

Faculty Senate Meeting
7-9 PM, Pamplin 32
Tuesday, January 18, 2011

Senators Present: L. Abbott, D. Agud, O. Balci, J. Bassett, B. Benham, T. Burbey, F. Charney, J. Chen-Yu, B. Cloyd, L. Cooper, R. Cothren, L. Dalgren, M. Ellerbrock, H. Farrar, J. Floyd, B. Hausman, T. James, B. Jones, S. Karpanty, J. Kuypers, O. Lanz, T. Larson, D. Liu, G. Long, S. Martin, T. Martin, M. Maycock, M. McGehee, J. Merola, D. Miller, M. Moseley-Christian, K. Niewolny, D. Parker, M. Patil, B. Pencek, W. Reed, H. Renard, L. Resler, M. Roan, E. Satterwhite, J. Setubal, D. Smith, C. Stovall, J. Tokuhisa, E. Vance, P. Vlachos, B. Vogelaar, J. Watson, J. Wilkins, A. Zajac

AGENDA

1. Introduction

The meeting was called to order by President Mike Ellerbrock at 7:00 PM.

2. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded and passed.

3. Moment of Silence

M. Ellerbrock asked the Senators to stand and observe a moment of silence as an expression of solidarity with those who suffered in the shooting tragedy at Tucson, AZ.

4. Proposed Campus Meals Tax Resolution

E. Satterwhite presented a resolution entitled "Resolution to Recommend that Virginia Tech Cooperate with the Collection of Blacksburg Meals and Lodging Taxes from Campus Visitors". Satterwhite informed the Senate that several key properties (University Mall, College Square, Smith's Landing) will no longer produce tax-revenue for the Town of Blacksburg after the next few years. Hence, the resolution was being proffered as an attempt to maintain the quality of life in Blacksburg. She also emphasized this resolution was not from the PlayFair group of Blacksburg, but was from the faculty.

Satterwhite spoke to the campus and town issues surrounding the resolution. She noted: the town code that addresses the meals and lodging tax, that BenchMark is taking over the operation of the Inn from Hilton, and that the BOV did not support the issue of tax collection of meals and lodging for the university and its auxiliaries.

A motion of support for the resolution was made (E. Satterwhite) and seconded.

A questions and answer period was entertained by the speaker and fellow Senators. Questions fell into the following areas: 1) what is the amount of revenue that would be collected through a meals/lodging tax, 2) if the tax is collected, will the university stop paying the franchise fee (VT Electric), and 3) are there franchised entities on campus that are already paying taxes?

The amount of revenue to be generated by the meals was in the \$100K area. Lodging would be twice as much.¹

Whether the university could or should remit any funds may be moot, for the auxiliary agencies (on-campus housing, dining, etc.) of the university are exempt from state and local taxes (per AG ruling). Non-auxiliary franchises (e.g. Subway, Seattle's Best Coffee) are not exempt and do collect taxes. This issue was discussed at length by the senators.

A friendly amendment (G. Long) to the resolution was to change the focus to the dining and lodging taxes of the Inn. The amendment was accepted. However, the vote on the amendment failed in the Senate: 19 yes, 14 no, 15 abstain. The discussion returned to the original resolution from Satterwhite.

Senators asked for clarification on the tax issue of the Inn. A town representative was in attendance at the meeting. Ellerbrock asked if the town would support a resolution for the collection of such taxes. The representative indicated the town would not pass such a resolution.

A motion to table the resolution was made by D. Parker. The motion was seconded and passed by the Senate (42 yes, 4 no, 2 abstain).

With the understanding this issue may return to the Faculty Senate, B. Vogelaar requested more information on the validity of this issue and the legal precedence of such an action. This information is requested before further discussion on the issue of a Campus Meals and Lodging Tax occurs. Satterwhite asked that in further discussion the Senate look at this issue as a point of principle, if not of law.

5. Governor's Proposed Changes to Faculty Compensation

Hal Irvin (Assoc. VP for Human Resources) presented the Faculty Senate with an update of the Governor's plans to change level of contributions to employee benefit plans. As this issue is currently being debated in Richmond, the action/inaction of the Legislative Assembly on this matter is not yet known.

Irvin spoke of the impact of the proposed cuts on both the VRS and the ORP systems. The change to the VRS system would mandate a 5% employee contribution to the plan. This would be offset by a 3% increase in pay, beginning 07/2011. The change to ORP would result in a 1.9% decrease in the state's contribution to an employee plan. No pay raise would be given to those in the ORP program.

A question and answer session covered the following issues in a genteel manner:

Q1. For those employed prior to 1984, the state took over the 5% employee contribution in lieu of a raise. Is this current revision not a pay-cut?

A1. Yes.

Q2. How many faculty are in ORP vs. VRS?

A2. Most of the faculty are in ORP (2,171 in ORP, 1,030 in VRS). Statewide, the number of employees in ORP are ~5,000. There are well over 100,000 employees in VRS.

Q3. Will those on ORP be able to buy back into the VRS system?

A3. Not likely. This action was considered two years ago, but not supported by VRS.

Q4. Did the ASO (from this past FY) contribute to the problems with VRS?

¹ No source was quoted for these figures.

A4. It most likely had some impact.

Irvin also pointed out VRS has a \$17.6 billion gap in its program. In 2014, it will be funded at only 61% of its liabilities.

A point of clarification was made to the terminology of the proposed cut. The 1.9% reduction for the ORP would result in a 18.3% decrease in the state's contribution to an employee's plan. Hence, the labeling of the reduction as 1.9% is misleading.

6. Update on Undergraduate Honor System

Jason Thweatt (Electrical and Computer Engineering, Chair of the Undergraduate Honor System, and Member of the Honor System Review Board) gave a presentation on the Virginia Tech Honor System. He showed data from the recent caseload of the Honor System and reported on the results/actions of the Honor System. Of the 307 cases (Spring, Summer, Fall 2010), there were 138 findings of guilty. The majority of sentences in these cases were "double-weighted zeros" and/or "community service". The remainder of the cases is still under investigation.

Thweatt informed the Senate that the Honor System needs faculty help. Assistance is needed in the roles of Faculty Panel Members and Faculty Counselors. Information can be found at www.honorsystem.vt.edu.

7. New/Future Business

Academic Citations

Ellerbrock asked colleagues to cite themselves as employed at "Virginia Tech," not "Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University". This action is needed for national databases to accurately report faculty citations.

8. Adjourn

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the January meeting of the Faculty Senate. The Senate adjourned at 9:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary L. Long 02/04/11