Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes
February 16, 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, Feras Batarseh (alternate for Leigh Ann Krometis), Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Scott Case, Guopeng Cheng, Josh Clemons, Rebecca Cockrum, Carolyn Commer, Nick Copeland, Ashley Dayer, Jonathan Everett, Stuart Feigenbaum, Zhuo Fu, Becky Funk, Rodney Gaines, Scott Gartner, Wesley Gwaltney, James Hawdon, Daniel Hindman, Mantu Hudait, Scott Huxtable, Eli Jamison (alternate for Karen Schnatterly), Ran Jin, Bryan Katz, Alex Kinnaman, Andrea L'Afflitto (alternate for Ran Jin), Catherine Larochelle, Evan Lavender-Smith, Renee LeClair, Justin Lemkul, Kim Loeffert, Gary Long, Guo-Quan Lu, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Rachel Miles, Gonzalo Montero, , Zhange Ni, Greg Novack, Thomas O'Donnell, Yuchin Pan, Robin Panneton, Nicole Pitterson, Steve Rideout, Susanna Rinehart, Nicholas Robbins, Hans Robinson, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Adrian Sandu, Richard Shryock, Stephanie Smith, Keith Stephenson, Jay Teets, Jim Tokuhisa, Alp Tural (alternate for Bill Green), Costin Untaroiu, Bimal Viswanath, Jerald Walz, Robert Weiss, Rose Wesche, Ashley Wilkinson, Erin Worthington, Randolph Wynne, Hehuang Xie, yan xu, Diane Zahm, Lizette Zietsman

Guests: Faika Lore, April Myers, Christine Neal

Absent with Notice: Charles Schleupner, Chelsea Thompto

Absent: Jonathan Auguste, Mark Coggins, Kristy Daniels, Carla Finkielstein, Rebecca Hester, David Hicks, Leanna House, Joseph Hughes, Casey Jim, Young-Teck Kim, Charles Lowery, Michelle Maycock, Ali Mehrizi-Sani, Nino Ripepi, Cori Ruktanonchai, Yang Shao, Eric Stanley, Laura Strawn, Kwok Tsui, Jeff Walling, Shane Wang, Angelica Witcher

Call to Order by the President Joe Merola at 2:37

Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Joe Merola)
 Consent agenda was adopted:

Minutes for 02-02-2024 (Link)
Agenda for 02-16-2024 (Link)

Business Agenda

Old Business

Updates & Announcements from Committees, Commissions, University Council

1. There were no updates or announcements.

New Business

2. Presentation and feedback on the Global Distinction Initiative
   a. President Merola gave a presentation on some of the indicators used in the two major rankings on which the university is focused, and the indicators included. Provost and other university leaders have stated that we should be able to use rankings as a proxy for university progress and success, notably the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR). These rankings are heavily research and scholarly oriented. Reputation accounts for 33% of the scoring and influence of the metrics, and this data is sourced from surveys distributed to other faculty members at other institutions.
   b. The other proxy is American Association of Universities membership, which is by invitation only. However, the metrics for AAU overlap significantly with THE WUR.
   c. Some discussion about the metrics and their reliability to represent research quality, research expenditures, and university success. For example, one person questioned why federal research expenditures are counted by AAU but not private grants and expenditures.
   d. Other comments were made about making investments in programs and areas where there is already success and achievement to boost those successes further.
   e. Some discussion and questions were made about the reputation survey and the communication efforts to promote Virginia Tech to improve the reputation score of Virginia Tech of the THE WUR.
   f. President Merola asked for senators to email feedback to him on how the university could make improvements. The next Global Distinction Steering Committee meeting is February 26, and the meeting will focus on summarizing the feedback and recommendations from the steering committee members and making decisions about how to proceed with a prototyping document to make an outline for a plan about how to meet the goals of becoming a globally distinct university.

g. Another discussion followed about the proper procedures to follow for University Mission Initiative (UMI) as outlined in Article XII. Of the [University Council Constitution.](#)

h. President Merola said he would send out an email to all senators to facilitate feedback from senators and their constituents.

i. Points were made about academy memberships and administrative effectiveness; for example, these memberships need to be nominated, and therefore, membership committees could be formed to support faculty in these memberships.

j. More discussion followed about the priorities of the university and how this initiative may not focus enough on the land-grant mission. There were some concerns expressed regarding inequities at the university and the need to prioritize such efforts.

3. 2nd Reading & Vote: CFA 2023-24B: Resolution to Approve Revised Extension Faculty Tracks

   a. Justin Lemkul presented the second reading of the resolution. There were no comments or feedback on the second reading.

   b. Results: 60 Yes, 0 No, 2 Abstain

4. 1st Reading: CFA 2023-24C: Resolution to Form a Task Force to Study Instructor Workloads and Salaries

   a. Justin Lemkul presented the first reading of CFA 2023-24C. The Provost is in support of this resolution and initiative, especially since it is exploratory and follows the proper procedures for investigating the issue.

   b. Some questions and discussion followed regarding whether other types of faculty would be included, such as teaching and research faculty, collegiate professors, and professors of practice. For now, instructors are the only rank included in the task force and study. One comment was made about expanding the definition of 'teacher' or 'instructor,' because professors of practice, for example, are also instructors but have a different title and status.

      i. A follow up question was posed about broadening the task force and study to include professors of practice, because their job duties are very similar. However, the genesis of this task force is related to salaries, and the Commission on Faculty Affairs wants this issue more uniformly handled; this is being driven by data already available. If this is happening with other teaching faculty, Dr. Lemkul asks that you make that you send the information to him.

Open Floor Discussion

5. Parking and transportation issues were brought to the floor by President Merola. One such issue is that certain research programs will retain their visitor passes for their research participants. Another issue is that sometimes individuals idle in handicapped spaces to pick up or drop-off people; this is an ongoing issue and parking and transportation services stated that they should be called when violations are noticed. In addition, when students park illegally in faculty/staff spaces using park mobile, they should also be reported by calling parking services. This will at least help with making parking services more aware of where there are more activities or violations and bringing them out to those areas more often for ticketing and monitoring.

   a. A member of the Parking and Transport Committee commented that the Committee is often told that parking services do not have the staff and resources to monitor parking as often and widely as necessary.

6. The issue of decreased classroom space was raised. There was consensus that the lack of classroom space is causing students and instructors to have less time for class time and more time for commuting.

7. Sharon Pitt, the new vice president for information technology and chief information officer, will soon be invited to a Faculty Senate meeting to discuss IT issues, such as the recent and ongoing email migration from Gmail to Outlook.

8. One question and a discussion about a new policy 6305 related to student suspicion. A resolution is being drafted by the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP). It will be brought forward to the Faculty Senate Cabinet first before being brought forward to the full Faculty Senate for discussion.

9. One senator brought forward the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings which use the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Some clarification was presented that the university does submit data to these rankings and that these data may eventually be used in the THE WUR reputation component.

10. A new calendar year was brought forward as an idea by a senator in a previous meeting, but the senator wanted to clarify that his idea represents his own ideas and does not represent his department. There is no policy per say, but there are the Principles of Shared Governance that ensure academic freedom, but some discussion followed that senators represent their departments as well as their own opinions.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 4:17 p.m.