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VT Faculty Senate

September 8, 2009
32 Pamplin Hall

Minutes

President Long called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm. Long invited everyone to have a soft drink/water provided by he and VP Ellerbrock and explained that the Senate officers agreed with the Provost's Office to forego the traditional catered refreshments, saving the University nearly \$5,000 annually (\$500 per Senate meeting). Provost McNamee has graciously offered to fund an end-of-year reception for Senators in April or May 2010.

1. *Agenda* – motion passed to approve the Agenda.
2. *New Senators* – Long recognized returning Senators and welcomed new Senators.
3. *Committee Assignments* – Long identified 11 University Commissions and Committees in need of a Faculty Senate member. If one is interested, please send an email to Long ASAP. Also, five Colleges have an open seat in the Senate Cabinet for a Senator-member. Long hopes to utilize the Cabinet in a significant role this year.
4. *Anti-Discrimination & Harassment Prevention Policy #1025* – the Commission on Equal Opportunity & Diversity (CEOD) has drafted some proposed changes to Policy 1025 regarding the possible inclusion of “Gender Identity” and “Gender Expression” into the existing University policy. Long explained the unorthodox procedural sequence last year that led to the issue being returned to the Senate and Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA) for consideration this year, hopefully within a period of six weeks. A motion was made but failed to table this discussion until next month. Long and Ellerbrock explained that no action was needed at the end of tonight's discussion. The issue will be considered by CFA later this week and returned to the Senate next month.

Ellerbrock then led a discussion of the proposed revisions, focusing attention on the main question: specifically whether VT should add Gender Identity and/or Expression (GI/E) to its existing list of prohibited acts that violate our campus Principles of Community. The 2nd half of the policy regarding the process of investigation and potential outcomes are still under review by University attorneys for legal appropriateness. Concerns expressed:

- A question was raised about the need to include Gender Identity – how is one to know another’s personal/private identity?
- Conversely, is it pertinent to know another’s internal Gender Identity for there to be cause for finding a violation has occurred?
- Concern was expressed about adding to the length of currently prohibited acts.
- A question was raised about why gender is not protected by state law. It was noted that neither is sexual orientation, yet it is protected by VT?
- A question was raised as to why a person can declare a change in gender, but not ethnicity? It was noted that one can change ethnicity by becoming a member of a tribe or citizen of another country.
- Concern was expressed about the need to clarify the difference between offensive versus prohibited behavior.

5. *President’s Report*

a) Budget – Gov. Kaine announced today a 13-15% cut in Higher Education, which equals \$21.3 million in lost E+G funds for VT. Since the state contributes about 33% of VT’s E+G budget, the \$21.3 million reduction constitutes an overall loss of 4.3% in E+G funds. Federal Stimulus funds can help offset only the short-term impact.

b) BOV Meeting – the desire was expressed for better communication throughout administrative and academic channels, particularly in some Colleges and Departments. It was noted that any institutional reorganization requires Senate input.

c) President’s Advisory Board – discussion was held about the role of VT Institutes. Regarding the budget, the Provost is committed to protecting tenure-track faculty; all other options are being explored. Concern was expressed about the lack of job security and relatively low salaries for Math and English instructors, in particular. Question was raised as to the status of the University’s commitment to raise faculty salaries to the 60th percentile? A vigorous discussion ensued about various perspectives on University priorities. A motion was made but failed to encourage a mid-year tuition increase.

6. *New Business* – a humble request was made to explore the number of faculty holidays, in light of why classes are held on national holidays.

7. *Adjournment* – 8:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Ellerbrock/Hardus Odendaal