



Faculty Senate

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

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

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

April 7, 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, Joseph Baker, Arthur Ball, Azziza Bankole, Hilary Bryon, Scott Case, Guopeng Cheng, Joshua Clemons, Carolyn Commer, Nick Copeland, William Ducker, Stuart Feigenbaum, Carla Finkielstein, Zhuo Fu, Becky Funk, Howard Gartner, David Gregory, Wesley Gwaltney, James Hawdon, Rebecca Hester, David Hicks, Daniel Hindman, Kristopher Hite (alternate for Justin Lemkul), Susan Hotle, Scott Huxtable, Ran Jin, Nathan King, Vivica Kraak, Leigh Anne Krometis, Catherine Larochelle, Evan Lavender-Smith, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Frances McCarty, Joseph S. Merola, Rachel Miles, Aaron Noble, Thomas O'Donnell, Robin Panneton, Bruce Pencek, Thomas Pingel, Patrick Pithua, Nicole Pitterson, Steven Rideout, Nicholas Robbins, Adrian Sandu, Charles Schleupner, Peter Schmitthenner, Richard Shryock, Stephanie Smith, Keith Stephenson, Laura Strawn, Jay Teets, James Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Kwok Tsui, Jerald Walz (attending for department, in Eric Kaufman's absence), Layne Watson, Rose Wesche, Ashley Wilkinson, Erin Worthington, Yan Xu, Diane Zahm

Guests: April Myers, Demetria Somervell

Absent with Notice: Andrew Binks, Eric Kaufman, Holly Kindsvater, Greg Novack, Robin Queen, Susanna Rinehart, Randy Wynne

Absent: Onwubiko Agozino, Jonathan Auguste, Masoud Agah, Jonathan Auguste, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Tanyel Bulbul, Kristy Daniels, George Davis, Joseph Hughes, Casey Jim, Brett Jones, Young-Teck Kim, Bradley Klein, Andrea L'Afflitto, Alexander Leonessa, GQ Lu, Jonathan Maher, Jason Malone, Caitlin Martinkus, Thomas Mills, Gonzalo Montero Yavar, Hans Robinson, Tom Sanchez, Eric Stanley, Ryan Stewart, Shane Wang, Anna Ward Bartlett, Angelica Witcher, Hehuang Xie

Call to Order by the Senate President Robert Weiss at 2:33 p.m. A quorum was present.

1. Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Robert Weiss)

- Consent agenda was adopted:
 - Minutes for 3-24-2023 ([Link](#))
 - Agenda for 4-7-2023 ([Link](#))

Business Agenda

Old Business

2. Updates & Announcements

- The Faculty Senate Reception for current and newly-elected senators will be held on May 5, from 2:30 – 4:15, at the Hahn Horticulture Garden Pavilion. Senators are asked to RSVP via the link on the Faculty Senate SharePoint page.
- The governance engagement survey has been distributed and is due on April 12. Everyone who is serving in the Faculty Senate during the 2023-2024 academic year is asked to respond so that we can fill the many positions in governance. Elections will be held on April 21.

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

- Commission and committee updates are available.

New Business

4. CGPSP 2022-23C: Resolution to Create Department of Neurosurgery at VTC School of Medicine, 2nd reading and Vote

- Monty Abbas presented CGPSP 2022-23C, Resolution to Create Department of Neurosurgery at Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, for second reading and vote. The resolution was passed unanimously by the Commission for Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve the resolution. Motion carried.
Voting: 61 Yes; 0 No; 0 Abstain

5. Statement on Responsible Use of Research Metrics: vote for Faculty Senate endorsement

- Rachel Miles presented the Statement on Responsible Use of Research Metrics. The statement is being presented for a vote to determine if the Faculty Senate wishes to endorse the statement. If passed, the statement will be added to the Faculty Senate

web page and will also be considered during the next academic year for inclusion in shared governance processes.

- Changes made since the last presentation for the purpose of clarification:
 - Comments on subjective evaluations were received and the use of metrics were provided. Clarifying language was added.
 - Comments on Principle 2 led to the addition of a clarifying statement at the end of the principle.
 - Feedback was received that the statement should more generally apply to the entire university. A clarifying statement was added.
- Discussion included the following: The change in language indicates that metrics will not be abandoned completely but will be used to inform. This raises the consideration of ensuring that metrics used are reliable. A change in language for Principle 3 was suggested to clarify that departments should review metrics for reliability. Comments on the need to educate departments and administrators were offered.
- A motion was made to endorse the statement with the friendly amendment and seconded. Motion carried. Voting: 53 Yes, 0 No, 4 Abstain

6. Day on Democracy presentation

- Jess Davis, Assistant Director for Leadership Civic Engagement with VT Engage, and Virginia Tech students Preeti Pandi and Eisha KC from the Hokies Vote Caucus presented information on the Day of Democracy. The Hokies Vote Caucus is a nonpartisan voting and civic engagement student program at VT Engage with a mission to institutionalize voter education and civic engagement while increasing voter registration and participation.
- The Day on Democracy program is proposed after engaging in informed and deliberative dialogue at Virginia Tech. The program would include celebratory and civic engagement events such as deliberative dialogues, advocacy and educational events, and community service. While the focus is Day of Democracy (election day), the group hopes to establish an advisory board and asks for a faculty representative. They are also reaching out to other senates.
- The VT Engage Center for Leadership and Service Learning has been charged by the VT President and Provost to address civic engagement. A national survey indicated gaps between voter registration and turnout rates for years surveyed between 2012 and 2020. Voter data by department is also available, indicating turnout by department. This data allows for custom engagement with specific groups.

- The Day of Democracy would send a message that civic engagement is important, allow students to put *Ut Prosim* into action, and provide students who are ineligible to vote with engagement opportunities.
- Discussion included the following:
 - The group is currently focused on finding representatives to serve on their committee. They are also working to determine if the Day of Democracy proposal should be vetted through shared governance. The goal is to engage on election day. However, long-term, they would like to address the cancellation of classes for election day.
 - The focus will be on local and state as well as national elections.

7. Presentation & Update on HR Job Architecture Project

- Susan Hughes, Senior Advisor to the Vice President and HR Transformation Consultant for the VT Division of Human Resources, provided an overview of the HR Job Architecture Project that focuses on A/P Faculty. This project will become more visible over the next months and the group wanted to present information to the Faculty Senate for awareness.
- Virginia Tech currently has about 2,500 A/P faculty positions with over 1,700 unique titles. The Job Architecture Project seeks to provide both career pathing and structure and will assist with recruitment and retention.
 - Structure will be based on job functions, subfunctions and disciplines.
 - Consistent job titling will help market alignment for compensation purposes.
 - Position descriptions will be available and will not have to be recreated for every position.
 - Career toolkits will be provided and will assist with career pathing.
- This project does not involve reorganizations or changes in reporting structure, salary adjustments, or working title changes, and does not include staff positions. Although salary increase is not part of the scope, the project will inform future compensation decisions. Several project phases are already complete with a rollout expected in August.

8. Presentation from Services for Students with Disabilities about Accessible Information Management (AIM) system & accommodation requests

- Christa Miller, Services for Students with Disabilities Associate Director, presented information on the new Accessible Information Management (AIM) system. The system is currently undergoing testing, and the first students will begin using it in the Fall semester. Any faculty members interested in participating in the testing phase should contact Christa. The link to the AIM portal is on the SSD home page, AIM Portal login.

- New procedures include:
 - Request – Student submits an electronic request.
 - Research – Student meets with SSD staff to discuss and explore options to address barriers.
 - Accommodation – Identify accommodations that help students overcome barriers; accommodations are not meant to require that faculty make major renovations. Faculty are encouraged to contact SSD if student requests will require a major renovation of structure.
 - Implementation - Faculty are part of this step.
- Graduate student support is divided between SSD and ADA and Accessibility Services. SSD helps with items related to courses and degrees. If students are in teaching, research or paid positions, those are handled by ADA and Accessibility Services.
- Feedback received by SSD was taken to heart with the implementation of AIMS.
 - Language has been consolidated and simplified.
 - Implementation required that accommodations be divided in two categories: testing accommodations and class accommodations. It may look like there are more accommodations, but there is not.
 - Distribution of letters is automatic via email and distribution time will be shortened from weeks to days. Faculty will receive fully customized accommodation letters in email, serving as formal notice. Information can also be accessed via a faculty dashboard.
 - Letters will be distributed to the instructor of record. If you have a class where there is an instructor of record but other instructors teaching, please notify SSD so solutions can be found.
- Discussion was held around the email communication from SSD.
 - Current processes require that students notify faculty of accommodations. Paper letters provide acknowledgement and meetings are held to implement accommodations. With the new system, it is still considered a best practice for professors to meet with students but is not a requirement and can be determined by individual instructors and the specific circumstances surrounding the accommodations. Feedback from the Office of Equity and Accessibility was cautious about requiring students to have a formal meeting with faculty.
 - The email serves as official notice of record. The email subject line is pre-programmed and will remain the same for every letter, helping with identification. The faculty dashboard is an additional organizational tool for faculty members.

- Discussion on self-identification, Policy 4075 University Accommodations of Persons with Disabilities, potential for legal implications and the current process was held.
 - With the current process, students self-identify to SSD then contact faculty. In the new process, students will not be required to contact faculty. Policy 4075 designates SSD as the organization to whom a student must self-identify. It is believed that the new process will eliminate many barriers for students and be helpful for faculty as the letters received will be customized with specific accommodations.
 - Comments and questions based on information from the Learning Disabilities Association of America and how the new process fits into guidance from the association were presented. With the new system, faculty will receive notification through SSD but implementation is still between student and instructor.
 - Comments were made on FERPA, HIPPA and legal review. Faculty members will be informed of the needed accommodations. If the covered individual has requested accommodations through the ADAAS or SSD, the individual will be informed of what information is being provided regarding the request.
- There are no changes in how the testing center works and volunteer notetaker process until 2024 for either students or faculty.
 - Discussion held around test scheduling. The scheduling feature in AIMS is not currently available. Faculty will set up parameters for their own courses.
 - Comments were made in support of the scheduling feature.
- SSD is open to presentations for departments, providing information for distribution, and participating in brown bag lunches or departmental meetings. Also, work is underway with TLOS to offer a faculty boot camp in May.

Open Floor Discussion

9. An update was provided from the Employee Benefits Committee. This has been provided to the Faculty Senate and can be reviewed on the SharePoint site. The group has determined that financing a tuition benefit for spouses and dependents is not feasible at this time and will support and promote the existing employee spouse and dependent scholarship.

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