

FACULTY SENATE MINUTES

October 31, 2017

IN ATTENDANCE:

Monty Abbas, Alan Abrahams, Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Mehdi Ahmadian, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Osman Balci, Arthur Ball, Jacob Barney, Bonnie Billingsley, Michael Borowski, Carlyle Brewster, Bryan Brown, James Campbell, Virgilio Centeno, Alan Esker, John Ferris, Matthew Gabriele, William Galloway, LuAnn Gaskill, Leon Geyer, Ellen Gilliland, Tracy Gilmore, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, Roger Harris, James Hawdon, Bob Hicok, Kathy Hosig, Eric Kaufman, Bettina Koch, Chang Lu, Zachary Mackey, Shelly Martin, Shelly Maycock (sub for Robin Allnut), Margarita McGrath, Cayce Myers, Sean O'Keefe, Philip Olson, David Radcliffe, John Richey, Susanna Rinehart, Hans Robinson, Todd Schenk, Brett Shadle, Richard Shryock, Eric Smith, Stephen Smith, Ryan Speer, Dean Stauffer, Cornel Sultan, Jim Tokuhisa, Benjamin Tracy, Kelly Trogdon, Diego Troya, Bruce Vogelaar, and Layne Watson (57 senators).

ABSENT:

Masoud Agah, Gregory Amacher, Tanyel Bulbul, Robert Bush, Stefan Duma, Candace Fitch, Sierra Guynn, Sara Jordan, Roberto Leon, Eric Lyon, Mike Nappier, Marie Parette, Doug Patterson, Tina Savla, Gary Skaggs, Jim Spotila, Divya Srinivasan, David Tegarden, Dwight Viehland, Percival Zhang, and Ryan Zimmerman. (21 senators).

1) Agenda

The agenda was approved.

2) Minutes

The minutes from the Oct 17, 2017 meeting were approved, with one typographical correction.

3) Governance referral resolution. UC Resolution 2017-18A: Resolution to Amend the University Council Bylaws

The taskforce on shared governance recommends that the Staff Senate, GSA, and SGA be given the same rights to comment on pending resolutions as the Faculty Senate now enjoys, and that the rights be expanded to all commissions.

Joe Merola discussed the resolution. He said that, in the year since CFA Resolution 2105-16B gave Faculty Senate the same right to comment on resolutions, decisions on resolutions have actually been made faster, with more consensus and feedback.

After some Q and A, the senate unanimously approved the resolution.

4) Resolution 2017-18.C: Resolution to Revise Pathways General Education Curriculum

The resolution, recommended by the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies, would revise the *Pathways General Education Curriculum* in the Language section as follows:

“Achievement in general education builds on a necessary foundation of English language proficiency. Therefore, foundational discourse courses must be taught in English. Courses taught in a language other than English and meeting the criteria of general education may be included to meet advanced discourse and other learning outcomes.”

It would further direct that “all Pathways forms and materials be modified to stipulate that the 6 foundational Discourse credits be taught in the English language.”

After discussion of the resolution, the senate voted to oppose it, 54-3. A letter explaining the Faculty Senate position was later passed on to the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies. The letter includes this partial explanation for the Faculty Senate position:

“The resolution purports to be motivated by desire to ensure that all students obtain “a necessary foundation of language proficiency in English,” but does not define what this entails. Faculty senators pointed out that proficiency is measured through the ability to perform specific tasks, set forth in the Pathways Guidelines. The Faculty Senate concurs that these skills are independent of the language in which they are developed, and that skills obtained in one language are in fact transferrable to another.”

5) Report from Oct 24 meeting between the Provost and FS cabinet

The outcome of this meeting, which dealt with ongoing P & T concerns, was an agreement between the Provost and Cabinet that P & T, as embodied in the Faculty Handbook, will remain unchanged while CFA reviews the P & T guidelines.

Work on departmental expectations documents for P & T will continue, with a May 2018 date of delivery as a goal.

A one line modification to the Faculty Handbook will be passed expeditiously through Governance that allows for the tenure clock to be stopped for “Administrative faults and defects”. This will be discontinued or limited in the 2019-20 year.

6) Q&A with President Sands

After an opening statement in which President Sands spoke about the state of the University, including strengths, weakness, and challenges, he took questions from senators.

While the topics ranged from salaries to the National Capital Region, certain topics came up frequently.

President Sands repeatedly stressed the importance of Destination Areas to his vision of an evolving Virginia Tech, as he sees a trans-disciplinary approach as essential to the university’s success in a globally competitive environment. Figuring out the DAs is his #1 priority. To his thinking, if we don’t succeed at offering genuinely trans-disciplinary options, we will become a regional university.

To succeed with DAs, he said we needed a new budget model, and he plans to continue with the PIBB. However, he said we need to take a few more years to build it out and “not just plow ahead.” He added that we need to reduce its complexity, and that it’s not intended to lead to a budget that is “data driven,” but “data informed.” As others have, he stressed that the PIBB is intended to enlighten budget conversations between the Provost and Deans, not substitute for them.

Faculty pointed out that the broad concerns about how the university is being run – concerns that have recently been the focus of the Faculty Senate -- go beyond issues with the out-going Provost. One senator expressed concern that a false narrative has taken hold, in which faculty are characterized as lacking vision or being resistant to change, and countered this narrative with the view that faculty are looking for leadership and real opportunities to participate in the direction

of the university. Another senator recommended that President Sands put a statement out that would express his understanding of faculty concerns, and counter recent statements from university that imply faculty issues are based primarily on confusion.

Repeatedly, in response to these and other comments, President Sands stressed the need for more involvement and conversation. He also admitted that for the past few years, he was unable to be as engaged on campus as he would have liked, due to travel obligations related to fund raising. Not only did he “pledge to make sure things are working,” he often raised the possibility of more faculty involvement. He said that he’d look for guidance from Faculty Senate on what faculty want to talk about next, that he’d make more frequent visits to Faculty Senate, and asked if Faculty Senate’s role in governance should become more significant, noting the historical legacy of command and control at Virginia Tech and conveying “shock” over the assumption that Tech still operates within that framework.