

# Faculty Senate Agenda & Minutes

## September 13, 2019, 2:30-4:30pm

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

*Present:* Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Robin Allnutt, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Arthur Ball, Michael Borowski, Tanyel Bulbul, Leandro Castello, Virgilio Centeno, Benjamin Corl, Eloise Coupey, Harry Dorn, John Ferris, William Galloway, Ellen Gilliland, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, Roie Hauser, Dana Hawley, Bob Hicok, Eric Kaufman, Bettina Koch, Roberto Leon, Zachary Mackey, Cayce Myers, R. Scott Pleasant, Robin Queen, Susanna Rinehart, Hans Robinson, Todd Schenk, Yang Shao, Ashley Shew, Jim Tokuhisa, Layne Watson, Anthony Wright de Hernandez

*Guests:* Coogan Thompson (GSA), Horacio Valeiras (BOV)

### **Approval of Agenda**

Agenda approved by unanimous consent.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of August 30<sup>th</sup> approved with minor edits.

### **Announcements**

- Rector Valeiras will be joining the Senate meeting later, and discussion of other business will be adapted to maximize time with Rector Valeiras.
- The September 27<sup>th</sup> Faculty Senate Meeting is the same day as a home Virginia Tech football game. Although many parking lots on campus must be vacated that afternoon, Virginia Tech Parking Services has confirmed that faculty can continue to park in the Perry Street lots without being towed.
- Reminder: Faculty workload equity will be the focus of the November 21-22 visit by KerryAnn O'Meara and Kiernan Matthews.

### **Topic 1: Governance Committee**

John Ferris reminded Senate of the background on the "[Principles of Shared Governance](#)" from the President's Committee on Governance.

- The current document is intended to be a guiding framework. More practical structures and processes will be outlined in the months to come.
- Senators complimented the approach, recognizing the need to have accepted principles to revisit as needed.
- Comments will be collected from constituent groups over the next month. Any suggestions for edits can be shared with John Ferris or Bob Hicok.

### **Topic 2: Nominations and elections**

Previous elections and nominations for university governance have been forwarded to April Myers for formal appointments. Those who are already serving on commissions and committees were thanked for their service. Some existing vacancies surfaced recently, particularly for circumstances that require the representative to be a Faculty Senator. Senators volunteered to fill existing vacancies:

- [Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs](#) (3-year term) – Ashley Shew
- [Commission on Outreach and International Affairs](#) (1 year remaining) - Michael Borowski
- [Commission on Research](#) (2 years remaining) – Harry Dorn
- [Employee Benefits Committee](#) (1 year remaining) – [no nominations]
- [University Council](#) (1 year remaining) – Anthony Wright de Hernandez
- [University Curriculum Committee for General Education](#) (3-year term; faculty representative) – Richard Rateau
- Faculty Senate Resolution Committee [Ryan Speer, Chair] (1-year term) -Bettina Koch

### **Topic 3: Bylaws Amendment, Senator Election Eligibility**

John Ferris shared background on [proposed amendments to Faculty Senate Bylaws](#), particularly related to re-election of Senators.

- Questions surfaced regarding oversight of the process for elected Senators. The Faculty Senate Secretary oversees the records, yet the departments are responsible for handling selection of individual representatives.
- Different departments handle their selection processes differently, and several Senators acknowledged lack of interest from colleagues, resulting in no competition for the role of Faculty Senate representative.
  - One Senator shared an example of the department electing an alternate in the third year of her term, noting the alternate would be ready to move into the Senator role for the next term.
- Questions also surfaced regarding timing of elections. Those considerations can be addressed at a later time.
- Senators shared concerns about how the Faculty Senate can ensure accountability.
- The group took a “straw-poll” vote regarding the options for approaching terms of Faculty Senators:
  - Limit of 3 terms — received 3 votes
  - Limit of 3 terms unless... — received 18 votes
  - Department election — received 21 votes
- Although there is little interest in a firm limit on three consecutive terms, some Senators expressed interest in communicating to departments a preference for rotating the role among faculty (e.g., communicate that the Faculty Senate prefers Senators serve no more than three consecutive terms).
- Discussion highlighted the importance of having Senators who are engaged, rather than simply being a name on the roster.
  - Future work needs to recognize and encourage active participation.
- The group took a second “straw-poll” among two options:
  - Limit of 3 terms, unless the department verifies an exception based on a department vote — received 6 votes
  - Departments asked to hold an election, with the recommendation of no more than three consecutive terms — received 23 votes

- John Ferris will share new proposed language electronically with the Faculty Senate, and the discussion will continue at the next Faculty Senate meeting.

#### **Topic 4: Q&A with Mr. Horacio A. Valeiras, Rector of Board of Visitors**

Rector Valeiras shared briefly about his background and affiliation with the University, both as a student and as a member of the Board of Visitors (BOV).

John Ferris shared question prompts for consideration:

- **Facilities:** About seven years ago, VT decided to disband its internal Facilities Group and contract out those services to Gilbane. The idea was to streamline processes and save money. For those of us who only deal with Facilities sporadically and for small projects, it appears that projects are routinely delayed and running way over initial costs due to poor performance by the contractor and the associated problem of limited capacity by the university building code office. Hearsay on the renovation of Holden Hall points to even bigger problems at the larger scale. As pressure grows on facilities due to increased enrollments, what is the Board of Visitors doing to address this pressing problem? Has it or anyone conducted an audit/study of the performance by the contractor?
  - Answer: He has not been on the building and ground committee, but he is aware of work in this area. Cost overruns are a concern, and budgets are being adjusted in response. Studies are being conducted to improve future projects.
  - A faculty member shared concerns about work being only partially completed and how that impacts the academic experience (e.g., availability of classrooms).
  - The BOV is working through a billion-dollar budget, with funds from both the state and private funds. The BOV has approved the master plan but does not get into many of the details.
- **Administration:** How does the university justify the preponderance of administrative positions at all levels (university, college, department)? The number of these positions seems to grow disproportionately to the number of positions for faculty who directly fulfill the university's mission. Common business principles would suggest capping administrative positions at three percent.
  - Answer: The BOV doesn't look at positions in terms of percentages but does consider comparisons with peer institutions. Also, he did some investigation of changes based on hiring over the past year. This year, faculty is up 13%, professional faculty is up 52%, and staff is down 4%. There are other growth drivers to consider. For example, more investments are being made in student support. In some cases, the hiring of more assistant deans and associate deans is done to free time of the deans to engage in more philanthropy, which is needed. Also, funding agencies are issuing more compliance requirements, which requires more administrative work.
  - A Senator asked for more comparison between institutions, considering particularly support personnel. The Rector indicated that he does not know those details, but he will get more information and share it back through John Ferris.

- John also raised questions about the ratio of undergraduate students to tenure-track faculty. The Rector indicated he would be willing to look into this as well, acknowledging the challenges over-enrollment has placed on faculty loads.
- A Senator also asked what is being done to retain personnel. The Rector connected this consideration with the next question prompt (i.e., Global Rankings).
- **Global Rankings:** How does the BOV view the administration's stated goal of making VT a "global land grant university" and its current focus on global rankings? Why does it consider this an important goal, and how does it intersect with our obligation to serve the Commonwealth, and particularly the rural parts of the state far from many of the current efforts?
  - Answer: Global Rankings are a priority to ensure top talent considers Virginia Tech as a place for employment. The BOV is working on investments to help in this regard, including progress in Richmond and Northern Virginia. The compensation issues that arise are a "hodge-podge of details," where some departments are doing well and others are not. The PIBB is one strategy to help with this.
  - John Ferris asked about the goal to raise faculty salaries to the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile, noting that cost-of-living raises are insufficient.
  - The Rector noted there are different inflation numbers to consider. The issue of faculty salaries relates to both raising starting salaries and dealing with salary compression. The source of extra resources is an important consideration, and the BOV is working more in that area. Faculty investments are crucial, and this is important for both growth in size of the university and advancement in global rankings. The BOV delegates running of the University to the President (and Provost, etc.). College deans make some decisions about adjustments in how the University invests its resources. The BOV Finance Committee will be looking further into the issue of faculty salaries.
  - A senator asked about the timeline for adopting the PIBB. The Rector described this as an ongoing process, with no clear start or final set of the PIBB.

### **Other Business**

No further business presented.

### **Adjourn**

- Formally adjourned at 4:22pm.

*Respectfully submitted by Eric Kaufman, Faculty Senate Secretary.*