

Remarks made during the BOV Information Session
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Thank you Mr. Rector; and good afternoon, members of Virginia Tech's Board of Visitors, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

This is an enormously busy, and frankly exhausting, time of year at Virginia Tech – for faculty, students, administration and staff. When I hear it referred to as Virginia Tech's unique brand of March Madness, I am tempted to quietly add "... followed by the April Asylum." Certainly, the ongoing process of updating the Strategic Plan, and the demands of the Higher Education Restructuring Act, have added to that intensity.

In carrying out the complex and arduous task of updating the Strategic Plan, our leadership has strived to represent the kind of university-wide, multi-layered, open and thoughtful debate to which we aspire as an institution. Community engagement is by no means easy, but it is critical to the integrity and validity of the process, and I applaud the efforts of all involved. Most recently, Friday's town hall meeting afforded an opportunity for shared input and insight. I know there is a second such gathering planned for April. There is no question that this process – and the implementation that will follow – raises both anxiety and excitement, both worry and a sense of opportunity. We must remember to pay attention to all of it.

I want to mention another extremely positive example of our progress toward becoming a more dynamic and responsive community. The development of the SafeWatch program is a truly excellent example of responsiveness and collaboration among administration, faculty and students, resulting in thoughtful action. Also, the Commission on Faculty Affairs has been working hard to address some of the issues that emerged from our faculty survey and focus groups last spring. So, good things are happening. I want to acknowledge that the work is *hard*. I believe that it is critical to the health and well-being of our institution that we *name that*. This is complex, often frustrating, sometimes overwhelming, important, and ultimately inspiring work. It is work that matters. If we do it well, it will change lives and the quality of our collective future.

Those of us at the BOV Academic Affairs Committee meeting this morning saw impressive evidence of the creativity, innovation and forward-thinking of our faculty members and departments across this university. If we are going to look to our faculty for innovative ideas and initiatives such as these, we must make it very clear that their time and energy will be supported, rewarded and recognized. We must continue to create the conditions which release the creativity and empower the intellect of each faculty member – and, by extension, of every student.

All of us need time and space for thought, study, reflection and development. We need the physical, financial and human resources to carry out our work – in the classroom, the library, and the lab. We do our work in the context of a seemingly endless struggle for resources and support. This has become a defining feature of our shared existence. The impact of that stress is substantial. We talked yesterday about the need for adequate space in which to do our work. We have talked for some time now about faculty compensation. There is considerable concern as to whether moving with all deliberate speed toward the 60th percentile is still a priority.

I am excited about the Center for Undergraduate Education, and the energizing and re-invigoration of our undergraduate program. It is timely, necessary, and very much in line with a national focus on quality undergraduate education. I sense that my excitement is shared by students, faculty and administration. However, I am concerned as to whether adequate funding and support will be available to accompany that vision. I urge the board to ensure that it does.

Virginia Tech is moving forward. I hope that we continue down this path of dynamic, challenging, and open dialogue. I hope we continue to model and promote integrity, respect, awareness and communication. I urge us to be rigorous and vigilant in our self-reflection, and to actively and continually examine our policies, practices and procedures in all arenas to ensure that we are living our core values in all that we do.

Thank you very much.