

## **Minutes:**

### **I. Call to order**

- a. President Jack Leff called to order the second Fall 2021 Meeting of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate Meeting at 5:30pm on **September 23, 2021** on Zoom.

### **II. Sign-in**

- a. Senators in-person and on Zoom signed in via Google Forms.

### **III. President Leff addressed the modality change and hate groups that have targeted the GPSS.**

### **IV. Housekeeping**

### **V. Approval of agenda**

- a. President Leff read this meeting's agenda. The agenda was passed.

### **VI. CAPFA Resolution 2021-2022A**

- a. Dr. Janice Austin read the Resolution and answered Senators' questions.
- b. After hearing no objections to the resolution, a motion was heard to waive the right to comment. The motion was approved.

### **VII. Committee / Commission Summaries**

### **VIII. Old Business (see details below for vote counts, amendments, and debates)**

- a. GPSS Resolution 2021-22F
  - i. President Leff read the Resolution to raise the low wages of University staff and get ahead of state requirements and called for a vote. The vote passed.
- b. GPSS Resolution 2021-22G
  - i. President Leff read the Resolution to address the chronic underfunding issues of the CCC and called for a vote. The vote passed.
- c. GPSS Resolution 2021-22H
  - i. President Leff read the Resolution to create more of a focus on parental leave policies and provide more generous support packages and called for a vote. The vote passed.
- d. GPSS Resolution 2021-22I
  - i. President Leff read the Resolution to improve the safety and reliability of VT's campus for undocumented students and called for a vote. The vote passed.
- e. GPSS Resolution 2021-22J
  - i. President Leff read the Resolution to improve safety and security for international students and called for a vote. The vote passed.

### **IX. New Business**

- a. GPSS Bylaws
  - i. President Leff introduced the new GPSS Bylaws. The motion to advance the Bylaws to a second reading passed.
- b. GPSS Resolution 2021-22K
  - i. President Leff read the Resolution to end prison labor contracts and reform hiring practices and read graduate student comments on the Resolution that were submitted ahead of the Meeting.
  - ii. Senator Murphy motioned to Amend the Resolution. The Amendment carried.
  - iii. The motion to advance the Resolution to a second reading passed.
- c. GPSS Resolution 2021-22L
  - i. President Leff read the Resolution to defund campus police and read graduate student comments on the Resolution that were submitted ahead of the Meeting.
  - ii. Vice President Fox addressed specific concerns submitted ahead of the Meeting.

- iii. Senator Murphy motioned to Amend the Resolution to clarify the definition of “defund” in the body of the resolution and add local examples to substantiate the ethical claims. The Amendment carried.
- iv. Point of order, President Leff called for a motion to extend the meeting by 20 minutes so that we could finish M and address all the motions on the floor. The motion carried.
- v. The motion to advance the Resolution to a second reading passed.
- d. GPSS Resolution 2021-22M
  - i. President Leff read the Resolution to repurpose the Threat Assessment Task Force and reduce student surveillance.
  - ii. Senator Kai Jun Chew motioned to Amend the Resolution to explicitly state that they will present regular updates to shared governance.
- e. GPSS Resolutions 2021-22N1-N3
  - i. President Leff moved to delay first readings of these Resolutions to the next Meeting (October 7, 2021) due to time constraints. The motion passed.

New business for next week is on the [website](#).

#### X. Adjournment

- a. President Leff adjourned the meeting.

### **Discussion Highlights + Submitted Commentary:**

#### **Vote Results:**

**F:** 48 Yes; 1 No; 0 Abstain

**G:** 46 Yes; 2 No; 1 Abstain

**H:** 49 Yes; 0 No ; 0 Abstain

**I:** 45 Yes; 2 No; 2 Abstain

**VOTE** to adopt minutes > vote **Passed**

President Leff verbally explains that GPSS, specifically President Leff, has been targeted this week by various violent extremist groups. The meetings will be moving online until further notice and restricted to Senators + VT graduate students. This is detailed further on the GPSS website.

#### **> CAPFA Resolution**

QUESTION: How is AP different from the Faculty Senate?

Dr. Janice Austin: Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs employees operate outside of the Faculty structure. Faculty Senate is for tenured and tenure-track faculty.

QUESTION: How many AP Faculty are there at Tech?

Dr. Janice Austin: Around 2000.

QUESTION: Why is this representation new?

Dr. Janice Austin: We didn't have a senate before.

QUESTION: Who represents non-tenured instructors/adjuncts?

Dr. Janice Austin: They are considered AP, so we do.

**VOTE to Comment > Comment Waived**

Start of Old Business

**>2021-22 F**

No comments

**>2021-22 G**

QUESTION: Where do the CCCs get their funding from?

President Leff: Currently moving offices / restructuring. Under the office of Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity? [Confirmed in chat OID].

COMMENT: Want to prevent VT from raising fees to pay for this. It needs to come out of existing funds.

RESPONSE: Such a small amount of money would not raise school fees meaningfully. Small amount of pay bands being increased. Not really fair to ask students to shoulder a monetary burden for equity initiatives, but students may be more willing to pay for this than another multi-million dollar building.

**> 2021-22 H**

No comments

**>2021-22 I**

Cranwell **COMMENT:** Virginia Tech in welcoming international students (F-1/J-1 visa holders) and faculty and staff (H-1B/J-1 visa holders) acknowledges that the Department of Homeland Security's ICE has a regulatory duty to check on the status of international students and scholars on our campus.

Cranwell **AMEND:** The ICE fake university targeted F-1 international students already in the U.S. not undocumented students.

**>2021-22 J**

Cranwell **STRIKE:** Remove Cranwell International Center from the bridge fund proposal.

While we are here to support our international students, we have an inherent conflict of interest in being the administrators of a fund for international students.

**AMEND:** Create a task force to establish a non-Cranwell entity to manage the bridge fund.

AMENDMENT **Passed**;44 Yes 0 No 0 Abstain

> **New GPSS By-laws**

**QUESTION:** What is a 'resolution sponsor'?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** A stakeholder in the Resolution that comes to answer questions / explain the Resolution to our Senate before we vote to issue comments / waive right to comment.

Start of New Business

> **2021-22K**

**QUESTION:** How much of VT labor contracts with corporations use unfair labor practices?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** This data is not readily available. It would fall under the taskforce to identify this and make recommendations.

**QUESTION:** Can this money come from reinvestment within scope of K?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** Up to the taskforce how to proceed.

**QUESTION:** If L passes can that funding offset cost of prison divestment?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** Possibly given that there would be \$6.8 million freed up.

Anon: Question on hiring practices related to formerly incarcerated people.

**President Leff RESPONSE:** Scholarship suggests this concern is unfounded.

**QUESTION:** Can we amend so that student fees do not increase for these changes?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** Yes. That would be within the spirit of the Resolution.

**COMMENT:** Felons should not be given *preferential* treatment for hiring.

**President Leff RESPONSE:** Noted. [Resolution has since been reworded to *fair* hiring.]

**QUESTION:** How much does VT pay for prison labor?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** Data is opaque. Not easy to provide a clear answer. Average amount hovers around \$2.05 / hr. When we look at California fire fighting wages, that was about \$1.10 / hr for awhile. No model prison that is paying workers minimum wage. Contact us otherwise. Check out the Ban the Box campaign in the Appendix for more information.

**QUESTION:** Does hiring felons increase violent crime?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** The empirical evidence suggests that we will not see a rise in violence by implementing changes outlined in the Ban the Box campaign as recidivism rates will lower in accordance with a decrease in poverty and an increase in opportunity.

**AMEND:** Add a line on divesting from labor acquired through sweatshops and countries with exploitative labor practices.

## AMENDMENT **Passed** Unanimously

> 2021-22L

### **Letters of Support Read (See Bottom of this Document)**

**Highlights:** Virginia Tech has checkered past with race. Abolition is necessary. VT police do not help the most vulnerable. Defunding is in line with University Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goals given the racialized nature of policing. Virginia Tech has also expressed public support and solidarity with people of color and addressing racism institutionally.

**QUESTION:** Does VT provide public access to VTPD expenditures?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** Yes, these are publicly available through the office of Financial Budget and Planning. The link is included. Reach out if you have questions.

**QUESTION:** What does ‘defund’ actually mean in this context?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** Complicated situation and a complicated answer. Good to familiarize yourself with all of the points being considered by reading through the Resources in this Resolution as well as D1 and D2. 8 to Abolish is also a good resource.

**QUESTION:** how will funding be rerouted to reduce harm?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** In line with movements like 8 to Abolish and Care Not Cops [in Appendices], funding will be rerouted to sources like the EMS, women’s center, and Cook Counseling. We will be moving from reactionary measures to preventative measures by addressing root causes of problems. There is not a one-size-fits all solution, and we’ll be working with other university groups to impact other changes, such as Title IX, to ameliorate these issues.

**QUESTION:** Can specific examples of VT police overreach be included in the Resolution?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** See appendices, could be added to the main body of text if a motion to amend is put forth.

**QUESTION:** First written comment shows why minority students need police. Maybe there is a way to address these problems without defunding the police such as downsizing or not allowing them to have guns?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** That was not quite the spirit of that comment. The comment was stating that police often exacerbate these situations or do not respond appropriately.

**QUESTION:** Do we have access to VTPD complaints? Can we include them in the Resolution?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** These are largely internal and not publicly available, highlighting transparency issues. Complaints registered via BLM, Abolition, UFM have been included in the Appendices [and discussed in local news].

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** “The Virginia Tech Police Department serves our campus and community by not only enforcing the law, but also supporting initiatives like safe ride and self-defense courses targeted towards sexual assault prevention”

**Vice President Fox RESPONSE:** Police do not prevent sexual assault or regularly resolve sexual assault cases. Broadly, using stats from RAINN and local crime statistics, in Montgomery Co. only 11% of these cases result in an arrest and nationally out of every 1,000 cases only 50

arrests are made. That means the majority of these cases are not ever reaching police. And in the few instances they are, they never make it to a meaningful place in the criminal justice system. The burden of responding and continuously caring for and assisting individuals who have experienced this type of violence falls upon the assailed and other Care-oriented resources. They must be funded accordingly. Looking at Clery Act statistics from these types of crime from VT specifically, VTPD cases are: August-September 2021: 18 cases, 2 active ; 2020: 10 cases, 1 active ; 2019: 1 inactive. So, even with programs like safe-ride and self-defense, these cases are still increasing and not being addressed by VTPD even after they occur. Furthermore, there is no strong, consistent empirical evidence to state that these VTPD services help to prevent or address these types of crimes.

**COMMENT:** VTPD should not be defunded. They provide important programs for public safety, and abolition will put too much strain on Blacksburg PD.

**RESPONSE:** We should listen to the lived experiences of vulnerable people who are most affected by policing. Many feel unsafe calling the police. Police are incapable of preventing sexual assault. But there is strong evidence that other actors and services are. [5 comments of support].

**COMMENT:** BPD can't follow everyone around. Students need to be using all of their training to defend themselves against sexual assault.

**RESPONSE:** That is victim blaming. It is never a survivor's fault for their experience. And self-defense rarely can prevent sexual assault from happening [6 comments of support]

**RESPONSE:** This is a good idea in theory, but police do not prevent sexual assault. This is why they should be defunded. [7 comments of support]

**COMMENT:** Agree, with reallocation of VTPD funds, though some labs rely on VTPD in emergency situations they are specially trained for. Need to work with Environmental Health and Safety to fill the gap.

**COMMENT:** Individual experienced a sexual assault in Blacksburg; VTPD did not help as assailant was not a student -- passed the burden to BPD. This experience shows privilege as a white woman because she was taken seriously while many others are not, but the police did not offer protection or support during the court case. Other services on campus such as Cook and the Women's Center did.

**COMMENT:** It's unclear [to this senator] how policing is related to racism. Police make this Senator feel more safe. Funds should just be 'shifted elsewhere' when needed.

**RESPONSE:** Pro-active policing tends to target or incriminate the individuals it should be trying to protect in these scenarios, especially when that individual is a person of color.

**RESPONSE:** That is a privileged position to have that the police make you feel more safe.

**RESPONSE:** "Shift those funds elsewhere" is just "defund" with extra syllables. Those funds don't disappear. They just go elsewhere [4 comments of support]

**RESPONSE:** [This senator] would much rather have the EMS show up to an emergency than the police. [4 comments of support]

**RESPONSE:** Policing is a product of white supremacy and to support policing is to tacitly condone the subjugation of minoritized peoples. POC shouldn't have to justify their existence. "There has to be a better way than this".

**COMMENT:** On the issue of lab emergencies there may be a federal mandate for a campus police force and it should be looked into.

**President Leff RESPONSE:** There is no such mandate as far as he is aware but will provision support just in case.

**AMENDMENT >** [This senator] proposes to amend the resolution to include focusing the police force instead of acting as a 'full fledge' police force but an extension of medical services and emergency services. The Environmental Health and Safety department relies on the VTPD to react to safety emergency in a timely manner where BPD police force cannot reach. I propose we reach out to the EHS and VT Ambulance to make sure they have the support they need.

**AMENDMENT Passed ;** 23 yes, 5 no, 4 abstain

**AMENDMENT >** It needs to be more clear what 'defund' means and 'defund' versus 'abolition'. Although this is outlined in the Appendices, it needs to be more clearly stated for everyone not up to date on this movement.

**AMENDMENT Passed;** 38 yes, 2 no, 2 abstain

Voted to extend meeting by 15 minutes

**> 2021-22M**

**QUESTION:** Who does the taskforce report to? Can we suggest Shared Governance?

**President Leff RESPONSE:** It currently reports to the University Council and is made up of department heads, but we could amend it to be clearer.

**QUESTION:** What are some examples of surveillance on students?

**President Leff RESPONSE** We don't have access to that information, which highlights transparency issues.

**AMENDMENT >** Inclusion of explicit language on taskforce reporting to shared governance.

**AMENDMENT passed;** 36 Yes, 1 No, 1 Abstain

#### Letters of Support 21-22 L

I am writing in support for the passage of resolution 2021-22L, "Resolution to Defund Virginia Tech Campus Police." There are several reasons I feel this is an urgent cause, right now, at Virginia Tech.

I am originally from ... County. So I have experienced Virginia Tech culture most of my life. I distinctly remember the Confederate flag flying above the drill field throughout my youth. The Confederate flag appeared on all class rings at Virginia Tech until it became optional in 1972 and remained an option for students long after. I remember many people wearing these class rings sporting the Confederate flag. In the 1990s, I distinctly remember forestry students burning a cross on the lawn of one of their classmates who was in an interracial relationship. Even as a teenager, I was aware of the dangers for Black students on campus.

I hope that now, at a time when Virginia Tech is celebrating its 150th year, and I might point out that they are celebrating in part by lifting up stories of the first Black men and women who attended and graduated here, that Virginia Tech faces and accepts that campus has often not been a safe space for Black students, Indigenous students, Chinese students, Latinx students, queer students, disabled students, and many more students attracted to the school's strong national and international reputation. Part of facing that past must be to create an atmosphere where every student can reach their full potential. Funds used to support Virginia Tech police must be used toward abolition for those most victimized by police, abolition through services, support, counseling, aid, and assistance.

Early in September students on campus received the report of a sexual assault at Lane Stadium during the football game. On September 9 we received a campus email denouncing some shocking behavior of Virginia Tech students that happened on Game Day — some students had yelled curses at the opposing football team while they ate at a local restaurant. This email was a slap in the face to victims of sexual assault and sexual violence. The next day another message was sent out, clearly aided by Title IX Director Katie Polidoro, that stated "Sexual violence is unacceptable. Full stop." The damage, however, had already been done. It is a privilege to live without having see or understand the damage of sexual assault, and Black students and students of color are disproportionately raped and assaulted on college campus. But it is these students who are much less likely to come forward and make a report. Funding used to support Virginia Tech police MUST be reallocated to provide outreach to students less likely to report sexual assault and support them once they do.

For these reasons, and many more, I hope GPSS will take this strong step to reimagine the culture at Virginia Tech by supporting student services rather than creating an atmosphere of fear and penalization that disproportionately impacts students who are most vulnerable to violence on campus.

Please pass resolution 2021-22L to Defund Virginia Tech Campus Police.

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I want to voice my support for GPSS resolution 2021-22L.

The evidence is overwhelming that campus safety is best served by reallocating funding from campus police to any number of social and cultural services. This is particularly true for the communities at VT that are most vulnerable to police violence.

The university cannot maintain its feigned support for Black Lives Matter while ignoring the single demand of the organization.

Moreover, the university is responsible for the safety and well-being of all of those who work and study here, and it must seek evidence-based approaches to accomplish this.

The evidence is clear that policing and the excessive funding of police forces, and VT police funding is most certainly excessive, has adverse effects on safety.

Resolution 2021-22L clearly positions the university to fulfill its obligation to its students, employees, and community by defunding campus police.

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... I am writing in support of the GPSS resolution to defund the VT campus police force.

As recent movements have highlighted, regardless of its stated aims, the police works to uphold structural inequalities and enact physical, material, and ideological violences against the most marginalized members of our community - VT police are no exception. VT police not only fail to serve, but further harm our students of color, queer students, students belonging to religious and ethnic minorities, women and femmes, students facing poverty or houselessness, disabled students, and so many intersections of these and other marginalized groups. Rather than "protecting" our communities, the presence of VT police on campus and in our communities, VT police in fact furthers the power structures which make minoritized communities vulnerable to begin with, through physical, material, and ideological violence. VT police claims to support the safety of our campus and community - but who is "us" in this instance, when their presence is precisely what makes so many of us feel unsafe?

Funds currently allocated to VT police would be much more effective going to resources that safely deescalate and/or directly tackle the structural causes of violence and vulnerability such as specialized task forces, funds to help students facing poverty and houselessness, and existing structures like Cook Counseling. Such resources would allow Virginia Tech to actually tackling

the problems it claims to, such as sexual assault, mental health, domestic violence, and structural material inequalities that disproportionately impact already-marginalized students.

If Virginia Tech indeed stands with its minoritized students as it claims to, it must defund the police, remove police presence on campus, and instead fund resources that address the needs of the most vulnerable members of this community.

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Having read over Resolution 2021-22L, “Resolution to Defund Virginia Tech Campus Police”, I,..., hereby express my full support for the resolution and its text. I appreciate the efforts of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate towards protecting vulnerable and marginalized communities within Virginia Tech and in affirming their commitment to resisting white supremacist influence and in supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. If there is anything I can do to help these efforts, in any capacity, please let me know.

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I am writing today in formal support of GPSS Resolution 2021-2022L: "Resolution to Defund Virginia Tech Campus Police."

In light of the dangers posed to Black and Brown individuals by encounters with the police, and in light of the commitments made by the Virginia Tech administration to support and stand in solidarity with the cause of racial justice, defunding the VT Police is an important way to protect multiply-marginalized members of the Virginia Tech Community.

Please register my strong support for this resolution.

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I am writing in support of GPSS Resolution 2021-2022L. This resolution is aligned with Virginia Tech administration's DEI initiatives and vocal affirmation of Black Lives Matter. Specifically, I support the use of a task force to develop a plan to defund campus police and reallocate resources to other departments and services.

There is considerable evidence that police, including campus police, disproportionately target people of color, particularly Black people, with infractions and unnecessary force ([Jenkins et al., 2021](#); [Moon & Corley, 2007](#); [Peeples, 2020](#)). Furthermore, campus police are often involved in interventions that may be better addressed by other services. For example, police are often integrated in response to concerns related to mental health on college campuses ([Margolis & Shull, 2012](#)). However, campus police are not adequately trained to address student mental health crises ([Bauer-Wolf, 2018](#)).

Although more than half of campus police in a recent study were trained in a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training ([Schriver, 2021](#)), there is considerable evidence that CIT is insufficient to prepare police forces to support people experiencing mental health crises ([Westervelt, 2020](#)). Rather than providing funding for more trainings which may not be effective to improve campus police interactions with students in need of different services, it may be more effective to allocate resources to existing campus services, such as Cook Counseling and Hokie Wellness, to address student needs on campus.

In summary, I fully support GPSS Resolution 2021-2022L. To achieve equity for students of color, disabled students, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ+) students, and other marginalized groups on campus, we must decrease police overreach, reallocate funds to other campus services, and ultimately abolish campus police.