



Faculty Senate
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
<https://www.facultysenate.vt.edu/>

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

October 14, 2022, @ 2:30pm

Pamplin 1045 or Via Zoom

Check-In:

Present: Robert Weiss (presiding), Montasir Abbas, Diane Agud, Susan Anderson, Rick Ashley, Netta Baker, Joseph Baker, Arthur Ball, Azziza Bankole, Andrew Binks, Hilary Bryon, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Scott Case, Guopeng Cheng, Nick Copeland, George Davis, William Ducker, Stuart Feigenbaum, Zhuo Fu, Becky Funk, Howard Gartner, Wesley Gwaltney, John Hagy, James Hawdon, Rebecca Hester, David Hicks, Daniel Hindman, Susan Hotle, Scott Huxtable, Ran Jin, Brett Jones, Holly Kindsvater (representing Ashley Dayer), Nathan King, Bradley Klein, Bettina Koch, Leigh Anne Krometis, Evan Lavender-Smith, Justin Lemkul, Alexander Leonessa, GQ Lu, Jonathan Maher, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Francis McCarty, Joe Merola, Rachel Miles, Gonzalo Montero Yavar, Aaron Noble, Gregory Novack, Thomas O'Donnell, Robin Panneton, Bruce Pencek, Kelly Pender, Christopher Pierce, Thomas Pingel, Patrick Pithua, Nicole Pitterson, Robin Queen, Steven Rideout, Susanna Rinehart, Nicholas Robbins, Adrian Sandu, Todd Schenk (representing Tom Sanchez), Charles Schleupner, Peter Schmitthenner, Richard Shryock, Laura Strawn, Jay Teets, James Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Shane Wang, Anna Ward Bartlett, Layne Watson, Rose Wesche, Ashley Wilkinson, Angelica Witcher, Yan Xu, Diane Zahm (78)

Guests: Ron Fricker, Chloe Robertson, Ryan Stewart

Absent with Notice: Biko Agozino, Eric Kaufman

Absent: Masoud Agah, Jonathan Auguste, Paul Avey, Kevin Boyle, Tanyel Bulbul, Joshua Clemons, Kristy Daniels, Carla Finkelstein, David Gregory, Joseph Hughes, Casey Jim, Vivica Kraak, Caitlin Martinkus, Thomas Mills, Hans Robinson, Stephanie Smith, Eric Stanley, Kwok Tsui, David Xie

Call to Order by the Senate President Robert Weiss at 2:31 pm

1. Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Robert Weiss)

- Consent agenda was adopted:
 - Minutes for September 30, 2022 ([Link](#))

- Agenda for October 14, 2022 ([Link](#))

Business Agenda

Old Business

2. Updates & Announcements

- Reminder to check previous meeting minutes for record of your attendance.
- Procedures document is currently being reviewed by the Faculty Senate Officers. Will have an update at the next meeting and will likely vote on incorporating it into official procedures.

3. Governance vacancy elections

- All vacancies were filled; election results:
 - Commission on Faculty Affairs, Joe Merola (66)
 - Budget and Planning Committee, Randolph Wynne (66)
 - Parking and Transportation Committee (temporary, only for fall 2022), Rick Ashley (66)
 - Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP), Hannah (Netta) Baker, (66)
 - Campus Development Committee (two vacancies), Jim Tokuhisa (65) and Brett Jones (66)
 - Employee Benefits Committee, Daniel Hindman (65)

New Business

4. Virginia Tech Chapter of the AAUP Presentation & Discussion

- Previously it was a very active chapter but went completely inactive until about five years ago.
- Helps to keep faculty abreast of national news on higher education, such as the recent stories about academic freedom being limited by governors or university boards (e.g., the Board of Visitors) appointed by governors.
- Also is a good way to keep informed and united on current issues affecting faculty.
- Helpful links for those who want to join or learn more: <https://vtaaup.org> and <https://facebook.com/vtaaup>
- Active Virginia Tech chapter that could use more members, but it is pricey (you must be an AAUP member to be a member of the VT chapter). There is a sliding scale offered. More information at https://members.aaup.org/joinapi_membershiplist?id=a202E000005QmhnQAC&order=2&site=a0d2E00000F9x2q
 - Briefly discussed getting scholarships for faculty members who cannot afford AAUP membership.

5. First reading of CUSP 2022-23A: Resolution to Modify the General Education Requirements for Students Seeking a Second Bachelor's Degree Requirement from Waiving Pathways Requirements

- The CUSP Chair presented the resolution and took questions. The slides are attached at the end of the minutes. Discussion:
 - There are probably only two to three students a year affected by this issue.
 - Some questioned whether we should rely on Pathways requirements as the method to which Virginia Tech enforces degrees requirements.
 - The Chair will ask the registrar about whether they need more clarifying language in the resolution regarding potential confusion with requirements for their major versus Pathways.
 - Possible issue with administration of international students, who may not be as aware of general education requirements, or it may not be clear whether they are qualified to enter a program.
 - Credits of general education automatically transfer, and there's a limit on the number of credits you can transfer.
 - There's a question on how this might affect those who have not received an associate degree but still want to transfer their credits; in these cases, it might be a disadvantage.
 - Many senators agreed that this is already the process for general education requirements but that it's now being codified.
 - State Policy on Transfer drives the VCCS transfer advantages for students who complete the associate degree.

Open Floor Discussion

6. Absence Verification Process

- A senator spoke about the challenging process of verifying absences due to illness or injury through Schiffert Hall. Schiffert only gives the date on which the student was seen, and it could have been for any reason. Too often, students refer to Schiffert's documentation for proof of illness when missing classes, and especially when missing exams. In addition, Schiffert's record does not tell the instructor why the student was seen. Therefore, instructors are unable to verify absence due to illness through this very cumbersome process. In addition, many students are using the Schiffert documentation to excuse their absences from classes and exams retroactively. After the senator presented on the matter, the following was discussed:
 - There has been an unprecedented increase in student absences this academic year. Illness is rampant, and it's possible that students are more cautious about getting others sick and about the possibility of having COVID. Therefore, there is an increase in the absence verification process through Schiffert.

- One senator suggested not accepting retroactive absence excuse requests; however, not all instructors have complete control and authority over the courses they teach and their expectations in those courses.
- It is increasingly difficult to manage absences fairly in this manner for major assignments and exams.
- Currently there is only an interim Dean of Students, and this needs to eventually be a fully staffed administrative area of the university.
- COVID has become a private issue rather than a public one, so students are more likely to make personal decisions based on their own judgments rather than university-wide recommendations or requirements.
- A couple of comments noted that notifying an instructor in advance of the absence is easier for the instructor, and it is more proactive for protecting people's health and not wasting their time.
- This is also an instructional design and classroom management problem. Schiffert should not be relied upon for absence verification, especially since they are prohibited from sharing any information beyond the date of the visit due to HIPAA requirements.
- There needs to be a more resilient system in place to manage surges in illnesses, COVID, and more habitual practices around social distancing.
- The Faculty Senate President will reach out to Student Affairs to notify them of this issue and the discussion around it.

7. Courses and syllabi made available online illegally

- Many professors are shocked to see their course materials and syllabi online, especially on coursehero.com. It violates the honor code and copyright law.
- Academic Integrity Office is pursuing this and trying to resolve it. In most cases, course materials are taken down after someone notifies them of copyright infringement.
- A senator familiar with copyright law volunteered to write up a short summary of the issue and how best to approach it proactively through copyright notices and potentially copyright registrations.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 4:04 p.m.