

Faculty Senate Minutes
April 19, 2019
NCB 160, 2:30 - 4:30

Present

Masoud Agah, Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Arthur Ball, Michael Borowski, Tanyel Bulbul, Charles Calderwood, Leandro Castello, Harry Dorn, Matt Eick, John Ferris, Ellen Gilliland, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, Bob Hicok, Kathy Hosig, Eunju Hwang, Christine Kaestle, Eric Kaufman, Lisa Kennedy, Bettina Koch, Roberto Leon, Paul Marek, Margarita McGrath, Shelly Maycock, Mike Nappier, Anita Puckett, Robin Queen, Marie Parette, Susanna Rinehart, Hans Robinson, Todd Schenk, Tess Thompson, Richard Shryock, Stephen Smith, Ryan Speer, Divya Srinivasan, David Tegarden, Jim Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Bruce Vogelaar, Layne Watson, Anthony Wright de Hernandez.

Guests

Joe Merola, Laurel Minor (OVPRI), Jonathan Bradley

1. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for March 8, March 22, and April 5 were approved with minor copyedits.

3. Announcements

The end of year reception will be Friday, May 3, 2:30 - 4:00 in the Solitude Room at the Inn.

4. Election of Officers for 2019-2020

- John Ferris, Bob Hicok, and Eric Kauffman were voted in as President, Vice President, and Secretary, respectively.
- After substantial discussion about the nature of the position, a majority of senators present were in favor of Jim Hawdon as President Elect should that position be approved in the Fall.

5. Discussion with President Sands

President Sands began by noting that it is good timing to have this conversation with all the changes that are underway at this point at the university, and he is anxious to engage with the Senate.

The discussion then followed the questions that the Senate provided to the President in advance of the meeting.

1. As of April 12, acceptances are up by 1600 students over this time last year, and the delta continues to grow each week. This year's incoming class is expected to be well above expectations across the university. With the growing sizes of our freshman classes, there is an increasing burden on those departments that provide required courses such as math, chemistry, physics, engineering education. This issue has already had a significant impact on the instructorate of the department of English (e.g., ENGL 1105 & 1106, or ENGL 1204H).

What tangible support (new hires, GTA positions) will be provided to ensure that class sizes and quality of instruction do not suffer under the strain of increased demand due to this historic "enrollment bump" ("enrollment mountain")?

Comments from President Sands

- Sands noted that we have had 2 years of over enrollment and 2 years of underenrollment recently. Slow to 1.8% currently at 2%
- VT overhauled the admissions process this year because we changed the admissions process. Last year we undershot, but in 2017 we overshot. This year we are 100 behind where we were in 2017, and that was a real problem.
- The model suggests we're going to come in right on target with 6600 new first-year students and 1250 transfer students.
- We came in under the target last year, which left us \$10M short in revenue.
- The deans will come to the provost to ask for resources. Sands is not more concerned this year than in prior years.
- Enrollment numbers change every day. May 1 is the deadline for students to accept offers.
- Admissions moved everything earlier this year; students have gotten more information earlier than ever before, so they should be making decisions earlier. Sands explained that the earlier decisions are a result of our changes to get information to students much earlier.
- The goal is 30,000 undergraduates by 2033. We're up to about 27,000, and we have more headroom. Graduation rates are going up, so we have some positive trends in the works.
- Graduate enrollment is falling right now. Part of that is the visa issue, and there are other issues going on.
- We expect our professional masters programs to be growing quickly, although that is not the same across the board; the effects are different by different departments.
- Transfer students are up a bit; trying for 1250 this year; had 1000 last year and not sure if we'll meet that target.
- Total student debt was down last year for in-state students, but not for out of state students – out of state debt is still creeping up. VT is freezing tuition and increasing financial aid.

Discussion

- Enrollment data as of 4/19/19 was shared with the President. Response: The melt will take care of any over-enrollment. The university expects a very high melt this year, particularly for international students, given the current visa situation.
- Sands noted that since May 1 is the deadline for acceptance, departments and colleges will get new resources May 2. The resources will come very quickly.
- Question re department vs. college budgeting in the PIBB. Response: The PIBB allows us to have a data-informed, not a data-driven model. The goal is to have the PIBB provide information, not serve as a driver.
- Comment: How are we addressing differences in GTA compensation in comparison to other schools? VT is losing out to other schools that are paying more highly. Response: Right now the administration is looking at that, and trying to actually get systematic benchmarking.

2. President Sands met with the Faculty Senate (3/27/18), and the following is an excerpt from the minutes:

A senator asked President Sands if the cost of faculty time is considered in some decisions about how to capture and use data. For example, has there been a cost/benefit analysis of EFARS? The president said we should be looking at these issues quantitatively, comparing the cost of time spent to the benefits accrued.

By my estimation, each annual completion of Elements EFARS is costing about \$5 million in faculty time¹. (The cost could be higher, but I have tried to be conservative in my time estimate; see attached.)

Although this cost cannot be eliminated completely, what strategic investments are being made toward reducing the amount of faculty time required?

Comments from President Sands

- VT brought Dwayne Pinkney onboard to help us address these issues. The administration realizes that our faculty are overburdened by having to spend time on administrative tasks. Some of those tasks could be done by staff, some electronically, and some eliminated. Sands has asked Pinkney to focus on faculty time. The first task force was staff compensation. The second is on faculty time and bureaucratic processes.
- Sands noted that the university doesn't require elements; Elements is a College-driven system. The university recognizes that the system is clunky and rough. Sands asked for a show of hands, and roughly 70-80% of senators present reported their departments were using it. Sands knows that we now have to subscribe to 7-8

¹ The number of faculty comes from [Institutional Research's faculty and staff "headcount" for Fall 2018](#), which includes 1,504 Tenure-Track Instructional Faculty, 1,606 Non-Tenure-Track Instructional Faculty, and 1,854 Administrative/Professional Faculty. It is possible many A/P Faculty do not complete EFARS, but Institutional Research includes them in the number of "Total Faculty," reported as 4,964. The average salary comes from the [Board of Visitors' meeting report/minutes](#) for August 27, 2018, which lists on page 2 the average faculty salary of \$104,519.

systems to help import information. Some colleges have hired student workers to help; some colleges are working with the library. We have to have an electronic system, and this effort/time issue is at the top of the agenda.

Discussion

- Multiple senators provided descriptions of their experiences using EFARs.
- Sands noted that faculty will always have to curate their records. He also noted that there should be tools that come with something like Elements that can also do things like update news feeds with recent faculty publications, etc.
- Question: How will the university manage the gaps in data as colleges use Elements differently? That is, different colleges will be providing different data inputs to the university. Responses: Information is coming from other sources as well. Sands notes that there is still, and always will be, manual work involved. He is aware of the differences in different systems and knows that there are concerns about all of these issues. Elements is an input, but not a central one.
- Question: What is the process university-wide when we have to select new systems? Response: We have one, but Sands cannot provide details, and instead encouraged the Senate to ask Pinkney. There is a group that makes a recommendation, but Pinkney has the details on how that process happens.
- Question: We are spending quite a lot of time wrestling Elements into submission, but we have a lot of expertise on this campus that we do not take advantage of. Response: Sands will bring this back to Pinkney.
- Sands notes that we do try to roll things out in pieces to get people to try things.
- Comment: Faculty have little to no power over colleges to inform how Elements is implemented. The differences in implementation by college are pretty substantial and there's no way to have faculty drive the discussion. Sands hasn't been in meetings with the Provost and the Deans about this issue, and indicated that he considers it more of an issue for the Provost. He did note that it's not a good strategy for deans to sit back and wait on Elements. College have to use Elements for the PIBB, and Sands says that it makes sense.
- Sands notes that there is no way to get faculty effort to zero, but the goal is to have a system that requires less effort than paper. Now it seems to be more, but the target is less. "We've heard you and the Provost's office is moving forward with Deans."
- The number one priority for Pinkney is to get rid of a lot of the paper processes and make more processes electronic.

3. Meshing the multiplicity of faculty views and the administrative focus on hierarchically pursued goals into something approaching common purpose is a complex endeavor.

What are your thoughts on the strengths and weakness of shared governance? How have your views on shared governance changed since you've been president, if at all?

Comments from President Sands

- Sands noted that VT is his third round with three different sets of approaches to shared governances. What's changed since he's been here is the increased role of Faculty Senate, and the potential for more formalizations.
- The system is different here than at his last 2 institutions, and he finds it impressive that we have voices of people other than faculty.
- He is pleased that we have made progress and feels like we're addressing problems and challenges.
- One thing that he hasn't seen before that is special is that we have 4 representatives to the Board of Visitors: one each for faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduate students. This representation creates dialogue.
- The best part of shared governance for him is the advisory group that meets monthly. About 10 people meet every month so that students, faculty, staff, UDPs, the provost, and the president can talk about what the core issues are and what's coming up for individual constituencies and where the conflicts and opportunities are.
- He believes the formal processes work and is happy with where they are. He created an office of policies and procedures (Kim O'Rourke), and has seen a big improvement in that area and a whole level of improved processes.

Discussion

- Sands skipped service as department head and dean, and went straight to provost. Question: What's been most helpful for him? Sands noted that his big mistake when he became provost was trusting that the deans were telling him what he needed to know. He's found that the best way for him to get information is through random lunches with faculty or students or staff. Those are the conversations where he learns what's going on.
 - Sands noted that in terms of a search for someone to head the Ombuds Office, the university was negotiating an offer.
4. In your recent Beyond Boundaries update, you said "Virginia Tech is currently in the No. 251-300 range in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. Increasing our global ranking drives improvement in those areas that are key to our success, such as research, recruiting talent, and developing partnerships." This statement seems reversed--if we focus on research, talent, and partnerships, our ranking should increase. The concern is that we are putting the cart before the horse, and allowing rankings to dictate the direction of the university.

Why should we allow one publication to shape the university, and why, given similar goals in the past that were not met, should we invest time and energy into a single ranking that may not improve?

Comments from President Sands

- Rankings should never drive what we do. At best they are an imperfect proxy for things that we want.

- The short answer is that prospective faculty and grad students look at rankings, so we can't get away from that. Rankings matter in recruitment, especially in international recruitment. He has seen that in different programs, and he sees that there is a substantially different pool depending on a university's global rankings.
- He agrees that it is putting the cart before the horse and notes that we can't sustainably drive the rankings up.
- Sands is worried that VT does not have the global ranking that it deserves. We need to be more visible. He compares us to US Public Land Grants when he looks at where we are in the rankings, and tracks where we are in terms of these peers. The one that's most aligned at the global level is the Times Higher Education ranking. The others all have too many problems and limitations, but the Times seems to line up reasonably pretty well, and it has us at 17 among US Public Land Grants. The top 13 are all in the AAU. We've never said publically that we want to be in the AAU; universities have to be voted in. Sands thinks that it's important for us to get into AAU, but we can't easily get ourselves into that space. We'd have to improve by 35% or so from where we are now to get there, along with reputations. Sands notes that we are an engaged university in a way he's never seen, but there's no way to measure that. He doesn't want to drive toward a target that takes us away from our core values, but also notes that if we are drifting down in the rankings, we have to ask why.
- Sands sees becoming an AAU university as a long-term goal we should aspire to. There are advantages, but we don't want to take us off the track that we're on and away from our core values. On many metrics we're above some of our peers that are AAU, but we're below the pack.
- Sands doesn't pay attention to the USNWR, which focuses on undergraduate programs. They measure how much universities spend per student, and a public land grant with an access mission is never going to win at the USNWR game. But again, we should be paying attention to key metrics that we should be tracking.

Discussion

- Question: Where is the faculty salary metric as a milestone, along with the faculty:student ratio? Can these be incorporated into the strategic plan? Response: Those are in the current plan, and it would make sense to carry them over. It is a SCHEV goal to hit 60% (relative to our peers) on the faculty salary benchmark; we took a dip and are slowly climbing back.
- Question: We have just been talking about the challenge of getting information into Elements, so how good are the rankings? Response: Those rankings get their data from the big database companies, not through us. We do provide some numbers. We pay attention to the numbers. One of our biggest challenges is the university's name. Internationally we are known as VPI & SU. We have to do a lot of work to make sure we are aggregated correctly. The Commonwealth could change our name, but lots of alums care about the VPI part. There's a big demographic divide in terms of the name. Marshall Hahn changed us to VPI & SU.

- Comment: Virginia Tech is not a comprehensive name – it narrows us down to something not comprehensive. The name aligns us with either non-comprehensive institutions as well as with lower tier schools.
- Sands: We need to be thinking 20-30 years out as we think about the name. He notes that Georgia Tech and the other big tech schools are becoming more comprehensive because of the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary problems. Top tier techs are becoming more comprehensive. We are the only Tech that has some degree of balance, and we are ahead of the curve. At the same time, the liberal arts universities are racing to get technology into them. Technology is now central to all disciplines-- basic technological literacy is embedded in a lot of disciplines.

5. What are the BOV and administration plans to address salary compression and other equity adjustments for long-time faculty and other employees?

Comments from President Sands

- The Board is very aware of salary compression because we talk about it all the time--not just for faculty, but for staff and for AP faculty. He noted the raise to \$12/hr and the bonus for our lowest-paid staff, which also had a bump to the next couple of pay bands. There is a high commitment to trying to address salary compression. The university encourages the deans and department heads to make compression corrections. Sands notes that in fields like CS, salaries are growing by 10%/year, so compression is really bad. Pinkney and HR are looking at compression as well and trying to address it. Deans and department heads have to do it for faculty. It is hard to do when the raises are 1%, and easier when they are at 3% (this year the base raise was 2.7%). We have to stay on top of it.

6. 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 have 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 its current space on N. Main Street and convert it to a non-profit childcare center but needs some partners to make it happen?

Comments from President Sands

- ABCs (Alliance for Better Childcare Strategies) has been a key issue. VT has a big seat at the table, and we are trying to partner with the community. One key concern is that if VT solves the problem for ourselves, we'd draw all the talent from the community and local companies will be left high and dry. We are currently working

with the YMCA; Kindercare (which is opening the new center on Country Club) is going to look at opening a second facility. Pinkney is also going to open a group to look at what we can do unilaterally if we aren't getting enough traction from/through ABCs. That working group is getting going now. Sands notes that it is a big issue that is on the radar and we are working on it.

7. I would like to hear President Sands' vision for protecting the NOVA campus specifically (and the entire university more generally) from simply becoming a vocational training ground for Amazon.

How will we make the NOVA campus comprehensive? More generally, how will we maintain our ability to analyze corporate behavior objectively and criticize those behaviors that harm the public good, such as those described as "exploitive" and "brutal work culture," if we continue to pursue corporate partnerships? Do we pursue these at all costs? Are there any corporate partnerships you would turn down?

Comments from President Sands

- We have turned down corporate partnerships.
- We do not have an MOU with Amazon. We have an MOU with the state to address the dire need for technology talent. It was announced with the Amazon deal because they were co-negotiated, but our partnership is with the state.
- We do have a lot of corporate partners, but we also turn down a lot of opportunities. Most partnerships are the hands of faculty, but some are at the university level.
- Tech Talent Pipeline is what the state funds. We are funded to graduate, in about 8 years, 750 masters level students per year from NOVA and 500 more CS/software engineers per year. The state has funded growth in these disciplines in Blacksburg and NOVA, with \$300M to B'burg and \$250M to NOVA. But that's just what state is funding; we can create a more comprehensive center with our own money, other partnerships, etc. We need people with expertise on ethics, policies, human capital, etc., because these are big areas that we have a lot of expertise and talent in. Sands believes we can do something special with the Innovation Campus to bring the full comprehensive experiences there.
- The university looks at corporate partners pretty carefully.

Discussion

- Question: Is this a chance to consolidate the different programs that are up in NOVA? Response: Philosophically yes, but practically probably not. We have 7 big sites up there, located where the programs and partners are, so it's a localized service model. The philosophy will be to keep them localized, but we need strategies to bring them together and link them more clearly. There might be some movement, but it's about being in the right/needed place. The big questions revolve around the grad school presence in Falls Church because of the big redevelopment there, and that will impact us. We'll have to make some choices about what to do. We got unsolicited proposals inviting us to partner in developing that site. UVA is moving out of the Falls Church Center to consolidate. We are purchasing its part and doing

some major renovation because we'll be there for a while regardless. We are not trying to consolidate all of NOVA into one space.

- Question: Is there a strategy to collaborate with the other state institutions to build a shared library resource? Response: Great idea. We just hired our second employee for the Innovation Camp; the person is in government relations, working with partnerships and collaborators in the area. Sands hasn't heard about any library issues.

8. The following question came from a member of staff.

I don't understand why we are still so paper-driven with our use of forms. Software has been out for over a decade that is secure so that people can submit documents across campus electronically.

For example: to assign access to many of our systems (HokieMart, Hokie Spa, etc.), I go online to request what I need, fill out an online "form," then I have to print it out, sign it, and send it in an envelope carried across campus by a human even though all the information (scanned invoices, fund #s) is in HokieMart already. Many of our forms are that way.

Our P-card system (Purchasing card) Is in essence a Bank of America Visa card. But to process expenses, I have to fill out:

- A log of expenses (an excel spreadsheet that show Vendor, Description, Fund #, etc.)
- Print out a statement sheet from BOA to confirm/match charges to the actual Billing Statement I got in the mail from BOA
- If travel, I have to print out all ticket info, plus another piece of paper showing Fund#, Vendor, description.
- I then have to make copies for our Business Manager, a copy for my file, then send it over to be paid.

In the real-world, the credit card company has software that can be customized (Oracle has software as well). When it is billing time, I can log in and all of our charges are there; there are dropdowns with Fund#, descriptions of what the items are, etc. I can fill this out on-line and submit to our Procurement Dept to be paid – NO PAPER.

We did it at my old company that has 8500 employees around the world. This is scalable. We are not that big of a business. I am concerned because this inefficient duplication of effort is a waste of our billable hours.

Comments from President Sands

- Note that this question was covered previously and Pinkney is working on it.

Concluding points

- Regarding enrollment, Sands noted that we can handle 6900 students, but that 7000 will be a problem.
- Sands noted that we have a culture that is risk averse, and that has served us well financially in so many ways. We have a lot of financial sustainability, and our administrative costs are lower than peers. But the risk is that perhaps we're a little too risk averse and we need to be a bit more agile.

6. Other business

University Personnel Committee Update (Joe Merola).

Merola reported that the university P&T process was in a very good place. The University Committee is there to make sure that all university policies related to promotion and tenure have been followed appropriately. Merola noted that it is significant work, but it is a very good committee to be part of.

American Association of University Professors (Joe Merola).

Merola invited everyone to consider becoming a member. Nationally, the AAUP is very active in standing up for faculty rights and concerns. The organization has a sliding scale in terms of dues. VT has a relatively small chapter (~50 faculty), but it is important to note that the chapter played a big role in past changes in administrators. VT has significant needs in terms of faculty who feel that they haven't been treated fairly, and AAUP plays a key role in that space.

Commission on University Support (Ryan Speer)

The Commission has charged the IT Tech and Services Support Committee to produce a document (e.g., resource request, recommendation, resolution) to address the problems with software procurement. The Commission heard a presentation from key individuals in Procurement as well as University Legal Council. A subcommittee has been charged to investigate the process and develop a better way to handle software procurement to better meet the ongoing needs of faculty. The subcommittee will be meeting this summer and into the fall, with a target of November. Key points are as follows:

- Speer encouraged the Faculty Senate to send someone to the meeting.
- Question: What changed and why? IT says nothing has changed in the process, but the number of requests is skyrocketing and software companies are becoming less responsive to university requests and concerns regarding agreements. Thus it is not really a change in the process, but rather changes in both the volume and the nature of contracts. Companies are less willing to negotiate with us because they have a substantial market to choose from, so VT has significantly less leverage than in the past, but the university is still bound by state contract law.
- The committee's charge also includes a request for more transparency in the process. IT notes that not all the slowdown is on their end; department IT is also part of the slowdown. The goal is a more transparent process so that faculty know where their requests are and who to contact or follow up with to prompt action. They want faculty to be able to know the status of their requests and where/what the challenges are.
- University Legal Council has hired one new person to help, but they are currently overwhelmed with work associated with the School of Medicine. Once that's wrapped up, the goal is to bring that person to focus on IT issues. The goal is to get a sense of what IT needs and how we can advocate for resources.
- There is no current plan to address this with human resources; they have a new software package.
- For faculty concerned about the process, contact them sooner rather than later.

Senate Feedback

Ferris requested feedback in terms of both what went well this year and what Senators would like to see improved.

7. Adjourn

The Senate adjourned at 4:18 p.m.