

April 10th, 2025

Greetings Members of the Board of Visitors,

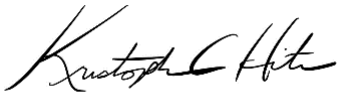
We appreciate the Board's commitment to keeping Virginia Tech affordable for students while simultaneously maintaining a high-quality educational experience. Many Virginia Tech alumni have benefited from their on-campus living experiences, which have been embedded in the design of the institution since its founding. Providing quality residential living for students is vital for Virginia Tech's growth and student success. Decades of evidence from higher education research and Virginia Tech's own experience shows that living-learning communities and residential colleges greatly benefit students at all levels¹. For example, national studies find that students in living-learning communities persist at higher rates and earn better grades than peers. Beyond metrics like GPA and retention, students in residential colleges and LLCs report a higher sense of belonging – a measure correlated with motivation, academic engagement, physical and mental health, and attachment to the institution. Students in LLCs have opportunities to work collaboratively with faculty and fellow students via LLC leadership initiatives, developing important interpersonal skills that serve them well in both their classwork and careers. Faculty engagement with living-learning programs makes them even more impactful²; the scores of VT faculty and staff affiliated with LLCs engage with students outside the classroom, forging rich and long-lasting academic and professional relationships with undergraduates through mentorship, collaborative research, campus participation, shared interests, and formal and informal learning opportunities. The multi-generational nature of VT's LLCs, in which first-year students live in community with continuing students, also contributes to student success, as continuing students mentor incoming first-years making the difficult transition to university studies. These mentoring relationships—with faculty, staff, and continuing students—are particularly crucial for first-generation, low-income, and nontraditional students³. Restricting on-campus living to exclude continuing students will undermine the potential of these high-impact programs and disadvantage many of our students.

To balance priorities, we respectfully propose that any resolution on student living explicitly allocate a portion of on-campus housing units for continuing students, ensuring vulnerable populations are not relegated to off-campus housing. Further, while it is appropriate for the university to report on housing occupancy-related student outcomes, we recommend protecting a broad array of living-learning programs based on their potential to provide a holistic education (in keeping with the Corps of Cadets experience) that Virginia Tech has been known for since its founding.

Our goal is to support all Hokies—current and future. We recognize practical limits on housing within the Town of Blacksburg and the New River Valley⁴. Any restrictions to on-campus housing require careful deliberation over time, allowing full consideration from a variety of perspectives. Rather than constrain housing options, we urge the Board to make campus housing accessible for students at every stage of their academic journey.

On behalf of concerned members of the Virginia Tech Chapter of the AAUP,

Kristopher C. Hite

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristopher C. Hite". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K".

VT AAUP Chapter President

1. <https://www.acuho-i.org/resources/research/case-for-campus-housing/> and <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003445784> and <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1235617>
2. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003447795> and <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1177338>
3. <https://www.bov.vt.edu/assets/Minutes-June%205-6,%202023-99.pdf>
4. <https://www.blacksburg.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/13051/638780733516230000>