

Faculty Senate Minutes
January 25, 2019
NCB 160, 2:30 - 3:45

Senators in attendance

Monty Abbas, Masoud Agah, Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Robin Allnut, Susan Anderson, Charles Calderwood, Leandro Castello, Kelly Cobourn, John Ferris, Ellen Gilliland, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, James Hawdon, Kathy Hosig, Eric Kaufman, Lisa Kennedy, Bettina Koch, Jake Lahne, Roberto Leon, Zachary Mackey, Paul Marek, Polly Middleton, Amy Nelson, Marie Parette, Anita Puckett (alternate), Robin Queen, David Radcliffe, Ford Ramsey, Susanna Rinehart, Hans Robinson, Todd Schenk, Richard Shryock, Stephen Smith, Ryan Speer, Jim Spotila, Jim Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Anthony Wright de Hernandez.

Guests

Sally Morton, Kelly Coburn, Brandy Salmon

1. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved unanimously.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with minor edits.

3. Announcements

Faculty Senate Resolution FS 2018-19A: Resolution to Amend the Faculty Senate Constitution, Article VII, Section 10, to use Robert's Rules

- As of January 9, 2019 there were 52 votes in favor and 1 opposed to the amendment. The amendment passes. The electronic voting was closed.

Amendment to the Faculty Senate bylaws Article VIII regarding Work Groups or Committees

- September 7, 2018: The motion was carried and the Bylaws no longer enumerate specific committees or work groups, but do include the ability to create them as needed.

Amendment to the Faculty Senate bylaws Article X regarding Faculty Representation On the Faculty Senate of Virginia

- October 19, 2018: The motion was carried to continue to send two elected faculty representatives, each of whom serves a three-year term, to the Faculty Senate of Virginia (FSVA), but to no longer require ex officio representation by the Senate President and Legislative Affairs Work Group Chair.

All motions are currently going through the Commission on Faculty Affairs for approval; from there they move on to University Council, and changes to the Constitution move to the Board of Visitors.

4. Amendments to Constitution and Bylaws

First Consideration: Faculty Senate Resolution FS 2018-19B, Resolution to Amend the Faculty Senate Constitution, Article V, Section 1 and Article III, Section 5, regarding term limits

- Please comment in the document: <https://tinyurl.com/FS-2018-19B>
- Ferris explained the rationale for the change, noting that the Bylaws seems the appropriate place for the specification of term limits; the change moves all discussion of term limits to the Bylaws.
- CFA supports moving the term limit specifications to the Bylaws, but also expressed strong support for making sure that the Bylaws do specify term limits. CFA sees significant value in term limits for Senators.
- The question of term limits has some urgency because of the current Senate cabinet positions. For example, Ferris cannot serve as Past President next year because his second Senate term is up at the end of this year.
- Ferris proposes to set a three-term limit in the Bylaws, and notes that a motion to amend the bylaws will be on the agenda for the next Senate meeting.
- The vote on this proposed amendment will be in 2 weeks.

First Consideration: Faculty Senate Resolution FS 2018-19C, Resolution to Amend the Faculty Senate Constitution, Article VIII, Section 1, regarding Amendments to the Faculty Senate Constitution

- Please comment in the document: <https://tinyurl.com/FS-2018-19C>
- The proposed change mimics current changes that Staff Senate and GSA have passed such that changes to the constitution no longer need to go through the Board of Visitors.
- CFA did not raise any concerns about this motion.

First Consideration: Faculty Senate Resolution FS 2018-19D, Resolution to Amend the Faculty Senate Constitution, Article II, regarding function of Faculty Senate as faculty voice

- Please comment in the document, <https://tinyurl.com/FS-2018-19D>
- CFA suggested simply ending the bulleted item in question with “of matters of broader concern,” without further qualification.
- In discussion, “broader” was changed simply to “broad” to avoid the question, “Broader than what?”
- As matter for future discussion, one senator raised the question of who can serve on Faculty Senate and who the Senate represents; the current language includes only tenured/tenure-track faculty and instructors, but we now have a number of other faculty ranks (collegiate professors, professors of practice, clinical faculty).

5. Living Wage for Staff

- Ferris reported that it will require \$1.27 million to bring staff salaries up to a minimum wage of \$12/hr. He did not receive much push-back when raising the issue with the administration, but there was some discussion around the narrative supporting the change, including both ethical issues and the “business case” around needs of the university.
- 431 staff members currently make less than \$12/hr, which is below the poverty level for a family of 4 and just at a living wage for single person.
- Ferris met with individuals from Human Resources, Finance, and other relevant groups.

- Dwayne Pinckney has agreed to put a committee together to report back before the next board meeting, so this initiative is moving forward.
- A key concern raised is that the university should make sure that we don't have people losing their jobs, losing benefits, and/or losing hours in order to keep the overall budget the same. This change should represent an increase to the staff salary budget.
- Senators also noted that moving forward, the university should maintain a practice in which anyone hired should receive a living wage.

6. Innovation Campus/Amazon Leadership Team Visit, led Brandy Salmon, Associate Vice President for Innovation and Partnerships)

Salmon began with a brief discussion of the initiative.

- Their team is visiting with a variety of groups on campus to share what's happening as the Innovation Campus and related initiatives move forward.
- Salmon is AVP of Innovation and Partnerships, runs LINK, and oversees technology commercialization.
- She helped the state put together the Amazon HQ2 proposal and will now serve as managing director for about a year or so; her focus is to work with a delivery team to help implement the new initiative.
- She described the proposal process and the excitement at the state level for what VT was able to put forward. She also noted that the initial proposal team was very small and working under very tight NDAs.
- Key gaps in Amazon's talent pool are in CS and software engineering, so those are our focal points.
- Virginia provided Amazon with fewer tax incentives and instead promised to invest money back in the Commonwealth to create the infrastructure to support HQ2.
- The proposed higher education package is historic: \$1.1 billion to support higher education across the state, which includes the Innovation campus in NOVA, a masters program, faculty start-up funds, and more. More than half of the amount as proposed is designated for VT to support growth in CS and software engineering.
- VT has quite a bit of fundraising to do to provide matching funds. Cornell Tech is one of the few potential parallels for this kind of project, but what VT is proposing is unique. Note that both Charles Phleger and Tracy Vosburgh were at Cornell during the creation of Cornell Tech.
- We are facing 6 months to a year of planning, followed by construction, and a 10-year ramp-up plan, with a very long term vision (100-year). The initial focus is on CS and software engineering, but the administration sees opportunities for growth into other areas.
- The whole initiative will unfold over many years and require a number of different strategies.
- We are working closely with the city of Alexandria; Amazon chose Arlington, but Alexandria has significant transportation infrastructure that supports the initiative.
- The current delivery team has representatives from many different parts of the university.

Senate comments

- *Question:* What's the involvement of other universities? *Response:* George Mason got a fair portion of the funding as well, but less toward capital projects. UVA also got some funding.

There's some funding for universities that want to apply, and funding for community colleges. Some money is also set aside for K-12. There is a lot of economic development planning and projections underway. With the federal government leaving Crystal City, there's been a huge loss of jobs, and a lot of unoccupied buildings in that area. Importantly, the funding is performance-based, so we will have to grow and meet our commitments in order to continue to receive funding. The whole package is now moving through the Virginia Legislature in Richmond for full approval.

- *Question:* The university has stated its commitment to disciplines beyond CS and software engineering. What's the plan for supporting interdisciplinary work and bringing other disciplines in? *Response:* Right now, that is the intention and vision. There is no implementation plan yet. Another key part of the vision is around economic development and innovation, so we need to be mindful about how the discoveries we make today can move to market. We also have a strong vision for partnerships with existing business, and trying to create strong partnerships.
- *Question:* CS has not always been a priority at VT; is that going to change? *Response:* Yes.
- *Question:* How will we actuate interdisciplinarity within the whole Innovation Campus? Are there things available that we can see? *Response:* Documents are available so that we can see the proposal.
- *Question:* How do we as faculty insert ourselves and engage in this process. *Response:* This is a long term plan, looking out 5-10 years, so there will be opportunities.
- *Question:* What about the whole state, and particularly far southwest VA? *Response:* All the funding is for higher education, so there's no plan for this region.
- *Question:* The State is providing \$250 million; VT has to match that. How will this happen and how will it impact the Blacksburg campus? *Response:* The \$250M requirement is over time, and includes philanthropy and other sources. In terms of impact, we can use Cornell Tech as a benchmark. The focus is on increasing investment in Northern Virginia and the Blacksburg to NOVA link.
- Salmon noted that she is really here to deliver a message, and that questions are better directed to the executive team.
- *Question:* Does Amazon need the state's help? Why?
- *Comment:* We cannot have a strong degree program in CS or other areas without a strong component of the humanities. A key concern is that the teaching up in NOVA will be predominantly adjuncts teaching the humanities components, without the intellectual environment of people being engaged in the intellectual life of the departments. *Response:* Salmon again pointed to Cornell Tech as the benchmark, and noted that the goal is to hire tenure-track faculty, with leadership from deans and the faculty themselves. One possibility is having Blacksburg faculty spend a semester or year up there. The goal is to promote the exchange of resources across campuses.
- In terms of planning new programs, they will use existing undergraduate programs and add new masters programs.
- *Question:* Will we try to target under-represented groups? *Response:* The strategic imperatives of the university remain in place.
- *Question:* How do our current students get galvanized about this? *Response:* We have the opportunity to do something really unique and special, and it's a way of serving our mission. Amazon created a chance for the state to grow its vision, and for VT to step in and help meet our needs.

- *Comment:* But the perception of current students is that this is a new initiative that leaves everyone else (those not in CS or software engineering) behind.
- *Comment:* ECE is expanding and growing to meet this need, but the students now have and are getting jobs, so they are already part of this vision.
- *Response:* Amazon sees themselves as attracting other companies to the area. Businesses are now seeking to expand their presence here in Blacksburg as well to employer opportunities in both locations.
- *Response:* We need to make sure that we don't focus too much on Amazon and lose sight of the bigger picture and the directions that we want to go as a university. We can't get too emotionally attached. We are not an Amazon campus; the Innovation Campus is meeting a need in the region that was identified through the process.

7. Adjourn

The Senate adjourned at 3:48 p.m.