



## Faculty Senate

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

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

# Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

## February 10, 2023, @ 2:30pm

### Torgersen 1050 or Via Zoom

#### Check-In:

**Present:** Robert Weiss (presiding), Montasir Abbas, Onwubiko Agozino, Diane Agud, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Paul Avey, Joseph Baker, Arthur Ball, Azziza Bankole, Andrew Binks, Hilary Bryon, Scott Case, Guopeng Cheng, Joshua Clemons, Carolyn Commer, Nick Copeland, Kristy Daniels, William Ducker, Stuart Feigenbaum, Carla Finkelstein, Zhuo Fu, Becky Funk, Howard Gartner, Wesley Gwaltney, James Hawdon, David Hicks, Daniel Hindman, Susan Hotle, Scott Huxtable, Brett Jones, Eric Kaufman, Holly Kindsvater (alternate for Ashley Dayer), Nathan King, Vivica Kraak, Leigh Anne Krometis, Andrea L'Afflitto (alternate for Ran Jin), Evan Lavender-Smith, Justin Lemkul, Alexander Leonessa, GQ Lu, Jonathan Maher, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Frances McCarty, Rachel Miles, Gonzalo Montero Yavar, Aaron Noble, Gregory Novack, Thomas O'Donnell, Robin Panneton, Bruce Pencek, Patrick Pithua, Nicole Pitterson, Steven Rideout, Susanna Rinehart, Nicholas Robbins, Adrian Sandu, Charles Schleupner, Peter Schmitthenner, Richard Shryock, Keith Stephenson, Ryan Stewart, Laura Strawn, Jay Teets, James Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Kwok Tsui, Layne Watson, Rose Wesche, Ashley Wilkinson, Angelica Witcher, Erin Worthington, Randolph Wynne, Yan Xu (76)

**Guests:** Scott Midkiff, Brenda van Gelder, Marc DeBonis, Randolph Marchany, Ashley Pope, Demetria Somervell, Tom Woteki

**Absent with Notice:** Anna Ward Bartlett, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Rebecca Hester, Stephanie Smith, Thomas Pingel, Joe Merola, Robin Queen, Diane Zahm

**Absent:** Masoud Agah, Jonathan Auguste, Netta Baker, Tanyel Bulbul, George Davis, David Gregory, Joseph Hughes, Casey Jim, Young-Teck Kim, Bradley Klein, Caitlin Martinkus, Thomas Mills, Hans Robinson, Tom Sanchez, Eric Stanley, Shane Wang, Hehuang Xie

**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 1-27-2023 ([Link](#))
  - Agenda for 2-10-2023 ([Link](#))

## Business Agenda

### Old Business

#### 2. Updates & Announcements.

- Committees and Commissions are encouraged to provide updates to Rachel Miles, Faculty Senate Operations Officer.
- The Employee Benefits Committee presented an update from their January meeting. The committee has discussed the topic of extending the current tuition benefit to include the spouses and dependents of Virginia Tech faculty and staff. The committee feels that support from the Faculty Senate and Division of Human Resources would be beneficial. Additionally, financial support from the university would be required.
  - Question: Could the Senate vote on support for this topic? Because the issue has been raised by a committee, it must first be presented to the commission to form a resolution before it comes to the Senate. The committee reports to three commissions: Commission on Faculty Affairs, Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs, Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs.
  - Question: What information is available regarding the financial impact of the extension? It is important for the Senate to know how the benefit would be funded.
  - Historical information was shared.
  - It is believed that UVA offers this benefit for faculty. It was noted that additional information about the UVA benefit would be useful.
  - Questions, concerns, and comments voiced will be taken back to the committee.
  - A summary of this information was requested from the Employee Benefits Committee so it can be added to the formal updates file.

#### 3. Second Reading & Vote:

- **CGPSP 2022-23A: DAP (Degrees and Academic Policy) Committee Co-op Program Change**
  - The resolution allows for short-term and part-term appointments and removes the one credit hour requirement. Virginia Tech does not have control over co-op programs, and this provides positive opportunities for

both students and Virginia Tech. Additionally, removing the credit hour requirement provides equity for all students.

- Motion was made and seconded to adopt CGPSP 2022-23A Co-op Program Change. Motion carried.
  - Voting: 60 Yes, 2 Abstain
- **CGPSP 2022-23B: Resolution to Establish a Master of Science Degree in Applied Data Science**
  - This resolution provides for a Master of Science degree and includes collaboration from several departments. Previously, it was felt that some departments were not included but that issue has been resolved and incorporated into the most recent version of the resolution.
  - Following limited discussion, confirmation was provided that the most recent version of CGPSP 2022-23B: Resolution to Establish a Master of Science Degree in Applied Data Science does include Industrial and Systems Engineering (ISE).
  - Motion was made and seconded to approve this resolution. Motion carried.
    - Voting: 57 Yes, 3 Abstain

## **New Business**

4. Discussion on topics for upcoming Board of Visitors meeting and constituency report. Several possible topics were discussed:

- Salary and Salary Compression. This continues to be a subject that is shared and mentioned frequently. The College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences recently conducted a faculty poll. Results indicated concern with salary and salary compression. Faculty would like to know what efforts the university is undertaking to address the issue. It was reported that Virginia Tech may be exploring an option for a salary study to be conducted by an outside group. This is expected to be a long process, 3-5 years. Historical information regarding this topic was shared.
- Hiring Practices. Transparency of hiring practices across the university, including the role of faculty in hiring and the significance of faculty voice in certain decisions. Increased faculty responsibilities for both student support and administration were mentioned.
- Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). SSD will be speaking about items that they would like to implement during an upcoming Faculty Senate Cabinet meeting.
- Traffic Safety and Parking. General concerns and suggestions were offered, including the suggestion of adding double lane cycling lanes for safety. Specific concerns with scooters and bicycles and personal observances were shared. It was mentioned that policies concerning scooters and bicycles are under review. The

need for attendants in areas with gates was also discussed. One senator requested that anyone with concerns provide these in an email to the Parking and Transportation Committee representative.

- Collaboration on Bachelor of Arts/Language Sciences classes are currently underway between Virginia Tech and Radford University and will be beneficial for both universities. It is believed that the Provost has expressed support for this initiative. There are currently memorandums of understanding between Virginia Tech Biomedical Engineering and Wake Forest University.
- The tenure package process. Faculty have reported that the package process is as much as 50 percent longer than those reviewed by State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) partners. Faculty support the requirements, but report that the package and paperwork portion is arduous.
  - The Provost recently distributed the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) survey. Faculty are encouraged to respond because this is a good way to express opinions, and the results are read and seriously considered.
  - The Board of Visitor's meeting is in March. Senators have time to solicit feedback from their departments and forward concerns.

5. Upcoming meeting with Virginia Tech's President and Provost on March 24, 2023.

- The President and Provost are expected to speak on academic freedom and other topics. Questions are usually prepared by senators and shared with the President and Provost prior to the meeting. How to best form and consider questions and whether to share all, part, or none of them prior to the meeting were discussed. The main goal is to provide time during the meeting for follow-up questions. Senators are asked to reach out to their departments for topics of interest and questions. A form will be provided for submitting questions and will be distributed by email.

### **Open Floor Discussion**

6. Capability of AI-powered cybersecurity software on VT-owned computers and their need at Virginia Tech

- Nick Copeland opened the discussion. Faculty have expressed concerns about the A5 cybersecurity software implementation. A petition on this subject has been created and distributed.
  - There are many items that the faculty do not know about: It appears that the decision has been made to deploy this technology. Whose idea was it, what was the rationale, is there an IT governance planning committee, and if so, who is on the committee and what are meeting dates and details?

- Faculty concerns are not about malware monitoring but about the use and abuse of technology and surveillance. Specific concerns include the following: society is concerned with AI technology, and this may impact students and their families; biases inherent in AI technology; the perception of surveillance; the definition of what constitutes a threat; and applicability to personal devices that access the eduroam network.
- Questions were asked regarding transparency during rollout; whether other universities are using the technology; if Virginia Tech has engaged in prior discussions on the topic and if so, why the Virginia Tech faculty were not included; and the process of shared governance. Concern was expressed that adoption of this technology represents a threat to the academic mission of the university.
- Scott Midkiff, Vice President for Information Technology, welcomed the opportunity to speak with the Faculty Senate and began by sharing underlying principles: university computers are not personal computers; the university's network is a private network; the university must operate its own computers and network based on its needs. The needs of Virginia Tech include both academic pursuit with the free flow of information and the need to protect the university from a large and growing number of cyber threats.
  - Virginia Tech experiences constant attacks on the network and these come from multiple sources with goals including financial gain, espionage, and theft. The university has the responsibility to protect information. Security measures have been in place for years but have not kept up with the threats. Virginia Tech is behind the approach that most corporations, government agencies and many universities currently employ.
  - Along with the need for protection, there must be an expectation of what is actually happening. For example, what data is collected, why it is collected, how it is used, and who can access it. There is a need to ensure that security measures are used in a way that is appropriate and consistent with functions necessary for the university community.
  - Virginia Tech, upon the insistence of the Board of Visitors, engaged a consultant, Deloitte, in Fall 2021, to conduct an IT Assessment and Security Review. The review resulted in twenty recommendations; six focused on cyber risk. Virginia Tech is working to implement all six of these recommendations. Four of the recommendations are impactful to faculty and university employee groups. Recommendations include:
    - Increase security controls on all computers. The controls will help reduce and understand risk and require effort across the university community.

- 24/7 security monitoring. Prior to this, responses to threats did not typically occur outside of business hours; 24/7 monitoring allows for a faster response. Virginia Tech has contracted with OmniSOC, part of Indiana University, to provide this service. Virginia Tech sends limited and well-defined data to OmniSOC looks OmniSOC data, compares it to current threats, and notifies Virginia Tech when needed. OmniSOC provides this OmniSOC to several universities. There are terms and conditions in place with OmniSoc to protect the privately shared data.
- The final two measures focus on protection for individual computers: endpoint detection and response (EDR) and data loss prevention (DLP). These are being implemented with a tool called Microsoft Defender with Endpoint, a capability of Microsoft A5. EDR DLP tools are being deployed only on university-owned machines. DLP ensures that information such as social security and credit card numbers are not lost. EDR looks for security vulnerabilities and issues. Both look more deeply at data than current data protection. When a potential problem is detected, metadata and at times other information to help identify what the problem is, are pulled.
- Policy 7035, Privacy Policy for Employees' Electronic Communications. This policy is the most relevant to this topic. While the policy quotes from the Commonwealth of Virginia's Human Resource Policy 1.75 that no employee should have any expectation of privacy on university networks or devices, it also states that Virginia Tech will support the academic mission of the university. Additional aspects of Policy 7035 were mentioned, such as that it raises the expectation and offers more guarantee of privacy. The policy keeps up with technological capabilities and threats, and therefore, it needs to be revised. The rollout of new security measures is in line with current policy. Technical implementation has been pushed forward more quickly than communication and policy discussion, but work is underway to ensure that communication and policy fall in place parallel with implementation.
- Additional discussion followed.
  - Question: What is the plan for communicating changes to employees? Multiple channels including campus notices.
  - Question: Is the implementation faster than policy updates? Virginia Tech has been pushing out implementations faster than policy updates have been occurring. Virginia Tech is within policy, but policy updates are needed before full roll-out.
  - Question: Does the policy identify what is not collected? Policy 7035 does provide these details. Everyone should be aware that at times Virginia Tech

receives court orders or FOIA requests and must access data that would not normally be accessed.

- Question: Where are we on executive access for faculty? There is a process available to request administrative access. This includes that a department head determine that this is a need.
- Lengthy discussion regarding topics including internal cyber security staff, metadata, security threats, transparency, policy, shared governance, and expectations.
- The suggestion was made to detail in Policy 7035 what data goes outside of the university and what stays internal. Currently, data does leave the university. For example, PageUp and Canvas. Any system like this undergoes a data steward review to ensure its security.
- Concerns were raised about personal equipment required for work. For example, using a personal phone to read email or for Duo Mobile. Security controls currently are focused on data only. However, these issues need to be answered as Virginia Tech moves forward. There are other options besides Duo Mobile that are more secure.
- Revisions to Policy 7035 will proceed over the next weeks and an update will be provided at a later date. Senators are encouraged to reach out with suggestions or comments to Brenda van Gelder, who oversees the policy and its revision.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 4:22 p.m.