

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

March 25, 2022, @ 2:30pm

Pamplin 1045 or Via Zoom

Check-In

Senators Present: Montasir Abbas, Onwubiko Agozino, Diane Agud, Abiola Akanmu, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Paul Avey, Joseph Baker, Arthur Ball, Azziza Bankole, Anna Ward Bartlett, Andrew Binks, Hilary Bryon, Scott Case, Guopeng Cheng, Benjamin Corl, George Davis, William Ducker, Crystal Duncan Lane, Stuart Feigenbaum, Becky Funk, Wesley Gwaltney, James Hawdon, Kevin Heaslip, Rebecca Hester, David Hicks, Bob Hicok, Daniel Hindman, Ran Jin, Brett Jones, Eric Kaufman, Holly Kindsvater (Alternate for Ashley Dayer), Vivica Kraak, Leigh Anne Krometis, Evan Lavender-Smith, Justin Lemkul, Alexander Leonessa, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Caitlin Martinkus, Frances McCarty, Rachel Miles, Michael Nappier, Aaron Noble, Gregory Novack, Thomas O'Donnell, Sean O'Keefe (Alternate for Ryan Stewart), Bruce Pencek, Christopher Pierce, Nicole Pitterson, Robin Queen, Steven Rideout, Susanna Rinehart, Nicholas Robbins, Thomas Sanchez, Charles Schlepner, Yang Shao (Alternate for Tom Pingel), Richard Shryock, Laura Strawn, Jay Teets, Steve Thompson, James Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Kwok Tsui, Layne Watson, Robert Weiss, Randolph Wynne, Hehuang Xie, Yan Xu (69)

Guests: Juan Espinoza, Luisa Havens Gerardo, Rick Sparks (3)

(67 attended via Zoom, 5 attended in person)

Call to Order by Senate President Robert Weiss at 2:35pm

Resolutions with Faculty Senate

- **CUSP 2021-22N:** Resolution to Establish Non-Class Holiday Status for Juneteenth, received: 3/14/22, due: 4/14/22, first review: 3/25/22, preliminary recommendation: waive right to comment
- **CUSP 2021-22O:** Resolution to Establish an Academic Relief Policy, received: 3/14/22, due: 4/14/22 first review: 3/25/22, preliminary recommendation: comment
- **CFA 2021-22E:** Resolution to Revise Faculty Handbook Language Regarding Appeal of Probationary Non-reappointment, received: 3/22/22, due: 4/22/22, first review: 3/25/22

1. Consent Agenda (Robert Weiss)

- Consent agenda including the following items was adopted:
 - Minutes for February 25, 2022 ([Link](#))
 - Agenda for March 25, 2022

Business Agenda

Old Business

- **Updates from University Council, Commissions and Committees** are available for senators to review.

- **2022-2023 Faculty Senate Elections:** Officer candidates will be shared in the next Faculty Senate meeting. The positions for new Shared Governance should be filled soon. The Faculty Senator elections should be completed by March 31. So far 14 departments have provided their election results or provided a notification of delay. Senators were asked to coordinate with their Department Heads/Chairs/Program Directors to facilitate the election process.
- IT Transformation Committee – Faculty Appointment: Ali Butt, Professor of Computer Science, is nominated as the representative. The nomination was approved by the Faculty Senate through unanimous consent.

New Business

- Standardized Test Optional Policy and Report (Juan Espinoza and Rick Sparks, Slides)
 - The study evaluates the test optional policy for undergraduate admission and its correlation with academic performance. Currently, the test optional policy has been adopted due to the challenges caused by COVID-19 pandemics, such as limited testing dates and testing sites.
 - The report reviews a few performance metrics such as the percentage of students who dropped a class.
 - Student performance could be distorted by the pandemics. Therefore, Rick Sparks suggested we continue to evaluate the Test Optional Policy for a few additional years to differentiate the impact of the test optional policy when not in the middle of a pandemic.
 - Juan Espinoza discussed the history of the Test Optional Policy implemented in Virginia since 2006.
 - Many colleges saw large increases in applications after implementing the Test Optional Policy, especially from underrepresented students.
 - Many colleges are deciding if they will extend or permanently adopt the test optional policy.
 - If Virginia Tech does not extend the Test Optional Policy, then it will become the only University in Virginia requiring standardized tests. It will put Virginia Tech at a disadvantaged during recruitment.
 - The proposal is to extend the current Test Optional Policy for three additional admission cycles: 2022/2023, 2023/2024, and 2024/2025. This will allow more time for the Enrollment Management Office to get clean data to evaluate without the compounding impact of COVID. Virginia Tech has already reduced the role of standardized testing since 2018.
 - Juan Espinoza introduced other metrics and answered questions that people asked in the holistic application review without the standardized test.
 - Earlier experience indicates that the grade and advanced courses in high school are correlated with college academic performance.
 - Juan Espinoza reviewed the application, offer, and yield data in 2020 and 2021. One can see a significant increase of the underrepresented students after implementing the Test Optional Policy.
 - In summary, the Enrollment Management team feels confident to evaluate the applications with the Test Optional Policy and strongly believes that a three-year extension of the Test Optional Policy is needed.
 - Faculty senators asked questions about the correlation of the standardized test and performance success.
 - There are some concerns about applicants choosing not to disclose test score if they are low.
 - There was a suggestion to review first-year performance in Engineering, since first-year performance is closely related to the graduation rate.
 - Concerns were raised about the data in high school and the potential impact of COVID.

- There was discussions about the qualitative and quantitative component in application review and uncaptured metrics from class activities.
- There were some concerns about the application review burden since the essays and other materials are more emphasized without the standardized test.
- Juan Espinoza and Rick Sparks explained and answered all the questions and emphasized the impact of COVID on performance data, which is a major reason to ask for a three-year extension.
- Beyond the extension period, this data will be the driving factor to make future decisions about test optional policies at Virginia Tech.
- Robert Weiss also concluded that the Faculty Senate is looking forward to reviewing more data analysis in the future.
- **CUSP 2021-22O:** Resolution to Establish an Academic Relief Policy, received: 3/14/22, due: 4/14/22, first review: 3/25/22, preliminary recommendation: Comment
 - Current academic relief is reviewed by individual Academic Deans. There are forms for students to fill out for review.
 - The new resolution will establish a new Academic Relief Committee to review the forms.
 - Senators expressed concerns about the lack of involvement of faculty, the ability to submit an application one year after the requested relief data, and the language of the resolution (2nd whereas).
 - Other senators spoke in support of the resolution because it provides flexibility.
 - Faculty senators also asked for clarification on how academic relief will be recorded on the transcript: a suggestion was that there was a specific designation as deemed appropriate by the University Registrar in place of a letter grade.”
 - The Faculty Senate has consented to **waive the right to comment** and asked the CUSP representative to share these thoughts with CUSP as they revise the resolution.
- **CFA 2021-22E:** Resolution to Revise Faculty Handbook Language Regarding Appeal of Probationary Non-reappointment, received: 3/22/22, due: 4/22/22, first review: 3/25/22
 - The Faculty Senate discussed the use of comments that are intended to improve a resolution.
 - The official comments from the Faculty Senate will be sent to the University Council when the resolution is presented for discussion and vote. The official comments are a part of the Shared Governance process. Robin Queen suggested **waiving the right to comment** unless there are further comments from the senators.
 - The Faculty Senate has consented to **waive the right to comment**
- **CUSP 2021-22N:** Resolution to Establish Non-Class Holiday Status for Juneteenth, received: 3/14/22, due: 4/14/22, first review: 3/25/22, preliminary recommendation: waive right to comment
 - Senators suggest changes in the resolution to provide an accurate historical perspective:
 - “WHEREAS, Juneteenth recognizes the profound significance of June 19, 1865, the date of the oldest known celebration commemorating the end of slavery in the United States; and
 - WHEREAS, while Juneteenth symbolically marked the end of slavery, it was only the beginning of a long, arduous struggle for freedom and equality by African Americans that continues to this day; and”
 - The Faculty Senate has consented to **comment** on the resolution
 - A draft comment will be reviewed by the Faculty Senate Cabinet on 4/1 and will be presented to the entire senate for consideration on 4/8

Open-Floor Discussion

- **Related to Resolution for Equitable and Cost-of-Living-Responsive Graduate Student Compensation**

- The Faculty Senate will submit four nominations, two from Engineering/Science, and two from Social Sciences and Others to sit as members of the task force.
- Then the chair of the task force and the Faculty Senate President will select one senator from each group to serve.
- There were limited volunteers to serve in the task force.
- A senator reported that the reason why people are not volunteering is a result of what she heard about violence and threats against some administrators and faculty members related to this resolution.
- A senator shared the concerns that there was no recognition of the cost of living differences between Blacksburg and the Northern Virginia campuses.
- Nominations were taken from the floor for those willing to serve on the task force.
- A senator reported questionable behavior of a student in a related meeting last week. Another senator explains how to work with other student members in the same team.
- Robert Weiss responded that the Faculty Senate needs to take actionable responses to behaviors not allowed on campus. This is supported by a few other senators with additional suggestions on serious responses.
- A motion to create a closed session was made and seconded to further discuss the concerns and potential follow-up actions.
- The Faculty Senate moved into closed session at approximately 4:20pm. No minutes were recorded.
- The Faculty Senate moved out of closed session at approximately 5:10pm

5. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made and seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 5:13PM.