

## **Points from April 16<sup>th</sup> CEOD discussion regarding resolution on caste**

- Members of Graduate and Professional Student Senate presented the resolution for discussion and feedback at the April 16<sup>th</sup> CEOD meeting
- They presented important points such as testimonials of students who have had negative campus experiences related to caste – including discrimination experienced in housing.
- They noted that they have spoken to legal and that their office confirmed there was no legal reason they could not move forward with adding explicit language and definitions of caste to Policy 1025.
- OEA representatives attended the meeting and explained that OEA's interpretation of policy 1025 is currently broad and includes protection of caste even if not explicitly stated.
- Their concern is that by making a policy more specific, the required evidence also becomes more specific and can have the opposite impact than intended. It can potentially make it harder to show a pattern of discrimination and that the intent was related to caste. Rather than if there was evidence of discriminating in any patterned manner around ethnicity or country of origin. The intent around caste would potentially need to be proven to protect students. More specific intent can be harder to prove.
- It was also discussed that the few institutions who have added caste to their policy were quickly sued. If this were to happen at Virginia Tech, it could also impact how to change the policy and how to uphold it. If caste is added – could be more difficult to collect information about discrimination specifically about caste rather than national origin.
- OEA also noted that there needs to be education on what groups the policy protects.
- Several folks also had concerns on the governance process, cabinet approval, and authority over this resolution since it is explicitly linked to the charge of CEOD. Additionally, OEA as an author of the policy and the office charged with conducting the work therein, believed they should have been consulted as a collaborator and stated they were not.
- **The overall takeaways at the end of the discussion were:**
  - There are clearly students who are experiencing caste related aggression and discrimination on campus. What can we do about that? GPSS strongly believes the policy needs explicit language and definitions.
  - OEA is concerned that it will make it more difficult to protect against caste discrimination versus broadly interpreting the policy to include it.
  - Both OEA and CEOD have concerns regarding by what method and through which commission changes to policy 1025 should occur.