

Staff Senate Constituency Report
Virginia Tech Board of Directors
November 17 & 18, 2019
Presented by Tamarah Smith, Staff Senate President

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

I am honored to be here today.

Communication is my main topic today.

A few things have occurred in the past few months to warrant this discussion. I was asked to sit on a search committee for a higher level position at our university and while reviewing the job description there was no mention of staff. But there were mention of students and faculty with some statistics added about research and such. When I brought this up to the chair of the position and I'm sure it was shared upward to the company we are working with for this search, surely just to appease me, the word staff was included, no statistics or anything to shout how great we are, "staff" was just added. So, putting us in as an afterthought is just as insulting. Just something to keep in mind.

Then a capital campaign is rolled out. On October 11th VT news there is a 4.13 min. video for us to view as well as an over hour long video that Dr. Sands is in. Nowhere in both videos are staff mentioned. Numerous staff have reached out to me with complaints of how "Virginia Tech does not care about its staff" and lots of frustration for being left out. I reached out to and spoke with Tracy Vosburgh and she shared that the leaving staff out of the videos was intentional. This is a huge campaign and that these particular videos were specific to donors (alumni) and that the videos were geared towards this particular audience. She assured me that the staff would have opportunities in the future with this campaign. I appreciated the talk with Tracy but am still concerned about the staff being left out in future university correspondence. There is no way that staff could have known that this was geared to that specific audience. Tracy and I spoke about how staff typically get upset when being asked to be a part of a campaign when they do not make large salaries. So, this is a hard thing to get right. But bottom line, staff have to be included and they need to feel a part of this wonderful university that we work at. When I took this role of President it was to support and stand behind our staff here at Virginia Tech. I would not be doing my job if I let things like this go.

The compensation committee that I am on reviewing student wage, and non-student wage positions is moving along nicely. With the help of extensive data and great conversations we have made great progress. I believe this committee will be able to put forth some recommendations in the next month or two. 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 and work towards meeting the goals of our strategic plan.