

# The VP Is In

September 24, 2011

This past week we held the first "The VP Is In" session of the year and a group of students showed up to talk with me about what was on their minds. Here are some cryptic notes on what we discussed last Thursday in the SGA Office.

1. With it being the fifth week of the semester, I heard that most students had a number of exams. We talked a bit about where students study, from private spaces in homes and apartments (where "non-screeners" tend to study) to public spaces like Torgersen and the Empo (where "screeners" go).
2. There was much concern about students walking out in front of cars and not in sidewalks and about bikers nearly knocking people down and zipping unexpectedly in front of cars. Let's be careful out there, folks!
3. Q: Why did a part of the Commuter Lot just get closed off? A: To allow for the start of construction on the new Signature Engineering Building.
4. Q: Has Phase IV of Greek Housing begun? A: Yes, work has started on the first house, Sigma Phi Epsilon, which is expected to open in the fall of 2012.
5. We talked about the plans for a new Student Center and how we are currently evaluating at least three potential sites for the new Center: behind Hahn and Derring on a portion of the Commuter Parking Lot, relocating the Washington Street tennis courts and building there, and building a combination parking garage and Student Center on the current Donaldson Brown/Squires lot. Each site has its pros and cons. What are your thoughts?
6. Matt Banfield, Undergraduate Representative to the Board of Visitors, was part of the group and shared that he has a 13-member Advisory Committee with whom he meets most Thursdays. You can always give input to Matt ([undergradbovrep@vt.edu](mailto:undergradbovrep@vt.edu)) or me ([spencer@vt.edu](mailto:spencer@vt.edu)) on any issue of concern.
7. We had a very lengthy discussion about student alcohol use, misuse, and abuse prompted by my mentioning that I am currently reading the book *Getting Wasted: Why College Students Drink Too Much and Party So Hard* by sociologist Thomas Vander Ven. Students tended to agree with the major thesis of the book: today's students have grown up with such high technology and with such extensive time spent texting, tweeting, Facebooking, and emailing, that many are not comfortable in social situations unless they can at least "get a buzz on" and, preferably, get "hammered." Such over-consumption is then often reinforced by others and the extent of their consumption grows worse. One student noted that the change to the 21-year-old drinking age has made matters worse than when the age was 18 because "people want to do what they're not allowed to do." I could go on and on about this, but let me just note that my staff and I are currently evaluating the recommendations from the Task Force to Reduce Alcohol Harm, Injuries, and Fatalities. If you have input, please let me know!

8. Another lengthy discussion focused on the topic of academic advising. There were concerns expressed about the high number of advisees which some advisors must carry, the "lack of answers" from some advisors, and the inconsistencies across departments and colleges with respect to the nature and quality of advising. One student praised the Philosophy Department for letting students choose their advisor. Several of our Board of Visitors members have expressed concerns about academic advising and the topic will be discussed at a joint meeting of the Board's Academic Affairs and Student Affairs & Athletics Committees on November 7.
9. Finally, we always enjoy some humor in these meetings, so we heard about the Galileo Community's Nerf Wars and the (Harry Potter) Quidditch games on the Drillfield. Both are events not to be missed!

I hope you'll join me for the next "The VP Is In Session" to be held on Tuesday, October 18, beginning at 3:30 p.m. in Room C of the Graduate Life Center. See you then or out and about in the meantime!

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