

Faculty Senate Agenda & Minutes

February 21, 2020, 2:30-4:30pm

Location: NCB 160 (or [via Zoom](#) for those outside Blacksburg)

Present: Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Robin Allnutt, Susan Anderson, Arthur Ball, Michael Borowski, Leandro Castello, Virgilio Centeno, Benjamin Corl, Sam Doak, Matt Eick, Ellen Gilliland, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, Roie Hauser, James Hawdon, Dana Hawley, Bob Hicok, Eunju Hwang, Eric Kaufman, Bettina Koch, Jake Lahne, Paul Marek, Mike Nappier, Marie Paretti, R. Scott Pleasant, Robin Queen, Susanna Rinehart, Todd Schenk, Yang Shao, Richard Shryock, Ryan Speer, Tess Thompson, Jim Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Robert Weiss, Cynthia Wood, Anthony Wright de Hernandez,

Guests: Ellen Plummer (Provost's Office)

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the February 7th meeting were approved.

Announcements

- John Ferris provided an update on measuring faculty/university impact. He participated in a presidential retreat that allowed the upper administration to discuss possible metrics and measures. Much of the discussion surrounded topics we might expect. John encouraged faculty to focus on the Times Higher Education metrics associated with United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. (See <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/university-impact-rankings-faqs>.) He also encouraged attention to ratios that consider the proportion of students and student credit hours per faculty member.
- John Ferris provided an update related to admissions and undergraduate enrollment forecasting. He has checked yield data and has appreciated transparency offered by the Enrollment Management unit. The recent discussions have focused on manageable numbers.
- Susan Anderson announced the 31st Annual Take Back the Night Rally, to be held March 26th at 7pm on College Avenue. She requested Faculty Senate be listed as a sponsor. This would be an endorsement, indicating support; there is no particular commitment.
 - The Faculty Senate moved and seconded to be identified as a sponsor for the 31st Annual Take Back the Night Rally. The motion passed unanimously.
- Eric Kaufman encouraged participation in the [COACHE Survey of Faculty Job Satisfaction at Virginia Tech](#). Although faculty on leave during the fall were not originally included, that issue is being resolved. All other instructional faculty should have received the survey and are encouraged to participate. A senator noted the past surveys have been used to guide actions in the Provost's Office. Regarding confidentiality, the Provost's Office receives only college-level reports, and no one is aware of circumstances where the data has been used in an undesirable way.
- Eric Kaufman noted that [Faculty Senate Bylaws](#) indicate departments have until March 15th to nominate and elect representatives for the coming academic year. The timing is

important, because next year's senators can begin attending meetings and vote on the slate for next year's officers. Also, the University is working to identify 2020-21 governance representations (e.g., commission memberships) no later than May 1st. Eric will follow-up with senators whose terms are expiring.

Topic 1: Revision of Promotion & Tenure Policies in Faculty Handbook (Chapter 3)

- Bob Hicok provided an update regarding the resolution to revise Faculty Handbook Promotion and Tenure (P&T) guidelines (CFA 2019-20B). That resolution was approved by the Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA) and is scheduled for first reading with University Council. He highlighted some recent changes to the resolution. The evaluation category labels have been simplified to "teaching," "scholarship," and "service." Also, instead of "expectations documents," the emphasis is now on "expectations and indicators," and a template has been provided.
- Even though it is going through University Council, there is still time to make changes.
- Senators relayed questions from their departments about the P&T decision and notification process.
- For faculty going through the P&T process during the coming year, they should not anticipate any surprises, yet some details about implementation timelines are still being developed.
- Regarding P&T expectations documents, departments should be receiving feedback soon.

Topic 2: Medical School Integration in Governance

- Bob Hicok reminded senators of the ongoing work to incorporate Medical School faculty into the governance process. The Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine (VTCSOM) is in the process of adjusting their guiding documents to allow instructors to participate in governance activities. One issue that remains relates to employment status, since many VTCSOM faculty are not technically employees of Virginia Tech. As a first step in representation, we anticipate starting with one representative for each of the 11 VTCSOM departments. Those representatives would want to participate via Zoom, so it is important for Faculty Senate to be prepared to facilitate such meetings effectively. Questions about participation remain, but it is important to move forward in testing things out.
- Bob indicated Faculty Senate should craft a resolution that addresses the employment language and the starting point for representation. Such a resolution could impact representation in other aspects of Virginia Tech governance.
- Additional discussion related to the desired length of time for the trial period. A senator moved that this decision be reconsidered annually. The motion was seconded, and the Senate voted to approve this motion.

Topic 3: Revision to Faculty Handbook Policies for Collegiate Faculty (Chapter 5)

- Bob Hicok provided an update regarding proposed revisions to Chapter 5 of the Faculty Handbook. The resolution has been through a first reading with the Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA), and it is being prepared for second reading before advancing to University Council.

- A senator asked about the edits that remove language indicating ineligibility for tenure. Bob indicated the language was moved to have all of the related statements in a single place.
- Bob also addressed questions about adopting “Career-Track Faculty” as the umbrella term for faculty identified in Chapter 5 of the Faculty Handbook.
- A senator noted the name change would affect different faculty in different ways, especially considering some of the positions are intentionally temporary (rather than framed as a “career”). The notion of “career-track” may be misleading, suggesting promotions and continuing employment can be expected when that is not true for all of the faculty who would be included in this category. However, the phrase “career-track faculty” is not likely to be included in position descriptions; it would be a broad category for use in the Faculty Handbook.
- Senators noted that removing the “Non-Tenure Track Faculty” reference may mask issues that University administrators need to address. There are ongoing concerns about less investment in tenure-track faculty, and this change could make it easier for that trend to continue.
- Senators discussed various naming options, including: “limited-term appointments,” “instructional faculty,” “more overworked and underpaid faculty,” “promotional and restricted faculty,” “teaching track,” and “teaching & research faculty.” One challenge is trying to identify a label that is not pejorative while also not suggesting it includes faculty that are not included.
- Bob emphasized that CFA is working on the language right now, and Faculty Senate is being consulted. There is more time to work on the language; he does not want to rush the decision.
- A senator noted different universities handle this labeling differently; there is no consensus across the U.S.
- A senator noted it is important to respect the different career choices people make.
- Bob took a “straw poll” to gain insight on preference for removing “Non-Tenure-Track” from the Handbook. A significant portion of senators were hesitant to remove “Non-Tenure-Track” without clarity on a better option.

Other Business/Discussion

- A senator requested the Faculty Senate take a look at recent changes with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) that may be impacting faculty workload.
 - John noted this can be discussed in a future full senate meeting, when SSD representatives can be available.
- A senator asked about the status of the scooters on campus. Another senator indicated the scooters will be on campus at least through the end of the semester. The concerns are being addressed with the Commission on University Support (CUS).
- No other business was presented.

Adjourn

The meeting formally adjourned at 3:48pm.

Respectfully submitted by Eric Kaufman, Faculty Senate Secretary.