



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

## Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

### December 9, 2022, @ 2:30pm

### Pamplin 1045 or Via Zoom

#### **Check-In:**

**Present:** Robert Weiss (presiding), Montasir Abbas, Diane Agud, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Joseph Baker, Arthur Ball, Azziza Bankole, Andrew Binks, Hilary Bryon, Guopeng Cheng, Nick Copeland, George Davis, Stuart Feigenbaum, Zhuo Fu, Becky Funk, Howard Gartner, David Gregory, Wesley Gwaltney, James Hawdon, David Hicks, Daniel Hindman, Susan Hotle, Scott Huxtable, Ran Jin, Brett Jones, Eric Kaufman, Holly Kindsvater, Nathan King, Bradley Klein, Vivica Kraak, Evan Lavender-Smith, Justin Lemkul, Alexander Leonessa, Jonathan Maher, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Frances McCarty, Joe Merola, Rachel Miles, Gonzalo Montero Yavar, Aaron Noble, Gregory Novack, Thomas O'Donnell, Robin Panneton, Bruce Pencek, Thomas Pingel, Patrick Pithua, Nicole Pitterson, Robin Queen, Steven Rideout, Susanna Rinehart, Nicholas Robbins, Adrian Sandu, Charles Schleupner, Peter Schmitthenner, Richard Shryock, Stephanie Smith, Laura Strawn, James Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Kwok Tsui, Anna Ward Bartlett, Layne Watson, Rose Wesche, Ashley Wilkinson, Angelica Witcher, Randolph Wynne, Hehuang Xie, Diane Zahm (71)

**Guests:** Jack Leff

**Absent with Notice:** Masoud Agah, Scott Case, Rebecca Hester, Leigh-Anne Krometis, Kelly Pender, Ryan Stewart

**Absent:** Biko Agozino, Jonathan Auguste, Paul Avey, Netta Baker, Kevin Boyle, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Tanyel Bulbul, Joshua Clemons, Kristy Daniels, William Ducker, Carla Finkielstein, John Hagy, Joseph Hughes, Casey Jim, Young-Teck Kim, Bettina Koch, GQ Lu, Caitlin Martinkus, Thomas Mills, Chris Pierce, Hans Robinson, Eric Stanley, Jay Teets, Shane Wang, Erin Worthington, Yan Xu

#### **Call to Order by the Senate President Robert Weiss at 2:32 pm**

##### **1. Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Robert Weiss)**

- Consent agenda was adopted:
  - Minutes for 11-11-2022 ([Link](#))
  - Agenda for 12-09-2022 ([Link](#))

- **CEOD 2022-23B:** Resolution to Approve the Land Acknowledgement and Labor Recognition Statements (FS Officers Recommendation: waive right to comment)

## Business Agenda

### Old Business

2. Updates & Announcements
  - The meeting location for spring semester will change to Torgesen Room 1050.
3. Updates from Committees and Commissions ([Link](#))

### New Business

1. Nomination/Election (1 member each): Access and Affordability, Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Working Group (SVCC), and Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies (CGPSP) (spring '23 only) FS Representation
  - Election results:
    - Access and Affordability Working Group
      - Nicole Pitterson (64)
      - Abstain (1)
    - SVCC Working Group
      - Susan Anderson (63)
      - Abstain (2)
    - CGPSP (spring '23 alternate)
      - Evan Lavender-Smith (62)
      - Abstain (0)
2. Nominations/Elections: SVCC subcommittees (7 members) & IT Transformation Learning Technologies subcommittee (1 member)
  - Question about the number of names submitted for the SVCC. Only seven names can be submitted to the President who then appoints them to the subcommittee. The names were selected randomly by the Faculty Senate President, but one senator strongly encouraged an eight name be put forward, because this individual's background in working with survivors of sexual violence.
  - Question about the names submitted for the IT Transformation subcommittee; two names that were submitted via email are missing. They were added to the form and voting commenced.
  - Election results:
    - SVCC subcommittees, members confirmed: Sally Entrekin (Entomology), Vassilios Kovanis (ECE), Megan Brem (Psychology), Marian Mollin (History), Sharon Johnson (Modern and Classical Languages), Johann Rudi (Mathematics), Marie Boer (Physics)
      - Yes (46)

- No (2)
  - Abstain (8)
  - IT Transformation Learning Technologies Subcommittee
    - Bob Edmison (29)
    - David Williamson (13)
    - Serkan Toy (8)
    - Abstain (8)
- 3. CGPSP 2022-23A: DAP (Degrees and Academic Policy) Committee Co-op Program Change
  - Resolution is to remove the one-hour requirement for co-op programs
  - International students are required to register and pay for one-credit hour, but this would mean they could register and pay \$0 for 0-credit hours
  - Question: does this affect undergraduate international students?
    - Answer: this now mirrors their same process.
  - Question: will the 0-credit hours be reflected in the students' transcripts?
    - Unsure, but the 0-credit hour co-op program will likely be on their transcript
  - Question: does taking only 0-credit hour courses impact a students' access to health insurance or other benefits?
    - No, just the requirements of the co-op program course. However, the CGPSP Chair will investigate to ensure students do not lose benefits with this change.
- 4. CGPSP 2022-23B: Resolution to Establish a Master of Science Degree in Applied Data Science
  - Question: what is the difference between this new degree and the computer data modeling and analytics program degree?
    - There is a recognized need for a degree specifically in applied data, especially with projected job growth in this area.
    - In addition, this master's degree is from an academy and not a department, which means that several departments came together to form the degree program; in addition, they have been trying for years to establish this degree, and it will accompany the current undergraduate applied statistics degree.
  - Question: would this degree be in direct competition with the Master of Applied Statistics degree?
    - No, because anyone can do this degree from any department.
  - There was discussion about the degree proposal itself, which has already been approved, its curriculum, requirements, and prerequisites. If individuals have access to the Jira system, they can access it at <https://webapps.es.vt.edu/jira/browse/CM-7613>.

- One senator expressed concern that the proposal had never been sent to faculty in their department for review, but other senators pointed out that at this stage, the establishment of the degree does not warrant feedback from Faculty Senate except more as a formality, because it has gone through all the necessary review periods and been reviewed by many departments and colleges. If senators want to provide feedback on the degree program or the proposal as a faculty member of their department, they can do so by accessing the link (above).

5. CFA 2022-23A: Resolution to Revise Language in Faculty Handbook Regarding Emeritus or Emerita Designation (First Reading)

- Comment and question: one senator was concerned that the language may not clearly state that emeritus/a status can be conferred upon faculty members beyond Teaching and Research faculty.
- Comment: one senator expressed concern that the process to obtain emeritus/a status creates more burden on over-burdened faculty members, especially in the post-COVID era in which faculty members, especially those from underrepresented groups, already feel overwhelmed. The senator stated that for faculty members to go through the process to obtain emeritus/a status and not get it would be highly demoralizing.
  - Answer: the process to obtain emeritus/a status itself is not changing; the language to clarify the process is changing, such as who is eligible.
- Question: does this mean that emeritus/a status cannot be conferred to instructors and collegiate faculty?
  - Not intended to be a restriction.
  - Another senator replied that AAUP specifically calls out that this should not be a restriction on faculty for obtaining emeritus/a status.
- Comment/point of clarification: emeritus/a status is meant to be inclusive of different faculty types, and it is intended to be a recognition of service and not necessarily a reward. In addition, it is meant to incentivize future engagement with the university.

6. Policy Committee Bylaw Revision Writing Group (Discussion)

- This discussion focused on the creation and purpose of a Faculty Senate working group to revise the bylaws for the following purposes:
  - The attendance policy in the bylaws is strict and unaccommodating in many ways. An effort was recently made by the FS Officers to create an attendance procedure to improve the process for missing meetings. However, as the proposed procedure was in direct violation of the bylaws, a new project is proposed by the officers in consultation with the cabinet to form this working group to propose bylaw changes for consideration by the Senate.

- Certain sections of the Faculty Handbook pertaining to the external committees that govern the faculty grievance process should be removed and codified in the FS Bylaws instead, which will give more control and oversight to the grievance process by Faculty Senate and faculty more generally.
- The committee needs four to five people; the FS President will appoint them, but there is a call for volunteers. Faculty Senate leadership recommends that the Bylaws be revised by December 23, before the university closes for winter break. The FS President will send out an email asking for volunteers soon, especially since there is an urgent and important need to get this done.
- The goal is to have the first review of the revised bylaws at the next Faculty Senate meeting on January 13, 2023, with the second review and vote at the January 27 meeting.

#### 7. Procedural Resolution: Shared Governance and the Academic Freedom/Free Speech Statement

- A senator expressed concerns about the recent process by which the statement on freedom of expression and inquiry was created and reviewed.
- The senator stated that there is a responsibility for all bodies of shared governance to be involved in the process, and if they are not, it could be construed that faculty endorse or approve something that they had little to no involvement in crafting.
- In addition, the recent process reveals that the Faculty Senate and its members are still learning about shared governance. The senator suggests that the Faculty Senate should vote to endorse, deny, or amend the current statement.
- Comment: if, perhaps, the statement does get approved by the Board of Visitors (BoV), which has not yet occurred, it may come back to the Faculty Senate for more revision or approval. Since the statement has not yet been approved by the BoV, then the Faculty Senate cannot yet vote on the proposed resolution.
- Questions about the proposed resolution from the floor:
  - Does this resolution attempt to deny the implicit endorsement of or embrace of the statement?
    - Not in its current form; it is merely a proposal for the Senate to vote on approving, denying, or amending the statement.
  - Does the current statement include the Faculty Senate's name on it (as the current resolution suggests)?
    - No, the Faculty Senate's name, nor the Faculty Senate President's name, is not on the statement.
  - Does the Faculty Senate sign or endorse the statement currently?
    - No.

- The Faculty Senate President explained that the statement was never intended to go through shared governance.
- The BoV asked the President to create a statement on freedom of expression and not on academic freedom. However, the President asked the Provost and Faculty Senate President to help form a task force and to also incorporate academic freedom into the statement.
- The Faculty Senate President convinced the Provost to increase the representation of faculty to have five faculty members plus the chair (also a faculty member) on the task force.
- After the task force completed the statement, it was sent out to the entire university community for feedback; there were 360 responses, the majority from faculty members. The task force incorporated many of the suggested revisions in the statement before forwarding the statement to the sponsors. It was then sent to the President without edits from the sponsors. The President subsequently decided to not change the statement and to simply forward it to the BoV.
- Clarification: if this resolution goes forward in Faculty Senate, there must be two meetings before a vote can take place to allow feedback from the Faculty Senate.
- Comment: The Principles of Community was first approved by the BoV before being officially endorsed by all the shared governance bodies, including the Faculty Senate. The current statement on freedom of expression and inquiry has not yet been approved by the BoV. It is also a statement and is aspirational in nature and is not policy.
- Comment: Faculty Senate has its own statement on academic freedom, which has been on the website since fall 2021. Perhaps that current statement should be reviewed and even revised by a group or committee.
- Comment: the first amendment, or freedom of speech, is being used as a means to bludgeon academic freedom and critical thinking, classroom discussions, and teaching. Freedom of speech itself is about citizens not being silenced by their governments, not about instructors telling students that their opinion has been voiced enough in their classroom.
- General discussion and wrap-up: this discussion has helped with understanding shared governance, and such discussions are important to have in the Senate.
- Question: does the President have the legal right and authority to make statements about the mission and direction of the university without the input of Faculty Senate and other governing bodies?
  - One senator replied that he does have that legal right and authority.
- A suggestion was made to invite the President and Provost to Faculty Senate early next year to talk more about the statement and its process.

## **Open Floor Discussion**

With the Faculty Senate meeting already running late, there was no indication that anyone wanted to have an open floor discussion.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 4:32 p.m.