



Staff Senate

<http://www.staffsenate.vt.edu/>

2018-2019

STAFF SENATE OFFICERS

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STANDING COMMITTEES

CHAIRS

Communications

Bruce Harper (bharper@vt.edu),
University Relations/Creative Studio
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Elections and Nominations

Judy Taylor (taylor1@vt.edu),
Provost Office (0132)

Policies and Issues

Judy Alford (judy.alford@vt.edu),
TLOS (0292)

McComas Leadership Seminar

Amy Ingram (amy.ingram@vt.edu)
Honors College (0427)

June 20, 2019

Noon – 1:00pm

3100 University Gateway Center, corner of Prices Fork Rd and University City Blvd.

(Use the parking deck just behind the building, or
one of the Blacksburg Transit routes that stop nearby.)

AGENDA

Call to order by Robert Sebek

Attendance: Please sign the attendance sheet, including guests

Approval of Minutes: electronically

Standing Committee updates: Written reports are included with this agenda

Communication: Mr. Harper

Elections & Nominations: Ms. Taylor

Policies & Issues: Ms. Alford

McComas Leadership Seminar: Ms. Ingram

Guest speaker: President Tim Sands

Passing of the gavel: Mr. Sebek and Ms. Smith

Adjournment

Zoom Video Conferencing Information

Initial meeting <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/901293323>

Next meeting: July 18, 2019: TBA

Staff Senate Constituency Report
Virginia Tech Board of Visitors
June 2, 2019
Presented by Robert Sebek, Staff Senate President

Good afternoon Rector Treacy, members of the Board of Visitors, President Sands, administrators and distinguished guests. It is an honor to present to you updates from staff at Virginia Tech.

When I began taking on leadership roles within the Staff Senate, I had no idea I would be working on the issues that have taken up so much of my time these last two years. After speaking with staff across the campuses, holding long phone conversations, and reading numerous emails, it became clear to me that our lowest paid employees struggle to afford basic necessities, and that precipitates problems at work: tardiness from a lack of transportation, excessive absences from an inability to pay for healthcare, even with insurance, and limited advancement opportunities because they can't afford the education/training required to gain new skills.

After working closely with people across the university, Staff Senate has accomplished many things during my term of office. We are included on administrator search committees. We've expressed our concerns on transportation and parking, and we now help distribute information on affordable options for parking passes and alternate transportation means. Salaries for employees in pay bands one and two have been increased. A stipend has been added for employees making under \$35,500. Each of these changes will have a great impact on our many lower paid employees. But there is still more that can be done.

Raising the floor for our part-time employees and contractors to the \$12/hour our full-employees have received will be vital to recruiting and retaining staff in key areas overloaded by our large enrollments: dining, custodians, lab managers, and parking enforcement. The time to bring part-time pay scales in line with this minimum is now.

The new child care task force is off to a good start, and we will soon hear from local experts and gather data this fall through a third-party survey. But the need for affordable and flexible child care options is here now. Graduate students with families will struggle teaching labs well into the evening to accommodate the large freshman class. Dining employees who start well before dawn have few options when it comes to their children.

The hundreds of freshmen who will have to live off campus have already affected rent rates in town, along with older apartment complexes being replaced with luxury developments. The result is that affordable housing near campus is decreasing, pushing lower-paid employees farther and farther away. Money saved on rent is then spent on commuting and parking. I have applied to Blacksburg's housing advisory council to be able to continue to work on this issue after my term as Staff Senate president has ended.

Our employees want to advance themselves so they can move into better paying jobs, but the university makes it easier to have your Ph.D. paid for than a G.E.D. Policy restrictions and inflexible supervisors make taking advantage of the 6 credit hours a year benefit difficult for many employees who could earn an undergraduate degree. Other employees want to attend training to improve their work skills to be able to move up the career ladder, but are hampered by costs their departments are unable or unwilling to afford. We need to align policies to make it clear that Virginia Tech's values include bettering its employees, even when that bettering may mean the employee moves on to another job, inside or outside the university. That value for personal and professional development must be communicated to supervisors.

Virginia Tech can be a great place to work, but there is always room for improvement. Some improvements do not require spending additional money; it's only a matter of raising awareness of existing programs and services. As onboarding processes are revised, Human Resources should make an effort to highlight the same material shared with new employees with existing employees. The Staff Senate and other campus partners can also share this information to ensure all employees are aware of the benefits and services available to them.

As my term of office comes to an end this month, I am confident that the training and sharing of information with upcoming leaders within the Staff Senate means those who will serve after me will continue to fight for a better work place for our staff. Tammie Smith from Summer and Winter Sessions will take over as the new Staff Senate President and Staff Representative to the Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Sebek
President, Staff Senate

Staff Senate 2018-2019 Summary

Staff Senate was involved with several projects across the university during the last academic year.

Communications

- Coordinated outreach at the fall Wellness and Benefits fair and the spring Staff Appreciation Day.
- Updated the website with meeting documents, updates to our constitution, and linked to the roster spreadsheet.
- Seeing more engagement through our Facebook page.

Elections and Nominations

- Maintained a database of staff interested in serving on committees, commissions, and council. The database is used to contact staff for possible assignment to serve when an off-cycle position opening occurs on a committee, commission, or council.
- Worked with the staff senate president to fill open positions.
- Worked with associations to add senators or senator alternates to their associations.
- Completed an election process to fill the 18 open positions on committees, commissions, and council.

McComas Leadership Seminar

- Met with Human Resources along with the President and Vice President of Staff Senate, to discuss the budget for the seminar. We now have a line item in HR's budget for the Seminar.
- Solicited extra funds from Deans and Vice Presidents for supplies (pens, notepads) and the leadership book.
- Established a google group to communicate, effectively, with committee planning.
- Piloted a satellite location in northern Virginia for staff in that area to attend. Coordinated with the Northern Capital Region office to ensure a catering service was provided for the staff attending the seminar via Zoom.

Here is a list of accomplishments:

- Worked closely with the new Vice President for Human Resources.
- Mr. Sebek served on the search committee for the new Provost.
- The Senate shared a "parking cheat sheet" with staff that highlighted cheaper parking options and alternative transportation services.
- Mr. Sebek presented on the need for access to affordable child care to the Board of Visitors in November.
- The Staff Senate worked with the Faculty Senate to raise awareness of our below-living-wage salaries for pay bands 1 and 2, including a presentation by the Faculty Senate president to the Board of Visitors.

- Mr. Sebek served on the university's Total Compensation Task Force that raised the minimum salary in pay band 1 from \$10.25/hour to \$12/hour, with corresponding increases in pay bands 1 and 2. It also established a \$500 yearly stipend for full time employees making under \$35,500. Staff Senate is still working on applying the \$12/hour minimum to part-time employees.
- Mr. Sebek serves on the new university Child Care Task Force that will report to the Board of Visitors at its November 2019 meeting.
- Ms. Smith served on the planning committee for the new university strategic plan, approved by the Board of Visitors at the June meeting. The Senate had multiple opportunities to provide feedback on the elements of the Plan.
- The Senate's executive board reviewed several resolutions prior to their presentation at University Council. We provided formal feedback on two of those resolutions.
- The Senate approved a resolution of gratitude for Lisa Wilkes in her roles as interim VP for HR.
- The Senate continued to sponsor meetings of staff association leadership to share practices and network.
- The University Benefits Committee surveyed staff on the possibility of changing how Winter Closing is handled. The majority of respondents said not to make a change.
- The Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs, chaired by Ms. Smith, held deep discussions on pay and benefits & recruitment, retention, and training.
- The Senate heard presentations from Ellen Plummer on shared governance; Tim Hodge on the university budget; Matt Hanratty on Blacksburg's affordable housing programs; Joyce Landreth and others on 4HELP and IT support services; Erin McCann on the university strategic plan; Senate leaders on future staff leaders, new senators, and encouraging staff participation in shared governance; Dwyn Taylor on upcoming construction projects; Jerri Baker on parking; Mike Dunn and Jack Washington on the university's Master Plan; and President Sands on the plan to deal with over enrollment.