

Faculty Senate Minutes
November 30, 2018
NCB 160, 2:30 - 3:45

In Attendance

Monty Abbas, Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Robin Allnutt, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Michael Borowski, Brian Britt, Tanyel Bulbul, Charles Calderwood, Harry Dorn, John Ferris, John Galbraith, Ellen Gilliland, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, Bob Hicok, Eunju Hwang, Christine Kaestle, Bradley Klein, Bettina Koch, Jake Lahne, Zachary Mackey, Paul Marek, Margarita McGrath, Polly Middleton, Cayce Myers, Marie Paretti, David Radcliffe, Susanna Rinehart, Hans Robinson, Todd Schenk, Durelle Scott, Amy Nelson, Richard Shryock, Ryan Speer, Jim Spotila, Cornel Sultan, David Tegarden, Jim Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Anthony Wright de Hernandez.

Absent

Alan Abrahams, Masoud Agah, Mehdi Ahmadian, Osman Balci, Arthur Ball, Robert Bush, Leandro Castello, Virgilio Centeno, Kelly Cobourn, Sam Doak, Robin Queen, Matt Eick, William Galloway, Sierra Guynn, James Hawdon, Dana Hawley, Kathy Hosig, Sara Jordan, Eric Kaufman, Lisa Kennedy, Roberto Leon, Chang Lu, Shelley Martin, Mike Nappier, Philip Olson, Ford Ramsey, Manisha Singal, Eric Smith, Stephen Smith, Divya Srinivasan, Dwight Viehland, Bruce Vogelaar, Layne Watson, Daniel Wodak, Ryan Zimmereman.

1. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from Nov 2, 2018 and Nov 16, 2018 were approved pending minor edits.

3. Announcements

- Software procurement and licensing compliance
 - The university provides a list of approved software at https://apps.itpals.vt.edu/cmslink/legal_agreement_log1.pdf
Note that this is an updated list that now includes some open source software.
 - There will be a meeting next Friday at 2:30 with the members of the IT and Legal department to discuss licensing issues (n.b., this meeting was postponed until January 18).
- There will be a meeting Friday, Dec. 7, at 3:15 to discuss the provost candidates (see below)
- Senators should vote on the proposed constitutional amendment to allow the Senate to use Robert's Rules of Order for its meetings.
- Senator Activity – Ferris sent out an email to less active senators to help generate people to contribute to critical efforts that are currently understaffed. The Faculty Senate needs to show that it is willing to take on shared governance. Note that this prompting is not a condemnation, but rather a request to help Ferris populate committees so that we can get critical work done.
- Ferris also noted that it would be helpful to make department heads aware of the extent of the committee service required for Faculty Senators, and perhaps provide mechanisms to release senators from other service.

4. Standing Committees Reports

The Resolutions Review Committee brought forward the Resolution to Observe Indigenous Peoples' Day at Virginia Tech.

- The Senate engaged in significant discussion around the idea of supporting the resolution. Senators were given the history of the resolution and the student organization involved.
- Through the discussion, strong support emerged from multiple senators.
- The Senate moved to actively endorse this resolution and move it forward, and the vote was carried unanimously.

Promotion and Tenure

- Bob Hicok provided both the latest version of the document and links to the Promotion and Tenure Discussion Board within the Senate Canvas site, and noted that CFA will have another version available at the beginning of next semester.

Assessment of Faculty Teaching Committee

- The committee has been formed and its members are Beth Waggenpack, Brandi Quesenberry, Katherine Haenschen, Claire Boor, Dorothy Connor, Emily Stallings, Polly Middleton, and Sara Arena. Stallings is the point of contact.
- What was initially a general faculty assessment committee has broken down into subcommittees – one for teaching, one for research, and one for service.
- Currently, the teaching committee includes representation from only two colleges: COE and CLAHS. They would like to have a rep from each college, so please ask for volunteers across colleges.
- They will meet next semester and provide a report back to the Senate.

Faculty Priority/Time Committee

- Volunteers are needed for this committee, and we would welcome volunteers who are not senators.

Employee Benefits Committee

- No report.

5. Other business

EFARS

As might be expected, EFARS generated a number of comments and discussion. Comments and questions were as follows:

- Peggy Layne's office has now added Barbara Lockey to help with EFAR support. All colleges have been asked to assign people to work on the system to tailor it to their colleges. College response has been strong from some colleges, but other colleges are not doing anything. As a result, people will have a wide range of experiences. CLAHS has declined to be involved for the most part; the pressure needs to be coming from Deans.
- VT cannot change the software itself, so changes need to be made by the company.
- With respect to enforcement of EFAR use across the university, the status remains the same as last year: The Provost is leaving it up to the individual College Deans.
- Hicok will provide a list of the people working on EFAR on Canvas.
- Question: Has the university made a commitment to keeping this platform for a reasonable length of time?
- Question: Who in the administration is committed to EFARS?
- Senators noted that both CALS and CAUS are very active in working on the system.

- Most of the work so far has been around the output side; very little work has been happening on the input side. Faculty Senator Osman Balci is on the project, and sees that there is very little we can do on the input side; those changes have to come from the software company itself. About all we can do on the input is put person resources into helping faculty get information into the system.
- It seems like in the last year, nothing has been done from the faculty side to help work on the input.
- There is a strong sense among the Senate that we need to have a better sense of what our colleges are doing so that we know where and how to push.
- With no changes on the input side, many faculty are left in the same place they were last year.
- The adoption decision itself is problematic; VT administrators see the deans as the primary users, but of course, faculty are the ones who need to enter all the data.
- A potential resolution would be to use a different system that was actually designed for US university systems. Elements (the current platform) is not a sound basis for our needs. From a systems design standpoint, it was not designed to do what VT wants it to do. It was built in English for the British system, with their metrics and their goals and their needs.
- The Provost seems to think that this is the only system available on the market that does what we need.
- Last year we had senators who were willing to work on it.
- It is a fixable system, but we cannot fix it because we don't have access to the source. The product is sold and marketed in England.
- Any system will have its own set of problems.
- The problems we are experiencing are endemic to a range of software systems the university has adopted that simply make more work for faculty and keep us from doing our jobs.
- The Senate could pass a resolution to the Provost that faculty not be required to use the system until it works.
 - We could ask specifically that the university develop its own system that meets our own needs, as we did with Summit. Note that it takes time and resources, but it would be what we need.
 - A second component of the proposed resolution idea would be that the data in the EFAR system not be used for evaluation.
 - The resolution would need a *Whereas* clause that noted that faculty are not primarily concerned with administrators' ability to extract data; faculty are concerned with their ability to effectively and efficiently document their work in the most efficient manner possible.
- A key problem is that EFARS are how the administration is also getting data that they want to use in the PIBB, which disadvantages colleges that don't use it.
- The software developers need input from faculty from each of the colleges.
- The problem is that the product is functioning well for the people who bought it and use it for data and reports. But they are not concerned as to whether the data and reports they are generating are actually accurate. They are concerned with the use of the data. The faculty concern, in contrast, is with the accuracy of the data since it is being used for evaluation.
- Comments against the idea of developing the software in house noted that the administration failed on the verification side. If we start in-house development, we'll need to

go back to step one. There is no one in the administration who has the capability to make sure the verification step happens.

- Maybe there needs to be a splitting of the aggregation of the data that administrators want; maybe what we need are two separate functions.
- Maybe there is an Academic Analytics type system for Burruss and a separate system for faculty.
- A key problem is that the data that we put it in is not representative of our individual efforts. The system presents an incomplete picture, whereas faculty want to ensure that the data entered is accurate so that administrators can make the best and most reasonable decisions possible.
- Last year's work was to try to improve the existing system. What we are proposing to do this year is to have professionals actually look at the needs and build a robust system in house, but that will take time.
- Before the university-wide system, CALS had an electronic system that they developed in house. That effort was a pilot attempt, and when it failed, we went to Elements.
- We need more concrete language to articulate what the system actually does capture and what it doesn't capture.
- One key question is how much it actually costs faculty in terms of time and effort to work with the EFAR system. Numbers are the language that administrators understand to identify the wasted faculty time each year. Such an approach might help us adopt a more positive framing of our concerns.

Senate Meeting time

Given that this time works well for most faculty, but disadvantages CAUS (which has multiple Friday afternoon classes), Ferris opened the floor to discussion to identify creative solutions and alternatives. The following comments emerged:

- Ask that people elect senators who can be here; having a known, stable time is critical to this approach.
- We could create a poll to find a common time.
- We could alternate meetings between two different days, but that seems to exclude more people.
- It is difficult to balance all of these competing needs.
- Stability is the essential issue; spring teaching schedules are already set, and if we start to change it now, we just get into problems with the current Senators.
- An every Friday meeting would be more accessible; we could have more frequent but shorter meetings.

In the end, we had a robust discussion with no solution.

6. Adjourn

The Senate adjourned at 3:49 p.m.