

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

March 5, 2021, @ 2:30pm

Via Zoom: <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/96824189627>

Senators Present: Monty Abbas, Masoud Agah, Diane Agud, Susan Anderson, Sara Arena, Richard Ashley, Paul Avey, Joseph Baker, Sarah Barrett, Michael Borowski, Hilary Bryon, Charles Calderwood, Leandro Castello, Cathryn Copper, Harry Dorn, Robert Dunay, John Ferris, Carla Finkelstein, John Galbraith, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, James Hawdon, Roie Hauser, Bob Hicok, Daniel Hindman, Eunju Hwang, Ran Jin, Eric Kaufman, Bradley Klein, Jacob Lahne, Evan Lavender-Smith, Justin Lemkul, Roberto Leon, Douglas Lind, Jonathan Maher, Paul Marek, Frank May, Frances McCarty, Michael Nappier, Amy Nelson, Aaron Noble, Chris Pierce, Patrick Pithua, Nicole Pitterson, Scott Pleasant, Robin Queen, Susanna Rinehart, Hans Robinson, Tom Sanchez, Todd Schenk, Peter Schmitthenner, Yang Shao, Richard Shryock, Jay Teets, Steve Thompson, Tess Thompson, Jim Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Kwok Tsui, A.K. Ward, Layne Watson, Robert Weiss, Anthony Wright de Hernandez, Bruce Vogelaar

Guests: Provost Cyril Clarke, Cameron Donaldson, Davis GC, David Guerin, Becky Guynn, Stuart Feigenbaum, Jack Finney, Ron Fricker, Trish Hammer, James Lord, Jay Mar, April Myers, Ellen Plummer, Don Taylor, Coogan Thompson

Call to Order & Guiding Questions

1. What are the Faculty Senate priorities as we close out this academic year and prepare for the next?
2. What insights can we gain from Provost Clarke's perspective on the University?

Consent Agenda

- February 19, 2021 meeting minutes unanimously approved.

Brief Updates and Announcements

- Eric Kaufman recognized three senators in the linked announcement.
 - [Faculty academies recognize new inductees for outstanding leadership, service](#)
- Eric Kaufman noted the new Zoom closed captioning that was tested during the meeting.
 - [Closed captions now integrated into Zoom](#)
- Eric Kaufman shared the following articles that may be relevant to senators. He noted that he may be including some key points in his remarks to the Board of Visitors.
 - [Chronicle Article: "Faculty Members Are Suffering Burnout. These Strategies Could Help."](#)
 - [Chronicle Research Brief: "'On the Verge of Burnout': COVID-19's Impact on Faculty Well-being and Career Plans"](#)
- Eric Kaufman noted that Cayce Myers had a conflicting meeting but is working on the Faculty Census, Faculty Senate Representation for 2021-22, and University Governance vacancies. Departmental elections are to be held in March in preparation for next year.
- Eric Kaufman noted that a faculty representative is needed for the Workgroup to Re-Envision Service Recognition Program. Please contact him with nominations.
- Eric Kaufman requested that senators add questions for the March 19th meeting with President Sands. He asked that this be completed at least a week before the meeting with President Sands.
- Others?

- Eric Kaufman provided an Update Regarding Qualtrics and Survey Tool Support, for those interested.
- Michael Borowski asked “If it’s possible to include the meeting days/times on the University Governance survey that would help figure out which committees I would be available to serve on?”
 - Eric Kaufman noted that this information can often be found in the meeting minutes, however Cam Donaldson (FS Assistant) should look into keeping track of the consistent meetings.
- In light of recent violence towards Asian communities across the country, Susanna Rinehart asked that the Faculty Senate draw up a short resolution in support of Asian faculty and students at Virginia Tech. A number of commissions and student organizations are planning to make statements as well.
 - Evan Lavender-Smith volunteered to help draft a statement. Eric Kaufman noted that a draft could be reviewed at the next Cabinet meeting and then approved at the following full Senate meeting.
 - [A message from President Tim Sands and Vice President Menah Pratt-Clarke | Virginia Tech Daily | Virginia Tech \(vt.edu\)](#)

Faculty Senate Priorities for 2021

- Eric Kaufman posed the following questions to the Senate. He also asked that Senators send ideas for priorities in the Zoom chat.
 - What does Faculty Senate success look like in the months ahead?
 - What priorities should be carried forward to next year’s Faculty Senate?
 - Leandro noted that the Director of OSP came to speak to the Senate previously, and would like to hear from her again.
 - Bob Hicok offered to connect Leandro with those involved.

Q&A with Provost Clarke (@ 3pm)

- Eric Kaufman began with welcoming Provost Clarke and presented the Questions for Provost Clarke 2021-03-05.
- Provost Clarke thanked the faculty for their continued support of the university and their students. He noted that he and the university are hopeful of having in person classes in the Fall, given that health considerations are met. Summer instruction should consist of 30% in person instruction. In comparison to the past, in person summer instruction is usually at 50%. Provost Clarke acknowledged that if physical distancing were needed in the Fall, that would limit classroom capacities. He and his team continue to run learning scenarios so that in person instruction can be maximized.
- Slide 1 of Questions: Surveying the Road Ahead
 - Provost Clarke noted that challenges will continue with regard to health measures, such as social distancing.
 - Provost Clarke shared that the University budget is good. In 2020, the budget concerns were much greater. This is largely because of Virginia’s economic strength in 2021. Provost Clarke noted the following important budget updates:
 - Virginia Tech has over \$3 million in support of University COVID testing.
 - Agency 229, extension and experiment station, gained an additional \$1 million.
 - The Undergraduate Lab Building funding will hopefully be approved.

- Slide 6 of Questions: Mitigating Pandemic Effects on Career Success
 - Provost Clarke noted that there are online counseling sessions available for faculty through HR.
 - Jack Finney mentioned that the Women’s Center has “Caregiver Check Ins” which have become a community of support within the University.
 - Jack Finney noted that they are trying to move away from annual reappointment. He wanted to push for earlier registration so that reappointment doesn’t all happen in June.
 - Moving forward, Provost Clarke noted that Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) survey requirements will be reinstated. Since last Spring, the faculty has gained a lot of experience in online instruction. Provost Clarke noted the importance of returning to an environment of instructional accountability. Therefore, it is appropriate to reinstate required SPOT Surveys. Of course, departments need to consider student responses because not all students have handled the year in the same way, and may be reflected in the SPOT responses. In general, the average University SPOT score increased in the 2020-2021 school year.
- Slide 7 of Questions: Efforts for Caregiver Support
 - Provost Clarke shared that the YMCA on Main Street received funding for a childcare center, which should help increase access for families in Blacksburg.
 - Jack Finney would like to do more to support adult caregivers. This is evident through the “Caregiver Check Ins.”
- Slide 8 of Questions: Support for Postdoctoral Researchers
 - Jack Finney noted that there are five open office hour positions available through VPRI. The purpose is to incorporate a range of postdoctoral development activities.
- Slide 9 of Questions: Support for International Programs
 - Provost Clarke indicated that he is very interested in supporting international programs, especially through funding.
 - Under the current system, students who are financially challenged often do not get to study abroad. In response, more scholarships have been planned for the future.
 - Larger programs to provide more opportunities are being evaluated.
 - New international sites are being considered for education, research, and service opportunities.
- Slide 10 of Questions: Software Licensing and Access
 - Provost Clarke noted that the University needs to balance ease of installation with cost and security of software. He acknowledged that it generally takes too long to get software permissions.
- Slide 11 of Questions: Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
 - Provost Clarke highlighted the University’s aim to go beyond the national level of support for students with disabilities. A conversation with Nakisha would be well worth while. Colleges with efficient approaches to this issue seem to do well with a high level approach as it streamlines policies.

Other Business

- Richard Ashley brought up his previous Zoom chat comment on SPOT Surveys.
 - Susanna Rinehart noted that a critical analysis of SPOT Surveys is important for the future, much more so than whether or not they should be considered during the pandemic.
 - Eric Kaufman indicated that faculty evaluation is being considered in the Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA) and will be considered by the Faculty Senate next semester.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Submitted by Cameron Donaldson, Undergraduate Assistant