

FACULTY SENATE MINUTES

September 19, 2017

IN ATTENDANCE:

Monty Abbas, Diane Agud, Robin Allnut, Gregory Amacher, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Arthur Ball, Jacob Barney, Michael Borowski, Carlyle Brewster, John Ferris, Matthew Gabriele, LuAnn Gaskill, Leon Geyer, Ellen Gilliland, Tracy Gilmore, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, Roger Harris, James Hawdon, Bob Hicok, Kathy Hosig, Eric Kaufman, Roberto Leon, Chang Lu, Eric Lyon, Zachary Mackey, Shelly Martin, Margarita McGrath, Cayce Myers, Mike Nappier, Sean O'Keefe, Philip Olson, Marie Paretti, David Radcliffe, John Richey, Hans Robinson, Todd Schenk, Brett Shadle, Richard Shryock, Gary Skaggs, Eric Smith, Stephen Smith, Ryan Speer, Jim Spotila, Divya Srinivasan, Cornel Sultan, David Tegarden, Kelly Trogdon, Dwight Viehland, Bruce Vogelaar, and Layne Watson. (51 senators)

ABSENT:

Alan Abrahams, Masoud Agah, Biko Agozino, Mehdi Ahmadian, Marwin Al-Haik, Osman Balci, Bonnie Billingsley, Bryan Brown, Robert Bush, James Campbell, Virgilio Centeno, Rami Dalloul, Alan Esker, Sierra Guynn, Aki Ishida, Sara Jordan, Bettina Koch, Doug Patterson, Susanna Rinehart, Tina Savla, Anju Seth, Dean Stauffer, Jim Tokuhisa, Benjamin Tracy, Diego Troya, and Percival Zhang. (26 senators)

1) Approval of agenda.

2) Approval of minutes for 9/5/17 meeting.

3) Discussion and information session with David Guerin, the new associate vice provost for communications.

This is the explanation of his role from the VT web site:

“...Guerin will work with the academic vice provost and vice president units in the Office of the Provost to direct and implement a comprehensive, integrated communications program. He will articulate and guide the implementation of communications strategies and tactics relevant to graduate and undergraduate recruitment, faculty recruitment, inclusion and diversity, outreach and international affairs, student life, and university initiatives related to Destination Areas and the National Capital Region.”

In his brief introductory comments, he stressed that he’s “Trying to listen a lot right now. This is an often forgotten part of communication.” He also said that, as someone a few weeks into the job, he’s focused on understanding how we can build, collectively and collaboratively, a good communication system. He views himself as a champion for faculty, and sees one of his primary tasks to convey what faculty are saying back to the provost.

Hans Robinson then opened the floor for questions. The following points or issues raised by senators stood out.

- One senator said ads touting Destinations Areas were scheduled to appear soon. The websites to be mentioned in these ads didn’t yet exist. This is a potential black eye for Tech. David responded that this is his #1 priority.

- A number of senators mentioned that there is no clear explanation posted for the extensive changes going on at Tech, noting that if the goal of administration is to be transparent, this kind

of info should be readily accessible. He replied that he wants to create platforms to deal with this. His expectation is that information important to the university community will be available in a timely fashion.

- In quick order, a series of related comments were made. That adding a layer between the faculty and administration to help communication strains credibility. That David hasn't been hired to represent faculty. That no other provost has needed someone to speak for him or her. That faculty have become overwhelmed with things presidents and provosts want us to do, and we're spending a lot of time to keep up with additional demands.

4) Appointments and commissions. Tracy Gilmore volunteered to serve on CUS (Commission on University Support). Kathy Hosig volunteered to serve on CUSP (Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies).

FS approved Tom Ollendick and Janelle Watson to serve on FHC (Faculty Honorifics Committee).

5) Highlights from reports from Board of Visitors Sept. meeting, from University commissions, and from Employee Benefits Committee.

- Hans shared President Sands views on the strengths and weaknesses of VT. While he considers teaching a big strength, the degree of external funding for research is a weakness Tech needs to address.

- John Ferris announced that CFA (Commission on Faculty Affairs) will address (4) major areas this year: P & T questions, a possible retiree health plan for tenured faculty, faculty morale and how it influences hiring, and equity in access to large-scale facilities and research proposal teams.

- Issues in front of the EBC (Employee Benefits Committee) include better retirement benefits, the need for child care, flexible retirement options, and a mandatory leave policy during holidays for staff.

6) Discussion on proposal for seventh year tenure review. The idea, offered by Jim Hawdon and based on a policy at Ohio State, is that someone denied tenure after six years could be given a second chance, *if* their 7th year is exceptional, or they were poorly coached as to the tenure process, or if the primary reason for failure was a badly prepared dossier.

Comments from the floor:

- There is already a mechanism to stop the tenure clock, and another to push the decision for a year, due to non-professional issues faced by the candidate.

- The use of such a "safety valve" might come to be expected.

- This could help in cases where the criteria for tenure were changed well into the period of eligibility.

Hans said he'll refer this matter to CFA.

7) FS then went into closed session to discuss two matters:

- A promotion and tenure issue originating in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies.

- Procedures for an administrative review process.

Coming out of closed session, FS approved a motion to create an ad hoc committee, composed of the members of the Faculty Review Committee, to investigate the P & T issue.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15.