

Faculty Constituency Report

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August 28, 2024

Over the past nine years, I have served as an academic librarian, professional, and faculty member at two universities. During my career as a junior faculty member and now as an associate professor, I have dedicated my livelihood to service. Libraries and librarians can only thrive through service to others, and that is only possible through intentional engagement, outreach, communication, and community building. None of these are possible without effort, strategy, and planning; in other words, they do not transpire on their own. As the newly elected Faculty Senate President at Virginia Tech, I believe my passion and dedication towards service will and can be utilized in purposeful and guiding ways during the upcoming academic year.

The faculty at Virginia Tech are energized and ready to begin the new academic year, and I am always impressed with their fervor and commitment to their students, research, and service to the university. There are challenges that we will face in the upcoming academic year, and faculty members' enthusiasm can be directed in innovative ways to face these challenges. Engaging with the faculty and students will be critical as we move forward during the academic year as challenges unfold. For example, I expect that the student anti-war protests will likely continue, and I believe engagement between and with the different groups will be crucial to ensuring peaceful freedom of expression activities on campus. Faculty members can act as mediators, but they must be invited to the table to act as mediators and communicators between different groups. Therefore, I must stress the importance of *engagement* with faculty, which, again, takes effort, strategy, and work to achieve. Service to the university goes both ways; faculty serve the university just as other actors do, such as students, administrators, and staff. In many ways, we serve one another to create a cohesive, functioning campus community in which we can rely upon one another. As we move into the new academic year, it is imperative that we strengthen these engagement opportunities with one another. There will be times when our communication channels break down or when we disappoint one another, but we can learn from our mistakes and move forward again.

One of the major initiatives at Virginia Tech is the Global Distinction Initiative, of which I serve on its Steering Committee. This is an ambitious initiative meant to bring international recognition of scholarship to Virginia Tech and attract top talent. However, we have seen a lack of buy-in and adoption of the initiative from faculty members at large. Many are asking: what is in it for me? Why should I care? Again, I cannot stress enough the power and importance of *communication* and *engagement* with the faculty. There are benefits of this initiative to the faculty members, but as of now, that has not (yet) been communicated to them. We need more opportunities for feedback, engagement, and strategic communications around the initiative. In addition, the initiative likely needs to be strengthened to be more inclusive of faculty members from backgrounds in the arts, humanities, and trans-, inter-, and multidisciplinary backgrounds. For example, the Destinations 2.0 Initiative is one incentive for transdisciplinary research, and it brings together disciplines to solve real-world problems in innovative ways. The grants associated with this initiative are impressive and commendable but there are still concerns from the faculty with incentivizing trans-, inter-, and multidisciplinary research across the university in broader contexts. Current short-term

incentives and metrics tend to project and incentivize productivity (e.g., through publications) and impact (e.g., through citations) through short-term windows, usually two to three years. TDR/IDR typically takes longer (more like 5-10 years rather than 3-5 years), but when it is successful, it is *much* more impactful and even considered “breakthrough” research. Faculty members believe that long-term strategies and goals should be adjusted to incentivize and include TDR/IDR or those interested in TDR/IDR in our goals and metrics. Traditional citation metrics typically incentivize short-term impact and specialized research, rather than TDR/IDR. These short-term goals *can* and *should* still be pursued; specialized research is still critical to the growth of research and scholarship. Long-term goals should *also* be pursued simultaneously. I implore you to also read and digest the university-adopted [Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics](#), which was approved by the President and University Council last May. It does not explicitly tell us to move away from our goals, such as to be a Top 100 Times Higher Education (THE)-Ranked University, but it says, “Yes, you can do this, *and* also include other metrics and scholarship in the process, especially and specifically for assessment of the individual.” A “yes, and” approach helps to bring inclusivity to ambitious university goals and drive intentional engagement with faculty who may *feel* excluded. In other words, we believe the university should pursue these goals, such as Global Distinction (GD), and that the metrics of GD act as mere proxies for scholarly impact. What faculty want to know is that their research, scholarship, and creative activities are still valued, incentivized, and encouraged by the university, regardless of the metrics used as proxies to measure and benchmark impact and success, especially at an *individual* level, such as during annual evaluations and in the promotion and tenure process. Large, bibliometric analytics can and *should* still be applied for benchmarking and macro-level assessment purposes, but we ask that the individual faculty member be protected from any potential inadvertent harm. In other words, when we are designing metrics-based assessments, we should ask ourselves: what are the unintended consequences? Who does this discriminate against (potentially)? And how can the metrics be gamed? For more in-depth reading, please refer to the [SCOPE Model for Research Evaluation](#).

The world of Higher Education (HE) is rapidly shifting and evolving. Service is often overlooked or perceived as “lesser than” compared to its counterparts, scholarship and teaching. However, without service to one another, the others do not thrive as much. Service is as much about trust in one another and in the institution as it is about functionality and ambitious goals. Sometimes our goals are too lofty, and sometimes we are too grounded in probabilities, but finding a middle ground is critical. The expectations of service in HE have evolved; traditionally, service activities are committee work or administrative duties, but now we see contemporary expectations shifting towards a more integrated approach that includes supporting the institutional goals in a broader context. How can faculty help support the institutional goals, especially through service, one of the most undervalued aspects of their work? I hope you will reflect on this question and others that I’ve posed throughout this report, and I hope we can work more closely together over this academic year, regardless of the challenges we face. I’m optimistic about the upcoming year, and I hope all of you are as well. In the spirit of *Ut Prosim*, I hope that this report will inspire you to engage with the faculty, such as those of us who have decided to serve in university governance. We are dedicated to service just as you are, and I believe that we can find common ground, commonalities, alignment in goals, and collaboration opportunities. I look forward to working with you in the coming academic year.