



Faculty Senate

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

<https://www.facultysenate.vt.edu/>

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

March 01, 2024 @ 2:30pm

Torgersen 1050 or Via Zoom

Check-In:

Present: Joe Merola (presiding), Monty Abbas, Luke Achenie, Diane Agud, Richard Ashley, Paul Avey, Azziza Bankole, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Scott Case, Guopeng Cheng, Josh Clemons, Carolyn Commer, Benjamin Corl (Alternate for Kristy Daniels), Jonathan Everett, Stuart Feigenbaum, Carla Finkielstein, Becky Funk, Rodney Gaines, Scott Gartner, Wesley Gwaltney, James Hawdon, Mantu Hudait, Joseph Hughes, Scott Huxtable, Eli Jamison (Alternate for Karen Schnatterly), Ran Jin, Bryan Katz, Alex Kinnaman, Catherine Larochelle, Renee LeClair, Justin Lemkul, Kim Loeffert, Gary Long, Gary Long, Charles Lowery, Guo-Quan Lu, Jason Malone, Ali Mehrizi-Sani, Rachel Miles, Gonzalo Montero, Greg Novack, Thomas O'Donnell, Yuchin Pan, Robin Panneton, Nicole Pitterson, Steve Rideout, Susanna Rinehart, Nicholas Robbins, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Cori Ruktanonchai, Charles J. Schleupner, Richard Shryock, Stephanie Smith, Laura Strawn, Jay Teets, Chelsea Thompto, Jim Tokuhisa, Alp Tural (Alternate for Bill Green), Bimal Viswanath, Jeffrey Walling, Jerald Walz, Travis Webster (Alternate for Shelley Maycock), Robert Weiss, Ashley Wilkinson, Erin Worthington, Yan Xu, Diane Zahm, Lizette Zietsman (68)

Guests: Benjamin Corl, April Myers, George Osei Ababio, Demetria Somervell (4)

Absent with Notice: Becca Cockrum, Evan Lavender-Smith Rose Wesch, Randy Wynne (4)

Absent: Onwubiko Agozino, Kaveh Akbari Hamed, Jonathan Auguste, Nick Copeland, Ashley Dayer, Zhuo Fu, David Gregory, Rebecca Hester, David Hicks, Daniel Hindman, Leanna House, Casey Jim, Young-Teck Kim, Leigh-Anne Krometis, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Zhange Ni, Nino Ripepi, Hans Robinson, Adrian Sandu, Yang Shao (21)

Call to Order by the President Joe Merola at 2:35

Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Joe Merola)

- Consent agenda was adopted:
 - Minutes for 02-16-2024 ([Link](#))

- Agenda for 03-01-2024 ([Link](#))

Business Agenda

Old Business

1. Updates & announcements from Committees, Commissions, University Council are available on the Faculty Senate SharePoint Site
2. Upcoming Faculty Senate meetings include visits by Ed Baine, Rector of the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors; Virginia Tech President Tim Sands; Bryan Garey and Kelly Oaks; Sharon Pitt; and likely Provost Cyril Clark. The next Board of Visitors meeting will be held April 8-9, 2024. Senators will be asked to suggest topics for inclusion on the faculty constituency report.
3. Updates on the Global Distinction initiative will be provided to the senate as new information is received.

New Business

4. Justin Lemkul presented CFA 2023-24C: Resolution to Form a Task Force to Study Instructor Workloads and Salaries for second reading and vote.
 - a. Feedback received included a recommendation to broaden the task force's scope to include other faculty types, such as professors of practice. The committee considered the recommendation but feels that it is advantageous from a strategic viewpoint for a task force to study only one faculty type at a time. The Senate may choose to conduct multiple reviews at the same time.
 - b. No modifications were made to this resolution during the commission's second reading, and the resolution was approved by the commission.
 - c. Two specific items were mentioned related to the task force: The Chair will be chosen in consultation with the Faculty Senate. The commission was encouraged to recommend that task force members maintain an outline or checklist of the review process to help future task forces that are convened.
 - d. A motion was made and seconded to approve CFA 2023-24C: Resolution to Form a Task Force to Study Instructor Workloads and Salaries for second reading and vote. Motion carried.
 - i) Voting: 60 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain
5. Justin Lemkul presented CFA 2023-2024D: Resolution to Amend the Provisions for Membership and Elections in the Faculty Senate Constitution for first reading.
 - a. The title of this resolution was changed during the Commission on Faculty Affairs' first reading to CFA 2023-2024D Resolution to Amend Article IV and Clarify Other Sections of the Faculty Senate Constitution.

- b. Most of the substantive proposed changes are contained Article IV, Membership.
 - i) Section 1, Composition. The number of elected faculty members comprising the Faculty Senate, currently 100, was removed. This change provides flexibility for adequate representation of additional faculty types, including research faculty and postdoctoral associates. Limited discussion was held regarding postdocs:
 - Departments, colleges, and faculty associations may determine if a postdoc can represent the group as a senator.
 - The possibility of a postdoc and their faculty mentor both serving as senators at the same time could happen, but the faculty senate feels this would be a rare occurrence.
 - If postdoc positions are funded by grants, the department or institute can buy out time for their service on the Faculty Senate. The senate has been informed that this is a straightforward process.
 - ii) Section 6, Elected Alternates. Language has been updated to encourage the election of alternates for each senator but only one senator per unit is required; this decision is left with the department, college, or faculty association.
 - c. Article X, Section 5, General Faculty Meetings. This section addresses the ability of the Faculty Senate to call meetings of the general faculty. Any meeting of the general faculty should be for significant purposes only. Thus, the following language was added: “In consultation with the other senates....”
 - d. The remaining changes are mostly boilerplate and administrative. Many bring the verbiage of the Faculty Senate constitution in alignment with the University Council Constitution.
 - e. The procedure for alternates who attend Faculty Senate meetings on behalf of senators was discussed. There is no provision for early voting; alternates vote in place of senators. Faculty report that it is helpful to discuss the vote with the alternate and provide information that has been received from constituents.
 - f. This resolution will undergo second reading and vote at the next Faculty Senate meeting. Please review the resolution and forward any comments to Justin.
6. Rachel Miles presented CFA 2023-2024E: Resolution to Endorse the Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics at the University Level for first reading.
- a. This statement was endorsed by the Faculty Senate in April 2023, and is available on the Faculty Senate web page,

<https://www.facultysenate.vt.edu/Statements/responsible-research-metrics.html>. It is meant to be aspirational, educational, and to be used as a guidance tool. It is not meant to be policy.

- b. The senate began studying the value of creating a statement on the responsible assessment of research metrics in 2019. Information was provided on the history of the statement, the research conducted to inform it, and the evidence-based principles endorsed by the international research community considered in this statement.
 - c. This Commission on Faculty Affairs feels strongly that the university community needs to be made aware of the information gathered on the use of metrics in research and their relation to faculty promotion, awards, and tenure.
 - d. This resolution will be presented at the next Faculty Senate meeting for second reading and vote. Comments can be provided to the commission.
7. Greg Beecher, Director of Talent Development, and Taylor Barker, Human Resources Data Analyst, provided information on the 2024 Campus Climate Survey.
- a. The climate survey is used to measure current attitudes, behaviors and standards of faculty, staff, wage employees, and university administrators. It will provide an understanding of employee perceptions on topics such as diversity, inclusion, leadership, work environment, and job satisfaction. Data gathered will help the university attract and retain talent, encourage a culture of belonging, and understand differences for employees across campus locations. Finally, insight will be gained into how the climate has changed since the last survey which was conducted in 2021.
 - b. The survey will be distributed to employees by a direct email link and will be open from March 18-29. Information will be provided to supervisors and managers for employees with limited computer access. Senators mentioned that many students and faculty continue to report email problems following the Google transition. The survey team will speak with IT about this concern before the survey is distributed.
 - c. Senators are asked to encourage their teams and colleagues to complete the survey. Responses are confidential.
8. Robert Weiss, Faculty Senate Past President, introduced the election of a Faculty Senate Officer to the University Council and University Council Cabinet
- a. A responsibility of the Faculty Senate Past President is to present a slate of potential officers for the upcoming year. This slate was prepared, presented to

the Faculty Senate Cabinet, and will be put forward for election in April. The slate of officers for 2024-2025 follows:

- i) President – Rachel Miles
 - ii) Vice President – Evan Lavender-Smith
 - iii) Operations Officer – Justin Lemkul
- b. The Faculty Senate President serves as co-chair of the University Council. Rachel Miles is not currently a member of the University Council. Robert Weiss feels that it is important for the upcoming Faculty Senate president to prepare for this role.
- c. Robert Weiss has stepped down from his current seat on the University Council and University Council Cabinet, leaving a vacant seat on each. He suggested that Rachel Miles be elected to represent the Faculty Senate on the University Council and the University Council Cabinet for the remainder of this semester, to prepare for the role of co-chair in the fall.
- d. A motion was made and seconded to conduct a vote to elect Rachel Miles as Faculty Senate representative to the University Council. Motion passed.
- i) Voting: 55 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain
- e. A motion was made and seconded to conduct a vote to elect Rachel Miles as Faculty Senate representative to the University Council Cabinet. Motion passed.
- i) Voting: 55 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain

Open Floor Discussion

9. Joe Merola recently attended a meeting of the National Council of Faculty Senates. Attendees discussed many issues that they are currently facing in their respective institutions.
10. A senator asked if any new information has been received regarding classroom space. The Faculty Senate has received acknowledgement of the lack of classroom space but has not received specific information or solutions. It is felt that sharing specific data would be helpful.
- a. A specific example was shared: Graduate students are facing challenges finding a location to schedule their defenses. Thesis and dissertation defense is required, and the inability to schedule a location is creating significant stress for students.
 - b. Please email Joe Merola with other specific examples so they can be compiled and presented to the administration.
11. A senator reported that a constituent has requested that the Faculty Senate revisit the challenges surrounding Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), specifically to identify resources for testing. Several suggestions were made:

- a. The need for evening hours. The information contained on the SSD web page may be incorrect; it is believed that the center is open later than stated on the web page.
- b. Allowing proctors to test in classrooms, not just the testing center.
- c. One department is currently reserving classrooms and proctoring exams themselves.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 3:43 p.m.