the community through the VT-ENGAGE program. Senators provided support to the Blacksburg Interfaith food pantry as our group project. Several members volunteered work hours at the pantry and several projects were conducted to collect food and other needed items. The Senate also supported the Montgomery County Christmas Store with

donations and volunteer hours. Currently, the Senate is participating in a statewide effort to resupply the Commonwealth's Food Banks with Peanut Butter. Recent health concerns have caused a shortage of Peanut Butter, which is an important staple for food banks. In response to a request from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), the staff senate held a food drive to assist the resupply of local food banks.

Staff have pledged approximately 20,000 hours since VT-ENGAGE started. VT-ENGAGE administration have indicated that this is probably a low estimate of the total hours of service contributed by staff due to the fact that some prefer to keep their donations private. Karen Gilbert, Assistant Director of the Center for Student Engagement and Community Partnerships (CSECP) joined the senate at the February meeting. Ms. Gilbert presented an overview of the CSECP and its four steering committees, which include VT-ENGAGE, Engaged Community Partners, Engaged Learning, and Engaged Student Leadership. Staff volunteers were requested to serve on each of the Steering committee groups.

Leadership Development - McComas Staff Leadership Seminar/Conference: The McComas Staff Leadership Seminar has grown over the past 14 years from a program initiated to build leadership skills among staff senators, to promoting leadership skills for all Virginia Tech staff, to include staff from other Universities in the Commonwealth. Given current economic situations, the planning committee proposed to expand the McComas seminar to include ACC Member Universities and regional Colleges and Universities instead of developing a separate national conference. The goal of this conference is to promote inter-collegiate discussion of ideas and best practices related to shared governance. The Conference will be held on May 7, 2009 in the Lane Stadium South End-zone Facilities. The theme is, "The Changing Faces of Staff Leadership".

Breakout sessions include: Catalysts that lead to change, Succession Planning, Economic Driven changes, Generations working together, and Participation constraints driven by workload and supervisory support. The Planning Committee would considerate a privilege to have members of the Board speak on the topics of leadership at the Conference.

Communication and Recognition - Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs (CSPA): The CSPA continued to promote open communications, Staff development, and Staff Recognition.

Communications: CSPA along with the Staff Senate were primary conduits for transmitting information related to a proposed Holiday policy change. Information related to the proposed new policy was forwarded to staff via the CSPA, Staff Senate and individual staff associations. A survey conducted through the Staff Senate gathered the opinions of the staff, which were then reported back through CSPA to the Human Resources Department.

HR Policies: The commission is conducting a comparative review of variations between policies related to staff and consistency with policies related to other groups.

Staff Development: CSPA is researching the question of varying level of support for staff training among departments (related to funding and work release issues).

Staff Recognition: Support for the Virginia Tech Staff Leadership Award is continuing. The calls for nominations for the second annual presentation of this award were distributed on March 02, 2009. Additionally the Staff Senate is exploring of the possibility of developing a physical place or area to recognize staff service. One idea forwarded is to develop a "Walk of Service" which might include brick pavers with a staff person's names and years of service to Virginia Tech engraved on them, similar to those found on the Alumni Center Patio.

Other Staff Involvement: Staff members have also been involved in various other initiatives within the University including the Violence Prevention Committee, the Energy and Sustainability Committee, and the Wellness Task Force. Work with these groups is still underway and additional information shall be provided in the future.

This concludes my report. Thank you for your attention.