

**Faculty Constituency Report**  
**Virginia Tech Board of Visitors**  
**November, 2019**

John Ferris, President—VT Faculty Senate

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

I would like to speak to you today about tenure, but first I'd like to recap discussions on time and money.

Again I ask that two items remain paramount in all deliberations of policies and practices, to:

1. Efficiently use faculty time  
Faculty time should be spent doing things that put into practice our expertise.
2. Respect faculty life outside of Virginia Tech  
Create time when faculty are free from Virginia Tech obligations. No contact. No meetings. No work required by our university.

And while the faculty time bucket is now overfilled, the faculty pay bucket needs filling. Faculty pay remains in the lowest 30-35th percentile when the state expectation is the 60th, and 2-3% cost of living allowances do not move the needle. Again I ask the Board of Visitors to:

3. Compensate Faculty Workload and Commitment with Commensurate Pay  
Commit to 6% raises every year until our faculty are paid at the 60th percentile. Support our Strategic Priority to "Be a Destination for Talent" with the goal being to "attract, retain, and develop the talents of faculty and staff."

These items address lowest responses on the recent COACHE survey: dissatisfaction with workload and work-life balance.

Which brings me to tenure.

Tenure is defined by the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure [jointly formulated and endorsed by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)].

"A tenured appointment is an indefinite appointment that can be terminated only for cause or under extraordinary circumstances such as financial exigency and program discontinuation."

Remember that before coming to the university, tenured faculty work hard to establish themselves as experts in their field, then go through an 8-month vetting process to be given the opportunity for a 6-year interview. We call this 6-year interview the tenure probationary period.

Do staff and non-tenured faculty work hard? Yes, of course they do. But this is about the role of tenure.

The principal purpose of tenure is to safeguard academic freedom, which is necessary for all who teach and conduct research in higher education. Free inquiry, free expression, and open dissent are critical for student learning, the advancement of knowledge, and a functioning democracy.

If faculty members can lose their positions for what they say in the classroom or for what they write in an article, they are unlikely to risk addressing controversial issues or, indeed, to innovate in their approach or research. Innovation requires a willingness to try out new ideas. The common good is not served when business, political, or other entities can threaten the livelihood of researchers and instructors, and thereby suppress the results of their work or modify their judgements. When faculty members can lose their positions because of their speech, publications, or research findings, they cannot properly fulfill their core responsibilities to advance, transmit, and transform knowledge.

Therefore, it is critical to have systems in place to protect academic freedom. To protect the quality of teaching and research and thus the integrity of our institution. Tenure serves that purpose.

So then, I ask that you honor tenure and the value that it brings to Virginia Tech with the following request:

#### 4. Preserve Tenure

- Reject the hollowing-out of tenure by rejecting any misuse of the term. Accept only the true definition of tenure: an indefinite appointment that can be terminated only for cause or under extraordinary circumstances.
- Protect the integrity of our institution by restoring the role of tenured faculty. The number of undergraduate students continues to grow. In the past 4 years the number of undergraduate student credit hours has grown by over 12%. The number of tenured faculty has not changed. And we now face an enrollment surge.

Academic Year	Total Student Credit Hours (SCH)	Tenured Instructional Faculty (TIF)	SCH/TIF
2014-15	428,537	1,064	403
2015-16	448,716	1,079	416
2016-17	453,396	1,050	432
2017-18	470,756	1,047	450
2018-19	482,646	1,063	454
Percent Increase	12.6%	-0.1%	
Annual increase	3.0%	0.0%	

Since we are increasingly relying on metrics, many on faculty performance, I'm asking that you restore a critical metric for the health of our institution. Grow the tenured ranks proportionately with the undergraduate ranks. Specifically,

Return to a maximum of 400 undergraduate student credit hours per tenured instructional faculty.

Are our staff and non-tenured faculty critical? Yes, of course.

Should our ranks in these areas grow as well? Yes, of course.

Please do not frame this as a zero-sum game. Faculty and staff are being asked to support an ever-growing number of students, in an ever growing number of locations, comply with ever increasing regulation, and implement an array of new initiatives and programs. This request is only that the tenured faculty ranks be proportionate to our growth.

These times of significant growth and change are when tenure matters the most.

Restore the ranks of tenured faculty and our ability to champion the academy and the academic freedom of our institution.

Thank you.