



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

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes October 28, 2022, @ 2:30pm Pamplin 1045 or Via Zoom

Check-In:

Present: Robert Weiss (presiding), Montasir Abbas, Diane Agud, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Netta Baker, Joseph Baker, Arthur Ball, Azziza Bankole, Andrew Binks, Hilary Bryon, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Scott Case, Guopeng Cheng, Joshua Clemons, Nick Copeland, George Davis, William Ducker, Stuart Feigenbaum, Zhuo Fu, Howard Gartner, David Gregory, Wesley Gwaltney, James Hawdon, David Hicks, Daniel Hindman, Susan Hotle, Scott Huxtable, Ran Jin, Eric Kaufman, Holly Kindsvater, Nathan King, Bradley Klein, Bettina Koch (alternate for Paul Avey), Leigh Anne Krometis, Evan Lavender-Smith, Justin Lemkul, Alexander Leonessa, GQ Lu, Jonathan Maher, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Frances McCarty, Rachel Miles, Gonzalo Montero Yavar, Gregory Novack, Robin Panneton, Patrick Pithua, Bruce Pencek, Kelly Pender, Thomas Pingel, Nicole Pitterson, Robin Queen, Steven Rideout, Susanna Rinehart, Nicholas Robbins, Adrian Sandu, Emily Sarver (alternate for Aaron Noble), Charles Schleupner, Peter Schmitthenner, Richard Shryock, Stephanie Smith, Ryan Stewart, Brian Strahm (alternate for Randolph Wynne), Laura Strawn, Jay Teets, James Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Kwok Tsui, Anna Ward Bartlett, Layne Watson, Rose Wesche, Ashley Wilkinson, Angelica Witcher, Erin Worthington, Yan Xu, Diane Zahm

Guests: Jack Leff

Absent with Notice: Joe Merola, Tommy O'Donnell

Absent: Masoud Agah, Biko Agozino, Jonathan Auguste, Kevin Boyle, Tanyel Bulbul, Kristy Daniels, Carla Finkielstein, Becky Funk, John Hagy, Rebecca Hester, Joseph Hughes, Casey Jim, Brett Jones, Young-Teck Kim, Vivica Kraak, Caitlin Martinkus, Thomas Mills, Chris Pierce, Hans Robinson, Eric Stanley, Shane Wang, David Xie

Call to Order by the Senate President Robert Weiss at 2:30 pm

1. Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Robert Weiss)

- Consent agenda was adopted:
 - Minutes for 10-14-2022 ([Link](#))

- Agenda for 10-28-2022 ([Link](#))

Business Agenda

Old Business

2. Updates & Announcements

- Reminder to senators who are the point of contact for university commissions and committees to send updates to the operations officer every two weeks; if there are no updates, please just send a note that there are no updates.

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

- Discussion: Changes to CUSP Resolution include:
 - WHEREAS [4] - clarity offered to comments made by FS at last meeting. This resolution doesn't bring in credits. They have satisfied general education requirements. Transfers are different. Degree courses cannot "double-count" towards other degrees.
 - Resolution is based on accreditation and regional accrediting bodies and does not attempt to clarify general education requirements for international students, because there are too many differences in gen ed requirements across the world.
 - Doesn't necessarily disadvantage international students, because such courses will still be considered on a course-by-course basis.
 - Amendment proposed by member to clarify language in WHEREAS [4]; CUSP Chair agreed to clarify the language.
- Vote: 63 yes, 1 no, 5 abstain

New Business

4. Review of Records Creation and Retention Procedures

- There was discussion around private chats in Zoom meetings, those chats are still saved on the host's hard drive, and sometimes the co-host's hard drive, depending on the Zoom settings of the host.
- There was discussion that the chat should potentially be a part of the minutes, but this is difficult to track. While messages in the chat can be meaningful, they need to be brought forward to the entire senate (e.g., senator or guest raising their hands virtually on Zoom, speaking up, or sending a private message to the moderator of the chat).
- There was discussion on whether the host should disable the copy/paste function of chat, but it doesn't seem to be a concern, especially since this is a way to personally save something, like a link or resource.

- Question from a guest about this policy reducing transparency within the governance processes.
 - Response from the President that this is not reducing transparency compared to previous record-keeping practices, especially when meetings were previously in-person only.
 - These procedures help to protect the identification of participants as well as to ensure that senators can speak openly during difficult discussions.
 - Comment: these procedures will help maintain consistency.
 - Response: there is also value to having total transparency and keeping all records. This would help to have a record of everything, especially since this is a public institution.
 - General discussion around the consequence of keeping every record of a senate meeting (e.g., Zoom chat, recording, transcript):
 - The guarantee of records not being saved (besides the minutes) helps others to feel they can speak up, even if their opinions could be considered controversial or could change quickly after discussion.
 - The way in which senators speak up helps them to know the response of their colleagues. A saved transcript or recording might take a faculty's comment or opinion out of context, and it could be easily misinterpreted.
 - The point of following this consistent records retention procedure is to offer an environment in which senators can speak openly, have difficult discussions, and undertake academic and political discourse on issues that affect them and their constituents.
 - Comment: advancing technology has forced us to have this type of conversation. There were not previously ways to easily record or save conversations (transcript, chat, etc.).
 - Related comment: FS officers request that senators may need to offer feedback on the minutes to ensure that the spirit and context of the discussions are accurately reflected.
 - Vote on approval of records retention and creation procedural document
 - Vote: 55 yes, 6 no, 7 abstain
 - Vote on approval of new appendix document (procedures for disabling saving of Zoom files and the Zoom live transcript)
 - Vote: 53 yes, 7 no, 7 abstain
5. Review of Meeting Expectations for Senators and Guests Procedures
- Procedures on Expectations for Senators and Guests
 - Overall, FS leadership wants there to be more decorum, respect, and civility during FS meetings.
 - Question about whether we record the "who votes which way" - we do not (historically), but this is not a policy or procedure yet. This may be a discussion in the future about recording who votes which way for accountability to senators' constituents.
 - Vote on approval of meeting expectations procedural document
 - Vote: 63 yes, 1 no, 5 abstain
6. Discussion on Freedom of Expression and Inquiry Statement

- Question: Will there be a report on the feedback submitted to feedback form?
 - Don't know yet, but the task force wants feedback by Tuesday, November 1. They will then decide on Friday how to proceed with changes and sharing feedback.
- Question: Can senators provide feedback now verbally?
 - It's better to go through the form so it doesn't appear to come personally the TF chair.
- Two strong comments from one department who felt the statement was surprisingly weak. Several senators agreed.
- Some comments on how faculty and others can be targeted or harassed, and that there should be policies on this. TF chair asked that faculty members please share more of this feedback, about policy especially.
- There are already some existing policies that protect faculty from targeted harassment. There are suggestions to make this statement and its website a "one stop shop" with links to relevant policies and statements, because many don't know these exist, such as the [2021 Faculty Senate statement on academic freedom](#), as well as other [Faculty Senate statements](#).
- Comments: the current statement emphasizes freedom of speech and does not defend the work done in classrooms to curate conversations; there needs to be more language on how teaching works to speak to the current climate as well.
- The second paragraph of the statement seems to hold a bias towards tenured faculty and research and teaching faculty. Research staff, A/P faculty, technical faculty seem to be left out, and their work is important to protect as well.
- One sentence of the statement could be used to justify oppression of speech of invited guests or speakers, especially if the university fears they might incite violence. It can give a "heckler's veto" to anyone who wants to speak on campus.
- The [Chicago Principles](#) also state nothing about the university's right to shut down free speech as a result of violent rhetoric; however, the University of Chicago is a private university, so their policies are different and shouldn't be compared to public or state universities.
- One of the challenges of the TF is that they were requested to make the statement short (200 words or less) while also incorporating language that extends to everyone in terms of their speech and inquiry being protected.
- Comment: Who has the responsibility to maintain balance in an environment of discussion or classroom (as noted in the statement)? It's not actually stated. This is troubling.
- Suggestion from a senator to look at the student code of conduct again and determine how it aligns (or doesn't) with the current statement.
- Question about what will happen after the TF finishes the final draft of the statement. They are still figuring out what will happen. The statement will go to the task force sponsors, but after that, it is unclear what will happen next.

- It is of the utmost importance to see how other universities proceed nationwide with their own policies and statements around freedom of expression and academic freedom. A trend is emerging in higher education in which actions are being taken to limit academic freedom in public universities.

Open Floor Discussion

7. There was recently some news from Hokie Wellness that there will be a fee associated with the War Memorial recreation center when it opens back up (similar to McComas fee structures).
 8. Lots of illnesses right now. Instructors are being told to just help students make up the work, which is very stressful and difficult.
 - FS Pres did bring up this issue to the Provost, and there is a message in today's communications from the Provost about the need for students to communicate their absences directly with their instructors and not rely on Schiffert for excusing their absences when they are sick and that Schiffert's system does not automatically provide excused absences.
 - Comment: The university often forgets to put resources into operational costs and ensure a better system and public health measures are in place.
 9. Flooding, power outage, and gas leak at Slusher this week.
 10. Update from the Employee Benefits Committee: there are new perks for faculty and staff. Will send this along to the FS President to send out to senators.
- Motion to adjourn and seconded at 4:23 p.m.