

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

November 12, 2021, @ 2:30pm

Via Zoom or Pamplin 30

Check-In

Senators Present:

Montasir Abbas, Diane Agud, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Paul Avey, Joseph Baker, Arthur Ball, Azziza Bankole, A.K. Bartlett, Andrew Binks, Hilary Bryon, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Tanyel Bulbul, Christopher Campo-Bowen (alternate for Caitlin Martinkus), Guopeng Cheng, George Davis, Ashley Dayer, Crystal Lane, Stuart Feigenbaum, John Ferris, Carla Finkelstein, Becky Funk, Joseph Guthrie, James Hawdon, Kevin Heaslip, Ashley Heflin, David Hicks, Daniel Hindman, Ran Jin, Brett Jones, Eric Kaufman, Nathan King, Bradley Klein, Vivica Kraak, Leigh Krometis, Evan Lavender-Smith, Justin Lemkul, Alexander Leonessa, Jonathan Maher, Jason Malone, Frances McCarty, Nyusya Milman-Miller, Michael Nappier, Amy Nelson, Aaron Noble, Gregory Novack, Thomas O'Donnell, Bruce Pencek, Nicole Pitterson, Robin Queen, Thomas Shryock, Susanna Rinehart, Nicholas Robbins, Todd Schenk, Peter Schmitthener, Richard Shryock, Ryan Stewart, Laura Strawn, Jay Teets, James Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Kwok Tsui, Layne Watson, Robert Weiss, Hehuang Xie, Yan Xu, Liqing Zhang (66)

Guests:

Jeffrey Dumars, Michael Dunn, Ellen Plummer, April Myers (4)

(62 attended via Zoom and 8 attended in person)

Call to Order by Senate President Robert Weiss at 2:36pm

1. Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Robert Weiss)

- Approval of the Faculty Senate Agenda for November 12, 2021.
- Approval and posting of the Faculty Senate meeting minutes for October 29, 2021 ([Link](#))

The consent agenda was presented and a motion to approve the consent agenda was made, seconded, and passed by unanimous consent.

2. Student Life Village Master Plan Presentation (Michael Dunn & Jeffrey Dumars, [Link](#))

Jeffrey Dumars and Michael Dunn shared the new student life village master plan for a new, vibrant, and diverse Student Life Village to provide as many as 5000 new beds for Virginia Tech. This is a high-level overview of the plan to accommodate student needs to connect, create and contribute in their study at Virginia Tech. The Village will use the open space on

the west part of the campus. Details can be found in the slides ([Link](#)). The Student Life Village will have several merits for students' life, such as diversity, access, and inclusions, integrated life and research, student well-being, connectivity and mobility, destination, sustainability, flexibility, and affordability.

The Senators asked questions about whether the location is close to the existing golf courses, and the relationship of the Village with the new enrollment growth. Jeffrey Dumars and Michael Dunn confirmed that the Village is close to the current golf courses and the project is not related to the new enrollment growth. The Senators also acknowledge the importance to include sustainability features in the plan for the Village. Senators also asked if the planned space would take the space of the farmland and whether the plan has considered transportation policies. The Village will not use the farmland and the group has already considered the transportation requirements.

3. Brief Updates (Robert Weiss):

- Board of Visitors Meeting (Nov 7-8)
Robert Weiss provided an update of the recent Board of Visitors Meeting. The summary can be found here [\[link\]](#). Robert Weiss briefly discussed the importance of maintaining free speech and academic freedom and ensure that they are not weaponized, when encountering target harassment.
- Robert Weiss also asked for volunteers to serve in the Undergraduate Honor Systems to speed up the reviews for reported cases. There is a special need right now with many cases involving senior students who are close to graduation.

4. Discussion of the Shared Governance Reformation (FS Officers, [Link](#))

The Shared Governance Reform document was shared with Senators to collect feedback from their faculty in their academic units earlier the week. Robert Weiss provided an update to the document and discussed the changes between the current governance structure and the proposed governance structure. Robert Weiss also discussed the feedback should be based on constituencies and asked the Senators to limit their comments to three minutes and stated that everyone would be given an opportunity to speak before someone speaks twice.

Senators reported the feedback that was received from the various units and overall the feedback that was received was very positive.

There were a few questions raised by faculty in various units.

- (1) Do the different Senates get an equal vote?
- (2) How do the Department Head/Chairs have input?
- (3) How can Faculty Senators get credit for their services if more work related to governance is required?
- (4) Clarification was requested regarding the roles of the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity (CEOD) and the Commission on Outreach and International Affairs (COIA)

- An explanation was provided that described that in the new governance structure these Commissions will report to University Council.

(5) Questions were raised regarding the work of environment sustainability and how this will be impacted with the new governance structure and the removal of the Commission on University Support.

(6) Will Faculty Senate keep the same proportion of members on University Council? Will there be more faculty than administrators?

(7) What are the pros and cons of the new model?

Discussion of the Governance Revision

The impact of the new governance model was described. The new model gives each senate legislative authority. In the new model there is a concern that senates are not able to advance a resolution directly to University Council. The notion that the expertise to do this work only exists in the Commissions is not true.

The historical perspective of the governance revisions was provided to the Faculty Senate. There are concerns that when administrators are in the room where votes are being taken, it could change the atmosphere. The Faculty Senate was passionate to make changes.

There is a belief that the power of the Faculty Senate is being underestimated by people in the new governance model. In the new model, the Faculty Senate can initiate the resolutions and set the agenda in the Commissions to discuss. It allows the Faculty Senate to override the resolution decisions.

It is important for Commissions to engage the Faculty Senate early to ensure the efficiency and success of the resolutions. The administration inherits the authorities from the Board of Visitors.

Robert Weiss asked the Senators to vote “Yes”, “No”, and “Abstain” to indicate the support of their units for the new Governance model. The poll indicated that the majority of Senators voted “yes” or “Abstain” with no votes for “No” from the group present. Monty Abbas and John Ferris were asked to prepare a paragraph, reflecting the suggested changes. If this is received in time for Senators to get feedback from their units then there will be another vote related to the proposed comments and suggested revisions.

5. Open Floor Discussion (FS Officers)

- Robert Weiss discussed the draft of the harassment Statement. The draft is online for Senators to revise. The cabinet members will discuss the draft in the next meeting.
- A request was made for the Faculty Senate to respond to the new graduate advisor certification process, which started to cause more issues for student’s defense scheduling. The evaluation criterion of faculty to be eligible to serve on the graduate committees was also not clear. It will cause more issues when a tenure-track/tenured faculty member is not eligible to advise graduate students. This topic will be considered in the Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA).

- Significant delays have been reported during the software procurement process. The Data Service department in the Library has collected data to analyze the issues. This same topic is currently on the agenda for the Commission on Research. This is also related to the OSP contracts and especially the understaff issue in the legal team.
- A request was made to explore getting tuition discounts for children of faculty to attend VT. Monty Abbas mentioned that the previous attempt will fail. Kevin Heaslip mentioned that if there is no tuition discount, then many children will choose other universities.
- Robert Weiss reminded Senators about his office hours.

6. Adjourn

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 4:21PM.