

# Faculty Senate Agenda & Minutes

## April 17, 2020, @ 2:30pm

### Meeting Via Zoom Only

Present: Monty Abbas, Masoud Agah, Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Robin Allnutt, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Michael Borowski, Tanyel Bulbul, Charles Calderwood, Leandro Castello, Virgilio Centeno, Benjamin Corl, Eloise Coupey, George Davis, Sam Doak, Harry Dorn, Matt Eick, John Ferris, John Galbraith, Ellen Gilliland, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, Roie Hauser, Dana Hawley, Bob Hicok, Eunju Hwang, Christine Kaestle, Eric Kaufman, Brad Klein, Bettina Koch, Jake Lahne, Roberto Leon, Paul Marek, Margarita McGrath, Polly Middleton, Cayce Myers, Mike Nappier, Amy Nelson, Marie Paretti, Patrick Pithua, R. Scott Pleasant, Robin Queen, Susanna Rinehart, Todd Schenk, Yang Shao, Richard Shryock, Eric Smith, Ryan Speer, Jay Teets, Tess Thompson, Jim Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Mark Van Dyke, Layne Watson, Robert Weiss, Cynthia Wood, Anthony Wright de Hernandez, Liqing Zhang

Guests: Joseph Baker, Cyril Clarke, Cathryn Copper, Jack Finney, David Guerin, Rachel Holloway, Ashley Johnson, Evan Lavendar-Smith, Frances McCarty, April Meyers, Ellen Plummer, Peter Schmitthenner, Don Taylor, Coogan Thompson

#### **Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of the April 3rd meeting were approved by unanimous consent.

#### **Announcements**

- Eric Kaufman reminded participants of Zoom functions, including [updating personal profile information](#). He encouraged individuals to [fix their screen name](#) to reflect their first and last name.
- John Ferris noted the May 1st meeting will include a question and answer period with President Sands. Senators may submit questions in advance through a [Google Doc](#).
- John Ferris reported there will be no end-of-year social for the Faculty Senate this year, but the Faculty Senate may begin next year with a social instead.

#### **Topic 1: Elections**

- John Ferris shared the Faculty Senate Cabinet's proposed slate of officers for 2020-21: Eric Kaufman for President, Bob Hicok for Vice President, and Cayce Myers for Secretary/Treasurer. John Ferris invited nominations from the floor; none were made. The Faculty Senate voted to accept the slate of officers as presented. (The Zoom poll captured 51 votes in favor, 0 against, and 1 abstention.)
- Eric Kaufman shared the Faculty Senate Cabinet's proposed representatives to councils, commissions, and committees for 2020-21 (Appendix A). The slate presented is only for new appointments/nominations. Existing rosters with term expirations are available through the [University Governance website](#). Three of the nominations are to fill the remainder of a vacated term; all others are starting a new term. If we become aware of other vacancies that need to be filled, the Faculty Senate can vote on those appointments in the fall. John Ferris invited further discussion or nominations from the floor. No further nominations surfaced. The Faculty Senate voted to accept the slate of representatives as

presented (Appendix A). (The Zoom poll captured 54 votes in favor, 0 against, and 1 abstention.)

### **Other Business**

- Prior to Provost Clarke joining the meeting, senators asked questions about admission/enrollment models for this fall. While much remains unknown, the university is adapting as new information and insights emerge.

### **Topic 2: Q&A with Provost Clarke**

- Provost Clarke shared his appreciation for the remarkable transition facilitated by faculty. He recognized work within all parts of the tripartite mission: teaching, research, and outreach. He then responded to questions provided in advance, as well as those that surfaced during the meeting.
- Graduate School Dean Question: “Would like an update on the search for a Graduate School Dean. The news release said there would be no interim, but I have heard very little about the timeline without an interim, seems like not enough time.”
  - Provost Clarke shared that Dean DePauw has offered to delay her retirement by one year, and he has accepted that offer.
- Expectations Documents Question: “Some colleges have not received finalized expectations documents for promotion and tenure. Will there be accommodations made to junior faculty who have received 2nd and 4th year review letters before receiving their college’s expectations documents?”
  - Provost Clarke noted the expectations documents are not something to be pushed through quickly. Faculty should not expect any surprises. It would be inappropriate to “change the rules” during someone’s probationary period.
- OSP Question: “The situation with contracts seems to have improved, but they still take months and much prompting and further improvement is still needed, unless we just accept that we are going to have to wait 6 months after a sponsor has agreed to provide funding before the funds actually arrive and we can start work. What is being done about this?”
  - Provost Clarke shared “a high level summary.” Teams are working with contracts and agreements. The ability to work through the bureaucracy requires appropriate staffing. The hope is to move forward with the necessary hires. There have also been advances with the tools (e.g., Summit Agreements) and consideration of different agreement types.
  - Don Taylor provided additional information on new hires and retention, which are helping with capacity.
- Classrooms Question: “Regarding classrooms, what efforts are occurring to better align instructional needs with appropriate classroom space? Many classrooms across campus are outdated and inadequate. I have proactively requested rooms that match instructional needs, yet rarely has this materialized. The result is trying to horse trade after classrooms are assigned which puts additional work on our schedulers, requires non-traditional meeting times (i.e. Friday 1:25 - 2:40), or accepting an inadequate teaching environment.”
  - Provost Clarke noted the classroom assignments are facilitated by the Registrar, with the goal of doing the best matching possible. The Registrar maintains a website that helps faculty identify which classrooms have required equipment/technology.

The university is continuing to work on remodeling of existing space to meet needs. The goal is to be forward-looking with expanding and improving instructional space. Securing the necessary funding continues to be a priority.

- Classrooms Question: “I’d like to know whether VT is planning on providing more, and roomier, classroom space, given the tight quarters we usually inhabit. This might mean converting some spaces not designated for classrooms into classrooms, or scheduling full days of teaching on Saturdays, or more evening classes--or all that. [John Ferris: I would be very strongly opposed to required weekend/evening teaching for faculty, except in some specific programs.]”
  - Provost Clarke noted the university has the capacity to facilitate enrollment without scheduling classes on weekends. The approach does require maximizing the use of available space. While online learning can be integrated into the academic program, Virginia Tech’s reputation depends upon excellence with place-based instruction. Virginia Tech needs to continue its commitment to quality experiential learning.
- Family Support Question(s): “I would like to know what consideration has been given to expanding some of the family support governance from tenure/tenure-track only to all faculty. VT recently made changes to their family leave policy in accordance with state regulations (8 weeks for mom and dad) which is truly excellent. However, some of our governance is still largely geared towards helping tenured/tenure-track faculty. For example, the Provost has a program to offer a course release within 12 months after a child is born for either mom or dad. However, it is for tenure-track/tenured faculty only, not PoP or instructional faculty. Additionally, child care in Blacksburg is extremely difficult to get into. The College of Engineering has a grant program I believe with Rainbow Riders which gives preferred admittance to COE faculty, specifically for tenure/tenure-track faculty only. As someone who teaches 6 courses in an academic year, programs and initiatives like these are equally beneficial to non-tenured track faculty who are trying to balance both personal and professional demands.”
  - Provost Clarke shared some “high-level responses,” and deferred to Jack Finney for further clarity. The Provost’s office will continue to maintain a flexible approach to faculty assignments. The goal is to calibrate and implement programs in a way that support faculty. While progress has been made, Provost Clarke acknowledged more progress is needed.
  - Vice Provost Jack Finney noted that budget availability impacts some of the offerings. Each college contributes funds to help with placement offerings through local childcare facilities. Jack is concerned about the impact of the pandemic on childcare partners; his office is planning to engage childcare providers in discussions this fall.
- Enrollment Questions: “I’d like some assurance that the over-enrollment from this past fall not be repeated but, in fact, that fewer students be admitted. The living conditions of these students was insupportable before this virus; given the heightened health concerns all of us will have from here on out, it seems we are stockpiling students so we can float various and sundry academic ventures.”

- Provost Clarke highlighted the enrollment management advisory committee and the committee's role in developing recommendations for implementation. The committee includes representation from the Faculty Senate, as well as three colleges particularly impacted by over-enrollment. The committee is benefitting from a data analytics unit and meets on a regular basis—recently meeting weekly. While acceptances were initially strong, international enrollment has dropped significantly. Acceptances for out-of-state offers have also been low, resulting in extending more offers to those on the wait-list. The university anticipates more “melt” than prior years and may extend more offers to the in-state wait-list in order to fulfill enrollment goals. There continues to be much uncertainty about enrollment in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A senator asked about the possibility of extending the deadline for acceptances, like some universities have done. Provost Clarke indicated extending the deadline could create issues to over-enrollment. However, offers to wait-listed applicants can be made after the deadline for acceptances.
- Provost Clarke also addressed considerations about allowing applicants to defer admission to a future year. He is reluctant to “open the flood gates” on that, yet much is unknown about what the future holds.
- COVID-19 Teaching Questions: “All four members of my household are in high risk groups. Should any one of us be infected with Covid-19, we are at much higher risk of serious illness and death. All of us have remained in quarantine these last weeks and will remain in quarantine for as long as necessary. If I return to a physical classroom before there is a vaccine, I am essentially putting my health and the health of those I love most in the hands of my teenaged students. While I love teaching and my students, I am not comfortable with that. I can't imagine my students would be as well. (1) Will you allow faculty in high-risk categories to choose teaching online through the next school year? (2) Will you allow students in high-risk categories to receive their instruction online as well?”
  - Provost Clarke shared that his office is in the initial stages of imagining what the fall semester might look like. Various factors are being considered, including potential infection and testing rates. Many universities have agreed to communicate plans for the fall during the first week in June. The goal is to have in-person learning in the fall, yet that is contingent upon being able to implement public health measures. It may be the fall semester involves a hybrid approach to instruction. Virginia Tech will be as flexible as possible to accommodate and protect members of the community. We are likely to see a shift from a population-based approach to a case-based approach based on levels of vulnerability.
  - Acknowledging various financial considerations, Provost Clarke noted that financial planning is coordinated by Dwayne Pinkney, senior vice president and chief business officer at Virginia Tech. There is a financial impacts working group that will be meeting on a weekly basis, and Provost Clarke contributes as a participant in that working group. While some information is known about endowment income, less is known about the state budget. Departments should currently look at 5-10% budget cuts for the coming year. No final arrangements have been made. Regarding

carryover funds, departments and colleges are in the best position to coordinate those arrangements and investments.

- Provost Clarke closed by thanking the Faculty Senate for help in making sound decisions in short timeframes. He truly values the input provided and the work as a partner in helping manage responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Other Business**

- Todd Schenk shared information about the Climate Action efforts. He encouraged broader sharing of the announcement on Canvas:
  - “We have moved our engagement process for the Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment update online and are keen to engage as many people as possible through various channels. In addition to participating yourselves, we would be grateful for your assistance in spreading the word throughout your colleges/ departments/ schools. Climate change continues to be a defining issue of the 21st century with evidence mounting that continued inaction on greenhouse gas emissions could lead to catastrophic changes, destabilizing the very systems that support and sustain human civilizations. The Virginia Tech community has an imperative role to play in reducing its environmental impact, educating others, and striving towards a more sustainable future. As part of the 2020 Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment revision process and Earth Week 2020 taking place next week, university and community members are invited to engage with the over 125 students, staff, faculty members, and other community members already involved in the revision process. Upcoming Climate Action Commitment engagement opportunities can be found at <https://bit.ly/VTCACengage>, including: *Climate Action Commitment subcommittee lightning videos* to get you up to speed on revision efforts; *Climate Action Commitment Revision Engagement Survey*; registration details for *Climate Action Commitment Revision Zoom Convenings* taking place between April 22-28; and much more. If you would like more information on the current Climate Action Commitment revision process overall, please visit: <https://svpoa.vt.edu/index/VTCACRevision.html>. And a reminder to visit <https://bit.ly/VTCACengage> to engage.”
- Another senator shared concerns about research that has been halted as a result of the pandemic. John Ferris encouraged such considerations to be added to the [list of questions being prepared for President Sands](#).

### **Adjourn**

The meeting formally adjourned at 4:12pm.

*Note: Minutes respectfully submitted by Eric Kaufman.*