



MINUTES

Faculty Senate
September 26, 2025
2:30 – 4:15 PM
Torgersen 1000 or via Zoom

Present: Justin Lemkul (presiding), Sharif Abdelaziz, Luke Achenie, Joe Adams, Diane Agud, Azziza Bankole, Kristen Benson, David Bieri, Nathaniel Bishop, Myra Blanco, Jan Helge Bøhn, Warren Booth, Bradley Bowen, Curtis Bower (alternate for Keith Stephenson), Ryan Calder, Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Sarah Clinton, Rebecca Cockrum, Nick Copeland, Carolyn Copenheaver, Bob Edmison, Rodney Gaines, Nicholas Goedert, Ann Gregus (alternate for Sarah Clinton), Barrett Gutter (alternate for Anamaria Bukvic), Wes Gwaltney, Ramtin Haghnazar Kouchaksaraei, William Headley, Rebecca Hester, Daniel Hindman, Kenneth Hodges, Adrienne Holz, Leanna House, Ran Jin, Bryan Katz, Alex Kinnaman, Andrea L'Afflitto, Jacob Lahne, Catherine Larochelle, Renee LeClair, Kimberly Loeffert, Charles Lowery, G.Q. Lu, Jason Malone, Stephen Martin, Joel McGlothlin, Harold McKenzie, Rachel Miles, Keith Nelson, Gregory Novack, Nicole Pitterson, Mark Psiaki, Isis Quinlan, Shelly Rhoads, Steven Rowson, Caroline Saouma, Angela Scarpa-Friedman, Karen Schnatterly, Yi Shi, Ian Shoemaker, Richard Shryock, Jim Tokuhisa, Diego Troya (alternate for Gordon Yee), Alp Tural, Jerald Walz, Jeff Warfford, Terri-Ann Wattsman, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, Hehuang Xie, Boya Xu

Absent with Notice: Rick Ashley, James Hawdon, Joel McGlothlin, Chelsea Thompto

Absent: Biko Agozino, Aaron Ansell, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Anamaria Bukvic, Sherwood Clements, Mark Coggins, Logan Dandridge, Naomi Dunn, Cassandra Efke, Matt Eick, Ihudiya Finda Williams, Candace Fitch, Mark Freeman, David Gregory, Eli Jamison, Daniel Karolyi, Sarah Karpanty, Lara Khansa, Bettina Koch, Lakshmi Madhavan Miller, Eric Martin, Ron Meyers, Marc Michel, Albert Pan, Nino Ripepi, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Stephanie Smith, Keith Stephenson, Byron Tsang, Erin Worthington, Gordon Yee

Guests: Aaron Gross, April Myers, Demetria Somervell, Tammy Trimble

Dr. Justin Lemkul, Faculty Senate President, called the meeting to order at 2:30. A quorum was present.

1. Adoption of Consent Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the consent agenda, which included the following items:

- Approval of minutes from September 12, 2025
- Approval of agenda for September 26, 2025

Motion carried.

2. Announcements and Updates

- A Virginia Tech Board of Visitors (BOV) Meeting will be held on September 30 at 9:30 a.m. to consider an athletics funding plan. The meeting will be livestreamed. Materials for the meeting

are accessible on the BOV website, bov.vt.edu. The livestream link will also be available on the website.

- A Pop-Up Faculty Club will be held on October 9. The RSVP link was provided.
- The campus community has been asked to provide feedback to be used for the Campus Mobility Framework by completing a survey. The survey link was provided.
- The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has provided Advice for Online Interactions. This document was provided on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site.
- Provost Cyril Clarke is scheduled to visit the Faculty Senate on October 10. Senators will receive an email with a form for submitting questions for Provost Clarke. Please seek input from colleagues and submit questions via the form. The questions submitted for President Sands fell into a short list of categories and most were addressed at the last meeting with the exception of a few questions that are better addressed by Provost Clarke which have been held for his response. Any questions submitted for Provost Clarke that are not answered during the meeting will be answered in writing following the meeting.
- Faculty Senate President Office Hours will be held on October 10 in the Faculty Affairs Office, Burruss Hall, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM. Coffee and refreshments are available.

3. Unfinished Business

Confirmation of Policy and Procedures Committee Membership

Justin Lemkul presented the Policy and Procedures Committee membership for confirmation by the Senate. The following individuals were appointed to serve on the committee: Carolyn Copenheaver, Rachel Miles, Jerald Walz. A motion was made and seconded to vote to confirm the members of the Policies and Procedures Committee. A vote was taken, and the members were confirmed.

Faculty Honorifics Committee Representative

Justin Lemkul announced that a representative who holds the Alumni Award for Excellence in Extension is needed for the Faculty Honorifics Committee. Renee Boyer has been nominated for this position. The floor was opened for additional nominations. No additional nominations were received, and the floor was closed. A motion was made and seconded to hold an election for the Faculty Honorifics Committee representative, and a vote was conducted. Renee Boyer was elected to fill this position.

Commission on Faculty Affairs Representative

Justin Lemkul announced the need for a representative for the Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA). Rebecca Hightower-Weaver has been nominated for this position. A motion was made and seconded to elect the CFA representative and a vote was conducted. Rebecca Hightower-Weaver was elected to fill this position.

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies

Justin Lemkul announced that a representative is needed for the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP). Term dates and meeting information were provided. The floor was

opened for nominations. Rodney Gaines was nominated to serve as a representative on CUSP. A motion was made and seconded to elect the CUSP representative, and a vote was conducted. Rodney Gaines was elected to fill this position.

4. New Business

CUSP 2025-26B Resolution Updating the Foreign Language Requirement

Jim Tokuhisa presented for first reading CUSP 2025-26B, Resolution Updating the Foreign Language Requirement. This resolution provides an update regarding the current foreign language admissions requirement. It does not change the existing requirement that students must have completed two years of foreign language prior to Virginia Tech admission, but changes how the requirement is imposed. Currently, the admissions process for new VT students allows them to enroll before the foreign language requirement is confirmed. Once students are admitted and the transcript review is complete, if they do not meet the foreign language requirement, they are required to take those classes before graduation, but the credits do not apply toward their graduation. This requires careful consideration and tracking by both students and administration. It impacts a low number of students, less than 1 percent (around 77 students). It was noted that as far as can be determined by data, it does not appear that this change will impact any particular group of students.

The shift from on-premise Banner to Banner SaaS will not allow for tracking a carve out of this type and if continued is expected to cause increased confusion for students and increased administrative burden to the university. This resolution focuses on shifting enforcement of the foreign language requirement from the time of university graduation to the time of admission, as is the case with all other admissions requirements. The transition from on-premise Banner to Banner SaaS provides an opportunity to update a policy that has not been updated in many years and would align the university with contemporary practice of other universities across the commonwealth.

There was lengthy discussion regarding the resolution which focused on several areas, including the following.

- Negative impacts to the Modern and Classical Languages Department.
- Other options that have been or could be considered. For example, graduate and professional students who do not meet GPA requirements are allowed to be admitted on academic probation but take courses over the summer to increase their GPA. Other solutions and considerations were reviewed in the commission, including the requirement itself.
- The topic of foreign language requirements for graduation for schools outside of Virginia and foreign language as an admissions requirement at other universities. It was stated that the states from which VT receives the majority of their admissions have foreign language requirements for graduation, and most higher education institutions also require foreign language for admission. International students also meet this requirement. Comments were made regarding the desire to continue to make VT accessible to students.
- Benefits and limitations expected from the shift from on-premise Banner to Banner SaaS. The current on-premise Banner can be customized by the university to meet specific requirements like this one. Banner SaaS will not support this customization. However, it provides for regular updates, maintenance, and improved integration with other systems. Senators asked whether this is expected to be the first of other problems that the university will see as it moves forward. The registrar has completed a review of admissions information and Banner SaaS capabilities and has not found any other issues like this one.
- Potential results for both students and administrative units if no changes are made to the way foreign language requirements for admissions are currently handled.

- Discussion of the current practice of giving a special status for foreign language requirement. It was noted that there are no other admissions requirements that allow for fulfillment prior to their college graduation, and the importance of having a clean and clear foreign language admissions requirement.
- If there are other future comments, please email the commission chair, Jim Tokuhisa, additional thoughts and discussion.

Discussion on Research Faculty Representation on Faculty Senate Cabinet

Justin Lemkul provided follow-up information about a topic introduced at a previous Faculty Senate meeting, Research Faculty representation on Cabinet. The Faculty Senate Cabinet considered this subject and feels that it was within the Faculty Senate President's purview to appoint a Research Faculty senator as an advisor to the Cabinet. As a result, Lakshmi Miller has joined the Cabinet as a Research Faculty representative.

5. Presentations

Presentation about Government and Community Relations

Justin Lemkul introduced Chris Yianilos, Vice President for Government and Community Relations; Lauren Augustine, Director of Government and Community Relations; and Rebekah Gunn, Director of Government and Community Relations, who presented information about the Office of the Vice President for Government and Community Relations and provided an overview of the current federal landscape and potential impacts to Virginia Tech.

The Office of Government and Community Relations is administratively located in Burruss Hall and their work focuses on defending the priorities of VT in all layers of government including federal, state, and local. Members of the office are located across VT campuses and the commonwealth.

A high-level view of the federal landscape looking forward toward the remainder of the calendar year, and potential impacts on the university, was provided, with focus on three areas: the (US) President's Budget Request and Congressional Appropriations, Impoundment and Recissions, and Facilities and Administrative (F&A) Reform. Brief information was provided about the process of and history around federal government shutdowns.

President's Budget Request and Congressional Appropriations. The Government and Community Relations office engages with the federal government on behalf of VT on items including Federal Student Aid, Sponsored Research, and Agency 229 – Cooperative Extension Agriculture Experiment Station Division. The President's Budget includes funding for several agencies and accounts, some impactful to Virginia Tech. Proposed funding in the President's Budget contains serious reductions in funding for some of these accounts. The House and the Senate are moving through the process of deciding their own funding levels and are including higher amounts of funding than what the President has proposed. There has not yet been agreement on the budget.

Impoundment and Recissions. It was noted that historically, focus is placed on the House and Senate budgets, with relatively little attention given to the President's Budget. This is the first year that there has been this level of focus on the President's Budget. The president is not accepting the status quo of how things have been handled but believes that his budget actions can be impacted by impoundment and recissions. Definitions, perspectives, and doctrines associated with impoundment and recissions were given. Decisions on impoundment and recissions as related to the President's Budget will be decided through the court system.

Facilities & Administrative (F&A) Reform. The current administration is proposing a 15% rate cap on F&A costs. Most universities are at about 60% right now. This is a wide disparity. It was noted that many members of both political parties feel that there should be reductions in the 60%. There have been court challenges which have found in favor of universities and the research community at every step. However, the administration continues to take different administrative actions which will also be decided in court.

There were limited questions and comments following the presentation regarding the 15 percent F&A cap, impacts currently being seen in research, and the planning tools and options available to Virginia Tech as we look toward the future.

Presentation on Auxiliary Services

Justin Lemkul introduced Carrie Cox, Senior Director for Auxiliary Services, who presented information on Auxiliary Services. Virginia Tech's auxiliary services mission is to serve the VT community by providing products and essential services so that others can achieve success in support of the VT mission. These services include mail service and the four areas within Transportation services.

A brief overview and highlights for several services were provided, including the following:

- Mail services: Provides service to both university residents (over 10,000) and departments. Data was provided on mail stops, package delivery services, demand, and delivery time.
- Transportation: including Parking Services, Sustainable Transportation, Fleet Services, and Air Transportation Services.
- Parking: While parking is shifting to the perimeter of campus, it was noted that Faculty/Staff parking areas remain the closest to the center of campus. Parking Services is 100% self-funded, with an amount given back to the university. Revenue information was provided.
- Sustainable Transportation: The Hokie Bike Hub is located in the Transit Center and provides self-service bike repair, maintenance, hands-on learning, and secure bike storage for minimal cost. The university continues to increase the number of EV charging stations available. The VA App (ConnectingVA) was recommended for those wishing to find carpool or vanpooling opportunities.
- Blacksburg Transit: There are 4 on-campus routes and a new route that accesses chicken hill. Blacksburg Transit provided 4.8 million rides last year, which is a 26% increase. Additional ridership highlights were provided. Anyone interested in a tour of the bus routes can request that by sending an email to gettingaround@vt.edu.
- Fleet Services: The New River Valley has only one rental car provider, and many students are not eligible to drive rental vehicles. This makes Fleet Services an essential resource for Virginia Tech.

Ms. Cox also announced that a Mobility Framework update is in process. The framework will serve as a guide to how different transportation systems work across campus, and feedback from the campus community is requested. A QR code was provided for this survey and for the Biennial Transportation Survey as well as for two tools, the Blacksburg Transit app and getaround.vt.edu.

A question was asked about the department's coordination with Valley Metro and SmartWay. Valley Metro is a collaboration amongst many regional partners. SmartWay Express is completely university funded, and this schedule is controlled to meet the needs of employees and students. There is also the overall SmartWay service over which Virginia Tech has no control.

6. Open Floor Discussion

There was no open floor discussion.

7. Adjournment

The Faculty Senate President extended the meeting time by 10 minutes to conclude discussion on CUSP 2025-26B Resolution Updating the Foreign Language Requirement. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:25.