

Faculty Senate Minutes
February 22, 2019
NCB 160, 2:30 - 3:45

Senators in Attendance

Masoud Agah, Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Robin Allnutt, Susan Anderson, Arthur Ball, Michael Borowski, Charles Calderwood, Leandro Castello, Kelly Cobourn, Harry Dorn, John Ferris, Ellen Gilliland, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, James Hawdon, Eunju Hwang, Lisa Kennedy, Bettina Koch, Zachary Mackey, Paul Marek, Polly Middleton, Mike Nappier, Amy Nelson, Marie Paretti, Robin Queen, David Radcliffe, Ford Ramsey, Susanna Rinehart, Hans Robinson, Todd Schenk, Durelle Scott, Richard Shryock, Ryan Speer, Cornel Sultan, Diego Troya, Layne Watson, Anthony Wright de Hernandez.

Guests

Bryan Brown (alternate, Biological Sciences), Anita Puckett (alternate, Religion and Culture), Sally Morton

1. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the Jan. 25, 2019 and Feb. 8, 2019 meetings were approved pending minor edits.

3. Announcements

- Senators are encouraged to vote on proposed resolutions and changes to the constitution and bylaws through the Canvas surveys.

3. Committee Status Update: Jim Kuypers - Assessment of Faculty Research

- The committee includes 16 members, with representation from every college except PCOB.
- The committee held its initial meeting on Jan. 30.
- They are currently drafting a survey to solicit faculty feedback.
 - The survey will include questions from the library on research impact measures.
 - Because the results of the survey may be used for research and disseminated publicly (i.e., beyond the university), they have submitted it for IRB approval. Once it is approved, they will send it to the faculty.
- The committee needs senators to help in advertising the survey – i.e., sending it to our home departments and encouraging people to participate. The committee wants and needs faculty input.
- The committee has a subgroup to assess faculty salaries relative to our peers. We're in the 35% and we've been there for years despite the University's stated 60% target. We have good support from the administration on this issue to try to figure out what to do and how to move forward.
- The committee's goal is to have a preliminary report for the Senate President to take to the BOV; they will have an April status report, and then a final report for the June BOV meeting.
- The salary subcommittee will report to the Senate President at the end of the semester.

4. Update on Strategic Plan: Menah Pratt-Clarke

Pratt-Clarke provided a brief overview of the current plan draft. Senators raised the following questions and comments.

- The plan should align with other universities in Virginia and SCHEV peers relative to teaching foreign languages. It would be nice to include goals around foreign language instruction to better align with our global vision and our peers.
 - Foreign language courses could be included in the PIBB metrics – e.g., provide bonus points for requiring foreign language courses – to make the courses something that can be captured.
- With respect to growth, there seems to be a particular tension between increasing student enrollment and increasing faculty productivity: more students inevitably means less research time for faculty. We need to do a better job of aligning the goals of the plan with each other.
 - The student population increased 13% while the faculty population increased about 6.5% over the last 4 years.
 - The issue of faculty work-life balance and job satisfaction was put into the strategic plan in the Fall, but now seems to have been removed.
 - The mission/vision statements include creation and discovery, but not the very purpose of a university, its telos, which is the interaction between faculty and students. It is the success of this relationship that should be the lens with which we assess success with university policies and initiatives (Beyond Boundaries, DA/SGA, National Capital Region expansion, growth in Blacksburg, etc.).
 - In particular, growth is featured in 7 of the 10 Beyond Boundary priorities, but senators feel strongly that growth is supported only to the extent to which it has positive effect on the quality of the student experience and enhances the lives, both professionally and personally, of faculty and staff.
- Student groups that spoke with the Senate last fall (SGA, GSA) raised concerns about where students fit in terms of Virginia Tech's mission. The current presentation puts research first, but we may want to think about that from a public presentation message and from a core values perspective. Do we really want to highlight our research goals first, above educating students, particularly given that we are a state land grant institution?
- Housing remains a persistent issue for married graduate students. The costs of graduate housing around here for those with families in particular can be prohibitive. Pratt-Clarke noted that increased options for campus-based housing is part of the master plan, including not only for grad students, but also for visiting faculty and new faculty.
- The language of the plan has improved greatly, though the section on cultural competence still needs work.
- The target for 30,000 undergraduate is across all VT sites, not just Blacksburg.
- A new link will be available on the website shortly with the most current version based on this round of feedback.
- Students have an increasing sense over the last few years that faculty aren't really here for them. This perception is a new one at Virginia Tech; historically, students come here in part because we have a reputation for high levels of interaction between faculty and students (graduate and undergraduate). This interaction – the intellectual exchange across boundaries – is at the center of what really draws a diverse community together at a university. There is a real value in the sought-for quality of shared intellectual engagement among faculty and students.

- The key signal for faculty relative to the implementation of the plan is going to be around resources. What are the incentives, and how are we incentivized to reach these goals? What would the signals look like around these kinds of goals that would help us move toward these goals? How do we know that we will be rewarded and that investments will be made appropriately to support this?
- The attention to student debt in the plan is important, but still, the university continues to raise tuition every year, so the practice seems to be at odds with the goal. Pratt-Clarke noted that some of the opportunities afforded by the Innovation Campus may help. She also noted that we have to balance sources of revenue (grants, donations, and, tuition), which is a complex space. VT does tend to have a fairly affluent student body overall, but this can mean that first-generation and low-income students face more challenges.
- A key concern is the quality of faculty and student experiences. How can we signal in the plan that relationships are at the heart of what we do? We need to emphasize the overall culture on this campus, and the importance of the interactions with one another. Historically this has been a real strength of VT, and it is something that has eroded in recent years.
- Growth for the sake of growth seems to be a problem: growth seems to be framed in terms of numbers, but not necessarily in terms of quality. We can easily grow without improving, but that is not desirable.
- Growth also has to be considered in terms of the Blacksburg community, not just the campus. How are we connecting to and partnering with the town to make sure we have a shared sense of growth and partnership?
 - Example: Will growth lead to growth in crime rates or incidents? A key issue for everyone is quality of life.
- Pratt-Clarke noted that the committee is having conversations about which metrics should be qualitative and which are quantitative, and trying to think about what metrics are meaningful and help us maintain the core values that define VT.
- Increasing “recognition” is perhaps not the best framing for the first priority. Perhaps the administration’s priority is recognition, but it should instead be about the things that will lead to recognition – i.e., we should be enhancing our impact and the quality of our work, which lead to recognition.
- The strategic plan should take into account the results of the recent climate survey. Work/life balance is a critical issue.
- Faculty are spending a lot of time doing things that are not productive uses of our time in light of the goals and mission of the university. Over the last decade or so, faculty have been asked to do more and more tasks that are time-consuming but not productive relative to teaching, research, or service.

5. Committee Status Update: Emily Wilkinson-Stallings – Assessment of Faculty Teaching

- Wilkinson-Stallings presented the current work of the committee and described the processes they are using to identify the critical issues, pedagogical shifts, changes in student populations, and more.
- The committee has a canvas site to gather their info.

6. Amendments to Constitution and Bylaws

Senators need to vote so that we can finalize these.

(Note: Senate Secretary had to leave before the meeting adjourned. Below are the remaining agenda items.)

7. New Business:

- Sponsorship of the Take Back the Night Rally and March (7 pm on March 28, Henderson Lawn) was approved.
- Employee campus climate survey.
- Review the questions that were submitted for President Sands.
- Succession planning: Earlier elections? Officer-elect positions?
- [Pathways revision proposal](#)

8. Adjourn

The Senate adjourned.