MINUTES

Faculty Senate
October 24, 2025
2:30 – 4:15 PM
Online via Zoom

Present: Justin Lemkul, (presiding), Luke Achenie, Joe Adams, Diane Agud, Aaron Ansell, Rick Ashley, Azziza Bankole, Kristen Benson, Myra Blanco, Jan Helge Bøhn, Warren Booth, Bradley Bowen, Anamaria Bukvic, Ryan Calder, Sarah Clinton, Carolyn Copenheaver, Margaret Cowell (alternate for David Bieri), Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Nick Copeland, Naomi Dunn, Anna Duraj-Thatte, Matthew Eatherton (alternate for Bryan Katz), Bob Edmison, Matt Eick, Ihudiya Finda Williams, Candace Fitch, Rodney Gaines, Nicholas Goedert, Ann Gregus (alternate for Sarah Clinton), Aaron Gross, Wes Gwaltney, Ramtin Haghnazar Kouchaksaraei, James Hawdon, William Headley, Dan Hindman, Kenneth Hodges, Adrienne Holz, Eli Jamison, Ran Jin, Lara Khansa, Alex Kinnaman, Jake Lahne, Catherine Larochelle, Renee LeClair, Kimberly Loeffert, G.Q. Lu, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Stephen Martin, Joel McGlothlin, Harold McKenzie, Ron Meyers, Rachel Miles, Laura Neser (alternate for Marc Michel), Gregory Novack, Nicole Pitterson, Mark Psiaki, Isis Quinlan, Shelly Rhoads, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Steven Rowson, Caroline Saouma, Yi Shi, Ian Shoemaker, Richard Shryock, Chelsea Thompto, Jim Tokuhisa, Byron Tsang, Alp Tural, Jerald Walz, Jeff Warfford, Terri-Ann Wattsman, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, Erin Worthington, David Xie, Boya Xu, Gordon Yee, Lijuan Yuan (alternate for Virginia Buechner-Maxwell)

Absent with Notice: David Bieri, Charles Lowery

Absent: Biko Agozino, Nathaniel Bishop, Curtis Bower, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Sherwood Clements, Rebecca Cockrum, Mark Coggins, Logan Dandridge, Bob Edmison, Cassandra Efkeman, Mark Freeman, David Gregory, Rebecca Hester, Leanna House, Daniel Karolyi, Sarah Karpanty, Bryan Katz, Bettina Koch, Andrea L'Afflitto, Lakshmi Madhavan Miller, Marc Michel, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Phil Nelson, Albert Pan, Nino Ripepi, Angela Scarpa-Friedman, Karen Schnatterly, Stephanie Smith

Guests: E. Fanny Jasso-Hernandez, Christine Labuski, April Myers, Demetria Somervell, Matthew Zimmerman

Dr. Justin Lemkul, Faculty Senate President, called the meeting to order at 2:32. 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 October 10, 2025
- Approval of agenda for October 24, 2025

Motion carried.

2. Announcements and Updates

- During the October 10 Faculty Senate Meeting, a question was asked regarding new Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Testing Office policy in which appointments may be cancelled automatically when students are late for testing appointments. This policy was never formally approved, and the practice is no longer in place.

- Justin Lemkul provided information regarding the Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education. Virginia Tech has not been asked to sign this compact. If the university receives a request to support the compact, the VT Board of Visitors (BOV) would decide on the response. In an effort to be proactive and collect faculty input on this potential issue, a feedback form has been created and was provided. Senators were encouraged to provide their input through the form and to share the form with colleagues.

- Justin Lemkul reminded senators of the form introduced at the last meeting that faculty may use to report general concerns. This form will remain active throughout the academic year. A key topic reported over the past two weeks is promotion and tenure requirements. The link to the form was provided.

3. Unfinished Business

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP) Resolution 2025-26B: Resolution Updating the Foreign Language Requirement

Jim Tokuhisa presented CUSP 2025-26B for second reading. The resolution changes the timeframe for the enforcement of the foreign language admissions requirement from completion by graduation to completion before admission. This change would bring the enforcement of this admissions requirement in line with other admissions requirements.

A summary of changes made since the first reading in Faculty Senate was provided: The order of the "Whereas" statements was changed. Additional "Whereas" and "Therefore, Be it Resolved" statements were included. The additional statements referenced Presidential Policy Memorandum (PPM) 68 which introduced the foreign language requirement and set the timeframe for completion of that requirement, stated necessary adjustments to the undergraduate catalog, and inserted a requirement for the university to monitor for any unintentional barriers to admissions created by these changes.

Jim Tokuhisa made a motion to approve CUSP 2025-26B; the motion was seconded. During discussion, senators shared comments, concerns, and insight.

The commission communicated with Modern and Classical Languages over the past year while the resolution was being developed. Senators from the department reported that the path forward in this resolution was the best of those presented. They expressed concern regarding the unknown impacts that the resolution may have to the department, faculty, and students.

Senators asked whether demographic information has been provided regarding the students that would be impacted by this change and noted the desire to be accessible and not increase barriers to education. The registrar has reported that there is no discernable group of individuals affected by this. The resolution includes the requirement to monitor unintentional barriers to admission.

Concerns that the changes presented in the resolution were initiated because of new IT capabilities and limitations were expressed.

Additional comments regarding the fact that the foreign language requirement is the only admissions requirement that can be fulfilled at graduation, the confusion and problems that this causes students, and the associated administrative burden were shared. The commission is not aware of any other universities that have this sort of timeframe for an admissions requirement. Many peer institutions have a foreign language requirement that must be fulfilled at the university level.

Senators communicated ideas about the inclusion of foreign language instruction at the university level for students, mentioned Pathways and whether foreign language classes could be included in the response for Pathways 7 changes, and the creation of summer immersion/remediation courses. It was noted that many students who meet their foreign language requirement by taking classes at the university level go on to minor in foreign language.

After lengthy discussion, Rachel Miles called for the previous question. The motion was seconded, and the previous question was adopted, ending debate on the main motion. A vote was taken, and CUSP 2025-26B did not pass (Yes: 28, No: 38, Abstain: 5)

Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies (CGPSP) 2025-26A: Resolution Updating the Withdrawal policy in the Graduate Catalog

Renée LeClair presented CGPSP 2025-26A for second reading. This policy amends the withdrawal policy in the graduate catalog to mirror the withdrawal policy for undergraduate students.

Following first reading, an additional “Therefore, Be it Resolved” statement was added which outlines resulting changes in policy documents: PPM 238 will be retired, and the Policy section of the Graduate Catalog will be updated effective Spring 2026.

Renée made a motion to approve; the motion was seconded. There were no further comments or discussion. A vote was taken, and the resolution passed (Yes: 61, No: 1, Abstain: 1).

4. New Business

CGPSP 2025-26B: Resolution Affirming Administrative Action Under Exigent Circumstances

Renée LeClair presented for first reading CGPSP 2025-26B. This resolution provides a response to actions taken by President Sands to repeal DEI requirements for graduate and professional students based on federal regulatory requirements and the BOV’s March 2025 DEI resolution. Language in the resolution affirms the administration’s decision, reaffirms the Principles of Community, and assures compliance with federal regulations.

The commission has not yet decided upon curriculum changes to address the removal of the DEI requirements but is taking a step back to reenvision what this could look like in the future.

Senators offered comments on the resolution, many sharing viewpoints of the president’s authority, shared governance, the BOV resolution, and federal directives. Using this resolution as a vehicle to provide the faculty voice to the BOV and the possibility of drafting a separate statement were mentioned.

Comments were made on specific terms used in the resolution, specifically concerns with the word “affirm” and the suggestion of changing it to “recognize” to more accurately convey faculty sentiment. Additionally, suggestions were made to communicate the commission’s intent to offer Pathways curriculum updates at a later time were mentioned.

5. Discussion with Dean Aimée Surprenant

Justin Lemkul welcomed Aimée Surprenant, Dean of the Graduate School, to the Faculty Senate. Dean Surprenant welcomed faculty input on important topics that are under consideration at the Graduate School.

A task force comprised of representatives including faculty and graduate students worked over the summer to create a process for graduate students who have experienced issues with a faculty relationship that does not rise to the level of Title IX and Title VI. This process will be presented at the next University Council Cabinet meeting, and the cabinet will decide which faculty senate commission will sponsor it through shared governance. This will allow faculty to provide input on the process, and may impact the faculty handbook and policy changes, which also will go through shared governance and allow for faculty input.

Dean Surprenant stated that the federal landscape around academia provides an opportunity to rethink, reimagine, and seek ways to improve graduate education. A workshop at an academic affairs retreat on this topic resulted in many suggestions but was missing faculty input. Dean Surprenant shared some graduate student statistics including information on the percentage of graduate students that do not complete programs and the number of PhD students that do not go into tenure track programs but instead go into corporations, industry or to smaller colleges, and requested thoughts and ideas from faculty.

Follow-up discussion included several topics: The increased number of PhD students that do not go into tenure track positions is seen nationally and internationally, and is not unique to Virginia Tech. The goals of students when they begin their graduate education are unknown but would be helpful information. A suggestion was made to provide a way for graduate students to learn about the differences between careers in tenure-track positions, small colleges, and corporations or industry as a way to inform their career choices. Exit interviews and methods to identify problems for students who are struggling could be of assistance. It was suggested that an email or survey be sent to the faculty at large.

Senators were encouraged to speak with their graduate school directors to stay informed about current graduate school topics.

6. Open Floor Discussion

- Commission Chairs Jim Tokuhisu and Renée LeClair were thanked for the work that they did on bringing forward resolutions from CUSP and CGPSP.
- A Senator expressed the feeling that the Faculty Senate should become more proactive and set yearly priorities and specifically mentioned the BOV. Justin Lemkul encouraged senators to respond to the call for comments for the constituency report to the BOV as this is the best way to inform the BOV of faculty views. The request for comments will be distributed soon and can be provided to colleagues for their input.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:26.