MINUTES

Faculty Senate
October 10, 2025
2:30 – 4:15 PM
Torgersen 1000 or via Zoom

Present: Justin Lemkul (presiding), Montasir Abbas (alternate for Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz), Luke Achenie, Joe Adams, Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Aaron Ansell, Rick Ashley, Azziza Bankole, Kristen Benson, David Bieri, Nathaniel Bishop, Myra Blanco, Jan Helge Bøhn, Warren Booth, Bradley Bowen, Curtis Bower, Ryan Calder, Sherwood Clements, Sarah Clinton, Rebecca Cockrum, Nick Copeland, Carolyn Copenheaver, Logan Dandridge, Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Bob Edmison, Matt Eick, Ihudiya Finda Williams, Candace Fitch, Rodney Gaines, Nicholas Goedert, Aaron Gross, Ramtin Haghnazar Kouchaksaraei, James Hawdon, William Headley, Rebecca Hester, Robert Hildebrand (alternate for Andrea L'Afflitto), Dan Hindman, Kenneth Hodges, Adrienne Holz, Leanna House, Eli Jamison, Ran Jin, Bryan Katz, Lara Khansa, Alex Kinnaman, Jake Lahne, Catherine Larochelle, Renee LeClair, Kimberly Loeffert, Charles Lowery, G.Q. Lu, Lakshmi Madhavan Miller, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Stephen Martin, Joel McGlothlin, Harold McKenzie, Rachel Miles, Phil Nelson, Laura Neser (alternate for Marc Michel), Gregory Novack, Nicole Pitterson, Mark Psiaki, Isis Quinlan, Shelly Rhoads, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Steven Rowson, Caroline Saouma, Angela Scarpa-Friedman, Yi Shi, Ian Shoemaker, Richard Shryock, Chelsea Thompto, Jim Tokuhisa, Byron Tsang, Alp Tural, Jerald Walz, Jeff Warfford, Terri-Ann Wattsman, Erin Worthington, David Xie, Boya Xu, Gordon Yee, Lijuan Yuan (alternate for Virginia Buechner-Maxwell)

Absent with Notice: Anamaria Bukvic, Rebecca Weaver- Hightower

Absent: Myra Blanco, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Mark Coggins, Naomi Dunn, Cassandra Efkeman, Mark Freeman, David Gregory, Wes Gwaltney, Daniel Karolyi, Sarah Karpanty, Bettina Koch, Andrea L'Afflitto, Ron Meyers, Marc Michel, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Albert Pan, Nino Ripepi, Karen Schnatterly, Stephanie Smith

Guests: Cyril Clarke, Ron Fricker, Bruce Friedman, David Guerin, Ann Gregus, E. Fanny Jasso-Hernandez, April Myers, Demetria Somervell, Ben Tham, Matthew Zimmerman

Dr. Justin Lemkul, Faculty Senate President, called the meeting to order at 2:31. 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 26, 2025
- Approval of agenda for October 10, 2025

Motion carried.

2. Announcements and Updates

- Justin Lemkul provided a recap of the September 30 Board of Visitors (BOV) meeting which focused on increasing funding for athletics. As the Faculty Representative to the BOV, Dr. Lemkul provided comments to the board. Due to a procedural glitch, these comments were given following the vote and are available for review on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site.

- The October 6 University Council meeting included a notification of exigent circumstances: In response to federal guidelines, President Sands suspended Pathways Concept 7, Critical Analysis of Identity and Equity in the U.S., and the graduate DEI course requirement. The University Council Constitution allows administration to act outside of the structure of shared governance in rare instances of exigent circumstances. The president's decision cannot be changed. However, because it is related to curriculum, the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies and the Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies will discuss the topic and determine if any resolutions should be advanced.

- Nominations have been requested for IT Governance AI Working Committee members. A link to the committee's draft charter was provided. Senators were asked to provide recommendations to Justin Lemkul of faculty with expertise in AI who are interested in serving on this committee.

- The October 24 Faculty Senate meeting will be fully virtual because of impacts to university operations resulting from a nationally televised football game. Please join the October 24 meeting via the Zoom link on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site.

- During the most recent Faculty Senate President Office Hour, faculty shared concerns about activities that have been occurring in their classrooms, including students recording classes without permission, asking questions that put faculty in uncomfortable positions, and concerns of copyright infringement.

    - A form has been created that will allow the reporting of such concerns to the Faculty Senate President, who can then raise them with administration. The link can be shared with colleagues. This form is meant for advising the senate of concerns and should not take the place of faculty consulting their department's administration. Resources will be added to the form indicating where faculty can go to get help for issues that rise above the purpose of the form.

    - It was noted that faculty may include in their syllabus a statement indicating that recording of video or audio in the classroom without consent except for Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) purposes is not allowed. Legal Counsel has been consulted on this. Guidance on this topic will be distributed via a memo to department heads from Ron Fricker, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

3. New Business

CFA 2025-26A Resolution to Revise Faculty Handbook Section on Appeal of Probationary Non-Reappointment Decision.

Jim Hawdon presented for first reading CFA 2025-26A. This resolution focuses on changes to Section 3 of the Faculty Handbook. Proposed updates to Section 3.5.1 state that a non-reappointment decision of a faculty member on a probationary term appointment made for reasons other than performance must be approved by a second-level supervisor unless the non-reappointment decision is made by the provost, and that there is no appeal. Currently, one person can make such decisions. This section applies to tenure-track faculty and is applicable at any point that a non-reappointment occurs, not only in a year of scheduled contract renewal. Historically, such non-reappointments have been rare at Virginia Tech but there were many last year.

A suggestion was made to add a third level review by the provost for all such decisions. This suggestion will be taken back to the committee.

CFA 2025-26C Resolution to Revise Formal Grievance Procedure in Faculty Handbook

Jim Hawdon presented for first reading CFA 2025-26C. This resolution focuses on Section 3.11.2 of the Faculty Handbook. Proposed changes include the insertion of a new step (step 3) in the process regarding instances where satisfactory resolution of a grievance is not achieved through reconciliation. This step states that in such cases grievance forms would be submitted to the Faculty Review Committee and the Grievability Committee and explains the roles of each. The actions included in this step were previously included in the text but occurred later in the process. The proposed new order provides further information for consideration. Further suggested changes include changing the review periods to university business days for clarity and renaming the Hearing panel to “Evidentiary Review Committee and Recommendation Panel.”

CGPSP 2025-26A Resolution Updating the Withdrawal Policy in the Graduate Catalog

Renée LeClair presented for first reading CGPSP 2025-26A. This resolution explains a simple modification of the graduate catalog. Currently, undergraduate and graduate students are allowed to withdraw from classes at different dates. Suggested changes in the resolution would unify the timeframe so that withdrawal dates are the same for both undergraduate and graduate and professional students.

4. Open Floor Discussion

- The SSD Testing Center instituted a policy in the Spring whereby the center automatically cancels appointments for students who are late for their appointments following a set amount of time, requiring those appointments to be rescheduled. The burden for rescheduling is on professors and there are restrictions around when appointments can be rescheduled, making the process administratively challenging. The Faculty Senate will follow-up on this issue.

5. Discussion with Provost Cyril Clarke

Justin Lemkul welcomed Provost Cyril Clarke to the Faculty Senate. Provost Clarke recognized the faculty and their commitment to shared governance; he emphasized the value of the time they invest in their service as a Faculty Senator. Previously submitted questions broadly covered five topics. Provost Clark addressed each of these questions and entertained follow-up questions.

Enrollment growth planning exercise: This project results from a directive given by the Rector of the Virginia Tech BOV and is ongoing. The administration has been asked to determine scenarios regarding undergraduate enrollment growth up to 40,000 students. The university had previously identified a need to grow graduate and professional student enrollment to a target of 10,000.

The planning exercise encompasses three stages: (1) Conducting a capacity analysis which identifies both limiting capacities and resources in areas such as on-campus housing, dining, recreation, classroom and laboratory space, and instructional FTE, which is an important factor. (2) Identifying the availability of both in-state and out-of-state students who would be interested in and thrive at Virginia Tech. (3) Understanding associated revenue and investment considerations. Provost Clarke noted that the prospect of increasing undergraduate enrollment to 40,000 students is of concern to the Blacksburg community and the Commonwealth.

Follow-up questions included discussion around the following:

- The administration anticipates that the BOV will continue to express an interest in the growth of areas perceived to be a particular strength to VT, but that does not mean there will be less focus or decrease in other departments.

- The continued commitment to balancing graduate and professional student enrollment with peer institutions which will impact the university's goals.

- The association of growth and impact to the quality of student life. The enrollment management team has been asked to consider retention and outcomes during this process. Academic performance is related to the global distinction initiative.

Status of academic resource alignment: A draft report has been submitted and is under review by Provost Clark. He will provide input for further consideration. Once this step is complete, relevant information will be shared with respective deans. The report currently contains information on degrees that do not meet degree productivity requirements, degrees where the rate of degree conferral and enrollment is of concern, and departments appearing to have an imbalance between the number of faculty and students. Recommendations will be provided that address these situations and specific areas.

Concerns regarding increased athletic funding and the pressure for faculty to obtain outside funding: Virginia Tech is committed to monitoring financial situations as well as anticipating and adapting to potential outcomes. Provost Clarke spoke briefly about F&A costs and stop-work orders. He stated that the increase in athletic funding takes the university to the maximum amount allowable and is expected to be funded by private donations with no direct impact to general education. However, potential indirect impacts may be experienced.

In a follow-up question, senators asked when Virginia Tech last increased faculty salaries without a state mandate. A brief overview of state mandates was provided, and it was noted that VT funds the majority of required salary increases. Two years ago VT increased the promotion amounts and implemented the National Distinction Program.

Compact for education from the federal government: Virginia Tech has not been asked to sign this compact but is monitoring the situation. Benefits with the compact are unclear and some of the included requirements are concerning to higher education institutions.

In closing, Provost Clarke was asked to offer some reflections on accomplishments achieved during his tenure as Provost. He emphasized that he does not claim sole responsibility for any major changes as they were all accomplished with the help and input of many people, including faculty. He spoke briefly on changes to shared governance, experiential learning, and the innovation network as items he feels are most consequential to the university community.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:21.