

## Staff Senate Constituency Report

Virginia Tech Board of Directors

June 2, 2020

Presented by Tamarah Smith, Staff Senate President

Good afternoon Rector Valeiras, Board of Visitors members, President Sands, Provost Clarke, Administrators and distinguished guests.

I am honored to be here today and to be a valued member of the Virginia Tech Community. Having worked here over 31 years I have seen a lot happen at this university. When COVID19 hit our area our university immediately stepped up and made decisions for the protection of our students, faculty and staff. From expanding the students spring break in order for faculty to get classes online to allowing and in a lot of ways asking people to work from home this was huge. And for those positions that could not work remotely, the university worked with employees to ensure they were paid through the spring semester. While other companies around the US were laying employees off, we were continuing to pay our employees even though workloads were drastically reduced. That is phenomenal, and I for one am so grateful to our administrators for taking care of us in this regard. PPE's were given to essential employees and so many other things were done to ensure safety. Thank you!

There has been concern amongst staff on communication. We understand not everything can be answered due to so many pieces involved in making decisions and ensuring safety, however this does not help the anxiety level when we have heard very little about staff. Some concerns:

When will we go back to work?

What happens if public schools don't go back in fall, what am I to do with my children?

I have elderly parents I take care of, I can't be put at risk.

I don't feel safe going back to work yet.

I can't afford to take a pay cut, when are we going to hear about what the university is going to do if the economy does not pick up?

Will there be furloughs?

Communication will probably always be an issue, and I do feel like the ones that have my ear are listening. In the scope of things, staff are happy to have jobs and are grateful that our university has put safety first.

The possibility of a 20% pay cut would debilitate staff. Many of our staff are paid well below the medium. I understand the need for drastic measures to aid in our budget shortfalls, but such a large pay cut in order to preserve jobs may not necessarily be the best route for our staff positions.

A furlough would be rough on folks but would be better in the long run for faculty and staff. Especially if it was done soon so that we could reap the extra money given due to COVID19 when claiming unemployment.

I am a resource for this university advocating for staff, working beside our faculty, undergraduate and graduate student constituent leaders. I welcome encouragement and input on how we can work together to make our university stronger and work towards meeting the goals of our strategic plan.