

Remarks made during the BOV Meeting

Hardus Odendaal  
President, Faculty Senate of Virginia Tech

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Thank you Mr. Rector, members of the Board of Visitors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Once again, I'd like to express on behalf of the faculty our appreciation for these opportunities to participate in this level of the governance process and your responsiveness to faculty issues.

The budget cuts in General Fund allocations from the state have remained the focus of our attention over the past months, and the Faculty Senate is, perhaps not surprisingly, still concerned about the impact the cuts are having on the instructional mission of the university. Last year the Officers of the Faculty Senate gathered feedback directly from the faculty on the impact of the recent rounds of Budget reductions and on any recourse actions they may have in mind. This feedback indicates that the reductions in department operating budgets have had a deep impact on departments' ability to sustain their programs and provide their students with a quality educational experience in terms of the basic transaction that happens at a university: students being taught and advised by faculty. Since most of an academic department's budget is spent on faculty salaries (typically >90%), only a small fraction (typically of 2-9%) goes to operational expenses, such as the hiring of instructors, GTA positions, office staff, travel, stationary, phone lines, etc. Every cut of 5% therefore had a significant impact on the ability of our academic departments to provide the resources directly associated with instruction. Faculty hiring, startup packages, retention and attrition have become growing concerns. Another major concern for the faculty is the library. The library this year is conducting another review to find almost \$900,000 in library subscriptions to journals, databases, monographic series, abstracting and indexing services and reference sources that will have to be canceled due to insufficient funding.

Without going into detail, I'd like to just summarize a few pertinent points that also came from the feedback that you may find relevant now and in the near future.

#### Tuition

The faculty by-and-large agreed that tuition and fees have to be increased not only to offset the reductions in E&G funding from the State, but also to counter inflation and increasing costs of bills, such as coal en electricity. Although we do not wish to implicate access for in-state undergraduate students, we do feel it is necessary to increase tuition in order to maintain quality. We hope the State or

the Federal government don't restrict our ability to increase tuition too much in return for stimulus money.

#### Differential Tuition and Fee increases and Enrollment Planning

This brings me to a related subject - differential tuition increases and enrollment planning is something the university might give more consideration. Enrollment planning should however, not be done centrally, but remain at the college and department levels, and colleges should be encouraged to collaborate closely on this issue.

#### Classrooms

Due to budget cuts we lost faculty positions for new hires and as a result of retirements. Fewer faculty and more students meant that individual faculty are teaching more classes and class sizes increased, which has a deteriorating effect on the classroom experience for students. We need more classrooms and we appreciate your efforts on this issue that are noticeable in current projects and those being planned.

#### Research

There has been good news too. Despite the recent rounds of budget cuts, research expenditures are still growing – and this should demonstrated the commitment and dedication of our faculty to continue to write proposals and secure successful grants despite the additional strain that was imposed on them due to declining funding and resources.

#### Other Feedback

The faculty had several other suggestions, but I want to highlight just a few that you may or may not find interesting:

- A Greener university: On saving paper and reducing the cost of publications, especially the expensive glossy brochures. We should move more towards electronic media, not just for glossy paper media, but also for administrative forms that students and faculty have to fill out or run around with for signatures.
- On energy and Sustainability: To reduce heating and cooling expenses in buildings. Turning off lights at night and maximizing efficiency of heating and cooling systems and insulation. They also suggested incentives for carpooling when using the fleet service.
- On Service: the faculty thought that we might consider the possibility of reducing the number of committee meetings and making committee meetings more efficient at the department, college and university levels.

Mr. Rector, to summarize, it is of crucial for the university to protect its basic function of instruction. It is our hope and recommendation that the BOV look very carefully at the effect that the cuts are having on instruction at Virginia Tech, and ensure that department operating budgets and the library budget be brought up

to the levels needed to maintain quality when making decisions on how funds will be distributed and invested at Virginia Tech.

Finally, I wish to express our deep appreciation to our university leadership, Dr. Steger, Dr. McNamee, our Vice-Presidents, our Deans, and their staff, who spent countless hours to find solutions to the budget crisis, to buffer the departments from the deep cuts that were imposed by the state, (we know it could've been worse) and who were forced to make difficult decisions. In the office of the VP of finance I know there were many late nights spent going through budgets line-item by line-item. Our appreciation goes out to them for the wonderful job they did to look after the finances of the university, but they are not the only ones who've been working hard and we recognize and appreciate the efforts of all our administrators and staff during these difficult times.

Again, thank you for this opportunity – and thank you for your dedication.

That concludes my report.