

# Faculty Senate Agenda & Minutes

August 30, 2019, 2:30-4:30pm

Location: NCB 160 (or [via Zoom](#) for those outside Blacksburg)

*Present:* Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Mehdi Ahmadian, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Michael Borowski, Leandro Castello, Eloise Coupey, George Davis, Sam Doak, John Galbraith, William Galloway, Ellen Gilliland, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, Roie Hauser, James Hawdon, Dana Hawley, Eunju Hwang, Christine Kaestle, Eric Kaufman, Bradley Klein, Jake Lahne, Zachary Mackey, Paul Marek, Eric Martin, Mike Nappier, Amy Nelson, Marie Parette, R. Scott Pleasant, Robin Queen, Emily Satterwhite, Todd Schenk, Ashley Shew, Ryan Speer, Jim Tokuhisa, Vinodh Venkatesh, Layne Watson, Robert Weiss, Anthony Wright de Hernandez, Liqing Zhang

*Guests:* Coogan Thompson (GSA), Madelynn Todd (BOV), Cyril Clarke (Provost), Reese Ramos (Ombuds)

## 1. Approval of Agenda

- Agenda approved by unanimous consent.

## 2. Approval of Minutes (5 minutes)

- Minutes of August 16<sup>th</sup> approved with minor edit.

## 3. Announcements (5 minutes)

- Update from Governance Committee
  - The "[Principles of Shared Governance](#)" were shared as a starting point. This will guide future decisions about structure and process.
- Horacio A. Valeiras, Rector of Board of Visitors, will visit with the Faculty Senate on September 13<sup>th</sup>.
- Reminder: There is ongoing attention to [faculty workload equity](#).
  - On Nov. 21-22 KerryAnn O'Meara and Kiernan Matthews will visit. Email Bob Hicok with requests or suggestions for workshops, meetings, etc.

## 4. Topic: Discussion of Enrollment (and Other Faculty Items)

- Cyril Clarke, Executive Vice President & Provost, addressed questions provided by Senators:
  - Question: From what I understand, this year's undergraduate admissions process assumed a yield rate distinctly lower than what has been seen in recent years. This was done in spite of several improvements to the admissions process, preview weekends, etc., that one would expect to increase the yield. Luisa Havens Gerardo told the Senate this was done because the number of early decision offers was significantly reduced this year, and these have a yield as high as 97%, so fewer early decisions should translate to a lower overall yield. Now, unless I'm mistaken, students who apply for early decision but are not offered entry through this program are then transferred to the regular admissions process. Since the subset of applicants who were not given early decision this year but would have been admitted this way in years past consists of students who are both very strong and highly motivated to come to VT, they could reasonably be expected to both be offered admission through the regular process, and also accept at a very high rate. In other words, one should in fact not expect that cutting back on early

decisions would reduce the yield appreciably. Could this be one reason VT overshot so badly in this year's admissions?

- Answer: This is difficult to answer, because we don't know why the acceptance rate declined so much in 2018. The uncertainty resulted in more offers for 2019. We could debate the rationale, but the end result was that we failed to reach the enrollment goal for 2019. Many people are now working through the consequences. We are now recalibrating our enrollment planning. We will not be able to identify initial estimates until after the enrollment census this fall; however, we will have fewer students joining Virginia Tech next year than we did this year. President Sands' goal remains to have an enrollment of 30,000 by 2023. Yield rates are informed by historic data, and this year's data is helpful for better future predictions. The [Enrollment Management team](#) is meeting with individual academic programs to discern their capacity for enrollment. The desired diversity of enrollment is based on a variety of factors, including a state mandate on the ratio of in-state to out-of-state students. A predictive model has been prepared to run simulations and test whether the approach to admission offers is likely to be appropriate for meeting enrollment guides. An enrollment advisory committee is being formed with representation from a variety of units, including nominations from academic colleges, as well as a representative from the Faculty Senate. Future plans include more use of a waitlist strategy, which would be used some, but not much, since the yield rate for waitlists is very low. Yield rates for different academic programs vary widely. The Enrollment Management team is continuing to look at where the process went wrong last year, but we may never know. Our focus is to use as much information as we can to do a better job in the future. Overall total yield rates are a composition of yield rates for individual programs, and it is difficult to discuss all of that at a high level. The enrollment advisory committee will approach these issues at the more detailed level.
- A Senator suggested future predictions should include both fine-grained analysis and a face-validity check based on the higher-level data. Provost Clarke agreed and indicated this is why faculty will be on the enrollment advisory committee. It is a culture change for the university to rely more heavily upon expertise of faculty, rather than relying solely on internal analysis or hiring external consultants.
- The financial offers to students to defer admissions yielded almost no result. The melt rate over the summer continued to be low (consistent with prior years).
- In the predictive model for student acceptance, five of the top ten variables are related to financial issues. Another large factor is based on student visits. The predictive model continues to evolve, but it is limited in part by the types of variables that can be recognized. This year, the University was able to spread financial aid across more students.
- A Senator asked about the impact of undergraduate enrollment on graduate enrollment. The Provost noted there is no direct impact on graduate enrollment, but there are indirect effects. Declining graduate enrollment is a concern for the Provost, and he formed a task force on graduate enrollment that has been meeting over the summer. Other institutions in our area have improved graduate enrollment in recent years, and the Provost believes Virginia Tech can do better.

- In future years, there may be ways for the University to better leverage faculty expertise in decisions that require a rapid response. This is something to consider in ongoing conversations about governance.
- Question: In an era when faculty are asked to do more and more things every year (with numerous “unfunded mandates” coming down from above and increases in all types of regulatory oversight), how are you going to help protect faculty time so that research faculty can continue to generate the grant dollars that are critical for providing our students with research opportunities, keeping graduate enrollment strong, and bringing in overhead for the university?
  - Answer: The Provost invited the Senate to continue to help better inform his colleagues about this challenge. The University is investing in various compliance entities that are helping. The PIBB model is designed to help with this, because it directs funding to units where support is most needed. There is still work to do on [EFARS \(Electronic Faculty Activity Reporting\)](#). The build out of EFARS is challenged by the variety differences among faculty activity, but the college deans have conveyed how important the data is.
  - A Senator noted the University needs to rethink its approach to valuing service. The Provost acknowledged the University needs to have a clearer understanding of how FTE is allocated to various commitments. The data is really valuable, but faculty are often resistant to sharing the data, because faculty generally value independence with how they allocate their time.
  - A Senator questioned whether all colleges will be required to use EFARS this year. The Provost noted the best current strategy is to encourage all to use it, but it is not yet at a point where he is comfortable requiring it. The current software package is the best commercially available, and the team is working to improve it. The caution about going too far into homegrown applications is that they become out-of-date and dysfunctional within a relatively short period of time.
  - A Senator noted concerns about large amounts of time devoted to university initiatives, like Pathways and Destination Areas. The Provost acknowledged ongoing tensions about valuing service while avoiding scenarios where faculty service prevents faculty from appropriately investing in research and scholarship.
  - The Provost noted how many university processes, like IRB, may seem like a burden, yet the compliance is critical for keeping people out of jail and allowing the research enterprise to continue.
- The following questions were presented to the Provost in advance of the meeting but unanswered due to time constraints:
  - Last year you spoke with the Faculty Senate cabinet about increasing the role of experiential learning at Virginia Tech. Have you been able to continue those discussions with other groups, and if so, what stands out from those conversations?
  - What do you see as some advantages that will arise from this fall semester over-enrollment of undergraduates?
  - During a faculty meeting Spring semester President Sands was asked how the University is addressing Faculty salary compression. President Sands stated that would be addressed at the college and department level. However, when deans and department chairs were asked about this, they indicated their hands are tied due to lack of funding. Can you comment on this?

- Where do things stand with the [Partnership for an Incentive Based Budget \(PIBB\)](#), and how do we ensure the PIBB does not drive decisions in a way that negatively impacts the student learning experience?
- Climate change is one of the greatest problems facing the world. Among faculty, you are in a much better place to speak to the kind and extent of research going on at Tech related to this issue. Would you say we are very active in this area? Should this be something we focus on and try to marshal resources around?
- You've no doubt been following the University of California's decision to opt out of its "big deal" contract with the mega-publisher Elsevier. How do you think Virginia Tech should be approaching the problem of escalating journal costs? If we were to follow the path taken by the UC system, what would we tell faculty and students who rely on these journals?

**5. Introduction:** [Virginia Tech Ombuds Office](#) Q&A

- [Reese Ramos](#), Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner Director, provided a brief introduction. He can engage in confidential conversations and help faculty consider options in difficult situations. The Office is independent, reporting directly to President Sands, which allows for separation from other units. Although he does not keep records, he sees patterns with conversations. Many situations are interpersonal and focus on either accountability or responsibility. His office is currently in 381 Steger Hall, but it will be eventually relocated to 620 North Main. His phone number is 1-3125.

**6. Other Business**

- Eric Kaufman provided an update on the [Nominations and Elections](#) for [Commissions, Committees, & Councils](#). While a few vacancies remain, we will send a notice for electronic voting to confirm the nominations and elections for those with willing volunteers.
- Jim Hawdon is coordinating consideration of changes to Bylaws concerning Senator Eligibility. However, he needed to leave before we had time to consider this, so it will be addressed at a future Senate meeting.

**7. Adjourn**

- Formally adjourned at 4:07pm.

*Respectfully submitted by Eric Kaufman, Faculty Senate Secretary.*