

**Remarks made during the BOV Information Session
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President, Faculty Senate of Virginia Tech
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Thank you Mr. Rector. Good afternoon, members of Virginia Tech's Board of Visitors, administration, faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate student body. It is with great humility, energy, hope and a sense of purpose that I sit here with all of you, poised as we are at the beginning of another academic year.

My humility arises from a real awareness of my responsibility as Faculty Senate president to represent and carry – to the best of my ability – the voices of my colleagues to this table and beyond. The source of my energy is my commitment to and passion for our collective mission and vision, and my awareness that I am surrounded by a group of women and men of enormous dedication, intellect and integrity, sincerely – I believe – committed to making this university all that it can and should be. I have been moved over the last year by this Board's commitment to listen, respond, act and partner with the university community.

My hope and sense of purpose reside in the multiple evidences of growth and change that I have already been privileged to witness in my relatively short time here. This is hard and complex work in which we are all engaged. The very real challenge for all of us is in sustaining our collective commitment to that work. Since I arrived here in the fall of 1999, the Higher Education Restructuring Act passed and is underway. We have created the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity. We have adopted the Standards of Inclusive Policies, Practices and Programs and the Virginia Tech Principles of Community. This fall, we are witnessing the opening of the Graduate Life Center and the continued implementation of the Graduate Education Business Plan outlined a year ago by Dr. DePauw. This Board has approved retirement benefits for part-time faculty, increased base salaries for Instructors, increased promotion stipends, and made initial progress in beginning to raise faculty salaries from the 21st percentile among our peer institutions to the goal of 60th percentile. It is critical that we sustain our commitment to that objective. The guidelines for dual career hires have been finalized and posted to the web; a child care committee was formed this summer to continue to address the critical challenge of providing affordable, flexible and quality child care for VT employees. We are making progress in rebuilding depleted faculty numbers. And, I am very excited about the plans for the development of the Undergraduate Program of which Dr. McNamee and Dr. Daniel will speak at tomorrow's Academic Affairs Committee meeting.

However, as we all know, there is work to be done.

The preliminary results of faculty exit surveys conducted last year, the Advance survey of all current instructional and research faculty this past spring (combined with the more qualitative data from a series of five faculty group discussions with approximately 60 faculty members from across the campus) will provide us with a path. We must pay attention. We must communicate and collaborate. We must respond to the very real challenges of work/life balance faced by educators and their institutions nationwide. To do so is not to make compromises; to do so is to invest in our future. This is an extraordinarily hard-working, dedicated and distinguished faculty, staff and administration. We need to take care of this, our most valuable resource and asset. The beauty of it is that to take care of our people is to take care of our institution.

We need to be concerned about sustainability and resources – human, financial and physical. We need to create conditions in which the intellect and creativity of our faculty and our students is given opportunity to thrive. All great teaching and learning involves research, service and outreach. And all great research involves teaching and learning. Our missions of teaching, research, outreach and service are inextricably intertwined. We need to continue to find ways to recognize, support and develop the unique work and contribution of each and every member of our community. Diversity is not a problem to be solved. Diversity is a gift, a strength, which we *must* honor.

In the meantime, there are those countless and largely invisible moments happening across this campus every minute which are emblematic of that for which we all strive. These are moments which do not show up on an Annual Faculty Activity Report, a student's grade report, or in a news release. These are the countless hours of dialogue, debate, discovery and dedication which are occurring in classrooms, laboratories, hallways, studios, sidewalks, administrative offices and rehearsal halls, among and between administrators, students and faculty. The light of understanding that flashes across a student's face. The student who dares to speak up in a classroom of 500, or who stops a professor on a sidewalk or in the grocery store having made some wonderful point of connection between his personal experience and what was just the subject of a lecture; the alumna who emails her former professor ten or fifteen years later to say thank you, or who has become a professor, and says she uses what she learned here every day with her own students. I could go on and on, but I know everyone here has been part of those invisible moments.

I look forward to another productive year of collaboration and partnership with all of you.

Thank you for your time.