

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