



## Faculty Senate

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

<https://www.facultysenate.vt.edu/>

# Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

## January 13, 2023, @ 2:30pm

### Torgersen 1050 or Via Zoom

#### Check-In:

**Present:** Robert Weiss (presiding), Montasir Abbas, Diane Agud, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Paul Avey, Netta Baker, Azziza Bankole, Andrew Binks, Hilary Bryon, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Scott Case, Guopeng Cheng, Joshua Clemons, Nick Copeland, Kristy Daniels, George Davis, Carla Finkielstein, Zhuo Fu, Becky Funk, Wesley Gwaltney, James Hawdon, David Hicks, Susan Hotle, Scott Huxtable, Ran Jin, Eric Kaufman, Holly Kindsvater, Nathan King, Vivica Kraak, Leigh Anne Krometis, Evan Lavender-Smith, Justin Lemkul, Alexander Leonessa, GQ Lu, Jonathan Maher, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Frances McCarty, Joe Merola, Rachel Miles, Aaron Noble, Gregory Novack, Robin Panneton, Bruce Pencek, Thomas Pingel, Nicole Pitterson, Robin Queen, Steven Rideout, Susanna Rinehart, Nicholas Robbins, Thomas Sanchez, Adrian Sandu, Charles Schleupner, Richard Shryock, Ryan Stewart, Brian Strahm (alternate for Randolph Wynne), Laura Strawn, Jay Teets, James Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Kwok Tsui, Anna Ward Bartlett, Layne Watson

**Guests:** Mantu Hudait, April Myers, Demetria Somervell

**Absent with Notice:** Masoud Agah, Arthur Ball, William Ducker, Rebecca Hester, Thomas O'Donnell, Peter Schmitthenner, Stephanie Smith, Rose Wesch

**Absent:** Biko Agozino, Jonathan Auguste, Joseph Baker, Kevin Boyle, Tanyel Bulbul, Stuart Feigenbaum, Howard Gartner, David Gregory, John Hagy, Daniel Hindman, Joseph Hughes, Casey Jim, Brett Jones, Young-Teck Kim, Bradley Klein, Bettina Koch, Caitlin Martinkus, Thomas Mills, Gonzalo Montero Yavar, Chris Pierce, Patrick Pithua, Hans Robinson, Eric Stanley, Shane Wang, Diane Zahm

#### Call to Order by the Senate President Robert Weiss at 2:33 pm

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

- Consent agenda was adopted:

- Minutes for 12-09-2022 ([Link](#))
- Agenda for 1-13-2023 ([Link](#))
- **CAPFA 2022-23A: Resolution to Revise the Administrative and Professional Faculty Senate Constitution** (FS Officers Recommendation: waive right to comment)

## Business Agenda

### Old Business

#### 2. Updates & Announcements

- Concerning last meeting's question about inviting the President and Provost to Faculty Senate to discuss freedom of expression, academic freedom, and the task force that drafted a statement: a request has been sent to them, but we have not yet heard back.

#### 3. Updates from Committees and Commissions ([Link](#))

### New Business

#### 4. Changes to Faculty Senate Bylaws, general edits:

- Changed the name of the Policy and Handbook Committee to the Policy and Writing Committee throughout the document
  - Multiple suggestions on a different name for this committee which will be discussed, and a new name proposed at second reading. Suggestions included: Policy and Documentation Committee, Policy and Handbook Documentation Committee, Policy Documentation Committee, Policy Review Committee, Policy Drafting Committee.
- Removal of references to specific Sections in the FS Bylaws and Constitution so the committee does not have to update section numbers each time they change.
  - Suggestion was made to keep the referenced article numbers but not the section numbers.
- Several grammatical corrections and modifications made to improve clarification throughout the document
- Transitioned the specific callouts to the VTCSOM to include them as one of the colleges throughout the document instead of being mentioned separately.
- Specific clarifying edits:
  - Article I: Repositioned the section on "Nomination and Election of the Faculty Senate Cabinet" to after the "Nominations and Elections by the Faculty Senate (Including Officers)." No edits to the content of the section.
  - Article VIII. External Committees of the Faculty Senate
    - Completely new article. It is verbatim from the Faculty Handbook and is part of Faculty Senate governance to be able to modify the external committees as needed.

- Article XII – Combined this and the next article as they addressed the same information, so it is one article now.
- Article XIII. Additional Senate Procedures
  - These are not new procedures; these were voted on and approved in Fall 2022. We have simply moved them into the Bylaws.
- Edits for Discussion:
  - Article I, Section 1 – Faculty Senators
    - Specific edits for senators to familiarize themselves with documents, constitution, bylaws, and SharePoint; although the SharePoint platform may change, the members decided to refer to it specifically, because it is crucial for senators to learn, and the bylaws can always be changed to reflect a change in software/platform.
  - Discussion on how detailed to make the reference to SharePoint. Since it could change the decision was to say, “The Faculty Senate officers will provide information on the platform used for communication and storage of Senate documents.” Article II, Section 3 – Representation
    - Removal of “d. In the unusual case that the allotted number of senators for a college is less than the number of departments in that college.” This is so unusual and rare that the committee members think it should be removed.
      - Question: what if a senator represents more than one department? Answer: this is not an allotment though, so this would not be a problem.
        - Question: would a senator have two votes in this unusual circumstance? Answer: Likely not. The same senator would vote on behalf of both departments. However, two departments might have competing interests, so this could be problematic.
        - Question: is this even permitted by the constitution or bylaws? The FS officers will investigate this.
      - Question about why the Senate determines membership based both on the number of faculty members in the department with a cap at 100.
        - This is a bigger conversation to have and would require revision of the constitution.
  - Article II, Section 4 – Nomination
    - This section now provides information on expectations for senators. Officers will also remind departments and faculty associations to elect alternate senators for the year.
      - Comment: there may be pushback about having to elect senators rather than allowing them to be appointed. Response: this is required by the new governance model, so it is not an option.
      - Question: how should elections take place within departments and the college associations? Answer: that is left to the departments

and associations. There needs to be faculty approval of their senator.

- Clarification on terms and when newly elected senators can start observing meetings.
- Clarification that the most recent past president may be asked by the president to serve as an advisor to the cabinet to fill roles of immediate past president when the president takes on more than one term as president.
- Article II, Section 6 – Alternates
  - Changing “may” to “must” in the statement, “Each department and the college faculty associations may elect one senator to fill in as an alternate when a senator cannot attend individual meetings or is on research or other leave.”
    - This change ensures that departments will have representation from their department when they are unable to attend meetings; i.e., alternate senators can help to meet quorum and vote in their absence.
- Article III – Attendance and Participation
  - Changed the name from “Resignation of Removal of a Senator, Officer, Cabinet Member, or Commission Chair” to “Attendance and Participation”
  - Section 1 – Notification and Consideration of Absences.
    - The frame of this section is focused on how senators will be held accountable for attending Faculty Senate meetings. The crucial change is that rather than relying on the Faculty Senate leadership to ensure regular senator attendance and participation the decision on removal of a senator will be the choice of the department. The Faculty Senate will notify the department head if a senator is not attending meetings. Therefore, the departments will have the authority and power to decide if they want to dismiss their senator(s) and elect new senator(s).
      - Question about the wording as it applies to attendance and having alternates attend. There may need to be some editing to clarify that alternates attending on behalf of senators do not count as absences or absences with notice.
    - Question: why are we distinguishing between attendance and participation? Is participation defined? And if so, are there consequences for not “participating”?
      - Comment: if there is little to no participation from a senator (e.g., they do not share Faculty Senate discussions and activities with their units), then there should be some sort of expectation codified in the bylaws.
        - Response: this is something that is talked about further down in the “expectations” section of the bylaws.

- Suggestion to change the title to “Attendance and Representation” or “Attendance,” because participation is more of a departmental issue. Section 2 – Resignation
    - Added language that senators should submit a letter of resignation to their department or college faculty association in addition to the Faculty Senate President.
  - Section 3 – Removal of Senator
    - Changed the authority to remove a senator to their department or college faculty association. Question: Is it wise for the Senate to remove its ability to remove senators? What if a senator is maliciously obstructing meetings or FS business?
      - Response: The committee will consider this request and determine if there is a way to retain some of this language and a proposal will be presented at second reading.
  - Section 4 – Removal of an Officer, Cabinet Member, or Commission Chair
    - The removal process for these leadership positions can be initiated through a signed statement from senators because they are directly representing and leading the Senate.
      - Question: should this also be applied to Commission members, especially since they are directly representing the Senate on a commission and not their department or faculty association? Answer: we are unable to enforce this, because we do not get a report on who attends commission meetings.
        - Question: is this in the commission meeting minutes? Answer: yes, but someone would have to go through every commission’s minutes to determine attendance.
        - Question: what if there is a universal system for attendance across all university governance groups? Answer: we do not have the ability to do that right now and it is likely a good idea.
        - If we do include this in the bylaws, then the Commission Chair would be required to enact a process to record and report on attendance. However, there is no mechanism in place.
        - Perhaps, the University Council should take on this issue, because it is a bigger question for governing groups across all the senates.
  - Section 6 – Replacement
    - The election to replace a senator should follow departmental policies and procedures.

## **Open Floor Discussion**

5. Discussion about AI tools used in education and research.

- Rather than policing AI tools, perhaps there should be more education around AI tools.
  - For example, we need more human creativity for research, innovation, and scholarly activities.
  - In addition, it could be used in the classroom to generate discussion and critical thinking around its usefulness and limitations.
  - ChatGPT was specifically discussed, and several suggestions were made about how to approach the tool in the classroom. Suggestions were also made to bring in experts on this tool to present to the Senate. The Faculty Senate leadership plans to reach out to those individuals suggested by senators.
  - Someone mentioned citation recommendation tools. Another senator said these tools can be dangerous and promote confirmation bias in research.

6. Discussion around the requirement of colleges to use Elements to report their faculty activities

- Biggest questions surrounding why the university or colleges want the data and what they are going to do with it.
- We need more communication and clarification around why we are using this data, and what is being done with it.
- One senator works on the Elements Implementation Team and will get some information gathered and hopefully a speaker or two to talk about it at one of the upcoming Senate meetings.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 4:19 p.m.