



## Faculty Senate

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

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

# Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

## March 29, 2024 @ 2:30pm

### Torgersen 1050 or Via Zoom

#### Check-In:

**Present:** Joe Merola (presiding), Monty Abbas, Luke Achenie, Onwubiko Agozino, Diane Agud, Kaveh Akbari Hamed, Richard Ashley, A. Jonathan Auguste, Paul Avey, Azziza Bankole, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Scott Case, Guopeng Cheng, Josh Clemons, Rebecca Cockrum, Nick Copeland, Kristy Daniels, Ashley Dayer, Jonathan Everett, Stuart Feigenbaum, carla finkielstein, Zhuo Fu, Rebecca Funk, Rodney Gaines, Scott Gartner, Wesley Gwaltney, David Haak (Alternate for Steve Rideout), James Hawdon, Rebecca Hester, David Hicks, Leanna House, Mantu Hudait, Scott Huxtable, Ran Jin, Bryan Katz, Alex Kinnaman, Matthew Komelski (Alternate for Rose Weshe), Leigh-Anne Krometis, Andrea L'Afflitto (Alternate for Kwok Tsui), Evan Lavender-Smith, Justin Lemkul, Kim Loeffert, Gary Long, Charles Lowery, Jason Malone, Majid Manteghi (Alternate for Jeffrey Walling), Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Michelle Maycock, Ali Mehrizi-Sani, Rachel Miles, Gonzalo Montero, David Moore (Alternate for Renee LeClair), Zhange Ni, Greg Novack, Thomas O'Donnell, Robin Panneton, Nicole Pitterson, Susanna Rinehart, Nino Ripepi, Nicholas Robbins, Adrian Sandu, Charles J. Schleupner, Karen Schnatterly, Yang Shao, Richard Shryock, Stephanie Smith, Laura Strawn, Sharon Swanger (Alternate for Albert Pan), Jay Teets, Chelsea Thompto, JIM TOKUHISA, Alp Tural (Alternate for Bill Green), Costin Untaroiu, Bimal Viswanath, Jerald Walz, Robert Weiss, Angelica Witcher Walker, Diane Zahm, Lu Zhang (Alternate for Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan), Lizette Zietsman (80)

**Guests:** Carolyn Adkins, Danna Agmon, Ghadeer Al-Hassan, Salam Assma Altawachi, Amaryah Armstrong, Pinhas Ben-Tzvi, Menwa Besheer, Christopher Campo-Bowen, Mauro Caraccioli, Molly Davis, Rachel Fitzgerald, Hannah Garbutt, Liora Goldensher, Rachel Grayek, Katlyn Griffin, aaron gross, Sally Hamouda, Fiona Hardy, Fatima Hasan, Catalina Hernandez, Anna Ingram, Christine Labuski, Jack Leff, Meridith Long, Marian Mollin, April Myers, Zarah Quinn, Corina Sandu, Nadine Sinno, Dee Dee Somervell, Jessica Taylor, Helena Thulin, Travis Webster, Emma Yadene (34)

**Absent with Notice:** Erin Worthington, Randy Wynne, Ashley Wilkinson (3)

**Absent:** Mark Coggins, Carolyn Commer, David Gregory, Daniel Hindman, Joseph Hughes, Casey Jim, Young-Teck Kim, Catherine Larochelle, Guo-Quan Lu, Hans Robinson, Cori Ruktanonchai, Eric Stanley, Keith Stephenson, Hehuang Xie, Yan Xu (19)

## **Call to Order by President Joe Merola at 2:38**

### **Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Joe Merola)**

- Consent agenda was adopted:
  - Minutes for 03-15-2024 ([Link](#))
  - Agenda for 03-29-2024 ([Link](#))

## **Business Agenda**

### **Old Business**

1. Updates & Announcements
  - a. Updates from committees, commissions, and the University Council are available on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site.
  - b. The Faculty Senate reviews faculty vacancies for university governance committees, commissions and University Council membership yearly, and conducts nominations and elections. The nomination process is underway, and elections will be conducted during an upcoming Faculty Senate meeting. The deadline for these elections is set by the University Council.

### **New Business**

2. Justin Lemkul presented for 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading and Vote CFA 2023-2024D: Resolution to Amend Article IV and Clarify Other Sections of the Faculty Senate Constitution.
  - a. Updates reflected in this resolution are focused on linguistic cleanup, maintaining consistency with language in the University Council Constitution, and adding clarifying language regarding research faculty and their representation in the senate.
  - b. Motion was made to adopt CFA 2023-2024D: Resolution to Amend Article IV and Clarify Other Sections of the Faculty Senate Constitution and seconded. Motion carried.
  - c. Voting: 68 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain
3. Rachel Miles presented for 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading and Vote CFA 2023-2024E: Resolution to Endorse the Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics at the University Level.
  - a. One wording change was made to the resolution text in response to feedback from the Commission on Research. The change clarifies that this resolution is

not a policy. There were no changes to the statement itself as it was previously endorsed by the Faculty Senate.

- b. Motion was made to approve CFA 2023-2024E: Resolution to Endorse the Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics at the University Level and seconded. Motion carried.
  - c. Voting: 58 Yes, 0 No, 2 Abstain
4. Justin Lemkul presented for 1<sup>st</sup> Reading CFA 2023-2024F: Resolution to Revise Faculty Handbook Language on Nominations to University Distinguished Professor and Alumni Distinguished Professor.
  - a. This resolution proposes minor changes in the Faculty Handbook, including granting the university president or provost the ability, in special circumstances and in consultation with the appropriate dean, to nominate eligible faculty members for consideration by the appropriate selection committee. This change provides another avenue for faculty to be nominated for these distinguished awards.
  - b. The second reading and vote will be conducted at the next Faculty Senate meeting. If any senators have comments for consideration, please provide those before the April 12 meeting.
5. Justin Lemkul presented for 1<sup>st</sup> Reading CFA 2023-2024G: Resolution to Update the Faculty Handbook Descriptions of Expectations for Promotion and Tenure.
  - a. This resolution is in response to feedback received last year regarding promotion and tenure. Feedback included a request for greater clarity on how clinical faculty are evaluated. The suggested changes have been discussed with the respective deans and the provost and are reflective of the expanding types of Virginia Tech faculty.
  - b. The second reading and vote will be conducted at the next Faculty Senate meeting. If any senators have comments for consideration, please provide those before the April 12 meeting.
6. Joe Merola presented the statement on Palestine and Higher Education for discussion.
  - a. General information about the Faculty Senate and Virginia Tech's system of shared governance was provided. Virginia Tech shared governance underwent changes which were approved by the Board of Visitors (BOV), and the current structure is less than two years old. The BOV required review following implementation, which is ongoing. Additionally, the Faculty Senate constitution and bylaws undergo regular review for clarity and accuracy.
  - b. The procedure for creating a position statement, outlined in Article XII, Policy Review and Recommendation Process, Section 4, Senate Position Development Process, of the Faculty Senate Bylaws, was explained.

- c. There may be no adequate forum to discuss issues of interest to the faculty that do not fall into a policy statement or resolution category such as this one, given the charge of the senate following last year's revisions to the University Council constitution and bylaws and the Faculty Senate constitution and bylaws. The senate should consider whether adjustments are needed to the Faculty Senate constitution and bylaws and/or alternative means by which to provide for this type of forum in the future. The statement is included on today's agenda for discussion only, not for voting. Discussion was held.
  - i. The Faculty Senate has in the past discussed and made statements on topics of concern. At that time, the Cabinet did not determine whether a topic was appropriate for discussion. It was noted that this is correct from a historical perspective prior to the recently revised shared governance structure.
  - ii. The current constitution and bylaws of the Faculty Senate must be followed. Under the new shared governance model, the Faculty Senate holds more power to influence policy than it did previously.
- d. A point of order was called for attendees to refrain from applause so that discussion can continue unimpeded.
- e. Senators shared comments and perspectives on the purposes of the Faculty Senate as prescribed in the constitution and bylaws. Discussion was held on the Position Development Process and how it relates to topics that may fall outside of the stated parameters.
  - i. A motion was made to override Article XII, Section 4 of the Faculty Senate Bylaws as applied to this statement. Virginia Tech shared governance bodies follow Robert's Rules of Order for parliamentary procedure. Robert's Rules of Order state that a body's constitution and bylaws cannot be suspended.
- f. Senators shared comments of both support and concern during the discussion period. A summary of broad topics follows.
  - i. Support regarding the statement:
    - The current statement supports the Virginia Tech Principles of Community and its mission as a land-grant university. It provides a way for the senate to speak up for those in the university community who are afraid to speak for themselves.
    - There is urgency in adopting this statement due to the situation in Gaza. Actions taken by the university make it complicit. However, the Faculty Senate can condemn these actions and support their colleagues and students.
    - The statement focuses on the targeting of educational institutions as well as other institutions like libraries, archives,

and museums. The Faculty Senate represents the voice of the faculty and should support those academic communities as well as individuals in the Virginia Tech community who have been personally impacted.

- The viewpoint that the statement is not inclusive or is political has been shared. This is an incorrect view of inclusion. The statement is not political but instead represents facts and international law.
- The Faculty Senate has issued similar statements in the past.
- Senators from several departments polled their constituents regarding the statement and reported the results to the Senate. Supportive comments included the following: The statement should be considered humanitarian in nature, not political.

ii. Concerns regarding the statement:

- The statement as currently presented is effectively a resolution, requiring specific actions that must be taken. The Faculty Senate cannot require these actions.
- Given the new role of the Faculty Senate in impacting policy and procedure, this statement falls outside of the senate's purview.
- The following suggestions were offered: (1) The current statement cannot be supported but the senate can craft its own statement or modify the current one. (2) Other forums should be identified where faculty can voice support, or the creation of such forums should be explored. (3) Sponsors of the statement should consider creating a petition that any supportive faculty member may sign.
- The Virginia Tech community represents students, faculty, and staff with many viewpoints, and it is impossible to consider all of them individually.
- The Faculty Senate has not made social or political statements following revisions to the university's shared governance structure, in alignment with the senate's new role. The current statement is political in nature and the senate cannot endorse it.
- Senators from several departments polled their constituents regarding the statement and reported the results to the senate. Concerns included the following: (1) The Faculty Senate as a whole should refrain from making a statement; (2) The Faculty Senate is not the appropriate forum for this topic and another forum is needed; (3) Senators agree with some but not all of the

sentiments presented in the statement and expressed concerns with the statement content; (4) A statement written in support would be helpful, but a statement written in condemnation is not.

- A senator reported that the statement has been shared with many campus groups. A list of several groups who have voiced their opposition to the proposed statement was read.
- g. Discussion continued into the final minutes of the meeting time. A motion was made to extend the meeting by 20 minutes and seconded. Motion carried.
- h. This matter will be revisited at a later date.

### **Open Floor Discussion**

7. There was no open floor discussion due to time constraints.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 4:40 p.m.