

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

January 28, 2022, @ 2:30pm

Pamplin 1045 or Via Zoom

Check-In

Senators Present: Montasir Abbas, Diane Agud, Abiola Akanmu, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Jonathan Auguste, Paul Avey, Joseph Baker, Arthur Ball, Azziza Bankole, A.K. Bartlett, Andrew Binks, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Scott Case, Guopeng Cheng, Benjamin Corl, Ashley Dayer, Stuart Feigenbaum, Carla Finkelstein, Becky Funk, James Hawdon, Kevin Heaslip, Rebecca Hester, David Hicks, Bob Hicok, Daniel Hindman, Ran Jin, Mary Kasarda (alternate representing John Ferris), Nathan King, Vivica Kraak, Leigh Krometis, Evan Lavender-Smith, Justin Lemkul, Alexander Leonessa, Jonathan Maher, Eric Martin, Caitlin Martinkus, Frances McCarty, Aaron Noble, Gregory Novack, Thomas O'Donnell, Robin Panneton, Sarah Parker, Bruce Pencek, Christopher Pierce, Thomas Pingel, Nicole Pitterson, Robin Queen, Steven Rideout, Susanna Rinehart, Nicholas Robbins, Hans Robinson, Todd Schenk, Charles Schleupner, Richard Shryock, Ryan Stewart, Laura Strawn, Jay Teets, James Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Kwok Tsui, Layne Watson, Robert Weiss, Randolph Wynne, Liqing Zhang (65)

Guests: Ronald Fricker, Holly Kindsvater, Ellen Plummer (3)

(65 attended via Zoom, 3 attended in person)

Call to Order by Senate President Robert Weiss at 2:34pm

A new agenda format was used based on the approval of the new resolution reporting and commenting process.

Resolutions with Faculty Senate

UC 2021-22A: Resolution to Revise the System of Shared Governance at Virginia Tech and approve the New University Council Constitution and Bylaws.

1st Reading in Faculty Senate: **1/28/22**; 2nd Reading/Vote in Faculty Senate: 2/11/2022.

1. Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Robert Weiss)

- Motion was made and seconded to approve and post the Faculty Senate meeting minutes for January 14, 2022 ([Link](#)). Motion carried by unanimous consent.
- Motion was made and seconded to approve the Faculty Senate Agenda for January 28, 2022. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

- In future, resolution for comment will be added to the consent agenda for review. If anyone requests, the resolution can be moved to the New Business section of the agenda.
- The consent agenda was presented and a motion to approve the consent agenda was made, seconded, and passed by unanimous consent.

Business Agenda

Old Business

2. Updates

- The Dean of the Graduate School presented on the research advisor registration process at the previous CFA meeting, The Dean stated that the process was designed to establish a database and that the review/approval will be completed within academic programs.
- Updates from University Council, Commissions, and Committees. A point of contact will be identified in each organization to provide the update. Once the point of contact has been identified, Ran Jin will contact that individual for an update starting next week.
- The weekly message from the Provost Office may not be reaching all faculty in a timely manner. The Provost Office is working on a new system that faculty members can directly receive the weekly message from the Provost Office.
- Statement on Targeted Harassment (vote): There were good discussions about the Statement in the last Faculty Senate meeting. Robin Queen asked the faculty senators to review the statement. The statement on targeted harassment was approved by the faculty senate and can be found on the [Faculty Senate website](#).

Yes: 51

No: 1

Abstain: 2

Statement on Targeted Harassment from the Faculty Senate is approved.

New Business

3. Introduction of Ron Fricker

Robert Weiss invited Ron Fricker, the new Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs to meet the faculty senators and respond to questions from the senators. Ron Fricker provided a short introduction and statements on his thanks to the Faculty Senators and the work they do on behalf of their units. Questions:

With the closing of Montgomery County Public Schools and Daycares over the past few weeks there are many younger faculty members, specifically women who are considering leaving academia. What is your vision to solve this problem and address the needs of the faculty?

Response: Acknowledgment that the last three weeks for caregivers, particularly parents of young children, were incredibly stressful. Flexibility with teaching modality has been provided and extended to next week. Make sure that all faculty know about the ability to request flexibility in where they are teaching and communicate back to the Office of Faculty Affairs on childcare concerns.

Can there be a new committee to assess the long-term impact of COVID on tenure and promotion and how can we establish new methods.

Response: It is important to explore how to evaluate the scientific impact of COVID as it relates to the tenure and promotion process. There are groups working on assessing potential changes to the tenure and promotion process.

Ron Fricker also would like to join in future Faculty Senate meetings.

4. UC 2021-22A, First Reading

Link to share with all faculty:

https://virginiatech.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/VTFacultySenate/EW_bfRR6iBFqGP1ygkzQv8B4MOu_c8fWcy0EO_6hOIog

A summary of the changes was presented to the senate.

1. Expand the resolution approval process to include the senates, which would each have legislative authority and responsibility over a defined area.

2. Move most of the commissions under the senates and require senate approval before resolutions can advance to the University Council. Each senate would have at least one commission. These senate commissions would be chaired by senators and have a majority membership appropriate for the senate. CEOD and COIA, because they don't fall neatly under the purview of any one senate, would be called university commissions, still report to the University Council, and maintain their memberships and functions.

3. Eliminate the Commission on University Support.

4. Create the University Council Cabinet, a small group of shared governance leaders from the senates and the administration who will meet every two weeks to discuss matters of concern to any party. The University Council Cabinet would also oversee the University Council when it is not in session and finalize its agenda. The provost and president of the Faculty Senate would co-chair this body. The main purpose of the University Council Cabinet is to increase the engagement between senate leadership and the administration. It would also review all resolutions for their relevance to senate and commission charges.

5. Reduce the size of the University Council from 81 to 58. Faculty, A/P faculty, staff, undergraduate students, and graduate and professional students would be represented by officers and senators from their respective senates.

6. Speed the approval process for course and program proposals by eliminating the university-level stages of approval. The following committees would be eliminated: The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, the Graduate Curriculum Committee, and the Pathways General Education Curriculum Review Committee. Resolutions would no longer be required for program proposals.

7. Create the University Mission Initiative process. This excerpt is from the new University Council Constitution:

'The university mission initiative process is a means of creating or revising policies, practices, or procedures that have the potential to broadly impact Virginia Tech's educational, research, and/or outreach missions. The process ensures that relevant components of shared governance, especially the senates, can participate in the development of significant changes or additions to the nature of our mission or the means by which we achieve them, and that these changes or additions are considered for adoption through the normal legislative process.

The resolution was open for questions.

How frequently will the University Council and Cabinet meet?

The schedule of University Council meetings varies. The University Council cabinet will meet every other week.

How can senators share these updates with their units?

Senators can share the summary of changes with the faculty and emphasize that the summary has been discussed and approved previously by the Faculty Senate. The senators can provide suggestions; however, the vote is on the document what has been prepared.

How are the library faculty being represented given the distinct types of faculty who are in the library?

Given the unique nature of the library faculty there will be additional discussions on how to address these concerns.

What happens if the Faculty Senate vetoes a resolution?

The President and the Board of the Visitors have the authority to decide important resolutions. However, if a resolution was vetoed, then it will need additional revisions and discussions before moving forward.

How will major challenges like the pandemic response be addressed in the new governance model?

The participation from the Faculty Senate is significantly improved and will allow for engagement in these conversations in ways that are not available in the current model

understanding that University leaders have the authority to do what is needed to sustain the institution.

Bob Hicok and other colleagues were thanked for their leadership and efforts over the past few years to develop the new shared governance model.

5. Open-Floor Discussion

COVID Response: Senators were asked to send any comments and questions to Robert Weiss so he can represent the faculty. A nomination was requested for appointment of a senator as the representative to the Commission of Graduate Professional Study and Policies.

Request was made to share links to documents that can be shared easily by faculty senators. In the future both an embedded link and the full link address will be provided in communication. as a footnote in the email.

Notice to the Faculty Senate that the Governor had proposed a new policy about charter schools in Virginia and currently is soliciting support from university presidents. Request was to ask President Sands to remain an advocate for Virginia Tech and to not take partisan sides in this issue.

Request was made that faculty review the best practice for SPOT evaluation and perhaps adopt the teaching evaluation process from peer institutes. The Commission on Faculty Affairs has been working on SPOT and the development of best practices and potentially some suggestions on modifications to the SPOT instrument, such as splitting infrastructure and classroom questions from the teaching evaluation. Commission on Faculty Affairs will begin to formalize the process in the Spring Semester and share the document for comment.

Concerns were raised about the university dashboard and the fact that it does not appear to reflect the reality of tests and results. Clear guidance was requested for faculty. More transparency was requested from the administration. A new dashboard will be established, and it was noted that the Governor does not allow for the collection of testing and vaccination data. The University will only be aware of the test results reported from the individual.

It was requested that more complete and up to date data be provided in the new dashboard and recommended that Faculty Senate representatives be part of the develop of the new dashboard. Challenges with collecting accurate data were explained and that needs to be the first step. The dashboard will be developed with the group that has been involved in the process since the beginning.

6. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made and seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 4:02PM.