

Faculty Constituency Report
Virginia Tech Board of Visitors

March 31, 2019

John Ferris, President—VT Faculty Senate

Good afternoon Rector Treacy, President Sands, members of the Board, Provost Clarke, and all others gathered here today.

Thank you.

You demonstrated not just in words, but in deeds, that Virginia Tech values every employee, including those with the least voice and the greatest need. Through your initiative and the great work by Dwayne Pinkney's Total Compensation Task Force, over 500 of our lowest wage employees will have a pay increase and nearly 1000 will have an annual supplement of \$500 that can be used for expenses such as medical care, child care, and parking.

So, again, thank you for demonstrating your commitment to every Hokie and confirming what we've seen time and again: what makes Virginia Tech special are the people, the personal interactions, and how we choose to nurture our shared community. We have seen this in the student survey in which we found that students love Virginia Tech because of their interactions with faculty, staff and each other. We have seen this in the Employee Climate Survey in which we found the most positively responded items were our Principles of Community, our feeling of safety, and the friendliness of our community.

I think the conclusion is clear: the people that compose our community is what makes us special. And this is as it should be. After all, our duty is service and our uncompromising principle is the inherent dignity and value of every person.

So then, beyond our unflinching duties and principles, what is our guide, the lens through which we should judge success in all of our initiatives and in turn drive the distribution of resources?

The purpose of any university is the creation and dissemination of knowledge.

But may I propose that the unique purpose of Virginia Tech is the shared experience of creating and discovering new insights, inspiration, and innovation.

May I further propose that everything done at our university should be assessed with respect first to our principles, and second to the positive impact on our university purpose with respect to alternatives for the resources expended.

What do I mean.

Consider two themes among the Beyond Boundaries priorities: expanding facilities (creating the Innovation Campus in Northern Virginia and expanding the Blacksburg Campus) and international recognition (Becoming a Top 100 Global University). Do I support the Beyond Boundaries priorities? Yes. But not as an end in themselves.

Building the facilities has instrumental value in advancing Virginia Tech's purpose, but is not the goal itself. If the facilities promote a richer learning experience than could have been created with a different deployment of resources, then this initiative is a success.

Being on a list of top 100 universities is one measure of advancing Virginia Tech's purpose, but is not a goal itself. It is one measure of success that must be weighed with respect to resources deployed.

Our success is not found at a ribbon-cutting ceremony or in the accolades of a list-maker. Success is found in our continual pursuit of our unique purpose and faithful adherence to our principles.

And so, it must always come back to how we relate to each other and express the principles and priorities that define us. I'm grateful to the Board of Visitors for all they have done and for all I have experienced as a faculty representative, and hope that I will continue to serve our community.

Again, thank you.