

Virginia Tech Faculty Senate

Constituent Report to the Board of Visitors
Mike Ellerbrock, Senate President
November 8th 2010

Dear BOV Members,

I am pleased to update you on recent endeavors by our Faculty Senate:

I. Senate Participation in University Governance

In accord with our Bylaws, we have made appointments of 32 Senators and at-large faculty to fill open seats on 28 University-level Commissions and Committees.

II. Outside Employment of Graduate Students

We have endorsed a procedural plan drafted by Dean Karen DePauw - Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education on how to systematize reporting by Graduate Assistants who seek outside employment. Dean DePauw will notify the student and/or departmental advisor if she perceives a potential conflict of interest.

III. COE Freshman Bubble

At the request of the Senate, officers met with Dick Benson - Dean of the College of Engineering, Daniel Wubah - Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education, and Jack Finney - Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs to understand the situation that resulted in an influx of 1,580 new freshmen in COE this year. The long-standing COE target has been 1,200. Senators are concerned about the implications for the rest of campus, particularly in terms of additional class offerings needed and collegial equity in requesting new faculty FTE.

For example, if one college is allowed to grow so rapidly, does that hurt the other colleges' ability to argue for more faculty members? In the broad context, is it in our institution's best interest to experience such bubbles (planned or unplanned) in enrollment management? If VT limits itself to X number of students (30,000?), then how can/should we manage enrollment in an equitable and planned manner?

Last year, the COE proposed an innovative plan to address budget cuts by recruiting an additional 100 students, commensurate with a planned decrease in freshmen enrollment in the Pamplin College of Business and University Studies, starting in Fall 2010. This would raise its normal freshman class from 1,200 to 1,300 for each of the next four years. Negotiations between the college and the university lasted through much of the

2009/10 academic year. New tuition revenue from the 100 additional students per class would be split approximately as follows: 25% budget return by COE; 25% for COE classes, 50% to support campus expenses outside of COE.

This last piece includes funds for Non-COE colleges that provide service courses for the engineering majors. Also, the COE plan called for a 1:1 ratio of new COE/Non-COE faculty lines. Further, it was not the university's intention to hold the overall university enrollment constant. It would make no financial sense for the university to attract 100 additional tuition-paying students to engineering only to subtract an equal number of students and dollars from other colleges.

This was the plan for 2010, however, actual engineering acceptances rose to 1,580 due to a surprisingly large increase in the number of offers tendered by the Admissions Office. Over the last six years, acceptance rates in the College of Engineering have ranged from 33% to 37%. Admissions made 4,412 offers to prospective engineering applicants in 2010, which is 764 more than the previous year's total of 3,648.

Put another way, the entering engineering class in 2009 was 1,215, which is only 15 higher than the old target of 1,200. To increase the entering engineering class in 2010 to the new target of 1,300 in would require 85 additional students. This is a one-year year increase of 7%.

From 2006-09, COE experienced a decline in yield of both In-State and Out-of-State students from 62-52% and 24-22%, respectively. To counter the recent downward trend, the Admissions Office increased its number of offers for 2010. Surprisingly, both yields rose: to 57% and 26%, respectively, creating the bubble.

COE is working closely with University Administration and our Admissions Office to attain its planned growth goals and maintain balance in its offerings. COE's Dean and Advisory Board are intensely committed to providing all incoming students with a quality experience consistent with the Top 5 engineering programs in the nation, including lowering its Student/Teacher ratio from 18:1 to 15:1 with full-time faculty. VP Wubah may bring in an external consultant for advice on enrollment planning and management.

IV. Annual Parking Permit Fees

Faculty and Staff Senates are collaborating on possible ways of reducing the financial burden of annual parking fees, especially on lower-paid employees. Ideas include: a staggered fee system based on annual salary; establishment of some remote parking lots at lower fees, with shuttle service; charging a fee on visitors to campus; and/or providing a cash rebate to lower-paid employees to use at their discretion.

V. Employee/Football Parking

Senate officers met with campus officials in the Transportation and Campus Services (TCS) to inquire about ways to accommodate faculty and staff who teach/work during home football games. Several items of agreement were reached:

- Employees need to understand that lots with individually *numbered* parking spaces have been legally “sold” to donors beginning at 5:30pm before Thursday home games and 10pm Friday night for Saturday games.
- Saturday games have more flexibility in accommodating individual employee needs on Friday evenings.
- Thursday night games (hosted only once per year) allow virtually no time in the transition from regular to visitor parking between 4-5:30pm to address individual needs.
- TCS will emphasize its continuing willingness to try to accommodate individual employee needs by identifying *available* lots (in addition to its regular list of *unavailable* lots) and by highlighting the phone number to call (231-3200) at the top of its campus email Announcement.
- TCS will continue to defer to the President and Provost’s Offices to make any suggestions about faculty changing class schedules.

VI. Senate Input on Local Government Issues

Regarding the controversy surrounding whether to renovate or rebuild Blacksburg and Auburn High Schools in Montgomery County, some Senators advocated Senate involvement in the public debate. However, after consulting several university administrators who cautioned against a formal Resolution, Senate urged all faculty members to express their input as local citizens.

On behalf of our faculty, thank you.