WHEREAS, The summer of 2020 saw the largest social movement in United States history cohere around a single, solitary demand: defund the police; and

WHEREAS, this demand comes explicitly from the prison abolitionist movement itself part of the longer fight against enslavement. Appendix 1 contains the 8toabolition platform, developed by Black Lives Matters organizers, as well as an article by prominent abolitionist Mariame Kaba since there seems to be some confusion on what defunding the police entails; and

WHEREAS, the most recent Black Lives Matter protests are part of a 7 year series of protests against police violence that call on institutions to break ties with mass incarceration as well as an over 200 year history of struggling against slavery; and

WHEREAS, many elements of the university have explicitly affirmed the Black Lives Matter movement and voiced their support for it (see Appendix 2); and

WHEREAS, students, faculty, and staff have been vocally supportive of Black Lives Matter and its demands long before the 2020 uprisings (see Appendix 2); and

WHEREAS, many members of the upper administration have likewise affirmed their support for diversity on campus and pledged to take action in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests (see Appendix 3) but have failed to comply with the single demand being made by that movement; and
WHEREAS, President Tim Sands, Vice-President Menah Pratt-Clarke, and Vice-President Frank Shushok have taken a strong stance on this issue when he said: “Our investment in the legacy of George Floyd must endure through our daily commitment to unravel the deep history and systems of racism in our society, including the role of educational institutions” which cannot be done without addressing the role of police on campus in a more serious and historically informed way; and

WHEREAS, if the administration wants to meaningful address racial injustice, then the inclusion strategies laid out in the Beyond Boundaries 2047 master plan are insufficient and they should either adopt the demand made by Black activists to defund the police or be honest with the Virginia Tech community that they do not support the Black Lives Matter movement-- there is no neutral position that can be taken; and

WHEREAS, while other resolutions address the university’s policies that have a stake in mass incarceration, the financial investments of the Virginia Tech Foundation are another site of university complicity that warrants addressing; and

WHEREAS, carceral corporations should be defined as any business that profits from the incarceration of human beings whether they are U.S. citizens or not, which would extend to ICE detention centers, private prison facilities, state and federal prisons, companies that develop technologies that enable incarceration like Predpol, and any corporations that charge for services therein; and

WHEREAS, it is currently unclear as to the extent of investment in corporations like the GEO group who profit from mass incarceration and ICE detention centers but it is certain that some level of investment exists in these multi-billion dollar corporations; and

WHEREAS, the continued existence of ICE detention centers, private prisons, federal prisons, and other sites of mass incarceration relies on these corporations who exploit incarcerated people for their bottom line and are fundamentally unethical in their business practices; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Virginia Tech administrators and employees who sit on the board of the Virginia Tech Foundation immediately begin divesting all investments from companies that profit from incarceration (broadly construed) and reinvest that money into more ethical businesses such as, but not limited to, businesses led by formerly incarcerated people that do not exploit prison labor. This divestment should be conducted as expeditiously as permissible by law and the Virginia Tech Foundation will release a transparent roadmap to complete divestment to the public within a year of this process beginning, which will include information on how much money is currently invested in carceral corporations, a plan for changing all of it over, and a mechanism of accountability so that the public can check to make sure this has been carried out.
Appendix 1: What is Defunding the Police?

8toAbolition platform: https://www.8toabolition.com/

8toAbolition demand to remove police from schools: https://www.8toabolition.com/remove-police-from-schools

Mariame Kaba’s article on defunding the police: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/12/opinion/sunday/floyd-abolish-defund-police.html

See, also, resources in GPSS Resolutions 2021-2022D1 and 2021-2022L for more historical context for what defunding the police means.

Appendix 2: Statements of Support for Black Lives Matter

Statements from: OID, CCC, UJIMA, SOAR; University, Provost, VTCSOM, CALS, CLAHS, CNRE, COS, LGBT Caucus, JSU, Libraries, BEAM, Athletics, OVPRI, CAUS, Moss Arts Center, Advancement, Women’s Center, AASU, OIA, Grad School, COE, PCOB, HR, Faculty Senate, VP Finance, VCE, Women’s Alliance and Caucus, History, VA-MD CVM, Hokie PRIDE, Black Caucus, Library Employees, I.T.Diversity Committee, BSE, AIIICC, and CIRED https://www.inclusive.vt.edu/index/VT_UCOR.html

Students, faculty, and staff have consistently organized and participated in BLM protests, which also affirms the movement and its demand. For example, see these articles on Two Die-In Protests- the 2020 Blacksburg protest and the 2014 Justice for Freddie Gray Protest:


Appendix 3: Upper Administration Statements of Support

Joint Statement by Tim Sands and Menah Pratt-Clarke- https://vtx.vt.edu/articles/2020/05/president-inclusivevt-statement-may31.html