



Senate Brief - March, 2nd, 2023 Meeting

This document should be distributed to all graduate students within your department or through your departmental listserv so that everyone may engage with the activities of the Senate.

Defend VT Students and Employees' Privacy and Security

Virginia Tech's executive administration recently indicated that it plans to use an artificial intelligence system that would comb through every device (computer, phone, etc.) connected to the Virginia Tech network. There has been an indication that this is not limited to equipment owned by the university and would include ANY device relying on the institution's network.

It has been claimed that this would be implemented to detect "cyber-security" threats. However, very little information has been given regarding this misguided policy that harms the privacy and security of VT affiliates. There is now a petition to call on the community to come together, stand up to this policy, and ask the administration important questions regarding this system.

[Please read the petition and sign it here.](#)

Student Health Insurance Survey

The GPSS and SMI (**Student Medical Insurance**) have put together this survey to gather some feedback about the Virginia Tech Aetna Student Medical Insurance plan from students themselves. The results of this survey will be used to understand what services students are currently getting as well as what they would want out of their health insurance plan. This will be used to advocate for insurance plans in the future that better match with student needs.

This survey is completely anonymous. Respondent emails, ip addresses, locations, and any other identifying information is never saved. Response data will not be made public.

The survey will first ask you questions about your current or past experience with the VT Aetna plan, then questions about your ideal health insurance plan, then finally some questions specifically about the SMI office.

[Please click here to fill out the survey.](#)



Cap and Gown Loan Program

If you are graduating, make sure to apply for the cap and gown loan program by March 20th. There's no hood or tassel included and the borrowed clothes should be dry cleaned before being returned. This is a great option for those who don't want to stress about the cost of graduation gowns!

[Click here for more information about the cap and gown program](#)

Board of Visitors Meeting Regarding Raising Student Tuition and Fees

The Virginia Tech Board of Visitors held a public comment hearing yesterday regarding their plans to raise student tuition and comprehensive fees. In the meeting they noted that tuition can be raised from 0% - 4.9% and comprehensive fees from 0% - 8.8%.

The Presidents of the Undergraduate Student Senate and the Graduate and Professional Student senate spoke at the meeting and did not support the raising of either tuition or fees. A number of graduate students also shared their experiences about how the costs of being a graduate student at VT has negatively impacted their mental and physical health.

The Board of Visitors will hold a meeting regarding the potential increases on March 20th, 2023. The meetings are open to students at VT and we encourage our community to attend and learn about these important topics.

Students who cannot attend the meeting can still give comments to the Board of Visitors via a comment form. Comments need to be made by March 13th at 11:59pm.

[Click here to leave a comment regarding tuition and fee increases](#)

Full Crow Moon Farm Walk

Glade Row Growing is hosting a moonlight farm walk on March 7th from 6:00pm - 7:45pm. The walk is suitable for children and adults with child tickets (6+) costing \$12 and adult tickets costing \$16. During this walk you will get to see the farm under the light of the new moon (called a Full Crow Moon or Worm Moon for March) and walkers will get to roast treats on a campfire at the end of the walk.

[Click here to buy tickets for the farm walk](#)



Parking Survey

Virginia Tech Transportation Services requests that members of the Virginia Tech community in Blacksburg provide their feedback on parking experiences on campus. This can help us gauge the dire parking needs for students here at Virginia Tech; the more feedback they receive, the better they can respond to our concerns and needs!

[Click here to fill out the survey](#)

Freedom of Information Act Training

Students interested in learning about the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) can attend a training regarding how to submit Freedom of Information Acts to the university on March 9th, 2023 from 5:30pm - 6:30pm at Southpaw Café (202 S Main St)

A poster for Freedom of Information Act Training. The background is blue with a white torn paper effect. At the top, an eagle is flying. The text "Freedom of Information Act Training" is written in a bold, black, typewriter-style font. Below this, on the white paper, is the text: "Learn to write and champion FOIA requests, an essential tool for holding the government to account. Get tips on who to ask and what to ask for, how to get answers quickly and how to reduce unnecessary costs." To the right of this text is a black paperclip. Below the white paper, the date and time "March 9 5:30-6:30 pm" are written in the same typewriter font. Below that is the location "Southpaw Cafe 202 S. Main St." There are also some decorative elements like a hand holding a pen, a fire, and a lightbulb. At the bottom, there is a binary code pattern.



Community Outreach

Fundraiser for Earthquake Relief

A disastrous magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck Turkey and Syria on February 6th. The Turkish Student Association at Virginia Tech requests that students donate to the Turkish Philanthropy Funds' Campaign at <https://donate.tpfund.org/team/479874>. Credibility of the philanthropy can be checked through two sources ([Charity Navigator](#), [Great Nonprofits](#)).