

COMMENTS MADE AT THE MARCH 26, 2024, PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION

Aileen Suarez

"Hi my name is Aileen Suarez and I'm a 4th year PhD Candidate at Virginia Tech. I'm taking the time out of my workday to ask the board of visitors not to raise tuition and fees for the upcoming academic year. Each year comprehensive fees increase and wage increases do not account for that. Even though efforts have been made to raise the living wage for graduate students, we do not feel those benefits. More than 3000 dollars per semester (4 months of rent for me) goes back to the university for services that folks can not use throughout the complete year. And on top of that, we have to pay taxes on our stipends before paying these comprehensive fees. New graduate students are not told of the upfront cost of attending this institution and I feel that others would not have chosen Virginia Tech if they knew before signing their contract. The fees are a burden to me and others financially with the stipend we are getting paid currently. The cost of living continues to rise with inflation and reducing the fee increase could help alleviate some of the complications when we just want to pursue higher education and focus on our research but we're all speaking here today."

Oliver Shuey

I'm a graduate student in the dept of science, technology, and society. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide community input and thank you for considering a 0% increase. I'm fortunate enough to receive assistantship funding through my department, but the level of support is still insufficient because of the cost of living. In AY 23-24, roughly \$210 (approximately 18% of my bi-weekly income, which is \$1,105.94) was taken out of every paycheck to cover my fees.

I understand that my graduate education is a privilege, but I find living paycheck-to-paycheck while studying at a globally-ranked university to be demoralizing. Asking graduate students to sacrifice their personal security in the name of achievement is wrong, we shouldn't have to pay more to attend school each year when the demands for our labor continue to outgrow the level of grad student compensation. It would be a big help to all grad students if the increase in fees is kept at 0%. Thank you.

Ben Burdick

The comprehensive fees are too high as they are. A monthly payment towards comprehensive fees constitutes 80 percent of my rent for that month alone, and I am in a very privileged position as a STEM student in a well-funded field. Other students cannot be as lucky, and it is for these reasons that I am requesting a 0 percent increase in comprehensive fees this year.

Riley DeHority

"Hi everyone, I'm back again! I commented last year on the proposed fee increases and I'm excited to be back here with you all.

I think it's awesome that you are considering a 0% increase this year. I understand that costs have increased with inflation and that the state budget is somewhat under question, but it feels great to know that student concerns about the burden of fees are being looked into.

Last year my department Biological Systems Engineering, as part of CALS and in response to advocacy by grad students, raised our stipends by nearly \$400 per month, from around 2,400 to around 2,800 a month. This was a huge deal for us.

I also got a position in GPSS, which is an extra \$5,000 a year. And my assistantship does extend over the summer. So for me, I am in a much more doable financial position than I was when I commented last year.

But not everyone is in that same position as I am. Two years ago, 92% of grad assistants were under a living wage. That number is much lower now thanks to recent minimum stipend increases, I don't have data for the spring, but we still don't have a guaranteed living wage for grad assistants.

I wish everyone could have the support I do to make paying fees a reasonable proposition, but they don't. I also want to mention that the living wage calculations do not take into account dependents that grad students may have, or taxes for international grad students. Every country has a different tax treaty with the US, if they even have one, and those can be brutal, which a lot of people don't know.

I still remember being shocked by the fees after accepting my first contract here. The amount that I would need to pay my employer would have been a much higher part of my calculations when deciding where to go. I tried to understand it at the time, but the fee tables are very hard to navigate for people who aren't in finance. You aren't told what fees apply to you when being offered a contract.

That's why I would like to encourage the BOV and the finance department to not raise fees, and to do whatever you can to have fees covered by grants, other sponsored programs, and whatever you can legally allocate to them under the current law. Having fees covered should be normal, with as many students getting them paid for as possible. Until then, please do whatever you can to not raise fees this year.

I understand that grad students are not the only people on campus who need a living wage: I want our bus drivers and dining workers and the people who work in Squires to be paid well too. So let's see what we can do to pay for these through means that aren't literally more than rent.

I also want to mention that I recently met someone who had been promised fees to be covered by their department, only to have that taken away after they reported misconduct. It was blamed on the 2% increase in December but it was just retaliation. A policy where fees are covered for grad assistants would limit this opportunity to retaliate against students. Thank you."

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|----------------------|-------------|--|
| Aleksandro Halili | Student | A consideration of tuition and fees increase by the board of visitors is an appalling, abhorrent action from the perspective of the student body at Virginia Tech. Most student work or go into debt to pay the current costs of attending this university. This can dramatically decrease a student's performance during and after university. This consideration by the board of visitors to make it more difficult for students to attend this university will decrease the attendance rate, graduation rate, and post-graduation employment rate. This decline will contribute to decreased revenue for the university and decreased technological outputs by the university. By decreasing the competitiveness of Virginia Tech as a producer of technological advancements, revenue will further decrease as grant providers will turn to more competitive universities where students are encouraged to succeed. As a graduate student, the current price of fees make it difficult to live reasonably with the wage we currently receive. If fees are to be increased, student wages must be increased proportionally to offset the detrimental effects of an increase in tuition and fees. |
| Sujan Subedi | Student | Hi I'm Sujan, I'm an international graduate student in FREC. Fees are an unnecessary burden on me as a grad student and I want to urge the board not to raise tuition or fees next year" |
| Amolpreet Kaur Saini | Student | <p>Dear Members of the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors,</p> <p>As an international student with no prior savings, any increase in tuition significantly impacts my financial stability and academic pursuits. Currently, I am employed at one of Virginia Tech's agricultural research centers (AREC, Winchester) which is approximately 3 hours away from the main campus. This arrangement is crucial for my research and academic progress, but living near Washington, D.C., I face exceedingly high rent costs, compounded by the lack of available student housing in the area. The financial burden of off-campus living in an expensive region, combined with my limited income as a research assistant, already stretches my resources thin.</p> <p>The proposed increase in tuition and fees, although might seem modest, poses a significant challenge for students like me who are already navigating financial hardships. International students have limited access to financial aid, are particularly vulnerable to such increases. The additional financial strain could severely impact our ability to continue our education, pursue research opportunities, and contribute meaningfully to the Virginia Tech community.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration of my perspective on this important issue. I am committed to my education and research at Virginia Tech and hope to find a resolution that allows me and other students in similar situations to continue our academic and professional development without undue financial burden.</p> |
| Sophia Puett | Student | As an out of state student tuition is already crazy as is. Don't make me transfer. |
| Haley Bautista | Student | I'm a graduate student in FREC. Fees are an unnecessary burden on me as a grad student and I want to urge the board not to raise tuition or fees next year |
| Abby Weaver | Student | <p>To Whom it may Concern,</p> <p>My name is Abby and I'm a graduate student in FREC. Comprehensive Fees are an unnecessary burden on me as a grad student and I want to urge the board not to raise tuition or fees next year. Fees total more than an entire paycheck for a graduate student making living in the greater Blacksburg area with such a high cost of living even more difficult.</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|-------------------------|-------------|---|
| Cecelia Wood | Student | <p>Dear BOV Members,</p> <p>I hope you will reconsider increasing student fees this year! As an in-state graduate student, I pay approximately \$2700 in fees every year. This amount could pay my rent for five and a half months. I also have to buy oil to heat my apartment, and that amount could pay for two years of keeping my house warm (if you consider 64 degrees warm...). While I was appreciative of the one-time \$20 rebate, I could hardly feed my cat for one month with that! She is a big chonker. As the cost of living continues to increase, and my cat continues to eat me out of house and home, paying my comprehensive fees becomes harder and harder. Please consider not raising fees so grad students can afford to live in Blacksburg (and feed their fat cats!).</p> |
| | Student | <p>Paying comprehensive fees this year meant that I had to choose between paying rent or buying groceries. Comprehensive fees are 14.5% of my salary; this is not sustainable. As a result of last year's increase in comprehensive fees, I can no longer afford to be a student in Blacksburg. I will be finishing with a Masters instead of continuing to do a PhD. I am devastated that I will have to abandon my research project, but it is some personal comfort to know that this is not my fault. The VT BOV has driven me away and unfortunately, I will continue to turn prospective students away from VT until graduate students are treated fairly.</p> |
| Molly Stroud | Student | <p>I could pay four months of rent with the amount of money I have to give back to Virginia Tech to pay fees. With our current fee rate of \$3149 a year, I am essentially making \$262 LESS every month than what my monthly stipend is. This is almost 15% of the minimum stipend for grad students. Please do not raise fees!!!!</p> |
| Mia Herrera | Student | <p>Many of us have worked hard to be able to afford coming to virginia tech, we know it's a great university so we take on extra responsibility to be able to attend. We work while being full time students as well as miss out on many opportunities just to be able to get by.</p> |
| Javier Millan Reyes | Student | <p>I am in-state student, but the fact that tuition rates could be increase could be problematic for me and my family, and I doubt that I could get more financial aid if the costs increase.</p> |
| Adrian Davila | Alumnus | <p>Tuition and fees at Virginia Tech have been increasing year after year for the past decade as costs to operate a university increase. This is understandable. However, Virginia Tech was founded as a land-grant university and is meant to educate the masses. By continuing to raise to cost of tuition and fees, Virginia Tech will continue to make education unaffordable for more and more citizens of the commonwealth. It's already viewed as an unobtainable goal for many of us who grew up in rural southwest Virginia. Please do not raise rates and further exacerbate the student loan crisis in this country. It causes more and more incoming students to become beholden to financial institutions upon graduation and further delays their ability to pursue a family.</p> |
| Mariamanda Portocarrero | Student | <p>As an international student I consider that rising tuition will give less opportunities to international students to come and study at Tech, with what we pay for tuition we could easily buy a house outside of the united states (every year) however we are investing in our education, with limited work hours, high fees of international transactions, high cost of leaving, earning in a currency and spending in other, makes it almost impossible for international students to come to tech or even continue here. And I do believe we are an important community here at VT. Raising tuition just will prevent other students from coming to Tech</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|-------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Christy Pototsky | Student | I'd like to ask you to not raise fees this year. It's great they're considering not raising fees this year. I live outside of Blacksburg due to the cost of living. Yet I pay fees on services I am not able to use or interested in using at all. I cannot use your public transport (and pay an arm and a leg for parking). Our minimum stipend is \$21,780, but we only make \$18,631 because of over \$3,000 in fees. But, before we pay fees, we pay \$714 in taxes on this extra money and then give it right back to you. Don't raise fees this year. And don't say we make \$21,780 when we don't. |
| Mariana Castaneda Guzman | Student | Cost of fees for graduate students are already too high already. We still don't have a living wage as it is. I would appreciate if fee were not decreased at least not raised. |
| Kelsey Jennings | Student | As a graduate student, I urge the board of visitors to support a 0% fee increase for students. As a virtual student, I am unable to access any of the services provided by the fees. Even when I was a local student, I never used many of the programs supported by mandatory fees, like athletic/rec sports fees and student activity fee, totally hundreds of dollars. Every month, my fees exceed all of my housing utilities combined, and is more than twice my car payment + insurance. I am unable to save money and am put in a precarious financial situation any time there is a small unexpected expense. By opting not to raise fees, I will be able to continue to meaningfully contribute to the Virginia Tech community. |
| Leighton Reid | Faculty/Staff | Please do not raise fees for our students. |
| Karla Perez- Serpa | Student | Raising tuition costs could hurt students and their families because not everyone is able to afford it. This can also extend a students graduation time due to not being able to take all the classes required because of the costs. |
| Martin Anthony Vargas Alvines | Student | As an international student I would really appreciate the BOV for considering the 0% increase in tuition and fees. Please do not raise them for the upcoming school year!! |
| Nathan Thayer | Faculty/Staff | I am heartened to see the Board is considering only a 0-3% tuition and fee increase. As someone who recently finished grad school, I still remember well the financial burden student fees placed on me at my institution. Graduate (and undergraduate) students do not always have a financial safety net they can fall back on, and while these fees pay for important and useful services they can be a major barrier for many. I urge the board to shoot for a 0% increase, or at least as close to that as they can get. |
| Nicole Paz | None | Do not raise the costs of our tuition |
| Edith Chen | Student | As a graduate student, I am making just enough to cover housing, food, additional medical fees, and other expenses. I receive the lower end of the bracket for my research stipend and the increase of the comprehensive fees would create a greater financial burden for me to continue my studies. |
| Rose McGroarty | Student | If the fees are raised, I may not be able to afford to continue at Virginia Tech. If I have to choose between comprehensive fees and feeding my children, I will have to choose my children. We already make very little money and inflation is hitting us hard. Don't do this to us. |
| Jason Banuelos | Student | Please do not raise the tuition and fees for the upcoming school year as it has a significant impact on my international peers. Thank you. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|-------------------------|---------------|--|
| Anyelina Mangru | Student | The tuition and fees have already gone up since I started my PhD here, along with the pricing of everything else around us and the stress and loads of a PhD, increasing fees once more will be detrimental to our progress and attempts at much needed work-life-balance. |
| Sushant Dahal | Student | The comprehensive fee is a burden to me. I would like the university to get rid of it. |
| Claudia Clinchard | None | Please do not raise the fees again. I am a graduate student and the fees are already over one month of my pay for the year |
| Greyson Moore | Student | Comprehensive fees are already a large cost for graduate students that do not make a large stipend and have been increasing at a higher rate than our annual stipend increases. With programs not paying for these fees and having them be pushed onto the students, it directly impacts our abilities to live healthy and academically successful lives. There are so many costs that graduate students have to face that are not clearly outlined (i.e. parking costs, travel costs for conferences, etc.). An increase to fees directly impacts students ability to focus on their work and not be financially stressed. While a 100-300 dollar fees increase may not seem like a lot, to students this amount can be the difference between regularly eating and not eating for 1-3 months. With rent in the area rising to unreasonable costs, please don't add more financial stress on students trying their best to survive on stipends that already are lower than we need to live comfortably. |
| Jefferson Salan | Faculty/Staff | The continued increase in tuition and fees without a commensurate increase in stipends, quality of education, and housing availability is unacceptable. Graduate students provide an excess in value and scholarship that the university takes for granted. |
| Fernanda Vasquez | Student | I appreciate the BOV for considering the 0% increase in tuition and fees. Please do not raise them for the upcoming school year. As an international student who's not allowed to work outside the university, this would have a great impact in my quality of life, and putting me under the poverty line. |
| Dibyendu brinto | Student | We do not want to increase fees |
| Chi Nguyen | Student | We do not want the tuition fee and costs to be raised. We are already exploited, overworked and underpaid as is. A lot of us are suffering from food insecurity while you have plenty of money. Cut the football coach's salary. Our team sucks and what are you paying him for? |
| Lindsay Johnson | Student | As a Grad student, I basically pay one months worth of income to my employer every year in fees. By increasing the cost of these fees, you are impoverishing your employees (whom you already underpay) further. I would highly encourage you to reconsider this decision. |
| Andres Valdez-Machicado | Student | Stop increasing the tuition, I just want an education not debt. |
| Vasundhara Gowrishankar | Student | I am an international student, who has taken 100% loan due to my weak financial background. I am not funded as I'm an international student. It'd be very tough for me to pay fees if there is an increase. |
| Paninnguaq Boassen | Student | I'm a student at VT and I don't want the tuition and fees to be raised. It's already high and has not been shown to benefit me in proportion to its amount. If you can't run the school with the current amount then you need to continue developing a system in which it can. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|---------------------|-------------|---|
| Provakar Mondal | Student | It will be difficult for us if the university increases the fees. Don't want that. |
| Ashutosh Srivastava | Student | I think the proposed increase in fee is something I want to highlight. As an International Graduate student at VT, we already pay a big sum, for me, my one semester fee is equal to my 36 months of rent. I hope it is not increased further. |
| Joshua Cartet | Student | The fees are already ridiculous, one semester of fees is 3 months rent at my apartment. The "raise" we got was not anywhere near enough to cover the increase in my rent alone. We are already getting paid proportionally less every single year when you consider inflation and now you want to raise the fees on top of that. Maybe all of the grad students should strike and form a union since you clearly don't care about us! |
| Bernard Moussad | Student | I've already seen my monthly rent be increased to a point where I'm worried about affording bills and food. I cannot afford to have my fees increased again. |
| Stephanie Zhu | Student | Graduate students are already suffering from food insecurity. The comprehensive fees are challenging for students to pay. Some would prefer to receive these types of services outside of the school but are required to pay. Having additional food and livelihood stressors relating to money makes the graduate school experience all the more challenging. This could deter future graduate students from attending, and damage the livelihoods of existing students. |
| Aditya Khanna | Student | Please don't increase fees. If you want to do that, increase our salaries by more to compensate. |
| Dasha M | Student | <p>Hello! I am a graduate student and I oppose both tuition and fee increases for this upcoming year. I am also one of the GPSS senators and international students have shared with me that it is shocking how much comprehensive fees they have to pay before they even get their first pay check after coming to the USA and that they are not transparent. Raising these fees would perpetuate that burden.</p> <p>I pay over 3,000 dollars in comprehensive fees as a graduate student to Virginia Tech (more than I pay in federal and state taxes combined). I could use this money to pay for around 4 and a half months of my rent, but instead I had to give it back to my employer, Virginia Tech.</p> <p>The minimum stipend for grad students is 21,780, but we do not see 14% of that because it is taken by comprehensive fees. With this proposed increases, that number would go up.</p> <p>Raising fees increases the burden on students and I believe it is an equity issue, because it further shows inequalities in the education system with individuals who do not have a safety net. As people start their PhD's and other graduate school degrees, they are also often starting families, but then cannot support themselves. Comprehensive fee increases will add to this burden.</p> <p>Comparably peer institutions waive their graduate students comprehensive fees or have lower fees, for example 475\$ a semester instead of more than a 1,000\$ at Virginia Tech.</p> <p>Overall, please do not raise tuition or fees as it perpetuates inequality, is a big burden for graduate students, and make Virginia Tech less attractive to getting quality students (from USA and abroad).</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|-------------------------|-------------|---|
| Corinne Mitchell | Student | Increasing student tuition and fees constitutes an undue burden on students, especially graduate students, whose labor in teaching and research is among the most vital for Virginia Tech's success as an educational institution. A vote to increase fees is a vote against a bright future for Tech as a research institution. |
| Bryan Angel | Student | We are already charged so much, and many our families cannot afford to take these costs in the first place. This increase in tuition will greatly displease many people and will not be better for anyone. |
| Ritisha Ghimire Kshetri | Student | <p>Dear Virginia Tech Board of Visitors,</p> <p>As a first-generation college student, I am reaching out to express my deep concern regarding the potential rise in tuition and fees. The prospect of increased financial burden weighs heavily on me and my family. Affording college is already a significant challenge, and any additional financial strain could jeopardize my ability to continue my education.</p> <p>I implore you to understand the gravity of the situation facing students like me. For many of us, attending university represents a dream fulfilled not just for ourselves but for our families as well. However, the fear of being unable to afford tuition casts a shadow of uncertainty over our future.</p> <p>By freezing tuition and fees, you have the power to alleviate this burden and ensure that students from all backgrounds have access to the transformative opportunities that Virginia Tech provides. Your decision will not only impact the present but will also shape the trajectory of countless futures.</p> <p>Please consider the profound impact of your actions on students striving to achieve their academic aspirations. Your commitment to keeping education accessible and affordable will make a world of difference to students like me who are determined to succeed against all odds.</p> <p>Thank you for your attention to this matter. I earnestly hope that you will prioritize the well-being and future success of all Virginia Tech students.</p> <p>Sincerely, Ritisha Ghimire Kshetri First-Generation College Student</p> |
| Devin Calpo | Student | Please do not raise costs as an AREC student it is hard to come back and forth from main campus to the AREC and raising costs would make it virtually impossible to survive. |
| Student at VT | Student | <p>The increased fee needs to be invested back into the students!</p> <p>I do not have any form of assistantship here at VT and I need to plan even a dollar's worth of expense seriously. I wont be able to afford the increase in fee.</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|----------------------|---------------|---|
| William Quintana | Student | I am a graduate student in the Chemical Engineering Department. Even with the generous stipend provided by the department and my PI, after the comprehensive fees, I am struggling to live in Blacksburg. My rent takes up nearly 60% of my income and the comprehensive fees take up another ~10%. After buying groceries, paying utilities, internet, and gas, I am barely scratching by. I understand the work you have done to limit increases to fees and tuition but you're proposing to increase fees more than the raise that we were given (2%) across the graduate school this year. By doing this, you are making other graduate students and myself financially unstable as many of us completely support ourselves. I ask you to please reconsider increasing the fees, and I thank you for your time. |
| Jack Reynolds | Faculty/Staff | How can you possibly argue that this is justified based on inflation-value arguments when graduate students are still the most vulnerable population to minimal increases in real wage? On top of the fact they receive zero benefits. All this does is make them more poor. You are effectively trying to convince them that they deserve a wage decrease. |
| Betül Karanfil | Student | I do not wish the tuition and fees to increase |
| Yusuf Dalva | Student | Considering the current status of the GTA/GRA wages, the PhD students can only earn as much as to afford on basic expenses. Increasing the mandatory costs would be only making the living harder. If the institution has an expectation from us to come up with exceptional research, us students have the right to expect better conditions. While acknowledging that the graduate school has its own costs, reflecting them on PhD students is not the ideal solution and I am strongly against it as a member of Virginia Tech community. |
| Tuna Han Salih Meral | Student | Considering the current status of the GTA/GRA wages, the PhD students can only earn less than the minimum livable wage. Increasing the mandatory costs would only make the living harder. If Virginia Tech wants exceptional research from us, us students have the right to expect better conditions. Reflecting the financial burden of the school to the PhD students, which are the pillars of research for this institution, is not a solution but a bigger problem and I am strongly against this increases as a member of Virginia Tech community. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|------------------------|-------------|--|
| Bengisu Nisa Aras | Student | <p>As an international and first-gen graduate student, I am worried about the plan to raise fees. Living on a stipend is incredibly challenging, especially considering the limited work and financial support options (loans, scholarships) available to us. The proposed fee increase will make it harder for all students, and it could also affect our motivation to focus on our studies. In addition to all the stress of graduate school, we have to cope with financial stress.</p> <p>After taxes, I'm left with about \$2090 per month. But I also have to spend \$397 each month on fees, which is almost 20% of what I get during a month. That's over \$3500 a year, which is already too much. We could use that money for our basic needs (rent and groceries), especially during the summer. Because our assistantships often don't cover expenses for the full year, we have to save money during the academic year to cover our expenses in the summer.</p> <p>The university needs to think about how this fee increase will affect all of us. It's not just about money, it's about making sure everyone has a fair opportunity to get a higher education. Raising fees like this could make it harder for graduate students to stay afloat financially and mentally, and could also make our academic community less diverse and inclusive.</p> <p>Instead of going ahead with this plan, I hope the university will consider other ways to make education more accessible and affordable for everyone.</p> |
| Alexander Davis | Student | The fees and tuition are reaching levels that make it hard to keep up with as a student that is working two jobs to pay for housing and education. Each year I attend is more and more difficult to afford and there are not enough opportunities for financial assistance. The closer to a 0% increase, the easier it will be for student's education to be achievable. |
| Mara Villalongo Andino | Student | It is unfathomable to me that the university is considering increasing costs just as they finally adjusted pay for students. It is almost like they are trying to make up what they lost in those increases. I am completely against these increases as it will only further the financial difficulties experienced by students. |
| Isha Makwana | Student | I am a student at Virginia tech and I do not want my fees and tuition to be raised because I already pay too much, fees I pay are equal to 42 months of my rent, which is unbelievably expensive already. |
| Minge Jiang | Student | Please do not raise the fee! It's already been the highest student fee I've never seen in a public fee! Even for me with a GRA stipend, it's still be so difficult for me to afford it! Every paycheck after paid taxes, we have to pay another extra \$203 dollars to the university!! We don't get a big paycheck!! Only barely surviving!!! |
| Logan Breiner | Student | Having a fee increase for grad students is absurd. Most of the things those fees go towards are things that grad students have no time to use, between teaching your undergraduate students and performing your research. Broadcasting that there have been pay raises for grad students to try and take the heat off of y'all doesn't change this fact for us: even with those pay increases, we still don't make what is considered a living wage in Blacksburg, and those fees take >10% of our income right out from under US every year. Everyone of you who considers a fee increase from graduate students, one of the most vulnerable groups of employees at VT, as a viable means to raise funds should be ashamed of themselves. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|----------------|-------------|--|
| Laura McHenry | Student | <p>Hello, and thank you for reading this comment. I speak from the perspective of a Ph.D. Candidate at Virginia Tech. First, I'd like to state clearly that I appreciate that student fees support so many of those University resources and amenities that benefit the entire VT community. I believe in and support members of a community supporting those amenities that benefit the larger community. That being said, the magnitude of the financial burden student fees impose on graduate students in particular is already out of proportion with levels of graduate student compensation.</p> <p>Last fall, I paid approximately \$1500 in student fees. I paid about that much again with the start of the spring semester. As my stipend is set at the CALS minimum of Step 15, student fees comprise more than 10% of my after-tax stipend. Especially in light of the fact that this minimum stipend level already does not meet the living wage in Blacksburg, this is a rough percentage to have to give straight back to the university (after having paid taxes on it, too).</p> <p>I urge you to consider the undue burden that a further increase in fees will place on the graduate students who carry out the bulk of the research that makes Virginia Tech the world-class institution that it is.</p> <p>We strive to live up to Ut Prosim -- but how can we serve if our cup is empty?</p> <p>Many thanks,</p> <p>Laura McHenry Ph.D. Candidate VT Department of Entomology</p> |
| Brian Ruether | Student | <p>It significantly hurts the student body, especially the graduate student body, to increase tuition and fees every year. Graduate students are the backbone of Virginia Tech, churning out the results from our research that brings in grant money and makes the school look desirable. Our stipends are low as it is, and increasing fees while not increasing our base pay makes it significantly more challenging to live in a college town which charges unbelievably high rent prices. Meanwhile, the administration makes multitudes more than we do. Additionally, the majority of graduate students don't even use half of the services these fees supposedly go toward. I know that fee increases can be necessary sometimes, but not at this breakneck pace! Please start treating your graduate student workers with respect, VT BoV, and stop the frequency and severity of these fee increases. Thank you.</p> |
| Brian Parker | Student | <p>Please consider a 0% increase in tuition and fees for 2024-2025. Increasing tuition and fees without raising wages puts a significant economic burden on me as a student.</p> |
| Noah Showalter | Alumnus | <p>Please consider a 0% increase in tuition and fees for 2024-2025. High tuition and fees are barriers to education and success.</p> |
| Raffae Ahmad | Student | <p>Please consider a 0% increase in fees and tuition. I had my comprehensive fees covered for spring semester and it made a massive difference. This is was a fortunate situation that is not available to the overwhelming majority of grad students. It has allowed me to have emergency savings. Comprehensive fees are too high already and put a massive burden on grad students ability to budget with the limited stipend they have.</p> |
| Sehrish Altaf | Student | <p>This is to request the board to consider a 0.0% increase ONLY for the upcoming comprehensive fee change.</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|-------------------|-------------|--|
| Meghan McElroy | Student | Please reconsider raising tuition. I will already have to take out loans to graduate and raising tuition will put me that much more in the hole. By moving forward with this you will be putting me and many of my fellow students in a dire financial position before we even have a chance to start our careers. |
| Hesam Hosseinpour | Student | Only 0% increase in comprehensive fee is acceptable. |
| Donya Mohamed | Student | The current fees are equivalent to 2 months of my rent. I have to enroll in the payment plan because I cannot afford to pay it all at once. This decrease in my monthly payment has me almost living paycheck to paycheck. The university just increased our pay (less than 10% at that) and now you increase the fees. Therefore, the increase in our pay is now useless. Not everyone has parents that help them pay for everything, some of us are fully independent and have to pay for everything, and yes I mean everything, on our own. Understand that the majority of students main income is their stipend, and it is not fair to have that taken away from us from petty fees. As if Virginia tech hasn't already accumulated enough money. |
| Minhyuk Ko | Student | I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech, and I do not want my fees and tuition to be raised because I already pay too much for the comprehensive fees. Nearly a quarter of my stipend is sent back to VT, and I have to pay state and federal taxes for my whole stipend, including the one that I send to comprehensive fees. |
| Arash Shams | Student | <p>Dear Board of Visitors,</p> <p>I am writing to express my strong opposition to Virginia Tech's planned tuition and fee increase. I am a doctoral student, and I am really concerned about the financial burden that this would have on me and many other people, endangering our ability to finish our degrees and advance academically.</p> <p>A tuition increase would compel me to drastically cut down on my job hours as a working student. This puts my ability to pay for essentials like groceries and rent in jeopardy, which makes money stress an ongoing problem for me. In turn, this stress clearly impairs my academic performance, maybe pushing me to postpone or even give up on important research opportunities that are essential to completing my Ph.D.</p> <p>One of Virginia Tech's most defining characteristics is its reputation for being both affordable and accessible. These fundamental ideals are clearly at odds with rising tuition, which disproportionately affects students from lower- and middle-class backgrounds like me. This would prevent a great number of gifted people from achieving their academic goals and make it more difficult for the university to draw in and keep outstanding Ph.D. candidates.</p> <p>I implore you to think twice about this suggestion and look into other options. Far more sensible strategies would be to increase financial aid or conduct a full analysis of university spending to find cost-saving opportunities.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Arash Shams</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|----------------|-------------|---|
| Abdulai Kargbo | Student | If in any way possible please keep the tuition fees where they are if not lower as me and many other students are struggling to afford tuition as it is. An increase in tuition would close out more and more people from behind able to pursue higher education and if a university or college is not focused on advancing knowledge in all fields to and for as many people as possible, what is that institution's main goal? |
| Abhay Raghavan | Student | As an out of state student, I do understand the rationale behind tuition/fee increases, but it is a lot more difficult for me to be able to provide funds for Virginia Tech. |
| Arash Nouri | Student | <p>Dear Virginia Tech Board of Visitors,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed tuition and fee increases. While I understand the necessity of funding higher education and maintaining the quality of academic programs and services, raising tuition and fees is not a sustainable solution and may have detrimental effects on students and the community as a whole.</p> <p>First and foremost, increasing the financial burden on students through higher tuition and fees may limit access to higher education for many individuals, particularly those from low-income backgrounds and international students. Education should be accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status, and imposing higher costs could deter talented students from pursuing their academic aspirations.</p> <p>Moreover, escalating tuition and fees significantly strain students and their families, often leading to substantial debt burdens upon graduation. Many students struggle to afford college, and further increases could exacerbate financial hardships, forcing students to take on additional loans or work multiple jobs to cover expenses.</p> <p>Additionally, higher tuition and fees may contribute to a widening gap in educational equity. Students from marginalized communities and countries who already face systemic barriers to accessing higher education may be disproportionately affected by these increases, further perpetuating disparities in educational attainment and socioeconomic outcomes.</p> <p>Furthermore, raising tuition and fees may negatively impact the overall student experience. Higher costs may force students to cut back on essential resources such as textbooks, housing, and food, compromising their well-being and academic success. Moreover, increased financial stress can detract from students' ability to fully engage in extracurricular activities, internships, and research opportunities, limiting their holistic development and prospects.</p> <p>In conclusion, I strongly oppose the proposed tuition and fee increases and encourage the Board of Visitors to consider the broader implications of such measures for students, families, and the community. I urge you to prioritize the long-term well-being and success of all students by pursuing sustainable and equitable solutions to Virginia Tech's financial challenges.</p> <p>Thank you for considering my comments on this important matter.</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Sarah Wolsiffer | Student | Virginia Tech's tuition is \$15,478 for in-state and \$36,090 for out-of-state students. The national average cost of in-state tuition is \$11,560, and out-of-state tuition \$27,320 (US News and World Report 2024). This already makes Virginia Tech a more expensive school than most, making their students pay between \$62,000 and \$144,000 for their education. Despite having a net position of \$2.1 million at the end of FY22, and despite increasing enrollment, BOV states that tuition and fees must be increased to account for inflation, construction, and other essential campus service costs. However, this change will only bring hardship to the current and future students of Virginia Tech without providing any benefits. The reasons for increasing student expenses are unfounded and the exploitation of Tech students is unacceptable. This proposal cannot be allowed to pass. |
| Brittany Linares | Student | It is already hard for many middle and lower class families to afford tuition, in increasing it you dictate education for students, making it harder when education should already be free. Instead focus on finding another solution. |
| Ashley Shew | Alumnus | It seems absurd to me that the university keeps reporting record high levels of generosity toward the university (with Giving Day and large scale gifts) while at the same time raising fees and tuition. |
| Khadijah Queen | Faculty/Staff | With food and housing costs rising, on top of continuing general inflation, a tuition increase would cause graduate students further undue financial burden. Please do not move forward with a tuition increase. |
| Casey Anne Brimmer | Student | Raising tuition and fees disproportionately impacts already marginalized and minoritized graduate students including students of color, disabled students, first generation students and international students. I urge the BOV to take decisive action which supports these students and not raise the tuition and fees for graduate students. As a disabled graduate student with an assistantship I struggle to make ends meet at the current tuition and fees rates because I have to pay for medical expenses the university does not account for. I know many other graduate students who face the monthly decision between medical care including medications and feeding ourselves. The university is more than able to continue functioning with the current rates and therefore you should no raise the tuition and fees. |
| Inga Haugen | Faculty/Staff | I do not believe tuition and fees should be increased. |
| Xakin Mariana Ramirez Isunza | Student | Please don't increase the fees, as an international student I can't have an income aside from the stipend, and the fees are already more expensive than my rent. I also do not have time or need to use half the things I am charged for, like intramural sports. |
| Alexandra Pirkle | Faculty/Staff | Please do not raise the tuition/fees for graduate students. This would disproportionately impact students with marginalized identities, including disabled students, racialized students, LGBTQ+ students, and especially those who are multiply marginalized. These students are essential to advancing Virginia Tech's strategic initiative, Virginia Tech Global Distinction, and bring a wealth of knowledge and perspective to their disciplines that will cement Virginia Tech's legacy for generations to come - but only if they can afford to be here. |
| Caroline Vickery | Student | Hello, As a graduate student, please do not raise our tuition and fees. Tuition and fees contribute funds to many benefits that graduate students do not reap, including programs that support the undergraduate student body but not the graduate student body. I, therefore, do not support raising the tuition and fees when I already pay for things that do not directly or indirectly benefit me. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|-----------------|---------------|---|
| Lina McCloskey | Student | Please don't raise prices! Worry about your planes Mr Vice Rector. |
| Alice Werner | Student | We already pay high fees which aren't even deducted from our paychecks pre-tax. The fees also aren't announced prior to the date new students need to decide whether or not to attend Virginia Tech. People should know how much they must pay in fees before making such big life decisions like whether or not to attend Virginia Tech. Not providing that information in advance is whatever the nicer word for "shady" is. New students, especially international students, are misled into believing what is on their paycheck is what they will actually make. And international students already pay higher international student fees. Financial insecurity is already enough of a problem among graduate students. Why increase fees and make financial insecurity worse for the people who allow Virginia Tech to function? Why not eliminate fees, or at the very least not increase them and remove them from paychecks pre-tax? Also the fact that fees are not just deducted from our pay makes funding us more difficult, because then assistantships must pay artificially inflated student wages that must compensate for fees not being deducted. End student fees! |
| Mariah Green | Faculty/Staff | Please do not raise student tuition. The high cost of living for society, on top of increased tuition, would hurt many students financially. Please do not raise tuition and cause more hardships for our students here at Virginia Tech! DO NOT RAISE THE TUITION! |
| Sofia Kryder | Student | Tuition is already high enough as is. Increasing the amount will only deter more potential students that could bring further recognition to this institution. I personally could not afford an increase in tuition. Just because the cost of living has gone up, doesn't mean the average income has in turn increased. |
| Sanchari Kundu | Student | With the current comprehensive fees, I am paying more than \$3500 each year. Being an international student it is hard for me to survive with the rest of the paycheck on my account. As an international student, we are only allowed to work for 20 hours, which means we can't work extra like others. I would kindly request not to increase any more fees for us. |
| Mariah rojas | Student | Comprehensive fees already take over 10% of my paycheck during the semester. An increase would make my living situation much more stressful. |
| Navdeep Godara | Student | A 0% increase will be afforded by students as living expenses are very high in Virginia compared to the assistantship offered. Please no more hikes in tuition and fees. |
| Caleb Henderson | Student | I have been a graduate student at Tech for almost 6 years now. I have seen student fees increase drastically with little benefit to me or those around me. I have no issue paying my fair share to ensure all students have access to quality health care services and public transportation. But when the busses are inconsistent/late, and getting an appointment can take days I can't help but feel that the increase in student fees only serves as a way to line people's pockets. Please if you decide to increase the fees, please try and make sure that the money is actually going for the benefits of EVERYONE, and not just to building another giant building to auction off to rich alumni. |
| Ahmad Humayun | Student | I do not want the tuition costs for graduate students to be increased. |
| Muhammad Raza | Student | Please don't increase the fees for graduate program. It is already very difficult to cover these as it is very difficult to get cheap room/apartment in Blacksburg. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|----------------|-------------|---|
| Gabrielle Ripa | Student | I oppose any increase of tuition and fees, but especially an increase in fees. This is the third university I have attended and I am currently working on my PhD at Virginia Tech. At my last institution, Mississippi State, graduate student fees were \$50/semester. Another graduate student in my department shared student fees at Texas A&M were \$80/semester. If both of these universities are able to operate on much lower costs, why can't Virginia Tech. Student fees are exorbitant and put a strain on graduate students, especially international graduate students who are not able to supplement their stipend with other sources of income. While I am enrolled in the graduate comprehensive fee plan, I am paying over 4 times more per pay period (~\$235/paycheck) than I paid for the whole semester at Mississippi State (\$50/semester). Approximately 15% of my graduate stipend (before taxes) goes towards student fees. With the cost of living in Blacksburg rising (including housing, gas, and groceries), graduate students cannot take another increase in student fees, especially without a subsequent increase in wages. |
| Thomas B Badon | Student | I have earned degrees from two land-grant, public institutions prior to attending Virginia Tech. Virginia Tech by far has the highest tuition and fees. From what research I gather, VT's graduate student tuition and fees appears to not only be above average nationally, but above the 75th percentile in cost. VT charges graduate students between 9 and 14% of their stipend in comprehensive fees. I earned a master's degree at an American land-grant university that charged \$50 a semester for graduate fees because they recognize the importance of their graduate students and health of their graduate programs. There is no reason for VT to have one of the highest expenses in the country for a public research school. Additionally, the school continues to overcharge remote graduate students at AREC facilities for services they will never have access to use. The \$300 waiver is not a significant reduction in fees and still doesn't cover the total cost of resources AREC students pay for but don't receive benefits from. |
| Joseph Taylor | Student | Please do not raise the student fees. The amount of fees I pay is already crippling. There are so many departments within VT that I see scrambling to find ways spend tens of thousands of dollars left over at the end of each fiscal year. I think the board should focus on helping departments be more efficient with they already have. It is so frustrating to see thousands of dollars be wasted on are unnecessary just so someone's budget won't be reduced in the following year. The money is there already, we don't need to raise tuition or fees. |
| Ravneet Kaur | Student | Tuition fees for graduate student and comprehensive fees especially is very unreasonably high as compared to othee state universities and the amount of stipend we get. |
| Paige Crane | None | I am writing to express my opinion that graduate and undergraduate tuition should not be raised. A college education is at a crossroad in that it is being increasingly accessed by a more diverse group of people while becoming less and less affordable to those same people. I am personally impacted by this trend, as are all the students I see working multiple jobs to pay for school. Even the graduate stipend for funded students is cut into by excessive student fees. Maintaining affordability should be a priority amongst the leaders of our university. Do not raise student fees. Thank you. |
| Drake Lynn | Student | I do not support raising fees for Graduate Students, who function as much as a work force than a student body and deserve to be treated more closely to other employees. |
| Shehla Yasmeen | Student | I do not want raise in fee as it is already too much for me to pay. Thanks |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|-------------------------|-------------|---|
| Shokoufeh Bozorgmehrian | Student | As an international student, it is a significant amount of money to pay every month for the plan of fee payments. This leaves me no flexibility in monthly living costs as it is now! Increasing it is not something that I can afford in any shape and form! And I believe this counts for all other students in my situation. |
| Carol Yen | Student | As a graduate student without stipend, I don't think the quality of the teaching I received so far is worth to raising my tuition. There are lots of professors don't prepare their lecture, and some of them I feel I learned nothing. The facility didn't improve at all. |
| Caetano Franco | Student | This new price is impossible to be paid for international students. |
| Mungyeong Choe | Student | I am an international student, and I have been serving as a 20-hour GTA since I joined the Tech. One of the reasons I chose VT was that I expected to spend less if I lived in Blacksburg, so I declined similar universities that offered me admission. However, it turned out that I technically receive less stipend due to the high comprehensive fee. If I had gone to another school, my financial situation would be much better. I don't use the school's facilities that much, and I don't think there is a valid reason for increasing the comprehensive fee. As VT decided to increase our stipend, the school also decided to increase the comprehensive fee. Nobody is happy with this decision. Professors are struggling to find other funding opportunities because of the increased salary for their grad students, but grad students did not receive any practical advantages. I was wondering why VT is pursuing such a meaningless trial. |
| Elisabeth Kitchin | Student | Please consider how any increase in tuition and/or fees will negatively impact Virginia Tech's ability to recruit students. Other universities of equal prestige, specifically other land-grant universities across the country, have fees that are a fraction of the price of Virginia Tech's. It is harder to compete with other universities when recruiting students to the VT graduate school, especially when our fees and tuition costs are so much higher than other universities. Any increase in fees/tuition will continue to cause the graduate school to lose promising prospective students. |
| Mary Olumide-Oyaniyi | Student | As tuition and fees continue to rise, access to higher education becomes increasingly challenging. Many students already struggle with debt, and further increases exacerbate this problem. The institution should explore alternative funding models and prioritize affordability. Thank you. |
| Mohammad Rahimi | Student | The tuition and fees are already really high and a major stressor for me and all of my friends (all graduate students). Given our limited salary, these fees take a toll not only on our finances but also our mental health twice a year. I have studied at 2 other large public US universities of comparable size and profile (to those of VT) and neither had tuition and fees nearly as high as VT's. Please do not exacerbate an already critical situation, by further increasing these fees. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|-------------------|-------------|--|
| Aditya Mandhare | Student | <p>As an International graduate student, I am deeply troubled by the financial burden placed on students, particularly in light of the current economic climate.</p> <p>The prospect of increased tuition and fees only adds to the financial strain that many of us already face. With comprehensive fees exceeding \$3,000, a significant portion of our stipends is allocated towards covering these expenses. For international students, the burden is even greater.</p> <p>As someone who is committed to their academic pursuits, I find it disheartening that a substantial portion of my stipend goes towards paying fees rather than supporting my education and research endeavors.</p> <p>I urge the Board of Visitors to carefully consider the impact of these proposed increases on graduate students, who play a vital role in the academic and research success of Virginia Tech. Any decisions regarding tuition and fees must take into account the financial well-being of students and ensure accessibility to higher education.</p> <p>I implore the Board to explore alternative solutions that prioritize affordability and equity, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to pursue their educational goals without facing undue financial hardship.</p> <p>Thank you for considering my perspective on this matter.</p> |
| | Student | I am a grad student and I hardly survive with the stipend I get, increasing the fees will lower my quality of life one step further, so please dont do it. |
| Saeid Alimoradi | Student | Graduate students pay over \$3,000 worth of comprehensive fees (even more for international students). The minimum Virginia Tech graduate stipend is set at \$21,780 before taxes. This means 14% of their stipend goes towards paying fees. A lot of graduate students are not using the athletic facilities yet; they have to pay for them. Their access can easily be terminated, and only those who want to can pay for and use the facilities. With only removing the athletic fee, a good chunk of comprehensive fee would be reduced. |
| Gayatri Vanamala | Student | As a graduate student, it's imperative to prioritize saving earnings, as they may prove invaluable during the job search period. Heightening comprehensive fees would deplete the already modest savings that could be pivotal later on. This would pose an even greater challenge for international students, given the significant expenses associated with traveling to and from their home countries. Moreover, increased financial burdens would inevitably amplify stress levels among students, subsequently impacting their academic performance. Social lives would also be compromised, as individuals would be unable to allocate funds for leisure activities. In light of the already exorbitant costs of essential needs such as water, transportation, and medical care, I urge the jury to consider reducing comprehensive fees instead. |
| Ahmad Raza Usmani | Student | <p>Even the current comprehensive fees is so much that a good portion of our pay cheques go towards that (almost around \$400 a month).</p> <p>I sincerely urge the BOV to reconsider their decision, since it's very hard to manage expenses as a graduate student when such a big portion of the stipend goes directly to the comprehensive fees (including some services that we never even use).</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|------------------|-------------|---|
| Lindsay Sandusky | Student | Please do not increase student fees! Graduate students are what make this university run, and we already pay over \$400/month back to Virginia Tech. This drastically reduces our stipend. Many of us do not have savings or expendable income, and we are just scraping by. Please do what you can to support us by not increasing student fees! |
| Bridget Re | Student | As a graduate student trying to live on the current stipend, I cannot afford to have an increase in tuition or fees! Fees take up a large part of my paycheck as is. I feel like Tech is taking advantage of their graduate students by underpaying them while continuing trying to get more money out of us. I am disappointing in the people in charge who find this treatment acceptable. |
| Yu Lin | Student | <p>I am reaching out as a concerned graduate student from the Department of Biomedical Sciences and Pathobiology, to respectfully request your consideration for maintaining a 0% increase in our comprehensive fees for the upcoming academic year.</p> <p>Currently, the comprehensive fees account for more than 10% of my after-tax income, a significant financial commitment. Since the pandemic began, both housing and grocery expenses in the Blacksburg area have surged, imposing an additional financial burden on myself and many of my peers. The escalating costs have forced several students to relocate to more affordable areas such as Christiansburg, whereas others, who lack personal transportation, are compelled to deal with the steeply rising rental prices near the university.</p> <p>An increase in fees at this critical time would not only deepen our financial difficulties but might also adversely affect our academic engagement and mental health. Our commitment to our studies and research, to make meaningful contributions to our fields, is unwavering. Nevertheless, the threat of a growing financial strain threatens to undermine our ability to concentrate fully on these important endeavors.</p> <p>I understand the financial challenges faced by the institution itself are significant. However, I believe that holding the line on fee increases this year would not only alleviate considerable stress for your graduate student body but would also signal the university's deep commitment to supporting us in our academic and professional pursuits.</p> <p>I urge you to consider the far-reaching impact of fee increases on students like me and to opt for a 0% increase this year. Such a decision would undoubtedly support our continued academic success and enable us to remain focused on contributing positively to our community and beyond.</p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to consider this appeal. I am hopeful for a decision that reflects the best interests of the student community and the university alike.</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|------------------------|---------------|---|
| Béla Williams | Student | <p>As an incoming first-year student, I strongly oppose the proposed tuition and fee increase. Virginia Tech is a land grant university, not a fancy private college, and it must be as affordable as possible. Based on the board's statements in the proposal, we clearly share this point of view. However, a 3% tuition and fee increase is not in line with our goal of affordable education. 3% may not sound like much, but this works out to hundreds of dollars per year and thousands of dollars in increased cost over the duration of a degree. This is unacceptable for both ethical and practical reasons. The Board's efforts to keep tuition increase below the rate of inflation is certainly better than nothing, but inflation is a highly flawed metric to use. As inflation increases, wages of families often do not. Thus, any increase in the cost of education at all hits especially hard, particularly during this national cost of living and housing crisis. This is personal to me. I grew up in Blacksburg, but took a gap year to work in order to save money for attending Virginia Tech. The proposed tuition/fee increase is equivalent to an entire month of rent for me each year. I am an aspiring engineer and I would like nothing more than to pour all of my mental energy into this fascinating subject, but this is made more difficult due to having to deal with such a high cost of attendance. As is common sense, and as a 2023 study in the Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education confirms: "financial stress has a strong impact on participation in different academic and personal activities of a student." We lag behind our regional peers in this regard. Based on each college website's estimated 23-24 in-state total cost of attendance, The University of Maryland is roughly \$5,000 less expensive per year than Virginia Tech. This number is closer to \$10,000/year less expensive for UNC Chapel Hill, NC State, Appalachian State, and West Virginia University. In fact, the out-of-state cost for Appalachian State is less than \$5,000 more expensive than in-state cost at VT. These numbers are important when students are deciding where to attend, and when families are deciding where to live. Why attend VT when going out-of-state to North Carolina is a comparable cost in some cases? Why live in Northern Virginia when setting up roots in NC's Triangle Area means markedly more affordable education for your kids? The lack of affordability at Virginia's universities has a negative impact on student success, weakens the appeal of VT for many talented students, and has ripple effects in the broader economy. The cost of attendance must not be increased.</p> <p>Hossain, M.K., Mahfuz, T., Latif, S. and Hossain, M.E. (2023), "Determinants of financial stress among university students and its impact on their performance", <i>Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education</i>, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 226-237. https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-02-2023-0011</p> |
| Mizanul Hoque | Student | <p>We, grad student from third world country have already been struggling with the current fees. Even hearing from grad students from other universities in the USA, it is exceptional here, in VT as most of the universities do not deduct such fees from grad students.</p> <p>If you want to increase the fees, increase the stipend to that proportion first.</p> <p>My opinion is, please, make our grad journey easy, we cannot do good quality research if we face financial difficulties.</p> |
| Laura Eanes | Faculty/Staff | I support the fee increase. I see the struggles on the departmental level to fund certain items and special requests that come up during the school year. The fees greatly help by supporting certain services which then allows departmental funds to go farther in other areas. |
| Kian Babaei Shalmani | Student | There are alternatives than to keep increasing costs carried by students who are already struggling |
| Kimiya MohammadiJozani | Student | Given the economic hardship and increasing inflation rate, as a Ph.D. student, being focused on my work is really difficult. I think the least the university can do is to cut or decrease the fee for Ph.D. students since they do not often use the facilities as much as master's and undergrad students do. This would help us focus on the important task of developing science and technology. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|------------------------|-------------|---|
| Elizabeth Sicking | Student | I ask that you not raise student fees for graduate students as paying these fees accounts for nearly 10% of my untaxed income as a graduate student. Factoring in taxes, hours worked a week, and other deductions made to my paystub, most graduate students (including myself) make below minimum wage, despite contributing a large body of research publications and workforce in the form of TAing. Increases in student fees add increased financial pressure to our lives, as we pay for services we often don't even use as graduate students. We recognize that our fees are low in comparison to other universities across the commonwealth, but it is because of things like that that students love Virginia Tech. I would also argue that student fees, in addition to other fees students may have to pay like parking, for school/research supplies, and more adds up more quickly than it would seem. For these reasons I hope the Board puts their students first and is able to find another source of revenue to increase student fees, rather than increasing the burden on the very students they're trying to support. |
| Emma Roshioru | Student | Accessibility and affordability- two words I use to describe Virginia Tech as I go on about how incredible my school is and in discussing what makes it all so great. How can we expect to continue to embrace such sentiments to students, current and future, when there is even a debate regarding fee increases. Students deserve more than education, but the right to retain the fees they were under the impression they would be paying for their time at Virginia Tech. Now is not the time to burden students in an inflationary economy, but to search for better solutions. |
| Mohammad Alipour Vaezi | Student | There are a lot of Iranian graduate students here who can't receive any financial support from their families due to the sanctions. Increasing the fees would make the life harder for them. |
| Nicholas Britten | Student | Please do not raise fees this year. As a graduate student, my assistantship is hardly enough to cover food, rent, and the cost of childcare for my family. A fee increase will make paying for basic necessities even more difficult, and it is extremely frustrating having to pay so much money for services that are largely geared towards undergraduates, some of which I cannot even use. |
| Mushtari Maliha | Student | Please do not raise the fees. It is already very difficult to manage expenses while paying the comprehensive fees. As an international graduate student, I have to spend a lot to go to my country to see my parents. I don't have any emergency fund let alone savings and my credit card debt keeps increasing. Comprehensive fees are a huge financial burden. I know a lot of prospective graduate students from my country who do not apply to Virginia Tech because they do not want to pay this additional fee. It would be really great if you could get the services funded by comprehensive fees paid for by any other legal means. Thank you. |
| | Student | Hello, I am a Ph.D. student in the college of engineering, and I urge the board to not increase the student fees. I have a full time assistantship from the department, and the fees already cost nearly a quarter of my entire pay check. Between that and rent increases across Blacksburg and neighboring areas, this will cause me and a lot of other students to have to reconsider the cost/benefit tradeoff of continuing this degree. The fees already cause a significant financial burden, and an increase will simply make that impact worse. It has frankly prevented me from getting a car. Though the transit system here is very useful, it is only helping with most of my transportation needs. As a researcher for the university, there are times where I need to travel around town conducting study trials; these times and locations are not always compatible with the transit system, further incurring a financial burden or intense coordination and inconvenience with classmates being kind enough to drive me. The increase in fees would simply compound these and other financial struggles students like me deal with everyday in our pursuit of a degree at this university. I urge you to please not raise the fees so that I can continue being a graduate student here. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|-----------------------|---------------|---|
| Kaustubh Deshmukh | Student | As a PhD student I ask that you please not raise fees for the upcoming school year. Comprehensive fees are a very significant financial burden on graduate students and I ask that you do everything in your power to get services funded by comprehensive fees paid for by grants and other means legal in Virginia. Comprehensive fees account to almost 15% of our stipends, which reduces our chances to create emergency funds or travel back home and makes it a financial stressor. |
| Emilia Hyland | Student | Any level of increase in student fees would mean more of my limited graduate stipend would go toward paying these fees and less toward the increasing costs of living, making it harder for me to support myself. I do not support this proposed increase in student fees. From my understanding, Tech's student fees are much higher than other universities. Tech should value their grad students and the work they do like those other universities. |
| Mattia Gramuglia | Student | As a PhD student, I ask that you please not raise fees for the upcoming school year. Comprehensive fees are a very significant financial burden on graduate students and I ask that you do everything in your power to get services funded by comprehensive fees paid for by grants and other legal means. |
| Joseph Kubalak | Faculty/Staff | Please do not raise tuition or fees. I was a VT student (both undergrad and grad) and still work at the university as a research scientist. I am still paying off the loans I took out to attend university, and the presence of the loans has really negatively impacted my outlook on VT as a whole. One full paycheck per month (from the university!) just goes to pay back the loans. The current rates are already crippling for the student body and should not be raised. |
| Sumit Saha | Student | Hi. I am a Ph.D. student in the department of Mechanical Engineering. I want a 0% increase in the comprehensive fee. The comprehensive fee is a very big burden for me. I can not afford a better housing because of this fee. The comprehensive fee is also a big reason that I can not make any significant savings. Increasing this fee will make it very difficult for me to make a good living at Blacksburg. |
| Marie-Clémentine Bahu | Student | Graduate student (especially internationals, making up for most of the grad students total) are paying the max. fees. Some students have to sell things they possess home just to be able to come here or pay the plane ticket. I believe that rising those fees will just lower the number of graduate applicants - hence reduce the number of performing students coming to VT. |
| Raghav Gnanasambandam | Student | As a PhD candidate I ask that you please not raise fees for the upcoming school year. Comprehensive fees already takes away 1.5 months of my 9 months salary. Eating decently well takes up 25 percent of my monthly stipend. A fee increase makes it even harder to plan my food with limited budget. |
| Waris Khan | Student | Hello, I am a graduate student in Mechanical Engineering department, and I am asking you to not to increase this year. As a graduate student, my assistantship is hardly enough to cover food, rent, textbooks, and medical cost of my mother. A fee increase will make paying for basic necessities even more difficult, and it is extremely frustrating having to pay so much money for services that are largely geared towards undergraduates, some of which I cannot even use. Comprehensive fees are a very significant financial burden on graduate students, and I ask that you do everything in your power to get services funded by comprehensive fees paid for by grants and other means legal in Virginia. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|--------------------|-------------|---|
| Chaitanya Sonalkar | Student | Hello, I am a PhD student at Virginia Tech. Managing expenses on a stipend is already a difficult task. The comprehensive fees charged is almost 20% of our monthly income! Also, My rent for next year is already up by 8%. I request you to not increase the fees this year, as it will make managing everyday expenses even more difficult. I sincerely request you to consider reducing the comprehensive fees if you plan on increasing the overall tuition fees. |
| Atharva Agashe | Student | Please do not increase the student fees Blacksburg is getting expensive year by year and increasing fees puts financial stress on graduate students |
| | Student | It really sucks going to a school that cares so little for the students that help make everything possible. It's already bad enough that we have to pay fees for things that I don't even use, and that the money we are given barely supports most of us, so why continue to raise fees and tuition? Maybe we should focus less on putting money into things that already have so much going into it and focus on what this school is actually for, helping to provide students with the best education possible without the worry of financial struggles. |
| Connor Herron | Student | I am a PhD student in the Mechanical Engineering department and I do not want student fees to increase. It's already difficult for me to support myself with a part-time job to pay for rent and tuition. It would be more difficult for me to remain financially stable if these fees are increased. |
| Erin Mahoney | Student | Hello, I am a graduate student in the Human Development & Family Science department, and I am asking you to choose the 0% fee increase this year. The comprehensive fees are the reason I cannot afford to attend conferences that are essential for networking in my field. Another fee increase is only going to make my life harder. |
| Emma Reilly Oare | Student | Hello, I am about to be an Accelerated Master's student in the Biological Systems Engineering department. I am asking for a 0% increase in fees next year. In the past year, I have had to pay for more psychiatric and psychological care as I have struggled with bipolar depression. If fees were to increase, given my current budget, I anticipate having a very difficult time paying for food, rent, and medication. A fee increase will make basic necessities even harder to obtain. Please consider our needs. |
| Mary Pletcher | Student | I do not think fees should be increased. There must be other opportunities to reduce spending at the university to support projects. A Virginia Tech education is awesome and should be available to more people without the threat of going into insane debt because the cost of tuition keeps increasing. Change is made by the many decisions of individuals, which includes those with voting rights in this decision. I urge the board to not increase fees. |
| Amanda Wei | Student | As a PhD student I ask that you please not raise fees for the upcoming school year. Comprehensive fees are a very significant financial burden on graduate students and I ask that you do everything in your power to get services funded by comprehensive fees paid for by grants and other means legal in Virginia. |
| Isabela Gnasso | Student | Hello, I am a third year physics graduate student writing to support a 0% increase in comprehensive fees in the upcoming academic year. They are already a significant cost and it would be an enormous burden to have to comply with an increase in fees. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|-------------|-------------|--|
| Jinsol Jung | Student | <p>Hello,</p> <p>I am a graduate student in the Mechanical Engineering department. I wish to express my observations to the esteemed members of the Board of Visitors and other stakeholders.</p> <p>During my stay here since 2020, I have noticed an interesting trend within our institution. There appear to be two distinct groups: one advocating for annual fee increases, while the other strives to alleviate the financial burdens faced by the majority of graduate students.</p> <p>Last year, despite a 5% increase in stipends, the net income for many of us was diminished due to corresponding rises in comprehensive fees. Additionally, the cost of living, exemplified by escalating rent prices, continues to strain our financial resources. (From 2019 to 2022, rent prices in Blacksburg increased by 12%, while those in Christiansburg surged by 24%, according to a study by the New River Valley Regional Commission). Furthermore, the post-Covid era has witnessed significant inflation rates (4.70% in 2021, 8.00% in 2022, 4.1% in 2023, based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) data provided by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics), resulting in higher expenses for everyday necessities.</p> <p>Consequently, it appears that the disposable income of many graduate students has remained stagnant, if not diminished. While I acknowledge the complexities involved, I believe it is important to highlight the real-world implications of fee increases.</p> <p>Personally, I have chosen this path, recognizing its challenges, and am prepared to navigate them. However, I urge the Board to consider the broader impact of their decisions on the student body.</p> <p>In closing, I am not advocating against fee increases, understanding the multifaceted considerations involved. However, I respectfully ask that you take into account the tangible effects on the lives of graduate students.</p> <p>Thank you for your attention to this matter.</p> |
| Arati | Student | We need 0%fee increase. Please increase the salary instead of fees. |
| | Student | <p>The VT fees take up the majority of my post-necessity (food, housing, insurance) income as a graduate student. Even living with another student, I usually don't have any money left over to save for emergencies. I've even had to cut back on my food bills (which are already minimal), to make up for emergency funds.</p> <p>Increasing the fees will not only place students like myself in worse financial situations, but the increase will disproportionately impact international student who already have more fees and a limited ruleset to make money outside of VT wages.</p> <p>Please think about these groups of individuals before you raise the student fees. These fees are already becoming unmanageable. Please do not raise the student fees.</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|--------------------|-------------|--|
| Graduate Anonymous | Student | <p>The fees take away a money that could allow me to EAT BETTER.</p> <p>Please do not increase. It is already a burden, and influences how well I eat!</p> |
| Lauren Pittman | Student | <p>Hello, I am a graduate student in the Human Development and Family Science department, and I am asking you to chose the 0% fee increase this year. The comprehensive fees are the reason I cannot afford to independently pay my car payment and build a savings account. Another fee increase is only going to make my life harder.</p> |
| Dinidu Hathnagoda | Student | <p>Hello, I am a graduate student in the Physics department, and I am asking you to chose the 0% fee increase this year. The comprehensive fees are the reason I cannot afford to see my family and pay off my credit card balance.</p> |
| Carlos Saint-Preux | Student | <p>Hello,</p> <p>I am a graduate student in the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences and I am asking you to chose the 0% fee increase this year. The comprehensive fees are the reason I cannot afford to pay off my credit card balance and medical bills. Another fee increase is only going to make my life harder.</p> |
| Egor Kolesnikov | Student | <p>I am a PhD student with a wife and son. Since comprehensive fees take about 18% of my net income, it would be noticeably harder to cover necessary expenses if fees rise. I am kindly asking you not to raise the fee.</p> |
| Md Sahadat Ali | Student | <p>Please, do not increase fees.</p> <p>Thanks</p> |
| Alexander Harris | Student | <p>End student fees for graduate students. We bring in the university millions of dollars and do millions of dollars of labor. Despite getting our tuition waived, we bizarrely have to give back some of our (small) stipend for student fees.</p> |
| Kassaye Belay | Student | <p>"Hello, I am a graduate student in the GBCB department, and I am asking you to choose the 0% fee increase this year. The comprehensive fees are the reasons I cannot afford to see my family and pay off my credit card balance. Another fee increase is only going to make my life harder.</p> <p>Please do not raise fees this year. As a graduate student, my assistantship is hardly enough to cover food, rent, and textbooks. A fee increase will make paying for basic necessities even more difficult, and it is extremely frustrating having to pay so much money for services that are largely geared towards undergraduates, some of which I cannot even use."</p> <p>As a PhD student, I ask that you please not raise fees for the upcoming school year. Comprehensive fees are a very significant financial burden on graduate students and I ask that you do everything in your power to get services funded by comprehensive fees paid for by grants and other means legal in Virginia.</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|------------------------|-------------|---|
| Jaimie R. Oare | Parent | As a parent of a STEM student and graduate of a large, land grant public research university, (The University of Florida) I understand that providing a top tier education at a reasonable price involves many factors. I appreciate the continued rise of VT on the NSF Survey. However, I am also well aware that a vast majority of the research dollars spent come from outside sources. Not to mention the increase in number of students each year at VT. For this reason, I oppose a tuition increase, with the confidence that VT will continue to utilize it's national standing to obtain the needed funding outside sources and not from the students who may return the dollar value to the university multiple times over in the future. |
| Nagihan Karakaya | Student | Hello, This is Nagihan in Nuclear Engineering department. Please do not raise fees this year. As a graduate student, my assistantship is hardly enough to cover food, rent, and utilities. Paying 1500\$ every term struggles many student, we hardly save few bucks every month. Basically, we save them to pay comprehensive fees. It is a factor that increases the stress during the PhD journey. We are hardly paying everything, working a lot and not having anything saved for after graduation. This fee increase will make paying for basic necessities even more difficult, and it is extremely frustrating having to pay so much money for services that are largely geared towards undergraduates, some of which I cannot even use. |
| Mary Michael Lipford | Student | To the BOV, I am a grad student at the eastern shore AREC, and I am writing to comment on the proposed increase of student fees. As a AREC student, I pay over \$2000 in fees and have no access to most of the entities I pay for (bus, gym, rec sports, etc). Having to pay for another gym membership and transportation to our rural research center on top of the crippling fees is a huge financial burden. I am asking respectfully, please do not raise student fees. We are already struggling as graduate students. Thank you. |
| SJ Greger | Student | While I support the expansion of VT's influence & quality, this price cannot come from the students. Most of us are stretched thin as it is and cannot keep up with the slow increasing crawl of tuition. While our education and research opportunities might be improved, the increasing amount of debt & lack of assistance will negate that positive mark on our futures. |
| Vera Lavrentyeva | Student | Very opposed towards an increase as a student who already has loans building up |
| Ibrahim Oguz Cetinkaya | Student | As students, we are already hardly breaking even. As a grad student, I spend over 20% of my salary for fees and this is already too much! The argument for increasing the fees is inflation but you should also consider that we experience the inflation in the rest of our spendings. This increase will definitely lower the quality of life for all students, both grad and undergrad. |
| Caroline Wolcott | Student | Hello I am a PhD Student in the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences. I ask that you do not raise fees for the upcoming academic year. The current fees are 10% of my total annual income. They are already significantly higher than a lot of other schools' graduate fees around the country. If you raise the fees, this will add to the already difficult financial burden these fees present. Thank you for your time. |
| Megan Hall | Student | Students here at Virginia Tech are already paying a very large amount of money to attend the school. Many in state students, including myself came to an in state school because we could not afford a college out of state, however increasing tuition would put many students in a position of financial stress and could make them consider transferring to a school with lower tuition. I urge you to consider the current economic state of our country and consider that many students and their families are struggling to make ends meet right now. A tuition increase would negatively affect many students and their families. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Corinne Fitzgerald | Student | Raising tuition would make it even harder for most students to attend especially if not supported by parents or guardian. College tuition is already so incredibly high and out of reach for a lot of people and this would make that even harder. |
| Sudarsana Jayandan Janakaraj | Student | I am a graduate student in the department of mechanical engineering. I am barely able to afford the fee and my living cost right now. I ask you to choose the 0% increase in fees for the next year. |
| Sagarkumar Parekh | Student | The increase in tuition and the increase in the graduate assistants' compensation has been disproportionate in the past. While there has been plans to increase the stipend, this has been accompanied by a significant increase in the non-E&G fees to support the increase in the costs. Additionally, there has been a constant increase in the living expenses (housing, groceries, fuel, etc.) every year. In the past, raise in grad student stipend has not been enough to mitigate the rising costs - both living and college fees. This makes affordability really challenging for all grad students, and perhaps affects the international student community the most. In accordance with VT's plan to maintain student affordability, I would urge the BOV to not increase the fees. |
| Mia Barlotta | Student | This fee increase will only increase already high student expenses and student debt |
| Nicole Jefferson | Student | The fees in addition to tuition are already a burden for a large portion of students. Even students on scholarship have to pay their fees out of pocket. Increasing the cost of fees while our university touts millions of dollars in endowments seems predatory. |
| Aakriti Sapkota | Faculty/Staff | Currently, graduate students pay over 3,000\$ worth of comprehensive fees. The minimum Virginia Tech graduate stipend is set at 21,780 before taxes. This means 14% of their stipend goes towards paying fees. I would support my view to not increase the student tuition and fees. |
| | Student | Please do not raise fees. I am currently paying 950 for rent by myself and more than half of my monthly check goes to rent. This doesn't include other incidentals, like my other bills and emergency situations, and up front costs for conference attendance. The grad students are already being bled dry, even with the wage increases over these past few years. If raised, it negates all the progress made to improve students' standard of living. For the love of god, we can only take so much. |
| Sadegh Yarmohammadisatri | None | Dear Sir/Madam, As a student, I am facing financial hardship already and do not know how to handle more fees. |
| Gian Putra | Student | I really hope that the comprehensive fee will not be raised, I don't even use gym and some other facilities that I pay, and also as an international student, I had to pay visa application fee, airplane ticket, and visa reciprocity fee before I came here. Now, I am still trying to pay a loan that I took to pay those fees. Please, consider it. |
| Teng Li | Student | Money is talking. |
| Suman | Student | Please don't increase |
| Nikhil Kumar | Student | As a PhD student, I ask that you please not raise fees for the upcoming school year. Comprehensive fees are a very significant financial burden on graduate students. I ask that you do everything in your power to get services funded by comprehensive fees paid for by grants and other legal means in Virginia. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|---------------------------|-------------|---|
| Subham Swastik Samal | Student | As a masters student, I kindly request that you refrain from raising tuition for the next academic year. My assistantship barely covers textbooks, rent, food, and medical expenses for me. It is quite frustrating to have to pay so much for services that are primarily oriented towards UGs, some of which I cannot even use, and a fee rise will make paying for basic requirements much more difficult. |
| Aksh Rajput | Student | As a masters student I ask you to not raise fees for the upcoming school year. Comprehensive fees are a very significant financial burden on graduate students and I ask that you do everything in your power to get services funded by comprehensive fees paid for by grants and other means legal in Virginia. |
| Wesley Woo | Student | <p>When I heard that comprehensive fees are going to be increased, I was really disappointed. While I understand that a lot of this money goes towards student programming, the \$3000 of comprehensive fees makes a significant dent in my savings goals every year. As a PhD student, it's hard for me to seriously consider pursuing an academic career when I know that the industry path will provide me with the financial security I'm giving up by being a student.</p> <p>Furthermore, it's disheartening to see that Virginia Tech's comprehensive fees are substantially higher than many high ranked institutions in my discipline (https://csstipendrankings.org/). It feels like Virginia Tech will never be able to recruit high quality computer science students, because we are both less prestigious and less attractive financially.</p> <p>Finally, I know that a lot of comprehensive fees go towards causes I'm happy to support, such as supporting underrepresented students and providing health care on campus. However, I feel that a big question mark remains for what the majority of my comprehensive fees go towards. Personally I have no interest in attending sports games on campus, and would strongly prefer that my comprehensive fees don't go towards supporting ticket raffles, or other "student life benefits" that I don't care to participate in. Why aren't some of these comprehensive fees optional? I don't want to use the gym on campus, so why should I pay towards the maintenance of those facilities? Overall -- comprehensive fees have strongly negatively impacted my experience as a PhD student here. I understand that some of these fees might be going towards initiatives I care about, but it feels like the vast majority do not. I think the BoV should seriously re-evaluate what programs are being supported by these fees, and align them with what students want to support.</p> |
| Isilay Derviscemaloglu | Student | As a PhD student I ask that you please not raise fees for the upcoming school year. Comprehensive fees are a very significant financial burden on graduate students and I ask that you do everything in your power to get services funded by comprehensive fees paid for by grants and other means legal in Virginia. |
| Voltaire | Student | As a doctoral candidate in the Mechanical Engineering department, I kindly request that the Comprehensive fees remain unchanged. With my current funding, I am unable to afford necessary dental health expenses. I am diligently saving for this, and any fee increase would further postpone my required dental surgery. |
| Apoorva Narendra Khairnar | Student | I am a Direct PhD Student at the Department of Mechanical engineering and I am asking you to choose a 0% increase in the comprehensive fee this year. As an international graduate student, it is already difficult to afford the living expenses while paying for an education loan in your home country. My assistantship is hardly enough to cover all of this. Hence, an increase in the comprehensive fees will only make it much more difficult to cover all the necessary expenses. |
| Rutvik Dagadkhair | Student | Please do not increase the Tuition fee, it is already too high for international students. If it's further increased, it might lead to financial problems for several including me. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|-----------------|-------------|--|
| Ranhee Yoon | Student | <p>Hello, I'm a graduate student in the ME department, and submitting this comment to ask that please do not raise fees for this year. Comprehensive fees are a very significant financial burden on graduate students. My assistantship is hardly enough to cover the cost of living such as food, rent, and other things. Therefore, I ask that you do everything in your power to get services funded by comprehensive fees paid for by grants and other means legal in Virginia.</p> |
| Astrid Lawyer | Student | <p>I am a graduate student in the Physics department, and I ask that you please not raise my comprehensive fees. These fees are already too high given what they are covering. For example, I pay currently pay \$420 each year for intercollegiate sports. I do not participate in intercollegiate sports, have no interest in them, and they do not in any way contribute to my education. \$420 is a month's worth of food for me, and I do not understand why a condition of getting a Physics degree is that I have to pay that much for a service that does not facilitate my education in any way and that I will never use.</p> <p>I also find the recreational sports fee obnoxious - I do not like that I am essentially forced into a McCommas gym membership. If this fee was not charged automatically, I could instead get a membership at a gym that was cheaper, less overcrowded, and that offered classes more relevant to my interests. I wish I could chose between paying for McCommas access or choosing a different gym to buy access to.</p> <p>I also wish that comprehensive fees were transferred directly from my department to the relevant university budget (like tuition is), rather than having the university give me the money and then immediately demand that I give it back. I make \$32,376 a year before taxes, so just under 10% of by before tax earnings go towards paying comprehensive fees. This means that comprehensive fees increase my tax burden by 10%, which is obnoxious. If nothing else, would it at least be possible to stop forcing me to pay tax on these fees by charging them in the same way you charge tuition?</p> <p>Comprehensive fees are the one reason I spend more money than I earn each year. Every time I start to build a savings buffer, the comprehensive fees wipe it out completely. I would be much happier if I had access to fewer services and paid less money per semester. I absolutely do not want to see these fees raised.</p> |
| Ashlin Hicks | Student | <p>Hello.</p> <p>My name is Ashlin Hicks and i am currently a Virginia Tech undergraduate student. I am part of a single parent household that does not make much income, which makes times hard to pay tuition. This tuition increase is something that will take away opportunities for the lower income students, and will also discourage students to come to college to pay. This changes the encouragement of students to change their future from what their parents gave them, especially for the first generation students. This increase is completely uncalled for, takes away opportunities, and overall, SHOULD NOT HAPPEN.</p> |
| Baker Aljawasim | Student | <p>I find it hard to understand why you would consider raising tuition and fees. The cost of living is already so high, and it's a struggle just to make ends meet.</p> <p>It's becoming increasingly difficult to afford the necessities of life, let alone additional expenses like higher education. I hope there can be a solution that doesn't put even more financial strain on students and their families.</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|---------------------------|-------------|---|
| Joshua Hoegerman | Student | <p>I am a student who is graduating these changes will have no effect on me, but I speak because the implementation of these fees, as high as they already are, are the reason I couldn't afford to go to present my research that got accepted to an IEEE journal and conference. These fees are the sorts of things that bite away from a community which doesn't even want HALF the services they are preported to provide. There is so much fluff and chafe in this university's programs that have long since stopped being helpful that should looked at long before any further increases are made. I don't want more pizza parties, the advisor's available and mental health support are unhelpful on their best days, and I am so tired of funded events from these fees that are proposed to be free but come from my already taxed pocket.</p> <p>TLDR: Cut unnecessary spending, you are looking to help those struggling financially with their education long before you look to try and increase services that are historically very unhelpful and usually only asked for in passing.</p> |
| Wuzhou Zu | Student | As a graduate student at VT, the living cost is already high enough to take most of my monthly stipend. Paying all the fees is another heavy burden on us |
| SEYEDMORTEZA HAJI MIRZAEI | Student | I kindly request that fees for the current academic year remain unchanged. As a graduate assistant, over 20% of my assistantship goes towards comprehensive fees, which I barely use. |
| Carly Elizabeth Bauer | Student | <p>Dear BOV,</p> <p>I hope this letter finds you well and full of laughter. I wanted to express my concern about the recent talk of increasing fees. If these fees go up, I fear I'll have to trade my lunch for a cardboard sandwich and start a squirrel-powered treadmill to generate electricity. My budget is already tighter than a jar of pickles, I fear I might have to start a lemonade stand on campus just to make enough. So, please reconsider this fee increase, unless you're open to accepting payment in the form of artisanal lemonade.</p> <p>Best, Carly</p> |
| Lane Robertson | Student | If you do raise tuition, please leverage the alumni network to create more scholarships and free aid programs for our low income or self-sufficient students. My fianace has not financial support except himself. Offsetting tuitions costs through prepared tuition aid programs via alumni and local blacksburg relations will increase trust in the administration between students, grow internship and student usage of alumni networks, and increase town relations at large. Along with this, please use the tuition raises to pay someone to be in charge of the creation and maintenance of these programs, as well as outreach to students regarding their existence. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|--------------------|---------------|---|
| Duy Bao Le | Student | <p>Hello, I am a PhD student in the Mechanical Engineering department, and I am writing you to kindly ask you to choose the 0% fee increase this year. The comprehensive fees are the primary reason I cannot afford to see my family, build up an emergency fund, and pay off my credit card balance. The assistantship I receive now is way below the living wage in Blacksburg. My assistantship just barely covers my basic needs (rent, food, transportation, books, and other expenses for my education). A fee increase will make my life even harder.</p> <p>Additionally, as a Ph.D. student, I am very busy with my research. I do not have the time and do not use some facilities and services that I have to pay with the comprehensive fees. I do not have the time to participate in any student activities while I have to pay the fee. I live in an area where I do not have direct public transportation to the campus area where my lab is located and I still have to pay student services fee to support this. I do not have time or demand to go to the gym or any athletic events while I have to pay the athlete fee.</p> |
| Nahaly Nafisa Khan | Faculty/Staff | <p>Hello, I am a graduate student in the Communication department, and I am asking you to chose the 0% fee increase this year. As an international student who depends solely on school funding with no financial backing, the comprehensive fees are the reason I cannot afford to see my family and pay off my credit card balance. Another fee increase is only going to make my life harder.</p> |
| David Bruce | Student | <p>As a PhD student I ask that you please not raise fees for the upcoming school year. Currently fees are ~14% of my gross annual income, which produces a significant burden for me. As a non-traditional student any increase will greatly impact my ability to continue my education. I ask that you do not increase the fees, or allow for graduate students to opt in to fees based on our needs.</p> |
| Kulash Zhumadilova | Student | <p>Please, don't increase comp. fees. As an international student I already pay 200 USD more and it is hard in today's economy.</p> |
| Kan Sun | Student | <p>Comprehensive fees have consistently been high, particularly for graduate students who infrequently utilize many associated services. It lacks persuasiveness to continue raising these fees if they are not adequately justified or reimbursed.</p> |
| Michael J Willis | Faculty/Staff | <p>As a professor with four graduate students from under-represented backgrounds it is imperative that we reduce mandatory fees for graduate students - or allow them an option to opt-in to fees rather than making them mandatory. These fees chew up between 1 and 3 months of salary for students and although they may be the lowest in the commonwealth they far outstrip fees that have been mandatory at the institutions I have previously worked at. It is making it difficult to attract and retain both international students and students from disadvantaged backgrounds as I cannot use agency-awarded grants to pay these fees for the students.</p> |
| Gabby Patarinski | Student | <p>Please do not raise fees any further for graduate students. We already do not make enough to live comfortably, and taking more of our paycheck away in fees will add more financial hardship to what is already a major stressor and barrier to wellbeing for grad students. If VT wants to remain competitive to recruit the best talent in their grad students, we should be doing everything we can to eliminate the burden of student fees altogether, either through department funding, grant money, or some other means.</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|----------------------------|-------------|---|
| Iliana Castillo-Machuca | Student | <p>Dear Board of Visitors,</p> <p>I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed tuition increase. As a student facing financial constraints, any rise in tuition would impose unnecessary stress and financial burden. The cost of living in our town is already high, making it challenging for students like me to afford basic necessities, let alone additional educational expenses.</p> <p>Increasing tuition fees would only exacerbate the financial challenges many students already face. It could force some of us to take on more debt, work additional hours, or even consider dropping out, which would ultimately hinder our academic progress and future prospects.</p> <p>I urge the Board to consider the impact of a tuition increase on students from low-income backgrounds. Rather than burdening us with higher costs, I encourage the Board to explore alternative solutions to address budgetary needs without compromising our access to quality education.</p> <p>Thank you for considering my perspective.</p> |
| Annabel Bass | None | A tuition increase without other compensation would seriously damage the livelihoods of low income students and soil our integrity as a university. |
| Sriya Karambor Chakravarty | Student | As a PhD student I ask that you please not raise fees for the upcoming school year. Comprehensive fees are a very significant financial burden on graduate students and I ask that you do everything in your power to get services funded by comprehensive fees paid for by grants and other means legal in Virginia. |
| Jasmine Floyd | Student | <p>Please don't increase my tuition it makes my pet rock unhappy (and me too)</p> <p>-Pleadingly a geoscience student</p> |
| Zekeriya Ender Eger | Student | <p>Hello, I am a graduate student in the Mechanical Engineering department, and I am writing to express my strong support for a 0% fee increase this year. As a student already facing financial constraints, the comprehensive fee poses a significant burden on my ability to manage my finances responsibly. Specifically, it is an obstacle against my efforts to build an emergency fund and to pay off my credit card balance, limiting my financial flexibility and stability. Considering the rental costs take up to half of what I get and almost around 80 % of the rest is used for food and other expenses, it is already too much. I would like to also state that taxes are much worse for international students like me, that is another reason that literally ties our hands.</p> <p>Choosing a 0% fee increase is crucial for alleviating the financial strain that many graduate students like myself are experiencing. Another fee increase will only exacerbate these challenges, making it even more difficult for us to pursue our academic goals and succeed in our studies. Therefore, I urge you to prioritize the financial well-being of graduate students by opting for a fee freeze this year. Thank you for considering my perspective.</p> |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|--------------------------|-------------|--|
| Thomas Davis | Student | As a masters student working full time, I respectfully request those who are in positions of authority to please not raise fees for the upcoming academic year. Comprehensive fees and other enrollment fees can be significant financial burden on graduate students and I ask that you do everything in your power to get services funded via other legal means in Virginia. The increase in fees necessitates additional time or sacrifice on the part of the student to cover these costs, resulting in less time for study and additional undue stress on already hectic life demands. Thank you for your time and consideration. GO Hokies! |
| Isabella Chuchro | Student | pretty please guys don't raise tuition |
| | Student | <p>Dear Board of Visitors,</p> <p>I am a current graduate student at Virginia Tech working hard to earn my master's degree. As a master's student it is already hard to find funding and I have worked extremely hard to save enough money to pay for schooling. Paying for these additional fees already takes up approximately 25% of my monthly budget, and most semesters I am unable to make proper use of many of the programs that these fees provide for. There simply is not enough time in the graduate schedule to do so. With that being said, I am begging you to vote no on raising fees for the sake all the graduate students who are forced to pay for services that they are unable to make use of. Or at the very least offer students the choice to opt out of certain programs that they know they won't be able to or wish not to use.</p> <p>Thank you for your considerations.</p> |
| HyunMyung Kang | Student | Hello, I am a Master's student in the ME department. I am asking to not increase the fees this year, since my family and I are already struggling to meet the financial needs with what I am paying. Many of the rents for houses are also increasing, and the fee increase will make it a lot more difficult for me to pay the rasie. |
| Jenifer Ann Albright | Student | <p>Hello, I am a PhD candidate in the CEE department at VT. Please do NOT increase the fees because our current salary is barley enough to afford basic necessities in the Blacksburg area. I, myself, have struggled with food security and housing costs, and increasing this fee will be another burden that makes it harder for me to afford basic necessities.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p> <p>Ann</p> |
| Julia Shapiro | Student | Please do not raise fees and tuition. |
| Mert Aybar | Student | As a first year PhD student I urge you not to raise fees for the upcoming school year. 15% of my assistantship already goes to pay the comprehensive fee which makes it so hard for me to balance my everyday expenses. Being an international student living 6000 miles away from home, comprehensive fee is a financial burden on me and other international graduate students and I ask that you do everything in your power to get services funded by comprehensive fees paid for by grants and other means legal in Virginia. |
| Sadegh Yarmohammadisatri | None | Please do not raise fees this year. As a graduate student, my assistantship is hardly enough to cover food, rent, and textbooks. A fee increase will make paying for basic necessities even more difficult, and it is extremely frustrating having to pay so much money for services that are largely geared towards undergraduates, some of which I cannot even use. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|------------------|-------------|---|
| Ella Davis | Student | While I understand that the University is battling inflation I urge you to consider the impact that rising tuition and mandatory fees would have on students who support themselves and the students from low-income families. These two groups do not have the buffer that an institution like Virginia Tech has. When these fees and tuition costs rise you will be causing these students to choose education or choose food/rent. If we want to have an institution that truly is inclusive, not just one that claims to be, then we must consider the reality of the students and families that have the least. |
| Didar Islam | Student | I am concerned that if this tuition fees increase becomes in effect it will severely affect my financial wellbeing. Even with the existing fees and working as a Research Assistant, I find it hard to manage enough food certain months. I can hardly afford the car payments (which is a necessity for me) after paying for rent and utilities! I would be grateful if they decide not to increase the fees any further. It's a very stressful situation financially as it is, I can't imagine being put under more stress and anxiety! Thank you! |
| Isaac Pressgrove | Student | Please for the love of god, don't raise the comprehensive fees. Grad students are already having fight tooth and nail, beg, and grovel just to get wages adjusted to a livable level by the university. Meanwhile rent and food prices continue to rocket upwards far out pacing any adjustments we get. As a PhD student in Mechanical Engineering I am covered by the highest mandated minimum wage on campus and even still comprehensive fees take up around 10% of my take home pay. My department doesn't have the funding for students, my advisor left the university for greener pastures in NSF and I scrounge for scrap GTA and funding opportunities every single fucking semester. I live in a constant state of stress and anxiety over how I will secure funding for the next semester. I am the president of my departments GSO. As such I am constantly made aware that I am hardly the only student struggling to find consistent funding. We are ALL so burnt out and tired of trying to stay afloat in the broken hellscape of funding that is the ME department and VT at large. The last thing any of us needs is additional comprehensive fees added on. Fees I would add that do almost nothing to improve the life of graduate students. For those of us, like myself, that find lifting or physical activity to be a form of stress relief it would be a thing of beauty to go to a gym on campus that I already pay for as part of fees. Alas, War Memorial remains un-open and McComas is so laughably overrun at all hours that it isn't even worth trying to go during its seemingly limited hours (looking at you limited weekend time slots). I bike to campus because buses don't service the housing I found that fits my limited grad student budget so transportation is more unused dollars that I pay. I have participated in intramurals once, but its targeted much more heavily to undergrads and I can think of only a few other grad students who have done even that, so we can add that to the places our dollars don't benefit us. To be honest other than the activity fees that GSBB can now distribute I can think of few ways to clearly see where my comprehensive fee dollars benefit grad students. But even if I could I would still vehemently oppose any increase to them. Myself and other grad students are scraping by ant additional expense is an expense too great. Low salaries means tolerating subpar living standards (looking at you sewer smell in my bathroom and family of 5 right over my bedroom), it means restricting when or if we get to travel to see friends and family, it means having no ability to save in case of emergency expenses or the sudden inability to secure funding for the next semester. IF YOU WANT TO BE A TOP 100 RESEARCH INSTITUTION CONSIDER CARING FOR THOSE THAT PUT IN THE WORK TO PRODUCE RESEARCH PRODUCT!!! |
| Elisa Ranger | Student | Hello, as a graduate student I would like to advocate for the 0% increase in fees for this year. Having 3-4k dollars taken out of my yearly salary greatly affects my ability to do anything outside of basic surviving. I understand the university needs money, but it seems unfair to obtain it from the already struggling student population when you could actually make pay cuts to the heads of sports, who have clearly shown no ability to do their job and win anything (I am talking about the football team, obviously). Thank you for your consideration. |

| Commentor | Affiliation | Comment |
|-----------|-------------|---|
| | Student | <p>Hello, I'm a graduate student writing to ask that you please choose not to raise student fees.</p> <p>Every semester, I'm required to pay fees for services I can't access and the expense of these fees is a burden on my limited finances. I live with chronic illnesses so, in addition to paying the mandatory health fee, I spend a significant portion of my GTA salary on medical care. The health fee is mandatory despite the fact that I can't actually access the healthcare I need from Schiffert. In my first year here, Schiffert turned me away pretty much immediately because I was a trans person seeking hormone replacement therapy (HRT). But they also told me they couldn't help me because of my chronic illnesses, so I have had to get all my healthcare from external providers. I understand the need to refer out for specialist care, but I take issue with Schiffert's practice of turning students away and referring out to external PCPs when students have already been required to pay for their services. I know my experience is not unique — it is common for students to be told their medical needs are outside the scope of what Schiffert does.</p> <p>As their leadership stated last year when describing Schiffert in the reproductive healthcare resolution response memo, Schiffert is set up as an "ambulatory care clinic," so they really only address minor, acute issues. It's obvious that this model was/is designed with a specific audience in mind — an undergraduate population of students who have primary care providers (PCP) at home and who primarily come in for straight-forward things like a strep test or blood test. But it's NOT designed to meet the needs of graduate students who have moved to Blacksburg to make a new home here while working towards their degree.</p> <p>By default, graduate students are older than undergraduates so we're more likely to be living independent from our parents, less likely to have health insurance coverage through our parents/families, and similarly, less likely to still be using a family doctor back home as our PCP. When we move here, we need to find new providers and because we've already had to pay for Schiffert, it's the obvious first place to go.</p> <p>I'm open with others about the fact that I live with chronic illnesses, so other students regularly come to me to ask/talk about healthcare in Blacksburg. I can't tell you how many times I've had graduate students come to me frustrated after visiting Schiffert to ask me if Schiffert ever actually helped me and what they should do to find a provider who will help them.</p> |