

Faculty Senate Minutes
March 22, 2019
NCB 160, 2:30-3:45

Senators in Attendance

Monty Abbas, Masoud Agah, Diane Agud, Mehdi Ahmadian, Robin Allnutt, Susan Anderson, Michael Borowski, Tanyel Bulbul, Charles Calderwood, Leandro Castello, Harry Dorn, John Galbraith, William Galloway, Ellen Gilliland, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, James Hawdon, Dana Hawley, Bob Hicok, Eric Kaufman, Jake Lahne, Roberto Leon, Chang Lu, Zachary Mackey, Paul Marek, Shelley Martin, Margarita McGrath, Polly Middleton, Amy Nelson, Marie Parette, David Radcliffe, Susanna Rinehart, Hans Robinson, Durelle Scott, Richard Shryock, Manisha Singal, Ryan Speer, Jim Spotila, Cornel Sultan, David Tegarden, Jim Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Layne Watson

Anita Puckett (Alternate), Julia Gohlke (Alternate)

Guests

Laurel Miner, Theresa Mayer, Sally Morton, Cyril Clarke,

Cyril Clarke attended the Senate and responded to a set of questions provided in advance of the meeting.

1. As reported in the P&T committee workshop in the fall, nearly 25% of pre-tenure faculty report being less than clear about what is expected of them as a scholar, and the situation is worse when asked specifically about tenure expectations. How is the Provost's Office working to improve clarity with faculty expectations?

Response

The critical issue is the development of the department expectation documents. These documents are due to the Provost's office by May 1. The Provost's Office will review all the documents at the same time and provide feedback to departments. Clarke notes that the uncertainty is not reflected in dossiers that have come forward to the university; in general, the dossiers do an excellent job of articulating faculty success and quality.

2. In University Council recently, during consideration of a resolution to create a new "Candidate Status" for doctoral students, you referred to an ongoing discussion of broader changes to graduate education. Will you give us the outline of the changes being considered?

Response

Clarke noted that he would provide not so much a discussion of broader changes but rather a process to conduct a comprehensive assessment/evaluation of graduate education.

First, he noted successes to celebrate:

- what departments are doing in terms of supporting, promoting, and graduating high quality students who are going on to successful careers;
- what the institution is doing through the grad school in terms of professional development support & IGEPs.

In other words, there are many good things at college, department, and institution levels.

In terms of areas of concern, Clarke highlighted the following:

- We are experiencing declining applicant pools and declining enrollment for graduate programs.
- These declines are happening in the context of a budgetary environment in which VT has stabilized and in some cases increased available support for graduate programs.
- One potential explanation for the decline is the national trend. But this is not entirely true. The overall trend is that the better the economy is, the fewer people seek graduate school. They head to work upon finishing undergraduate degrees and/or don't return for further training. Clarke notes that while this might be true, it is not useful as a strategy: we can't depend on a poor economy to grow our graduate programs.
- Clarke is working with DePauw to put together a task force to look at our graduate education, and they are looking for someone from faculty senate to serve on that task force. The task force will:
 - Conduct a comparative analysis relative to peer institutions in terms of applications, admissions, enrollment, retention, time to degree, time to candidacy; cost; reputation.
 - Recommend qualitative and quantitative recommendations to evaluate graduate programs.
 - Look for ways to reduce costs. The university has already presented one initiative to the BOV to reduce costs, and that is to charge students for only 3 credits post candidacy.

Senate Comments

- *Question:* How do we provide better support for fellowship recipients in terms of health insurance? Currently grad students who are on fellowships often do not get health insurance. Fellowships are prestigious, but do not cover the full cost of graduate school. *Response:* Clarke recognizes that it's a problem and sees it as part of the task force's charge.
- *Question:* Why grow at all? *Response:* Growth allows us to achieve critical mass needed to be successful. The drive to grow is to scale up our research mission to meet our responsibilities as a land grant, to better achieve our mission. The arguments that drive graduate enrollment are very much tied to research. For many disciplines there is a tight link between research growth and the growth of graduate programs. Growing graduate programs allows to do more research, and thus to raise our visibility and impact. Robust graduate education programs are essential to helping us continue to advance our research program; it is a matter of reputational excellence and impact.
- *Question:* Is the enrollment drop linked to a particular point in time (e.g., the change in international students due to recent immigration policies). *Response:* The decline has been in the last three years.
- Clarke wants the task force to focus on research-based graduate programs (not necessarily the professional graduate programs, because those will likely grow through the Innovation Campus and other initiatives).

3. During a search for a new chair in my department, every candidate brought to campus mentioned increasing the number of on-line courses we offer. What are your views on the benefits and limitations of on-line instruction, and your vision for its place at Virginia Tech?

Clarke offered not a vision, but rather observations.

- He was Dean at Oregon State starting in 2007 before coming here in 2013 (which straddled the recession). He noted that OSU did a very structured and intentional effort around online education. They created substantial growth that could not have been accommodated in Corvallis. The administration worked closely with faculty to identify needs and goals of faculty around online education, and they worked in a fairly intentional way with faculty to make this work.
- He came to VT and found not much happening here in terms of online education. Clarke understands why face-to-face education is important and the value that it brings to education. But for an institution to be as dismissive of online learning as we were at the time was perhaps not in our best interests. Moving forward, Clarke is interested in an organic model of development, with appropriate support and resources, in helping faculty to engage in and pursue online learning and explore adaptive learning.
- Online learning probably has to be a piece of our developing strategy for students in northern VA because that effort involves taking advantage of non-university opportunities for internships and co-ops. We need to provide extended internships, and we need to figure out how we can support them through online learning so as not extend the time to degree.
- He noted that online enrollment can have a high percentage of students who are on campus using online classes to help them get critical courses.
- *Senate Question:* Are we talking about just undergraduate degree programs, or about the possibility of earning certificates? Response: Both. He sees challenges of online and face-to-face teaching as similar in some ways in terms of engaging students and promoting intellectual development.

4. Now that it has been in place for a few years, what is your evaluation of Pathways?

- First, Pathways has not been in place for a few years; it was approved in 2015 but only started this fall.
- Where are we: Clarke noted how much time faculty have spent in developing course and classes. Rachel Holloway notes 400 courses approved, 17 minors approved with 8 more going through governance. We have approximately 330 students enrolled in those courses.
- The accomplishments are strong at this point. We've made a tremendous start. But we haven't been at it long enough to know how well it's working. But the model has an assessment process embedded in it, so we should be getting data around results that can be synthesized and reviewed.
- Clarke noted that the minors are becoming connected with the educational elements of the destination areas; the DAs are being reinforced and extended through the minors.
- He noted that he wasn't part of the Pathways because its development happened when he was in the School of Veterinary Medicine. Now that he's looked more closely, he's impressed at what's been done and the innovative work coming forward.
- *Question from the Senate:* One concern is that the data is not usable and the sample sizes are too small to inform decision-making. There is concern that we are being asked to produce data for the sake of data, but it's not useful for making curricular changes. Many

faculty feel like they're just making data to make data. Response: He links the situation to his experience of outcomes-based assessment in VetMed, and notes that VT is a national leader here. He had two key suggestions: 1) These concerns need to be shared with the undergraduate academic affairs office (Rachel Holloway) and with the assessment and evaluation office. 2) The sample size is problematic; but if there is consistency in methodology and coherence from year to year in terms of how things are done, we can accumulate meaningful data. Ferris will follow up to provide specific comments to send to Rachel Holloway and the assessment office.

5. When the strategic plan is complete, will faculty be part of prioritizing goals and expenditures?

- The Provost's Office is not responsible for the strategic plan. But Clarke notes that Pratt-Clark and her team are trying to figure out the best way of engaging faculty in governance and planning. This will be part of Phase 2.
- Clearly, faculty need to be engaged in the strategic plan. Burruss understands that universities are built on their core full time faculty members. Faculty have to be involved in the process of developing the strategic plan, and if that's not working, Clarke needs to know.
- The proposed framework for the strategic plan will be presented to the Board of Visitors next week, and the Board will provide feedback.
- His questions for us are what are our expectations around input and what do we want?
- Ferris will include this question for President Sands when he comes to the Senate.
- *Question from the Senate:* Will the Innovation Campus influence the strategic plan?
Response: It has to be included in the strategic plan for 2 reasons: 1) it represents some of the underlying goals, and 2) it's such a big event in terms of the time and energy and focus.

6. What is your vision for the Innovation Campus? Do you see VT offering numerous undergraduate class in NOVA?

- While he certainly has opinions, he sees his vision as less important than the vision of the President and the vision of the faculty. So he'll offer a strong opinion.
- The immediate goal is to meet the expectations and commitments in the agreement with the state: 1) establish a campus that educates at the graduate level individuals training in the broad realm of computer science and computer engineering; 2) double undergraduate enrollment in CS and CPE. But that's a bit of a limited vision; we need to broaden the aperture to include data sciences more broadly and to think more expansively about how to leverage that. And in the longer term, we need to go beyond that to provide opportunities for the whole university to be engaged in opportunities in NOVA. We need to provide an opportunity for us to provide an emphasis around the interaction of people and technology.
- He is not suggesting that the Innovation Campus be everything, but rather suggesting that a thematic coherence around that will allow broad participation across the university.
- *Question:* What about undergraduate programs? Response: The Innovation Campus is really about graduate programs. VT has a 50-year history of delivering grad programs in NOVA, with 750 graduate students/year up there. For undergraduates, the Innovation Campus offers opportunity for access to experiential learning opportunities up there. We are not planning at this time to deliver undergraduate programs up there. There are many reasons why we're not ready to do that now, including political elements around the

region, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the experience in Blacksburg and the experience of VT and what we offer here. Before we head down a road that has undergraduate programs elsewhere, we'd have to think really long and hard about that. But we can use NOVA to engage students in experiential learning opportunities up there.

7. There is a persistent need for affordable childcare for the entire Virginia Tech community (staff, faculty, students and Blacksburg residents) that disproportionately affects families with younger members. It is a frequent question from prospective young professors, many of whom are working couples for whom adapting their working schedules is difficult and has real impact on their performance evaluations, and they hear from our colleagues that the situation is not being adequately addressed.

With plans to continue to expand the university in the near future, what plans has the university developed to alleviate this crisis now and in the next 2 years? For example, does the university intend to address this issue by itself or does it intend to partner with organizations such as the YMCA at Virginia Tech, which has plans to renovate some of their current space on N. Main Street and convert it to a non-profit childcare center but needs some partners to make it happen?

- Clarke agrees that it is a critical need, and is serious around trying to work hard in support of this issue. Clarke will summarize but also notes that Jack Finney is leading this initiative for the Provost's office.
- There is a collaborative effort in place now: the Alliance for Better Childcare Strategies (ABCs) that is a partnership with the town, the county, Lewis Gale, Carillion, and NRCC. We have a substantial role in this partnership. ABCs is working to develop strategies and solutions. One outcome is the new facility by Beeks that will open this summer and add about 20% capacity to existing services. There will also be continuing assessment to identify need and potentially develop a second center (perhaps between Blacksburg and Christiansburg).
- At the university level, Dwayne Pinkney is taking the lead to assess compensation levels of staff and building in a provision for supplemental compensation to address the costs of childcare and parking. Jack Finney is representing the Provost's office there. The BOV is aware and supportive.
- Jack Finney is meeting with the executive director of the Y to discuss their plans to identify ways to partner and help expand capacity.
- Internally at VT, the CDCLR (lab school) has a draft plan for a new facility that will provide a number of slots.
- In short, we are working in partnership with external entities to address capacity, and working internally to address cost and cost subsidies.
- We also have the Little Hokies Hangout, a graduate school program to help support graduate student parents.
- Jack Finney: ABCs is also focused on the quality of existing centers; e.g., they've held two recent conferences open to centers, home care providers, etc. to provide education and support. They are helping to provide educational opportunities and credentialing, as well as funding to encourage people to get credentials.
- Jack Finney: CDCLR has to be a priority for CLAHS. NRCC is also coming into play to support associate degrees for early childhood educators.

- We also still have our partnership with Rainbow Riders, in which 60% of their openings come to VT.
- *Question from the Senate:* On the workforce issue, we have a limited talent pool of people who are able to take those jobs. Do we know that when the new center opens, we will not again see another facility close because we don't have enough people to staff these?
Response: The salaries being paid at the existing centers do not compete with salaries at Hobby Lobby. We have to elevate the pay scale for childcare workers. As expensive as childcare here seems, it is about \$400/mo less than comparable centers in Charlottesville, Lynchburg, etc. We pay low salaries, and that's part of the problem. Costs are going to have to go up to better sustain quality childcare here.
- *Question from the Senate:* Is there any chance that the lab school will add infant care?
Finney: That is the big motivation for the expansion.

8. While the PIBB is intended to be incentive-focused, the discrepancy with Sponsored Inventive Value seems to present an unfair allocation, which is likely to de-motivate faculty. How is the Provost's Office working to address the different types of fairness that impact organizational outcomes? (See [Science for Work: "Why you should consider fairness when designing your change management process."](#))

In the recent book [Land-Grant Universities for the Future](#), the authors argue that land-grant universities should become more fiercely land-grant in their orientation. How do you interpret our land-grant mission, and what is Virginia Tech doing to ensure our leaders and supporters are oriented to embrace this distinction?

- Clarke starts with the second part: He has had the privilege over the last 36 years to study and work at land grant institutions, and he sees that as a privilege and values the land grant mission. LGIs have been extremely durable and valuable and important to states. They are drivers of so much of what we do in the U.S. in terms of enabling people to aspire to their dreams, drive economic development, support families and communities. He is completely committed to the LG mission, and notes that as we move forward and value the distinctiveness of our institution we have to compare ourselves to other LGIs.
- Fairness is important. He appreciated the reminder in the material references in the question in terms of the essential nature of fairness and how it can be communicated and enacted.
- A key point is the incentive around extramural grants and contracts. The PIBB has a bonus for that kind of work. The PIBB calibrates to 4 basic categories – student credit hours, enrollment, grants, philanthropy. Clarke notes that in the current model, colleges that get 229 money get less benefit in terms of extramural grants than colleges that get other external money. CALS and CNRE get a lot of 229 money; Vet Med is a bit different. The key problem with CALS and CNRE is in terms of how 229 money is handled and "counted."
- The question sent Clarke back into an analysis of the differentiation – what and how much?
- So, consider a college that doesn't get 229 funding. Their total budget is based on certain performance outcomes. For colleges that get 229 funding, the money goes just to those colleges on the basis of ongoing state allocations. So those colleges that don't get 229 funding need to have a way to be rewarded for their extramural grants and contracts. But as we go deeper it gets more complex, and Clarke is re-examining the issue.

- 229 funds extension and research; it has no link to the [undergraduate/graduate] educational mission [n.b. it is linked to the university's public education mission] and cannot be used for the educational program; they must document its use to the Commonwealth.
- Consider a college that doesn't get 229. It gets a 208 allocation from the PIBB that is performance-based, and a significant portion of that allocation goes to build infrastructure for research. 208 funding pays for quite a bit of our research efforts. But in order to get that money, we have to meet the performance criteria around research.
- For units receiving 229 funding, a lot of the research infrastructure is paid for by that 229 funding. Colleges receiving 229 have added support that benefits research faculty in ways that are not available to 208-funded colleges.
- Clarke is now trying to work with the Deans to better understand how much of the 208 funding is used to support research.
- He notes that the original justification for some elements in the PIBB was that 229 colleges get additional support and infrastructure that is not performance based.
- *Question from Senate:* How can you ensure that potential opportunities are not lost as units "follow the PIBB"? I.e., How can we ensure that we won't pass up long-term opportunities in favor of short-term gains. Response: The PIBB is only part of the budget allocation process. It is one part of the budgeted amount, but not the only amount. The administration will allocate money over and above the PIBB to colleges. So when those opportunities are available and faculty need support, they need to come together and make the needs known to the Dean and the Provost. The discretionary budget is spent in weekly financial meetings, and the administration has regular opportunities to allocate money and meet capacity.
- *Question:* How has 229 changed historically relative to 208?
- *Comment:* CALS and CNRE do have a large extension mission separate from research. Response: 229 is state/federal money and it cannot be supplemented from 208, tuition, etc., even if it is not keeping pace.

The Senate adjourned 3:55 p.m.