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**Graduate and Professional Student Senate
 GPSS Resolution 2021-2022D1
 Resolution to Expand Ethical Oversight of Researching and Developing Policing and
 Surveillance Technologies**

First Reading by GPSS:	August 26th, 2021
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Staff Senate Review:	date
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Approved by COR	date
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Approved by University Council:	date
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Effective:	upon approval

WHEREAS, the summer of 2020 saw the largest social movement in United States history unite around abuses in the criminal justice system, calling for the abolition of police departments and mass incarceration; and

WHEREAS, many departments and university administrators have issued strong calls to action for addressing mass incarceration and the systemic racism (Appendix 1) of which policing and surveillance technologies are a major part (Appendix 2); and

WHEREAS, Virginia Tech has invested significant resources into developing surveillance and policing technologies including but not limited to developing drone technologies for border surveillance, drone / Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) technologies for U.S. police forces, algorithms for surveilling students/civilians, and carceral criminal justice education; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that some applications are not necessarily unethical, such as agricultural research using drones. We are not referring to those projects, but rather recognize the need to distinguish socially useful projects from harmful research and development. Accordingly, enhanced scrutiny ought to be leveled at projects focusing on technologies with human subjects and recipients of surveillance and sources of algorithmic data. Further scrutiny should be directed towards projects with fiscal relations to criminal justice, policing, and carceral

institutions, their affiliates such as The GEO Group, or projects easily appropriated for the purposes of tracking, AI surveillance, predictive policing, or autonomous policing; and

WHEREAS, as an example, we have established “security” as a guiding principle for many of our research centers--including the newly established School of Environmental Security or the Hume center for security--when other frameworks oriented toward justice could be employed instead (Appendix 2); and

WHEREAS, the development of certain policing, security, and surveillance technologies contributes to the systemic racism that is the target of the 2020 protests and longer histories of racial justice protests; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Tech has an ethical responsibility to protect the marginalized members of our community who directly experience violence from policing and border surveillance; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Tech has a further responsibility to avoid complicity in the development of weapons and training for policing and border security; and

WHEREAS, current IRB and ethical review processes do not sufficiently protect vulnerable communities from the development of anthropotelemetric surveillance technologies and procedures that unequivocally target individuals based on racial, gender, and cultural prejudices; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that a task force be immediately charged with auditing the ethics of drone, surveillance, and other technologies with military or security applications for their ethical standards, and with working to develop guidelines that broaden ethical oversight beyond the current IRB protocol. The stakeholder portion of this task force (see GPSS 2021-2022A) should *not* include members from VTPD or security centers and instead be focused on recruiting students from overpoliced backgrounds and faculty who have critical expertise with security technologies. The broader ethical oversight should be applied to multiple levels of university management, with clear moral criteria that build upon existing practices, guided by the ethical values demonstrated in the above statements. The recommendations made by the task force should have the ultimate goal of increasing ethical oversight of research programs, resulting in a complete moratorium on the development of further technology and educational programs that support mass incarceration, drone warfare, and potentially harmful surveillance of marginalized communities at home and abroad.

Appendix 1: Statements of Support

Brandy Faulkner’s (political science) breakdown of the issue:

<https://liberalarts.vt.edu/news/in-the-news/2020/06/virginia-tech-professor-on-george-floyd-and-the-social-issues-re.html>

Teach-in on BLM following the protests:

<https://liberalarts.vt.edu/news/events/2020/06/black-lives-matter-and-social-movements.html>

Presidential statement:

<https://vt.vt.edu/articles/2020/05/president-inclusivevt-statement-may31.html>

Statement from Carillion: <https://medicine.vtc.vt.edu/news/2020/20200601.html>

Statement from STS:

<https://liberalarts.vt.edu/about/inclusion-and-diversity/sts-scholars-for-justice.html>

Statement from History:

<https://liberalarts.vt.edu/about/inclusion-and-diversity/historians-for-justice.html>

Virginia Tech's Unfinished Conversations on Race

https://www.inclusive.vt.edu/index/VT_UCOR.html

Appendix 2: Academic Literature on Policing

Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, Open Media Book (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003)

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*, American Crossroads 21 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007)

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2016)

Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton, eds., *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter* (London ; New York: Verso, 2016)

INCITE!, ed., *Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016)

Mariame Kaba, *We Do This 'til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice*, ed. Tamara K. Nopper, 2021

Eric Stanley and Nat Smith, eds., *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*, Expanded second edition (Oakland, Calif. Edinburgh: AK Press, 2015)

Liat Ben-Moshe and Allison C. Carey, eds., *Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Dylan Rodriguez, *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006)

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 2nd Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

Ruha Benjamin, *Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code* (Medford, MA: Polity, 2019).

Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England: Harvard University Press, 2016)

Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Tenth anniversary edition (New York London: The New Press, 2020).

Appendix 3: Carceral Research Program Examples

The Hume Center lists “cybersecurity, autonomy, and resilience for the national security community” as core principles for its organization.

Website: <https://hume.vt.edu/>

In 2020, Virginia Tech approved the “School of Environmental Security” as part of the College of Natural Resources and the Environment’s expansion into Northern Virginia. This center uncritically deploys the language of security in ways that stigmatize climate refugees and treats the environment as a resource for national security experts to control. The resolution specifically identified partnerships with border security and national security agencies as the potential application for work done at this School as well in addition to the problematic language.

Resolution here:

https://bov.vt.edu/assets/Attachment%20K_Resolution%20to%20Approve%20School%20of%20Environmental%20Security%20in%20College%20of%20Natural%20Resources%20and%20Environment.pdf

The Virginia Tech Applied Research Corporation works in partnership with Virginia Tech resources to develop UAV technologies directly linked to national security projects whose board of directors includes Virginia Tech administration, Virginia Tech faculty, and Virginia Tech Foundation Administration.

Website: <https://vt-arc.org/about/>

In 2014, Virginia Tech engineers started to experiment with UAV applications for policing, including using it to investigate crime scenes. The Virginia Tech Police Department is nationally recognized for its work on drones, which this resolution specifically identifies as a major ethical problem.

Brief article: <https://dronelife.com/2014/08/14/drone-test-site-virginia-tech/>

Virginia Tech's department of sociology hosts a criminology major that uncritically supports and perpetuates security frameworks leading to discrimination and increased surveillance. While some efforts have been made to ameliorate this by encouraging students to take certificates in African American Studies and other more critical fields, the program exists to funnel people into security industries and some faculty members who work on "crime prevention" facilitate this lens.

There are more examples but many are rendered unavailable because of Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security information clearances. This lack of transparency only compounds the issues identified by this resolution.