

Staff Senate Constituency Report Update
Virginia Tech Board of Visitors
August 27, 2018

While I submitted the written constituency report shared with last month's agenda, issues arose during the BOV retreat that lead me to substantially change what I discussed in person during the information session of the BOV where I gave me report.

During the retreat, members of the BOV and university administrators discussed strategies for leading the university into the future, near and long term. There were significant discussions on the budget, future of funding from the state, areas of growth, and general needs. There was a presentation on faculty salaries compared to our peer institutions (much as I have seen before) and the need for additional funding to bring up those averages. Then there was a presentation on staff salaries compared to market levels, which I have not seen before (staff salaries have never been discussed in recent years, based on my search of past BOV minutes). There was a discussion on the need for an additional \$5 million to bring staff salaries up to market levels, not including the coming merit raises.

There were also discussions on finding funding for other types of support for personnel: lab equipment and renovations for researchers, conference travel, professional development, and additional benefits. While heavily faculty focused, I reminded attendees of similar needs on the staff side.

When I have my presentation on Sunday, I talked about the real need for funding staff salary increases, with an emphasis on increasing salaries for pay bands 1-3, plus wages for part-time staff. Even modest increases for our lowest paid staff will make a tremendous difference in their lives. I reminded BOV members that under the Restructuring Act of 2006, university staff policies are governed by our BOV, and that UVA and William & Mary have already implemented changes in compensation, benefits, and leave for their university staff, while Virginia Tech has only implemented the merit raises in years when there is no statewide raise. I asked that the changes happening in the new Human Resources division also include a review of those policies at UVA and W&M. The Rector brought up his visit to Staff Senate this past spring when it was mentioned that there had been a coat drive for staff and how deeply that affected him. So there is support for our requests.

I also noted that staff can benefit the university when they can participate in professional development activities, and that the university needs a culture that supports staff participation. Currently, many supervisors will not allow their staff to take classes or attend conferences because they worry that staff member will be able to move on to a better paying job, leaving them with a position to fill. I said that the university should value a more skillful employee and support someone moving to positions as part of a career. There was general agreement that this should be implemented.

Staff Senate, the Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs, the Benefits Committee, the Staff@VT task force, and each of your staff associations have a role to play to develop these policies,

compensation plans, benefit packages, professional development opportunities, and other changes that will improve the working conditions here at Virginia Tech. I appreciate all of you who can contribute to the work needed in the months and years ahead.

Robert Sebek

President, Staff Senate and Staff Representative to the Board of Visitors