Joint Resolution to Revise Shared Governance at Virginia Tech
Commission on Faculty Affairs, Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs, Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs, and Commission on Student Affairs
Resolutions CFA 2020-21C, CAPFA 2020-21B, CSPA 2020-21A, and CSA 2020-21A

First reading, CFA	November 6, 2020
Approved, CFA	January 22, 2021
First reading, CAPFA	November 11, 2020
Approved, CAPFA	December 9, 2020
First reading, CSPA	November 17, 2020
Approved, CSPA	December 15, 2020
First reading, CSA	November 19, 2020
Approved, CSA	December 3, 2020
Faculty Senate Review	December 4, 2020
Staff Senate Review	December 11, 2020
Graduate Student Assembly Review	December 6, 2020
Student Government Association Review	December 6, 2020
First reading, University Council	February 1, 2021
Second reading, University Council	February 15, 2021
Approved, President	
Approved, Board of Visitors	
Effective date	TBD

WHEREAS, Virginia Tech has been well served by a system of shared governance structured to include representation by a wide cross-section of faculty, students, staff, a/p faculty, and administrators; and

WHEREAS, the underpinning for Virginia Tech's system of shared governance is the "Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities" issued jointly by the American Council on Education, the American Association of University Professors, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges in 1966; and

WHEREAS, the last comprehensive review of Virginia Tech's system of shared governance occurred in the early 1990's and resulted in the current interlocking system of committees, commissions, advisory councils, and University Council, which is the main policy-making body of the university and is advisory to the President; and

WHEREAS, although minor modifications have been made to the governance structure and University Council Constitution and By-laws, there had been no systematic evaluation of the system in 25 years, and the lack of a formalized path for the collective voice of the faculty, student, and staff

constituencies to be represented through their formal bodies in the process of policy formulation and approval was identified as a deficiency; and

WHEREAS, in the spring of 2019, President Sands commissioned the ad hoc President's Committee on Governance composed of faculty, students, staff, a/p faculty, and administrators to define a set of guiding principles for effective and equitable governance and outline any changes to the existing system required to put these principles into effect; and

WHEREAS, the ad hoc President's Committee on Governance has now completed the first stage of its work and proposes a revised system of shared governance for the future structured around principles of effectiveness, equity, and representation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we approve the "Principles of Shared Governance" in Appendix One; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we approve the framework for the revision of Virginia Tech's system of shared governance outlined in Appendix Two and as conveyed in the diagram on page 6; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the ad hoc President's Committee on Governance will oversee the completion of the additional work required by this resolution, including but not limited to the revision of the University Council Constitution and Bylaws, and that the full set of changes necessitated by this resolution will be approved through shared governance before they are implemented.

Appendix One: "Principles of Shared Governance"

Shared governance is the process by which the university community shares responsibility for reaching collective decisions on matters of policy and procedure. We believe that shared governance is essential to Virginia Tech's mission as "an inclusive community of knowledge, discovery, and creativity dedicated to improving the quality of life and the human condition within the Commonwealth of Virginia and throughout the world." We further believe that shared governance is the means by which we organize the components of the university into an interdependent whole; that collaborative decision-making is the foundation of strategic and coordinated effort; and that shared governance should operate within the framework of the following principles at every level of Virginia Tech's various locations:

1) *Democratic processes*

We will employ democratic processes, including the use of representative bodies, to ensure that the views of all constituencies are reflected in our decisions and increase the likelihood that a course of action will be broadly supported and implemented. All revisions to and the creation of new academic initiatives, policies, and programs will be carried out within our formal system of governance.

2) *Respect, collaboration, and trust*

We recognize that the Board of Visitors, administrators, faculty, a/p faculty, staff, and students have differing roles, scopes of authority, and accountability; that these differences are necessary and productive; and that a mutuality of respect for each other and our varying roles and responsibilities is essential for good-faith dialogue, collaborative decision-making, and trust in the processes of governance.

3) *Clarity of roles and authority*

We commit to maintaining a shared understanding of Virginia Tech's system of governance, including clear guidelines for our separate and mutual areas of responsibility for determination, recommendation, and consultation on particular matters, and recognize that the roles and authority of the Board of Visitors, administrators, faculty, staff, students, and a/p faculty can vary depending on context and topic.

4) Inclusion and diversity

We believe that a diverse community of people and perspectives is necessary for the creation of effective and fair policies and procedures and will work to ensure equality of access to the positions and venues of governance.

5) *Communication and transparency*

In order to capture and reflect the scope of opinions across our various constituencies and locations, we expect honest and respectful communication; that every component of governance will maintain clearly defined channels for reciprocal communication within and between constituencies; and that we will reach our decisions in a transparent manner such that the various constituencies are aware of how decisions are made and the rationale for those decisions.

6) *Efficiency and effectiveness*

We will conduct deliberations and make decisions in a manner that is timely and appropriate to the issue and periodically evaluate the performance of shared governance in order to improve its operation and adapt it to evolving conditions.

7) *Accountability*

While recognizing that the Board of Visitors and president are legally accountable for the condition and operation of the university, we affirm that when acting as participants in governance we are accountable to each other, as individuals and constituencies, for our statements and decisions; that administrative rejection of shared governance recommendations should be unusual and for compelling reasons that are publicly conveyed and subject to collective response; and that in the rare instances exigent circumstances require university leaders to act outside the structure of shared governance, they will explain the exigent circumstances and discuss the action or actions taken in open forums and in a timely manner.

8) *Commitment*

We believe that shared governance requires a commitment of goodwill on the part of all participants, the broad recognition of shared governance as an important activity, and sufficient resources for the effective operation of shared governance.

Appendix 2: Framework for the revision of shared governance

1. All representative bodies will be referred to as senates and each senate will be defined to include a specific area of legislative authority and responsibility (in the form of resolutions) and have at least one commission under its control. For example, Faculty Senate might be defined as follows: *Faculty Senate shall be representative of the entire faculty (excluding administrative and professional faculty) and have the authority and responsibility to act on their behalf through*
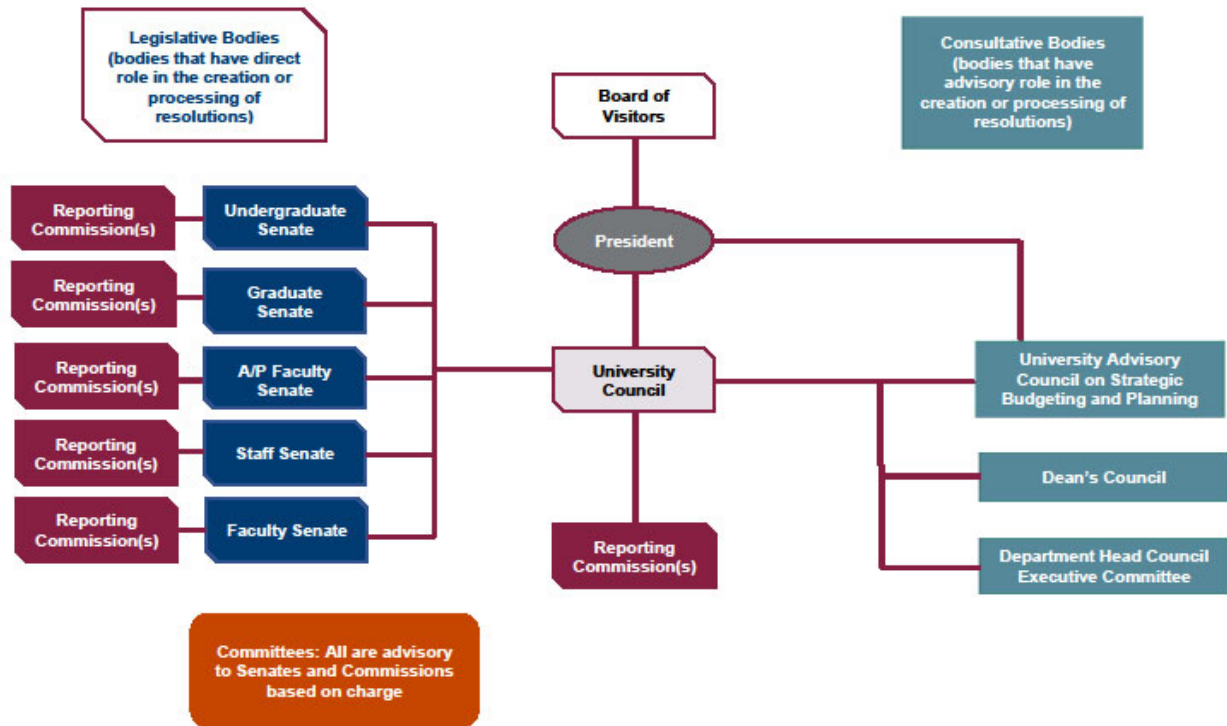
legislative recommendations concerning academic policies and regulations, educational standards, curricula, matters of equity and diversity that affect the faculty environment, and the working conditions of faculty. Comprised of tenure-track, non-tenure-track, and research faculty, it also provides an avenue for the consideration of any matter of general interest to the faculty.

As part of assigning commissions to senates, the President's Committee on Governance will review the commissions, committees, and councils that are part of University Council, update or revise their charges and processes as required, and eliminate or combine these components of governance where warranted.

2. University Council Cabinet, a subset of University Council made up of leaders from the administration and the other components of governance, will be added to University Council. The Cabinet will steer and charge University Academic Initiative committees or work groups, oversee the movement of "everyday" topics and resolutions through governance, in large part through the use of consent agendas, and provide a more intimate forum for discussion of governance issues. Other than University Academic Initiatives, the majority of items will move through governance as they do now, with additional process oversight provided by the Office for Policy and Governance (see item 6).

3. Senates will each have an executive council or cabinet that coordinates its activities, communicates with the other components of governance through the Office for Policy and Governance, and provides a venue for deliberation among senate leaders.

4. The formative work on University Mission Initiatives (major changes such as Experiential Learning) will be conducted through a standard process within our system of shared governance. The committees that take up these tasks will be formed through a steering/charging process in University Council Cabinet that places representatives from the senates and other components of governance on the committees in numbers proportional to the nature of the task. Other members of the committees will be selected by the administration and/or the committee chairs in accordance with a process established within governance. In addition to contributing to the committees, senate representatives will be obligated to report on the progress of the committees to their senates and take feedback from their senates to the committees. Likewise, the committee leaders will periodically report their progress to University Council and take input from that body as well.

5. The Office of the Vice President for Policy and Governance will coordinate and support the activities and manage the infrastructure of shared governance and facilitate communication and the flow of agenda items between its components. Though it will have no decision-making authority on policy, from a communication and workflow perspective, it will serve as the hub of governance.

6. The college faculty representatives currently part of University Council will become members of Faculty Senate. They will be selected from and serve concurrently in the college faculty associations. Colleges without faculty associations will create a process by which faculty can elect a college representative who will serve in the Faculty Senate.

7. The Council of College Deans and Department Heads Council Executive Committee will be added to University Council as consultative bodies. While each dean is currently and will remain a voting member of University Council, linking the Council of College Deans itself to University Council is consistent with how we treat the other representative bodies.

8. Consideration will be given to the resource needs of each senate to allow some of its members to focus on the work of the senate. Governance requires a degree of care and feeding that faculty, staff, a/p faculty, and students cannot provide in sufficient degree while engaging in their other work.

9. The commissions not assigned to senates will be referred to as University Commissions.

10. University Council membership will be reevaluated to reflect these changes and to accommodate greater discussion of academic issues.

11. Recommendations from the Task Force on the Future of Student Governance will be reviewed by the President's Committee on Governance and incorporated in this revision of shared governance as appropriate.

Proposed Governance Structure

Legislative Bodies
(bodies that have direct role in the creation or processing of resolutions)

Consultative Bodies
(bodies that have advisory role in the creation or processing of resolutions)

Board of Visitors

President

University Council

Reporting Commission(s) — Undergraduate Senate

Reporting Commission(s) — Graduate Senate

Reporting Commission(s) — A/P Faculty Senate

Reporting Commission(s) — Staff Senate

Reporting Commission(s) — Faculty Senate

Reporting Commission(s)

University Advisory Council on Strategic Budgeting and Planning

Dean's Council

Department Head Council Executive Committee

Committees: All are advisory to Senates and Commissions based on charge

December 4, 2020

The Faculty Senate reviewed resources related to the Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA) *Resolution 2020-21C: Resolution to Revise Shared Governance at Virginia Tech*. Faculty Senators had the opportunity to raise questions and receive responses from members of the President's Committee on Governance.

As the primary representative body of faculty at Virginia Tech, the Faculty Senate is pleased to accept an increased role in the shared governance process. While we recognize the new structure will require further investments and responsibility, we understand the University administration is committed to providing the necessary resources and recognition to support the proposed structure. Furthermore, the principles of shared governance outlined in the resolution appropriately reflect faculty perspectives on essential priorities.

Faculty are supportive of CFA Resolution 2020-21C and the proposed revisions to shared governance at Virginia Tech, and the Faculty Senate looks forward to further engagement in the shared governance process. Thank you for advancing this effort!

Respectfully,

Eric Kaufman, President
Virginia Tech Faculty Senate

Staff Senate

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December 11, 2020

To: Vice President of Policy and Governance

The Staff Senate Committee on Policy and Issues has reviewed and approves CFA Resolution 2020-2021C. Staff Senate is in agreement that it is a good time to review and update the governance structure.

Thank you,
LaTawnya Burleson, Chair Staff Senate Policies and Issues Committee

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