Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
November 3, 2023 @ 2:30pm
Torgersen 1050 or Via Zoom

Check-In:

Present: Joe Merola (presiding), Monty Abbas, Luke Achenie, Onwubiko Agozino, Diane Agud, Kaveh Akbari Hamed (alternate for Saied Taheri), Richard Ashley, Albert Auguste, Paul Avey, Azziza Bankole, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Young Cao (alternate for Bimal Viswanath), Guopeng Cheng, Josh Clemons, Mark Coggins, Nicholas Copeland, Kristy Daniels, Ashley Dayer, Jonathan Everett, Stuart Feigenbaum, Carla Finkelstein, Bruce Friedman (alternate for Robin Panneton), Zhuo Fu, Rodney Gaines, Scott Gartner, David Gregory, David Hicks, Daniel Hindman, Morgan Holder (alternate for Wesley Gwaltney), Mantu Hudait, Joseph Hughes, Scott Huxtable, Ran Jin, Bryan Katz, Alex Kinnaman, Leigh-Anne Krometis, Catherine Larochelle, Evan Lavender-Smith, Renee LeClair, Justin Lemkul, Kimberly Loeffert, Gary Long, Charles Lowery, Guo-Quan Lu, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Michelle (Shelly) Maycock, Ali Mehrizi-Sani, Rachel Miles, Gonzalo Montero, Gregory Novack, Yuchin Pan, Nicole Pitterson, Cori Ruktanonchai, Susanna Rinehart, Nino Ripepi, Nicholas Robbins, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Adrian Sandu, Charles Schleupner, Karen Schnatterly, Yang Shao, Richard Shryock, Charles Smith, Jay Teets, Jim Tokuhisa, Kwok Tsui, Alp Tural (alternate for Bill Green), Costin Untaroiu, Rose Wesche, Ashley Wilkinson, Erin Worthington, Randolph Wynne, Hehuang Xie, Yan Xu, Diane Zahm

Guests: Marc DeBonis, Laurel Miner, April Myers, Amy Sebring, Dee Dee Somervell

Absent with Notice: Scott Case, Carolyn Commer, Rebecca Funk, Jim Hawdon, Rebecca Hester, Robin Panneton, Chelsea Thompto, Jerald Walz, Robert Weiss, Lizette Zietsman

Absent: James Casey, Rebecca Cockrum, Leanna House, Young-Teck Kim, Zhange Ni, Thomas O'Donnell, Steve Rideout, Hans Robinson, Stephanie Smith, Eric Stanley, Keith Stephenson, Laura Strawn, Jeffrey Walling, Shane Wang, Angelica Witcher Walker, Lizette Zietsman

Call to Order by the President Joe Merola at 2:32
Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Joe Merola)
- Consent agenda was adopted:

Business Agenda

Old Business

1. Updates and announcements from committees, commissions, and University Council are available on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site
   a. Meeting minutes from the Faculty Senate of Virginia and the Transportation and Parking Committee are available.
2. Joe Merola called for nominations from the floor for faculty senate representatives to the Faculty Senate of Virginia and the Commission on Faculty Affairs. No nominations were received. Nominations will be accepted, and elections held at a future meeting.

New Business

3. Joe Merola introduced discussion on draft Policy 7010, Policy for Securing Technology Resources and Services, and draft Policy 7035, Privacy Policy for Employees' Electronic Communications.
   a. The Board of Visitors passed a resolution in March 2023 directing the university to enhance security. The resolution included requirements to revise relevant policies and ensure transparency. The authority for this task was delegated to the executive vice president and chief operating officer, Amy Sebring.
   b. Both draft policies were submitted to the Faculty Senate previously and introduced to senators earlier this semester. Many new senators are unfamiliar with the details surrounding these policies.
4. A question-and-answer session was held, focused on IT Transformation and related policies:
   a. Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Amy Sebring provided additional background information.
      i. The IT transformation process has been a multi-year effort and a focus of the Board of Visitors. IT security, past breaches, and current security threats were described. IT security encompasses everything from ensuring that Virginia Tech remains operational to securing information.
      ii. One of the recommendations during the transformation process was to implement endpoint protection, which became a concern for many during the spring semester. The Board of Visitors tasked Virginia Tech to update relevant policies, 7010 and 7035. Executive Vice President

Sebring indicated the importance of ensuring that the campus understands the process encompassed by these policies and that there are no unintended consequences that would impact an employee's ability to complete their work. The policies were distributed to all senates and feedback has been received by various groups. Feedback from the Faculty Senate specific to the items above is requested.

b. A question was posed regarding the creation of an independent oversight board to ensure that the technology is not misused. Concerns exist regarding misuse and protection of free speech, and oversight boards are recommended by many IT professionals.

    i. Technical aspects of the technology were summarized by Marc DeBonis (Collaborative Computing Solutions, IT). When an alert about a possible threat is received, a ticket is created. Responses are triggered based on the level of the alert. Many items are resolved automatically without contacting the user. Additional information can be found on the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer web site at https://evpcoo.vt.edu/Initiatives/ittransformation/projects/cybersecurity/improved-endpoint-protection.html

c. Additional suggestions of unintended consequence were offered, including the undermining of shared governance and potential loss of the ability to contribute on important matters due to an increase in administrative scope. Executive Vice President Sebring stated that conversations around endpoint protection should have been initiated earlier and provided a commitment to increased communication.

d. A timeline was requested for when the Faculty Senate can provide feedback on these two policies. The Faculty Senate will request feedback via email to individual senators. Comments will be compiled and provided to the administration.

5. Justin Lemkul presented for 2nd Reading and Vote CFA Resolution 2023-2024A: Resolution to Revise the Description of Faculty Senate Standing Committees in the Faculty Senate Constitution.

a. This resolution provides revisions to Section I, Article VIII of the Faculty Senate Constitution, which describes the Faculty Senate Standing Committees. Legal Counsel advised that the current language regarding the committees potentially obligates the senate to address any issue presented. Current revisions better define scope and provide flexibility.

b. A motion was made to adopt the resolution and seconded. Motion carried. Voting: 53 Yes, 1 No, 2 Abstain

6. Laurel Miner, Assistant Vice President and Chief of Staff for Research and Innovation, presented for discussion and comment COR Resolution 2023-24B: Resolution to Revise Policies 13005 and 3020 on Center and Institute Establishment, Oversight, and Governance and Financial and Administrative Procedures.
    a. Several concerns were shared:
        i. In the past, specific language supported the application of faculty from departments outside of an institute's area.
        ii. The requirement for provost approval. The Commission on Research has made some revisions, including changes regarding provost review. New sponsored centers must have a unique name and acronym. Once approved, logistical information will be submitted to the provost.
        iii. Comments of concern were shared about the first criterion listed for establishing a center: Fulfill a need that cannot be met through existing organizational units. Comments were made that this language can be interpreted in different ways. Laurel Miner stated that the purpose of this specific criterion is to establish the rationale for a new organization and is considered best practice.
    b. The policy specifies that only organizations created through the policy can be called a center. There are organizations on campus that currently call themselves centers or institutes but were not created through this process. These organizations will have one year from policy approval to decide whether to change their name or submit a letter of intent to become an established center.
7. Carla Finkelstein presented for discussion and comment COR Resolution 2023-24A: Resolution to Revise Policy 13040: Virginia Tech Human Subjects Research Policy.
    a. All updates in this policy are revisions required to ensure compliance with federal regulations.
8. Joe Merola introduced the request for feedback on shared governance. When the current form of shared governance was adopted by the Board of Visitors, the approved resolution included a requirement that the University Council Cabinet review the governance system the first two years after implementation. The University Council Cabinet is conducting this first-year review, with support provided by the Office of the Vice President for Policy and Governance.
    a. A survey of the campus community has been conducted, and collected data is being compiled and reviewed.

b. Discussion questions have been provided to the senates, commissions, and other groups such as dean's and department head's groups. These groups have been asked to obtain feedback from their members.

c. Comments provided by faculty senators in response to the discussion questions follow.

- How well are the approval path of a resolution and timeline understood? How might this be streamlined?
    - o Concern was expressed that many people may not understand the approval process. Senators recommended presentations for new senators that provide an overview of the shared governance process and the resources currently available on the shared governance webpage.
    - o Submitting a draft at the beginning of the resolution process is difficult and requires a lot of resources. A recommendation was made to submit only the draft notice form, in lieu of a draft resolution, for University Council Cabinet review.

- Has it been difficult to fill the positions on your commission/senate? If so, what do you think is the reason(s)?
    - o Senators report the following difficulties with filling positions: Faculty do not receive a lot of credit for serving as a senator. As a senator you also must represent the senate on commission or committee posts, which is challenging given the workload. Different departments view service differently, and many encourage faculty to not participate in shared governance, but instead prefer service to be at the college or department level.
    - o Comments were made that the Faculty Senate has much more influence under the new system. Under the previous system, the senate was only consultative.
    - o A suggestion was made to reach out to deans and department heads to increase understanding of the faculty's role in the new shared governance system and to encourage them to promote it to their faculty.
    - o A current resolution brought forth by the Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs was mentioned. This resolution would add a statement of the University's support for participation in both the shared governance system and professional development opportunities to all staff job postings. Conversations have been held about adding a similar statement across other job categories, including faculty.

- Are you satisfied with the transparency of the shared governance system?
    - o Some faculty expressed dissatisfaction and mentioned the IT Transformation as an example. Conversation was held around the

need to clarify the difference between transparency of the shared governance system and transparency of the university administration.

9. Justin Lemkul reported on proposed changes to the University Council Constitution and Bylaws. While some of the changes are helpful, concerns have been expressed about part of the updated language. The Faculty Senate Policies and Procedures Committee has drafted initial comments on these proposed changes.

Open Floor Discussion

10. The Board of Visitors Meeting will be held on November 5 and 6. Joe Merola will present the Faculty Senate Constituency report. Expected topics include transparency and shared governance. Any senators that would like to suggest other topics for inclusion in the report are asked to provide those to Joe via email.

11. The importance of having representation on the Faculty Senate of Virginia was mentioned, including the need to stay informed about upcoming items within the state, and the ability to provide a viewpoint on behalf of Virginia Tech.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 4:24 p.m.