Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
February 2, 2024 @ 2:30pm
Torgersen 1050 or Via Zoom

Check-In:

Present: Joe Merola (presiding), Monty Abbas, Luke Achenie, Onwubiko Agozino, Diane Agud, Kaveh Akbari Hamed, Richard Ashley, Paul Avey, Azziza Bankole, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Scott Case, Guopeng Cheng, Josh Clemons, Rebecca Cockrum, Nicholas Copeland, Kristy Daniels, AShley Dayer, Jonathan Everett, Stuart Feigenbaum, carla finkielstein, April Fu, Becky Funk, Rodney Gaines, Scott Gartner, David Gregory, Wesley Gwaltney, Jim Hawdon, David HIcks, Daniel Hindman, Leanna House, Mantu Hudait, Ran Jin, Bryan Katz, Alex Kinnaman, Leigh-Anne Krometis, Andrea L'Afflitto (alternate for Kwok Tsui), Evan Lavender-Smith, Renee LeClair, Justin Lemkul, Kim Loeffert, Gary Long, Charles Lowery, Guo-Quan Lu, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Rachel Miles, Gonzalo Montero, Zhange Ni, Greg Novack, Yuchin Pan, Robin Panneton, Nicole Pitterson, Zarah Quinn (alternate for Shelly Maycock), Steve Rideout, Nicholas Robbins, Cori Ruktanonchai, Charles J. Schleupner, Karen Schnatterly, Yang Shao, Richard Shryock, Stephanie Smith, Jay Teets, Chelsea Thompto, Jim Tokuhisa, Alp Tural (alternate for Bill Green), Bimal Viswanath, Jeff Walling, Jerald Walz, Rose Wesche, Ashley Wilkinson, Angelica Witcher Walker, Randolph Wynne, Diane Zahm, Lu Zhang (alternate for Nazila Roofigari-Esfah), Lizette Zietsman (74)

Guests: E. Fanny Jasso-Hernandez, April Myers, Frank Osei, Dee Dee Somervell (4)

Absent with Notice: Carolyn Commer, Tommy O'Donnell, Susanna Rinehart (3)

Absent: Jonathan Auguste, Mark Coggins, Rebecca Hester, Joseph Hughes, Scott Huxtable, Casey Jim, Young-Teck Kim, Catherine Larochelle, Jason Malone, Ali Mehrizi-Sani, Nino Ripepi, Hans Robinson, Adrian Sandu, Eric Stanley, Keith Stephenson, Laura Strawn, Costin Untaroiu, Shane Wang, Erin Worthington, Hehuang Xie, Yan Xu (21)

Call to Order by the President Joe Merola at 2:43

Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Joe Merola)

- The minutes for 01-19-2024 (Link) were adopted.

- The agenda for 02-02-2024 ([Link](#)) was presented.
  - A motion was made and seconded to amend the agenda to include the election of a new representative to the Commission on Faculty Affairs as an item of New Business. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried.

Business Agenda

Old Business

1. Updates and announcements from Committees, Commissions, and University Council are available on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site.
2. The university has selected Sharon Pitt to serve as Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer. Vice President Pitt began this role in early February.
3. A second pop-up faculty club will be held at the Moss Arts Center on Thursday, February 22, hosted by the Department Heads Executive Council and sponsored by the Office of Faculty Affairs.

New Business

4. Evan Lavender-Smith introduced University Council Resolution 2023-24A – Resolution to Revise the University Council Bylaws. This resolution is currently in the Senate comment period and scheduled for first reading at the February 5 University Council meeting.
   a. The Faculty Senate Policies and Procedures Committee provided preliminary information on the resolution during a December Faculty Senate meeting. Following additional committee discussions, the Policies and Procedures Committee recommends the following revisions.
      i. Several wording changes to increase clarity.
      ii. Article II. Meetings of the University Council Cabinet. The committee recommends changing language to state that regular meetings may be canceled or postponed for cause "when deemed appropriate by the co-chairs" and that electronic votes may be conducted "when deemed appropriate by the co-chairs."
      iii. Article III. Policy Review and Recommendation Process, Section 2. Communication. Recommends changing the term "Resolution Proposal" to "Resolution Notice" and adds the term "Draft Resolution" to minimize confusion.
      iv. Article III. Policy Review and Recommendation Process, Section 2. Communication. Comments have been received from commission

chairs regarding the current requirement for a draft resolution to be submitted to the University Council Cabinet. This process requires significant effort by commission chairs before University Council Cabinet review. Clarification was provided that the resolution removes the requirement to submit a formal draft to the University Council Cabinet. Instead, a Resolution Proposal form that describes the resolution concept is required. Additional discussion was held on the following related topics.

- The University Council Cabinet determines whether a resolution fits within the charge of the commission that presents it. The Cabinet also considers whether resolutions may have legal, human resources, or budgetary implications. The University Council Cabinet makes decisions by membership vote.
- It was noted that not every topic should go through shared governance. Efforts are being made to identify what topics are appropriate to shared governance, but the senate feels that this discussion should be held with the campus community before final decisions are made. The Faculty Senate was asked to distribute a copy of commissions and their charges to senators.
- If the University Council Cabinet does not agree that a resolution fits within a commission charge, the commission or senate leadership may follow the procedure outlined in the University Council bylaws for appealing to the University Council.
- Discussion was held about the scope of projects that the Faculty Senate may undertake. In addition to creating resolutions that must go through the shared governance process, the senate can also write statements and publish philosophies regarding matters of interest, which require approval only by the senate itself.

    v. <u>Article III. Section 7. Senate Comments on Resolutions</u>. Recommends reducing the timeframe for senates to offer comments on resolutions upon receipt of the Draft Resolution Proposal Notice to five business days after a commission approves a resolution.

b. The Faculty Senate Cabinet's recommendation is to comment on the resolution. Comments will be presented to the University Council Cabinet.

5. Justin Lemkul presented the Commission on Faculty Affairs 2023-24B: Resolution to Approve Revised Extension Faculty Tracks for First Reading.

a. This resolution seeks to update language in the Faculty Handbook regarding faculty ranks for continued appointment extension faculty. No faculty have been hired on the Extension Continued Appointment Track since 2013. Extension faculty and College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Human Resources have been involved with the process and support the change.

6. Justin Lemkul presented the need to elect a representative to the Commission on Faculty Affairs.
   a. The commission meets on alternate Fridays from the Faculty Senate, from 10:30 a.m.–12:00 noon, with the next meeting being on February 9. The commission has several initiatives under discussion and expects to bring forward additional resolutions this spring.
   b. A call was made for self-nominations. No nominations were received from the floor.
   c. If anyone is willing to serve on the commission or submit a nomination, please notify either of the Faculty Senate officers.

7. Joe Merola provided a summary of the critical needs / reinvestment process.
   a. The Board of Visitors has directed a reinvestment exercise, which is part of the budget development process. The intention is to relocate 25 million over the next 5 years that will be used for important Virginia Tech initiatives, including the [Virginia Tech Advantage program](#).
   b. Virginia Tech has asked for critical needs requests from all areas of the university. During the next few months, the General Assembly will deliberate its budget and Virginia Tech's budgeting process will occur. All university units have been asked to identify 1-3 current activities that could be sunset or changed, freeing up money for reinvestments and allowing the university to move forward with important programs.
   c. Comments were shared about the potential effects this may have on certain colleges and programs. It was noted that this is a multi-year process and that it encompasses all areas of the university including administrative units, not just academic colleges.

8. A recap and discussion of the Global Distinction Steering Committee Retreat was presented by Joe Merola and Rachel Miles.
   a. The steering committee is small but provides needed expertise. Dan Sui, senior vice president for research and innovation, and Don Taylor, executive vice provost, were appointed to co-chair the committee. The group's goal is to create a prototype recommendation of a plan to increase rankings. After the prototype is complete, broader groups will be engaged to create the actual plan and move forward.

b. The committee attended a retreat which included multiple presentations on subjects such as benchmarking, communication and marketing, and the graduate school. A follow-up meeting will be held in a few weeks.

c. During the retreat meeting, it was reported that the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR) rankings are believed to be aligned and overlap with AAU membership indicators. Virginia Tech is in the group of 251-300 for THE WUR. A listing of the top 20 Carnagie-class public land grants was also provided; Virginia Tech is closer to the bottom of the listing, tied for 17 out of 20. The university is focusing on moving up in the rankings.

d. Rachel Miles provided information specific to metrics.

   i. AAU use of productivity and research impact information was explained. Information regarding source overlap and unique information was presented.

   ii. The arts and humanities don't often receive as much coverage as other disciplines for multiple reasons. For example, faculty in these areas may focus on exhibitions, performances, or single author books.

   iii. The Faculty Senate approved a Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics last spring. The Commission on Faculty Affairs is discussing a resolution to have this statement endorsed at the university level, providing a message that all work and scholarship matters. This statement can be found here:

e. Discussion was held around rankings, metrics bias, AAU membership, Virginia Tech's current position in membership indicators, and the steering committee membership.

f. Faculty Senators asked the following questions that will be brought to the committee: What is the benefit that will be received as a faculty member of an AAU university? How does the focus on becoming a university of global distinction reflect our values as a land grant university, and will it distract us from our land grant university mission?

Open Floor Discussion

9. No discussion items were introduced.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 4:21 p.m.