

30

SHARES

[ShareTweet](#)

*3978 views*

**By: Camden Lazenby | [clazenby2@radford.edu](mailto:clazenby2@radford.edu)**

More than 100 people attended a forum hosted by the Honors Council last Wednesday about the impending change in Radford University's credit policy that is lowering the maximum credit hours from 18 to 16.

## **UPDATE**

On the day this article was published in The Tartan newspaper Oct. 2, 2019, the university sent an email to students, "seeking feedback from the student body regarding" the change in tuition policy.

A link in the email sends students to a webpage where they can list their concerns about the policy. The online form requires you to submit your name, your major, the year you intend to graduate, and your comments for it to be submitted.

The university says it "will utilize the feedback in determining next steps regarding implementation for the 2020-2021 academic year." The form will be open until Oct. 31

---

On May 10, alongside a tuition freeze for the current academic year, the Board of Visitors (BOV) approved dropping the maximum credit hours to 16 per semester. Each credit hour above 16 would result in an additional \$329 charge on top of tuition, increasing the cost of attendance by thousands of dollars for students who have to take 17 or 18 credit hours to graduate in four years.

One month later, President Hemphill emailed faculty and staff, saying, "this policy is not being implemented for the 2019-2020 academic year. The delayed implementation until the Fall 2020 semester is being pursued in order to provide ample opportunity to make students aware of and plan for the change."

This message was never delivered to students. The only message students were sent about

the changing policy was in an RU Connected email sent on May 16. The first campus highlight, as it's termed, in the email was a link to a press release about the BOV meeting.

[Down in paragraph 23](#), the press release states, "As part of the Committee discussion, the University recommended modifying the tuition model for the 2019-2020 academic year to limit the flat rate to 16 credit hours for students at the Radford campus. Students will be incentivized to more actively manage course loads and it better aligns tuition price and cost with student credit consumption. Students taking more than a 16-hour course load would pay an additional \$329 per credit hour."

"The university recommended" is the most definitive clause in this paragraph, and it's the only mention of the policy change in the 55-paragraph press release.

Stewart says one of the "big things" about their movement is it "is student lead and student talked about ... We've definitely had discussions with certain faculty, but this is not something that, like, faculty put students up to." The available minutes from the [May 10 BOV](#) meeting show the approved tuition rates for the 2019-2020 year and establish that the prices are for 12 to 16 credit hours. Even though tuition froze, students were charged \$140 more in mandatory fees.

Hannah Stewart and Matthew Shuma, the two students who ran that Wednesday's forum, were drummed up to fight against the policy when news and misinformation were disseminated into RU social media groups over the early part of the Summer.

# DOES YOUR BACHELORS' DEGREE COST MORE THAN OTHER RADFORD STUDENTS?

Although students will have the same Bachelor's degree, some will have to pay more for it depending on their area of interest and involvement.



Email to Radford Community:  
"Board of Visitors hold spring quarterly meeting and freeze tuition for 2019-2020 academic year"



At the Spring BOV meeting, a vote passed declaring that despite receiving state funds to freeze tuition costs, the university would raise tuition only for select students.

**WHO?**

- STEM, CVPA, & health science majors
- Students who need to retake a class
- Students who change majors
- Double majors or those with a minor

Let's **STOP** being taken advantage of and stand up!

**This is masqueraded tuition increase that is discriminatorily targeting select students.**

If you take >16 credits a semester you will be paying an extra **\$329 per credit hour**



**BOTTOM LINE:** The BOV and student representative did not stand up for students.

**Contact Lt. Governor of Virginia**

Justin Fairfax  
Twitter: @FairfaxJustin  
District Phone: 804-786-2078

**Contact VA Attorney General**

Mark Herring  
Twitter: @MarkHerringVA  
District Phone: 804-786-2071  
E-mail: [mailoag@oag.state.va.us](mailto:mailoag@oag.state.va.us)

**Contact Radford State Delegate**

Chris L. Hurst  
Twitter: @ChrisHurstVA  
District Phone: 540-739-2553  
E-mail: [DelCHurst@house.virginia.gov](mailto:DelCHurst@house.virginia.gov)

If you see this, take a picture and tag one of these guys!

**Contact Virginia Governor**

Ralph Northam  
Twitter: @GovernorVA

**Contact Roanoke Times**

Twitter: @roanoketimes  
District Phone: 540-981-3340



**Radford deserves better than this discriminatory policy! Let's tell them!**

**Contact The Board Of Visitors**

Martin Hall, 3rd Floor  
PO Box 6890  
Radford, VA 24142  
Phone: 540-831-5426  
E-mail: [bov@radford.edu](mailto:bov@radford.edu)



The flyer that the student kept putting up.

“When 100 some odd students show up in a room upset about something I think they need to know about it,” said Fox. When classes began, they posted and handed out fliers titled “Does Your Bachelor Degree Cost More Than Other Radford Students?” around campus. The small poster is a flow chart that describes the BOV’s actions, proclaims “this is a masqueraded tuition increase that is discriminatorily targeting select students” between two large quotation marks without attribution, and lists contact information for the BOV, four different state officials, and the Roanoke Times.

The fliers don’t explicitly say the policy has yet to be enacted, but Shuma understood this when talking to students at the forum. When speaking to The Tartan through email, he said, “I’m glad the policy was pushed back a year. This whole policy was rushed. I hope we can bring light to this policy and the proper research can be done on how it will affect students.”

Stewart says one of the “big things” about their movement is it “is student lead and student talked about ... We’ve definitely had discussions with certain faculty, but this is not something that, like, faculty put students up to.”

When the students first put up their flyers around campus, they found that many of them were taken down by the next day, even though they had worked with the front desk in the Bonnie Hurlburt Student Center to find and understand the campus policy. Stewart doesn’t know who removed their fliers, but the more she put them back up, the longer they stayed.

The pair of students were scheduled to meet with the staff senate on Sept. 19, but the day before, Kristina Contreras, the President of the Staff Senate, canceled on them and suggested they speak with Hemphill directly. Contreras declined to comment on the matter.

Shuma said they never reached out to Hemphill but felt they were going through the right channels to make a difference.

Initially, the forum was supposed to be sponsored by the [Student Government Association \(SGA\)](#). While some students of SGA were at the event, neither of the organization’s advisors could attend the forum, meaning SGA had to push back the forum to Oct. 2.

Shuma said, “the point of having the forum this Wednesday was to get the students’ voices/concerns and share them at the Board of Visitors meeting the next day.”

“Because the forum was planned/approved, Hannah and I were already sharing the date of the forum with students,” Shuma continued. “When SGA had to postpone, we decided to

move forward with the forum ourselves.”

The honors council, which both Stewart and Shuma are a part of, hosted the forum alongside five other campus organizations.

Colleen McNickle, SGA president, said, “I just want everybody to know that if you have issues like this or any issues that you’re encountering otherwise during the school year, you’re more than welcome to come to SGA. We will try to provide a platform for you and connect you with who you need to be connected with.”

Although SGA was unable to sponsor the event McNickle still attended the forum. “I have some close friends who are affected by it, so I definitely feel for them, and I hope it works out in everybody’s best interest.”

Looking forward, Stewart said, “We never had anything like this over the summer, and they pushed it back a year, we’re a much louder voice now.” She says they aren’t going to drop the pressure. The President of the Faculty Senate and the faculty advisor to the BOV, [Dr. Jake Fox](#), went to the event as well. He doesn’t get a vote in the BOV meetings, but after hearing students through the overcrowded room talk about their worries, Fox said he would be raising the students’ concerns to the BOV in the next day’s meeting.

“When 100 some odd students show up in a room upset about something I think they need to know about it,” said Fox.

“We all think it’s too expensive,” Fox continued. “We all think higher education is way too expensive. A lot of faculty can’t afford to send their kids to college; that’s the truth. I can’t afford to send my own kids to college. I’ll be taking loans. We are sympathetic.”

Regarding the announcement of the policy, Fox thinks, “the administration would fully own the fact that they botched that. I really do. ... Regardless of whether the policy is a good idea or not, I think they recognize that the communication on that was not good.”

Fox noted that even though the BOV is approved to use the policy, the budget for the next academic year hasn’t been made yet, so “nothing is a done deal.”

Looking forward, Stewart said, “We never had anything like this over the summer, and they pushed it back a year, we’re a much louder voice now.” She says they aren’t going to drop the pressure.

“We’re going to continue until this policy is repealed.”

For more university news, stay connected with your Tartan newspaper.

**Photo Credit: (Camden Lazenby | Contributor)**

**Featured Image:** (Students poured into the first-floor classroom in Cook Hall to voice their concerns over the new credit hour policy.)