

**Remarks made during the BOV Information Session**  
**W. Samuel Easterling**  
**President, Faculty Senate of Virginia Tech**  
**7 November 2004**

Thank you Mr. Rector. Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

I'd like to address three points in my remarks this afternoon: Campus Climate, the Charter University Initiative and the Faculty.

**Campus Climate**

In my comments at our August meeting, I spoke of the importance of *civility* and *bridge building* between members of the university community. In light of recent disturbing and unacceptable events that occurred on campus, I feel the need to reiterate this message. While our focus recently has been on the incidents directed at members of the African-American community, indeed there are other less publicized, but equally despicable, acts that occur on campus directed at other groups. We must remind ourselves that working to improve campus climate, in all aspects of university life, for all members of the university community is not a definitive task like completing a paper or a course, but rather it must be an on-going objective that is interwoven in to everything we do. We should take these recent negatives and turn them into positives. We should talk about the positive things being done to improve campus climate and how these can be expanded or enhance. We should use the incidents to help us focus on what we can do better so that those in our community and others outside our community realize that we are indeed committed to our core values. These values include *mutual respect* and *personal integrity*. I suggest to you that these and our other core values will not have the significance we desire if we are not committed to *civility*, defined here by a desire to have an inclusive and diverse campus environment. As a university community – the leadership, faculty, staff and students - must all re-commit ourselves to achieving this often stated objective. Certainly our future depends on it.

**Charter University Initiative**

I know you have probably heard as much as I on the Charter University Initiative. I suggest to you that the discussion needs to continue and be expanded. It is important for me, as well as my faculty colleagues, for students, for staff, for the administration and for this Board to be as familiar as we possibly can with the details of the initiative. I believe that the Charter, or at least the major points within the charter, is absolutely critical to the future of our University. This initiative will impact our ability to provide the high quality education to our students that they expect and deserve, it will enable us to retain and improve the world class faculty that we have, and it will provide an enhanced working environment for our talented and hard working classified staff.

I've read and heard detailed, serious questions and subsequent discussion that have raised concerns about various aspects of the Charter initiative. I think such discussions are healthy and lead to a better understanding of the issues. I'm convinced from the presentations and discussions that I've heard and been a part of that we need to stay the course and do everything we can do to educate ourselves about the details

of the initiative and to support those on the front lines that are seeking its passage. Again, I say, I think our future depends on it.

## **Faculty**

Members of the faculty continue to work hard and achieve notable successes outside those that occur everyday in the classroom. Recent items in the news point to some of these:

A \$2 million award from NSF to the College of Engineering, that Associate Dean Bevelee Watford will oversee, to develop strategies to turn around the national decline in the number of engineering graduates

A three-day humanities symposium, "Music, Myths & Mountains," held recently, that featured performers and scholars from all over the world.

A "rebuilt" System X terascale computer achieving 12.25 teraflops, an almost 2 teraflop increase from the previous benchmark of 10.28 – truly remarkable.

These accomplishments, and many, many others, are developed, supported, led or created by Virginia Tech faculty, most often working with our students and staff, and are great examples of the capabilities of the Virginia Tech faculty. But they do not and will not happen in a vacuum.

Proper support, the ability to work with high caliber students, the availability of state-of-the-art facilities - are all critical to such successes. I told you in August, and want to repeat it again now, that I believe the key to our future, given where we are today and where we want to go, is to grow the faculty both in stature and in number. Certainly we have to be very targeted in the areas that we invest new resources. I'm confident that this targeting will include attention both to the funded research and education mission as well as the unfunded research and education mission. We are a strong faculty today, but I believe we can always be better. The bottom line – support the faculty, we'll be successful at the things we do best, thus enabling the University as a whole to achieve the stature envisioned by the plans that President Steger and Provost McNamee have laid out and that this Board has endorsed.

Thank you Mr. Rector.