

## **Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes**

April 8, 2022, @ 2:30pm  
Pamplin 1045 or Via Zoom

Present: Montasir Abbas, Onwubiko Agozino, Diane Agud, Abiola Akanmu, Susan Anderson, Paul Avey, Joseph Baker, Arthur Ball, Azziza Bankole, Andrew Binks, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Scott Case, Guopeng Cheng, Benjamin Corl, William Ducker, Stuart Feigenbaum, Becky Funk, Wesley Gwaltney, James Hawdon, Kevin Heaslip, Rebecca Hester, Bob Hicok, Daniel Hindman, Mary Kasarda, Eric Kaufman, Nathan King, Leigh Anne Krometis, Evan Lavender-Smith, Justin Lemkul, Alexander Leonessa, Jonathan Maher, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Caitlin Martinkus, Frances McCarty, Michael Nappier, Amy Nelson, Aaron Noble, Gregory Novack, Thomas O'Donnell, Sean O'Keefe, Robin Panneton, Sarah Parker, Bruce Pencek, Christopher Pierce, Nicole Pitterson, Robin Queen, Susanna Rinehart, Nicholas Robbins, Thomas Sanchez, Todd Schenk, Charles Schlepner, Richard Shryock, Jay Teets, James Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Anna Ward Bartlett, Layne Watson, Robert Weiss, Cynthia Wood, Hehuang Xie

Guests: Emily Burns, Alice Fox, Jack Leff, Bryan Garey, Roan Parrish, John Randolph, Chloe Jade Robertson

### **Call to Order**

Robert Weiss called the meeting to order at 2:36 pm.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of the March 25<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved by unanimous consent.

### **Approval of Agenda**

- “CUSP 2021-22N: Resolution to Establish Non-Class Holiday Status for Juneteenth” was removed from the Consent Agenda and placed in the New Business section of the agenda based on a senator’s request.
- The revised agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

### **Old Business**

#### **Topic 1: Updates and Announcements**

- Updates from commissions and committees are available for senators to review on the Faculty Senate’s SharePoint site ([LINK](#)).
- Announcement that Rebecca Hester and Eric Kaufman have been elected as faculty nominees to represent social sciences and humanities on the Graduate Assistantship Support Task Force.
- Faculty Senate President read a statement concerning events at the March 25th meeting of the Faculty Senate:

- When describing the small number of faculty who had volunteered to serve on the Graduate Assistantship Support Task Force, the Faculty Senate Leadership was surprised to learn that at least one senator's interest in volunteering to serve on the task force had been influenced by her concerns about volunteering. Based on this realization, it was important to learn of the nature of these concerns and for the Faculty Senate to discuss them.
- Should senators feel apprehensive about participating in shared governance due to the nature of meetings, concerns about social media backlash, or other issues, the Senate will be unable to fulfill its obligations to Virginia Tech faculty and to the Virginia Tech community. While dissent and disagreement within bodies are to be expected, our collective efforts in Faculty Senate and other bodies will be most productive in an environment that nurtures openness, engagement, and respect.
- Should it become necessary for the Faculty Senate to discuss an individual in the future, the Senate will immediately go into closed session, as required by the new Faculty Senate Constitution. Faculty senators should assist each other in these moments due to the logistically complex nature of Senate meetings (e.g. attending both in-person and online; participating through Zoom chat). There may be instances when the Senate finds itself discussing matters it had not anticipated, and although these instances should occur infrequently, the Senate needs to develop a process to expedite its transition from open to closed sessions.
- Faculty have a variety of means to address concerns about harassment, discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual assault, as outlined in Policy 1025 and Policy 1026, as well as the student code of conduct, the faculty ethics committee, and the threat assessment team. The Senate will review these policies and processes at an upcoming meeting, and he noted that faculty are free to contact the President or Vice President for advice and/or direction to the appropriate office or individual in the event they have questions or concerns about these matters.

### **Topic 2: 2022-2023 Faculty Senate Elections (Senators)**

Senators were reminded that the Senate requires election/appointment of 30 new senators from 12 academic units for AY 2022-2023. As of April 8<sup>th</sup>, 12 of the 30 senators have been elected/appointed; 3 have been nominated or are awaiting election results. Senators should continue to work with their units to expedite elections so that newly elected senators can attend the final meetings of AY 2021-2022.

## **New Business**

**Topic 1: CGPSP 2021-22C: Resolution to Establish a University Policy Governing Representation on Task Forces and Working Groups** (Discussion led by Faculty Senate Representatives to CGPSP)

- CGPSP 2021-22C consists of a set of best practices for task forces / working groups, as well as the following:
  - Task forces / working groups would, under CGPSP 2021-22C, contain a stakeholder portion defined as the group most affected by a policy being developed and/or the group that brought the policy forward.
  - At least one-fourth of the voting members would be composed of individuals from the stakeholder portion.
  - The resolution is offered as a university policy (or a numbered policy) and there are requirements for such a policy, namely, that a policy must require specific action is taken. A specific action is not called for by the resolution.
  - The fourth paragraph in 2.0 of the proposed policy states, “If a plurality of the stakeholder portion withdraws their confidence from the task force or working group (by written communication with the chair of the task force/working group and the administrator who provided the charge), then the administrator may consider actions including reconvening the working group or task force.” Later in the paragraph, it states, “This procedure is not to be used if there are simply disagreements between members of the committee.”
  - It is difficult to imagine the loss of confidence resulting from anything other than disagreement and noted the need for clarification on this matter. In addition, the policy would likely guarantee that any task force/working group engaged in policy development would require a student stakeholder portion.
- It was noted that CGPSP 2021-22C is part of a pattern among resolutions originating in GPSS. The underlying problem with this resolution and others from GPSS is the appearance of an intent to rig the outcome, as opposed to engaging in a discussion or brainstorming effort intended to arrive at a collaborative solution to matters of concern for GPSS. It was recommended that CGPSP 2021-22C and other resolutions related to shared governance which have not involved collaboration between the provost, the president, the deans, faculty members, and students should be tabled at University Council.
  - It was noted that the Senate cannot write a formal comment on this resolution, and that the intended purpose of the present discussion was to provide Faculty Senate representatives to University Council an understanding of the Senate’s opinion about CGPSP 2021-22C in order to represent opinions of faculty at the April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of University Council.
  - It was noted by a Senator that the Senate could have discussed CGPSP 2021-22C earlier in the year, and that this resolution is of the sort that the Senate should have an opportunity to discuss. A senator expressed disagreement with the opinion that this was an attempt made by students to rig an outcome. It can be frustrating for a stakeholder to spend a substantial amount of time on a task force/working group addressing an issue of importance to them with the expectation that the outcome of the task force/working group will reflect its

charge when administrators have created the charge and gathered the task force/working group (which also tends to result in the appearance of a rigged outcome). An emphasis was made on the importance of the Faculty Senate discussing proposals in a manner that empowers various constituencies at the university to collaborate on issues and that cuts across divisions among faculty, students, staff, and administration. Collaboration of this sort is vital to the life of the academy and to academic freedom. There was a hope expressed that the Senate would refrain from shutting down resolutions with which faculty disagree and instead focus on broader issues and common concerns among constituencies.

- Another senator noted that the scope of the policy may suggest that it should be owned by the office of the provost or the office of the president. There was a question raised about the appropriate body from which a resolution concerning task forces/working groups should originate.
  - In response, it was stated that the scope of CGPSP 2021-22C likely requires an administrative owner such as the office of the president.
  - In addition, the policy refers to administrators selecting chairs. This would pertain to task forces/working groups generally, and the policy does not distinguish between a task force/working group created by the president, the Faculty Senate, or anyone else. Therefore, this would need to be resolved and/or clarified given the broadness of the policy and its potential repercussions.
- Another senator expressed interest in the idea of a single stakeholder portion being chosen and provided 25% membership on a task force/working group and affirmed some of the concerns already mentioned. There was stated support for the Senate's further consideration of the creation of task forces and working groups.
- A senator expressed concern about the vagueness of the resolution operationalizing the scope and membership of task forces/working groups, noting that administrators could favor the stakeholder portion. Concerns were expressed that the policy may inadvertently work at cross purposes with its intent.
- In the Zoom chat, it was stated that the Senate is late in discussing this resolution because the resolution was not presented to the full Senate in the fall.
  - Clarification was provided that there were two versions of the resolution in the Materials for Review folder on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site: a PDF version provided by April Myers on April 8<sup>th</sup>, which is the version that will be considered by the University Council; as well as an older Word version. In addition, it was noted that the Senate did not have time to provide a comment on the resolution due to a clerical error and emphasized that there was no attempt made to prevent the Senate from discussing the resolution.
- A senator expressed concern about the need for caution with respect to allowing administrative approval for every task force/working group created at the university. There was support for the idea that task force/working groups should consist of

members who are most knowledgeable of and most impacted by the charge of a task force/working group. However, there were concerns expressed regarding unintended consequences associated with this policy.

- A senator asked a question concerning clarity about the outcome if the opinion or vote of a task force/working group is not unanimous.
  - The resolution does not offer clarification on this matter.
- Gratitude was expressed for the work performed by the GPSS on this resolution. Concern was expressed that the Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Working Group did not include ideal representation from stakeholder groups. While the intention of the resolution and the work performed by the GPSS is laudable, the resolution needs further work.
- It was noted that shared governance should adhere to democratic processes and concerns were expressed that this resolution would bestow a right on a portion of a task force/working group that other members in the group do not possess.
- A comment from a Guest from the GPSS noted that the resolution was worked on by several groups, including Faculty. The intention of the resolution is to provide a set of best practices for forming stakeholder groups with specific concerns. It was noted that more work is required to address the concerns voiced by faculty and there is an eagerness to continue work on this policy via continued discussion and collaboration.
- With hesitancy, it was reiterated that it is problematic that the resolution was presented as a numbered policy in relation to the need for such policies to include requirements. There is collaborative work beginning to explore alternative means for developing a set of best practices for task forces/working groups.

## **Topic 2: CUSP 2021-22N: Resolution to Establish Non-Class Holiday Status for Juneteenth**

- There was a request for clarification about what language in CUSP 2021-22N concerned the Faculty Senate that warranted a comment.
  - The concern from the previous Faculty Senate was revisited related to the accuracy in language that suggested the Emancipation Proclamation freed all slaves. It was noted that slave-holding states which remained in the Union were not affected by the Emancipation Proclamation and referenced the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
- There was a good discussion among the senators regarding the resolution comment
- A question was raised about the implications of the holiday on summer school administration.
  - It was explained that issues concerning summer-school administration have been considered and resolved by CUSP.
- The Faculty Senate President expressed gratitude for the senators' attention and sensitivity in their suggestions for the Senate's comment on the resolution.

- The Faculty Senate leadership will work with Senators to improve the resolution comment so that it can be submitted to CUSP for consideration

### **Topic 3: 2022-2023 Faculty Senate Officer Slate**

The findings of the subcommittee charged with generating the slate of 2022-2023 Faculty Senate officers was reported. The subcommittee identified Rachel Miles (Operations Officer), Robin Queen (Vice President), and Robert Weiss (President). The vote for Faculty Senate officer positions will take place on April 22<sup>nd</sup> or May 6 at the final Faculty Senate of the year.

### **Topic 4: Climate Action Commitment Presentation** (Slide presentation [[LINK](#)] and Q&A led by John Randolph and Todd Schenk)

- John Randolph and Todd Schenk provided background and an update on Virginia Tech's Climate Action Commitment (CAC).
- The content of this presentation is available upon request.
  - Senator Questions
    - The benefit of moving toward documented low-carbon solutions (systems such as mass timber to decrease use of concrete; bamboo and hemp for use as insulation) is commendable. Concerns were expressed over difficulties encountered by faculty when attempting to discuss ideas of this sort with facilities.
  - A concern was expressed about the value proposition of CALS 100+ core faculty given the many other faculty groups on campus already engaged in climate-related initiatives.
  - A senator asked a question about the process of relaying information about the activity of other groups engaged in climate-related initiatives.
    - Faculty can contact Todd or John
  - A Senator noted the importance of climate action and sustainability being integrated into the entire curriculum of the university. A question was asked about campus-based EV charging stations and plans to increase their number in coming years.
    - John expressed hope that climate action and sustainability will be integrated into the entire curriculum of the university. He also noted that CAC is developing a plan to increase the number of EV charging stations.
  - The work of the CAC is the most impressive effort that some senators has witnessed during their time at Virginia Tech. A question was asked about a best-case scenario for embedding climate action and sustainability into university curriculum.
    - John mentioned a proposal to form an Institute for Climate and Sustainability.
    - Todd noted that an institute could be ideal if it were balanced between research and curriculum as described in the proposal mentioned by John.

## Open-Floor Discussion

### Topic 1: Glean Software (Discussion Led by Richard Shryock)

- A concern was expressed on behalf of another faculty member about the use of Glean, a software platform licensed by the university that allows students to make audio recordings of classroom proceedings. There was a concern that Glean is being advertised to students in a manner that encourages the recording of lectures; that students are not informing professors of recordings; that recordings might become available to the public; and that recorded information might be taken out of context or manipulated. In addition, some students do require accommodation, which may necessitate the recording of lectures, and it was emphasized that the concern expressed primarily involved the desire for consent among professors and students to be recorded.
  - It was noted that the Faculty Senate Cabinet discussed this in September, and the officers discussed this concern with university legal counsel and were told that the Commonwealth of Virginia has a one-party consent law. Therefore, legally students do not have to seek consent to record in the classroom.
  - A question was raised about whether placing a statement in a course syllabus indicating that recordings must require prior authorization is prohibited.
    - It was noted that in the Student Code of Conduct that there is an allowance for a reasonable expectation of privacy.
  - A concern was voiced about the instructor and student awareness of recordings and the potential for such awareness to alter the nature of courses in which sensitive personal information is disclosed.
  - A section of the Student Code of Conduct related to the recording and/or Distribution of Audio/Visual Material Without Consent was shared with the Senate in the Zoom chat
  - A link to Virginia Tech's "Glean Lecture Recording Agreement" Google form was shared in the Zoom Chat, which includes the following language:

Lectures recorded solely for personal study may not be shared with other people without the consent of the lecturer. Recorded lectures may not be used in any way against the faculty member, other lecturers, or students whose classroom comments are recorded as part of the class activity. Information contained in the recorded lecture is protected under federal copyright laws and may not be published or quoted without the express consent of the lecturer and without giving proper identity and credit to the lecturer. Violations of this agreement may also constitute plagiarism under the Virginia Tech Honor Code (Undergraduate: Article I.; Graduate: Article I, Section 3).

- There is a potential for the development of best practices for syllabi statements on consent and recording following consultation with university legal counsel.

**Adjourn**

The meeting formally adjourned at 4:41 p.m.

*Note: Minutes respectfully submitted by Evan Lavender-Smith.*