

**FACULTY SENATE MINUTES**  
**April 10, 2018**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Monty Abbas, Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Robin Allnut, Susan Anderson, Arthur Ball, Michael Borowski, Tanyel Bulbul, James Campbell, Virgilio Centeno, Alan Esker, John Ferris, William Galloway, LuAnn Gaskill, Ellen Gilliland, Tracy Gilmore, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, James Hawdon, Bob Hicok, Bradley Klein, Bettina Koch, Roberto Leon, Eric Lyon, Zachary Mackey, Margarita McGrath, Sean O’Keefe, Philip Olson, Marie Paretti, Anita Puckett, David Radcliffe, Ford Ramsey, Susanna Rinehart, Hans Robinson, Todd Schenk, Brett Shadle, Richard Shryock, Manisha Singal, Eric Smith, Ryan Speer, David Tegarden, Jim Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Bruce Vogelaar, and Layne Watson. (44 senators).

**ABSENT:**

Alan Abrahams, Masoud Agah, Mehdi Ahmadian, Gregory Amacher, Richard Ashley, Osman Balci, Jacob Barney, Bonnie Billingsley, Carlyle Brewster, Bryan Brown, Robert Bush, Stefan Duma, Joseph Gabbard, Sierra Guynn, Roger Harris, Kathy Hosig, Sara Jordan, Eric Kaufman, Chang Lu, Shelley Martin, Cayce Myers, Mike Nappier, Doug Patterson, John Richey, Tina Savla, Gary Skaggs, Stephen Smith, Jim Spotila, Divya Srinivasan, Dean Stauffer, Cornel Sultan, Benjamin Tracy, Kelly Trogdon, Dwight Viehland, and Ryan Zimmerman. (35 senators).

**1) Agenda**

The agenda was unanimously approved.

**2) Minutes**

The minutes were unanimously approved.

**3) Election of Officers**

The following were unanimously elected Faculty Senate officers for 2018-2019: John Ferris (President), Bob Hicok (Vice President), and Marie Paretti (Secretary/Treasurer).

**4) Strategic planning presentation and discussion**

As part of a series of presentations to Tech constituencies, Vice President for Strategic Planning Menah Pratt-Clarke reviewed a draft version of the University’s Strategic Plan. She covered the strategic planning process, the structure and composition of the various committees involved in creating the plan, as well as the relationship between the strategic plan and the Beyond Boundaries vision for Virginia Tech. Work on the plan began in the fall of 2017 with a series of presentations by stakeholder groups and included review of previous strategic plans. The current draft of the 2019 plan includes a “vision statement” – “We will be the global leader for transformative change in the spirit of Ut Prosim (That I may serve)” – and statements about core values and strategic objectives, among other components. The following link takes you to Dr. Pratt-Clarke’s presentation, as well as a survey: <http://www.beyondboundaries.vt.edu/strategicplanning.html>

During Q & A, several senators expressed the belief that faculty were not sufficiently involved in the creation of the strategic plan. When Dr. Pratt-Clarke pointed out that many faculty sit on the

various committees who participated in creating the plan, a senator replied that most of them are department heads or chairs, and that their views do not necessarily reflect those of the broader faculty community. In response to another senator who said that faculty have not been hearing about the strategic plan “from those above them,” Dr. Pratt-Clarke invited any faculty members interested in working on the strategic plan to contact her. Finally, when asked what her greatest concern for Tech is going forward, she said it’s our ability to deal with rapidly changing and highly competitive national and international educational contexts, as well as changing attitudes about the importance of higher education.

## **5) Comments on metrics**

Faculty Senate President Hans Robinson gave a brief presentation on the pitfalls of using metrics to make qualitative assessment in higher education. Beginning with a pair of statements – that he is not against measuring things as long as it’s done properly, and that “numbers have an air of objectivity and precision that is not warranted by default” -- he proceeded to touch on the following:

- 1) Bias in SPOT scores (against women, minorities, and others)
- 2) The lack of evidence that current methods of “learning outcomes assessment” actually improve student outcomes
- 3) The absence of rigorous statistical and social science practices in the majority of assessment
- 4) The need to use expert opinion to inform metrics
- 5) The tendency of poorly used metrics to produce perverse incentives.

In conclusion, he said that we need to be prepared to admit when data does not allow for any conclusion at all, and be careful of a tendency to stick with faulty procedures once they’ve become embedded in an institutional framework.

For those interested in these issues, he suggested the article “A Guide for the Perplexed” by David Eubanks, which can be found here: [https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.aalhe.org/resource/resmgr/docs/Int/AAHLE\\_Fall\\_2017\\_Intersession.pdf](https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.aalhe.org/resource/resmgr/docs/Int/AAHLE_Fall_2017_Intersession.pdf)).

## **6) Q & A with Provost Cyril Clarke**

In response to a question about the extent of administrative growth at Tech, Provost Clarke said that the administrative components growing at the greatest rate have to do with student well-being and compliance, which he feels is positive growth. In his estimation, the size of the administrative super-structure here is similar to many other institutions.

On the subject of the PIBB, he said that funding at Tech before, when he was a dean, was pretty much a black box, and what we’re trying to accomplish moving forward is a system that’s more transparent (at least for deans), one that allows us to recognize where money is coming from and incentivize activities accordingly. While some things are easy to measure – philanthropy, for example – it’s much harder to create metrics for student success and scholarship, among other areas we need to assess. With respect to measuring scholarship, he wondered if there are ways we can harness our extensive experience evaluating scholarship in the context of P & T and apply it to the PIBB in order to create scholarship incentives within departments.

To a question on how to use SPOT scores more effectively, he said that we need to bring something to bear in addition to SPOT scores, that students can tell you a lot about how education is delivered, how different classes are integrated (or not) across curricula, but they can't tell you much about content. He suggested that we create a set of guidelines that, among other things, would specify how often we evaluate teaching (is it necessary every year?) and who we evaluate (do full professors need to be evaluated as often or in the same way we evaluate assistant professors?). He added that any good evaluation is part of a system of circular feedback, that we should be assessing outcomes with the intention of evaluating our original goals and the methodology we're using to achieve them.

To a question about his belief in administrative transparency and how it can be "pushed down" to lower levels of our bureaucracy, especially to deans, he said that he is trying to "model systems and behavior." Adding that he finds his visits to the Faculty Senate valuable, he suggested we invite deans to the senate, too.

## **7) Adjournment**

Faculty Senate adjourned at 7:07.