

# The VP Is In

**March 22, 2011**

On March 22 I held the latest session of "The VP Is In" in the SGA office in Squires and I am happy to share some highlights of the conversation that day.

Students were excited that the course registration period for fall semester had begun and they were beginning to think about their choices of courses for next year. They were also pleased that construction has started on the West End Market renovation project. This will provide about 100 more seats, a new restroom area, and an expanded kitchen, all of which will help the service and ambience at West End. The project is due for completion by early Fall Semester. One student mentioned that he had some ideas about arrangement of tables at West End that might make things go more smoothly. I suggested to him that he fill out one of the comment cards in the dining center and send the staff his suggestions in this way. The dining staff is always grateful to receive comments and suggestions.

Discussion then shifted to SGA elections and the observation that for the past two years we have had only one "ticket" of candidates running. I asked people why they thought this was true and the most common responses were a reluctance of some students to express opinions and run for office, allegiances to small organizations rather than to SGA, and groups of friends not wanting to run against groups of friends. The net result of this is that there are now discussions going on about doing away with the slate or ticket of candidates and instead having candidates run as individuals. There is even discussion of having elections of only a president and a vice president and that the secretary and treasurer positions would become appointed positions. What do you think? Let's hear your thoughts on this matter.

It was interesting to hear some of the students talk about how they missed living in residence halls. They reported especially missing the convenience of living on campus, but they appreciated being able to buy any one of the available dining plans since they like the food and did not want to invest in major cooking in their apartments (by the way, about 2/3 of our students in Blacksburg purchase some sort of dining plan).

We went on to discuss the possibility of our instituting a "Good Samaritan" policy or procedure in our Student Conduct system that would inform students that they would not be penalized in the Student Conduct system if they sought help for an alcohol emergency. Some present thought this might be a good idea; others thought that this could lead to abuse and suggested that perhaps such a provision might be a one-time privilege, but that it should not be abused by "repeat offenders." Some students suggested that, even though there might not be a formal Student Conduct case in such a matter, the student should still have to come into one of the Student Affairs offices for discussion with one of the professional staff about their behavior.

We went on to talk about the University's zero-tolerance policy on drugs and the fact that simple possession of marijuana generally results in suspension from the University for at least a semester. I raised the question as to whether we ought to change this policy/procedure, and most

students felt that we should and that a first offense of that nature should not necessarily lead to automatic suspension, depending upon the circumstances. These two policy discussions regarding a Good Samaritan policy and the minimum sanction for drugs are currently under discussion within my staff. We would welcome hearing your thoughts about these matters.

One student wanted to know about the airport runway expansion that is going on. I explained that the first part is a correction in the current runway to take out a "dip" that exists on the runway and to level that portion off. The second portion of the project will be an actual extension of the length of the runway itself to allow larger corporate jets to land and take off in Blacksburg.

We talked about basketball seating and student interest in redoing where the seats for students are located. There has been strong interest in having students occupy the portions immediately behind both baskets. However, in the current system that would mean displacing a number of non-students who have purchased tickets in one of those areas for years. At the same time, the Athletic Department has announced that it will be reseating Cassell Coliseum for the 2012-2013 season; I suggested that making a proposal for a change in seating, to be effective that season, might be the best way to go.

Finally, one student asked about the project at the back of War Memorial Gym that has been going on for quite some time that involves the wall and crossover bridge from the Payne Hall area. I promised to get some specific information about this and I have now heard back from Mike Coleman, Associate Vice President for Facilities, who provided the following information: During a routine inspection of the War Memorial bridge Facilities Services discovered several locations of deterioration that raised concern. This resulted in the engagement of professional engineers to evaluate and make recommendations to the university. During the destructive phase of repairs it was discovered that the concrete deterioration required the bridge to be removed from service. The authorization for this demolition has been approved and will begin shortly. Discussions are ongoing to determine what if any next steps are required regarding replacing the bridge.

See you around the campus or at the next "The VP is In" session (scheduled for 3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 20 in the SGA Office in Squires)!

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