

**Remarks made during the BOV Information Session**  
**W. Samuel Easterling**  
**President, Faculty Senate of Virginia Tech**  
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Thank you Mr. Rector. Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

I have the great pleasure of speaking to you today on behalf of the Faculty of Virginia Tech. When I hear my self say those words, I also realize the great responsibility that my presence here requires.

What an exciting time of the year it is for us all! The start of another academic year always brings a rejuvenated spirit to campus in which all members of the University community share. I've often told friends and colleagues that it is indeed this time of the academic year that I think I enjoy most.

I want to start by thanking you for your past and continuing efforts on behalf of the Faculty. I know there was discussion last year within Finance and Audit on the issue of competitive salaries and the fact that these are essential to address recruitment and retention of a high caliber faculty. I know the Board and Administration is committed to improvements in this area and its importance cannot be understated.

I am particularly excited that the focus for the coming year of the Academic Affairs Committee will be Graduate Education, Faculty Affairs and Diversity. The three focus areas are both closely intertwined and individually important. I know there will be significant discussion about the many aspects of this effort within Academic Affairs and I don't want to preempt that, but I do want to focus on what I believe is the singular key to our success in reaching the goal of becoming a Top 30 University set forth by President Steger and endorsed by the Board – that is the Faculty.

One only need to look at many of the metrics on the "*Scorecard-University Goals 2010*" document, which was discussed during the Academic Affairs committee meetings last year, to quickly realize the urgency of my point. What group will most affect the total research expenditures, the number of publications or the number of National Academy members? What group will advise and guide the graduate work of the 900 additional doctoral students that we seek to add? What group will make implementation of the exciting and important Transformative Graduate Education initiative a reality? What group will ensure that we have an exciting, diverse and effective undergraduate curriculum that attracts the top students from the Commonwealth, the nation and abroad? What group will sustain the University's commitment to outreach and international affairs by offering the number of courses and programs with international components that

we desire? I firmly believe that the answer to each of these questions is *the Faculty*.

You know, as well as I, that in the last few years we've seen Faculty numbers cut by some 300 positions. It is refreshing to see approximately 80 of those positions returned with the start of this academic year. This trend must continue over the next several years if we are to have realistic expectations of achieving our goal of becoming a Top 30 University. To a person, I believe you will find the Faculty dedicated to improving the quality and stature of Virginia Tech, however I likewise believe that we must focus on the quantity, or size, of our faculty to effectively improve.

Before I continue, I want to make sure that my comments are not interpreted as in anyway demeaning or disrespectful of the role that the staff and students of Virginia Tech play. Clearly our success is dependent on high quality undergraduate and graduate students, as well as a productive and dedicated staff. We certainly have these today and I believe both groups will be enhanced by increasing the numbers and stature of the Faculty. High caliber students will want to attend Virginia Tech in greater numbers and their degrees will become even more valuable to them as a result of an improving Faculty. A high quality and productive Faculty need the support of a high quality and productive clerical, professional and technical staff. We must find ways to improve the quality of life and compensation for our staff if we are to have the increasing levels of support necessary to take us forward.

I spoke last Friday during the New Faculty Orientation Program and noted points made by President Steger and other members of the administration during their presentations. The words civility and building bridges were used several times during the morning. As a civil engineer, a structural engineer more specifically, I typically use these words in a little different context. However, they are very applicable to our work together. The goal set out for us will not be easy to attain. With a group as large as the University community, we will certainly not always agree on how to best accomplish a given task. However, if we treat one another with civility, where input and information is appropriately shared and discussed, then I believe we can reach great heights. We can create effective bridges whether they are between students and faculty, collaborative research groups or the faculty and this Board.

Let me close by saying that I'm looking forward to a positive, productive year in which we can move forward with our mutual goal of making Virginia Tech the very best it can be. I look forward to helping the Faculty better understand the work you are doing on their behalf and for Virginia Tech in general. And I look forward to helping you better understand the role and responsibility of what is an incredibly hard working and dedicated Faculty.

Thank you Mr. Rector.