

Staff Senate Constituency Report
Virginia Tech Board of Directors
August 23-26, 2019
Presented by Tamarah Smith, Staff Senate President

Good afternoon Rector Valeiras, Board of Visitors members, President Sands, Administrators and distinguished guests.

I am honored to be a part of the constituent group to advocate for our amazing staff.

As this is my first meeting as the staff representative to the Board, here is a little about me.

I was born in California but raised in West Virginia. I learned at an early age that you had to work hard for what you want. Being raised in a tight knit farming community, we knew everyone and were taught the value of communities rallying together for all situations.

From an early age, I have had a passion for leading, and a desire to help communities grow. With my 30 years of Virginia Tech Service, a certification in advanced organizational management and some college course that I have taken here, I have a passion for this university and for service. I have seen so much change over the years and support the change that is occurring.

One change I am advocating for staff this year is to expand their knowledge of change occurring at the university and take an active part in learning the “buzz” words and how they apply to our work. The “5 Minute Buzz Word” provides opportunity for a staff volunteer to share their understanding of the initiative, what it means to them, and how it impacts their work. Specific examples include Ut Prosim, shared governance, and Tech Talent Pipeline. My hope is that if staff better understand the terms faculty and administrators are using, they will feel more included and appreciated for what they bring to the table.

Another staff initiative is to offer different activities or events where we can work together in serving not only our university but our communities as well. This past month I shared the need for volunteers working as a Hokie Helper for move in. At this time, I do not have a number of those who are participating, but I am excited to start this initiative. These events will not only benefit the community but help staff to feel the sense of community that we all need.

At our past staff senate meeting we were joined by Reese Ramos, our new Director of the Ombuds Office, who very delightfully engaged the staff in what his office has to offer. The staff were very encouraged by this new resource and look forward to working with him.

As you have been hearing, affordable/quality child care continues to be an issue in this community. Staff Senate has an ad hoc committee on this issue and will continue to share this need with the university. The past staff senate president, Robert Sebek, is also a stakeholder on the University Childcare Committee convened earlier this spring by Dr. Pinkney.

Finally, compensation is being reviewed on student wage, and non-student wage positions. This past year we made great strides with increasing the minimum salaried paid amount to \$12.00 an hour. When this increase was first brought forth, there was ongoing concern that non-student wage and student wage positions may be doing the same type of work and if this is the case, shouldn't those positions be reviewed and considered for a change to the minimum wage. A separate committee has been formed to address these concerns. This committee is being chaired by Paula Stuard, Compensation Director in Human Resources and I am fortunate to have a seat on it.

I am a resource for this university advocating for staff, working beside our faculty, undergraduate and graduate student constituent leaders. I welcome encouragement and input on how we can work together to make our university stronger.