

Minutes
Commission on Faculty Affairs
October 18, 2024
10:30 am – 12:00 pm
Burruss 330E and Zoom

Commission Members Present: J. Lemkul (presiding), R. Fricker (ex officio Provost's Office), D. Agud (Faculty Senate), C. Bartel (Staff Senate), J. Lahne (Faculty Senate), R. Gaines (Faculty Senate), J. Hawdon (Faculty Senate), N. Connors (A/P Faculty Senate), V. Buechner-Maxwell (Faculty Senate), R. Jin (Faculty Senate), K. Pitts (Dean), J. McGlothlin (Faculty Senate), L. Learman (Dean), K. Benson (Faculty Senate), K. Schneiderman (Undergraduate Student Senate)

Absent with Notice: E. Lavender-Smith (Faculty Senate)

Absent: A. Valop (Graduate and Professional Student Senate)

Guests: E. Kim (Faculty Affairs), D. Harris (Policy and Governance), A. Myers (Policy and Governance), J. Edgin (Psychology Department Head), N. Guerrero (Vet-Med Department Head)

Quorum: J. Lemkul called the meeting to order at 10:31 a.m. A quorum was present (50%+1 of current membership = 8).

1. **Welcome and Introductions.**
2. **Consent Agenda.**
 - a. **Review and Approval of Agenda.**
 - b. **Approval of Minutes from October 4, 2024.**

The consent agenda was adopted without objection.

3. **Reports from Senates.**
 - A/P Faculty Senate: N/A.
 - Staff Senate: The resolution to form a staff and non-student wage compensation task force has been approved.
 - Undergraduate Senate Report: N/A.
 - Grad/Prof Senate: N/A.
 - Faculty Senate: N/A (fall break).
4. **Unfinished Business.**
 - a. **Continued Discussion on CFA 2024-25A: Resolution To Amend The Faculty Handbook Description Of Clinical Faculty Ranks.** J. Lemkul introduced J. Edgin and N. Guerrero as guests and reviewed the most recent edits to the resolution. The commission previously felt that the language surrounding clinical instructors was overly prescriptive, especially in comparison to the language around clinical professors. After soliciting questions and feedback, the commission agreed to strike the word "service" in the section pertaining to clinical instructors (to distinguish clinical service from other service), and change all mentions of "research" to "scholarship and research" at each

rank to be more inclusive of the work that faculty members may or may not engage in. J. Lemkul will take these comments into consideration, update the document accordingly, and present the resolution at the next Faculty Senate meeting.

b. Continued Discussion on CFA 2024-25E: Resolution To Amend The Faculty Handbook Regarding Procedures For Promotion And Tenure And Related Appeals.

R. Fricker reviewed his edits to the resolution as a result of the last discussion in CFA. In Section 3.4.3, R. Fricker requested feedback on the length of waiting periods and time periods of service when there are disagreements in considering faculty members for P&T. The commission agreed on a waiting period of one year after the written request has been submitted, but expressed initial disagreement on the suggested period of service of four years at Virginia Tech. The commission reached a consensus on “at least two years in rank at Virginia Tech” being the most appropriate time frame. Also in Section 3.4.3, there were discussions about the composition of committee size. Some suggestions were made to split the number of members by department and college, but the ultimate decision was made to limit the size to five voting members. Finally, R. Fricker introduced a summary table of appeal decisions and next steps in Section 3.5.2. The commission members agreed on the improved clarity that the table provided, and offered no further comments. J. Lemkul will bring this resolution before the Faculty Senate at their next meeting.

5. New Business

a. First Reading of CFA 2024-25F: Resolution To Form A University Mission Initiative Committee To Recommend Updated Policies For Funding Graduate Research At Virginia Tech.

J. Lemkul reiterated the purpose and goals of University Mission Initiatives (UMIs). The purpose of this UMI (which is notably the first UMI to ever be submitted) is to increase graduate enrollment and research output to aid in the university’s pursuit of global distinction. J. Lemkul initially proposed a more detailed resolution with reference to related constituent groups, but heeded recommendations to narrow the scope to graduate enrollment and research. CGPSP has reviewed this resolution, provided feedback, and expressed their intention to endorse the document at UCC. J. Lemkul will meet with the Commission on Research for further conversations to receive their endorsement as well. Although this resolution may eventually impact all aspects of scholarship, the scope of this resolution will be focused on research only at this time. The goal of this resolution will be to create a UMI committee, which will offer evidence-based recommendations for elevating research at Virginia Tech through policies, funding strategies, and any other avenue the committee deems relevant. The timeline for this initiative will be fast; the future committee chair must submit their recommendations to UCC by the end of Spring 2025. Commission members raised a few questions and concerns regarding international students, post-docs, ranking the committee objectives, and graduate students in unconventional education tracks. Unfortunately, due to the limited scope of the UMI, content on international student and post-doc support will not fit under the purview of this initiative. However, we can recommend that CGPSP pursues improved support for international students, and reassure those in ORI that the language in this resolution is not intended to impede on the opportunities for post-docs in any way. Commission members recommended the specification of primary and secondary objectives for this UMI, which may offer more time for the commission to achieve different goals in different semesters. Finally, it was clarified that the focus of this UMI is only on doctoral enrollment, not master’s enrollment. This may have a differential impact on graduate students who earn their master’s on the way to their PhD, but this is likely something that will be addressed by the committee.

6. **Open Discussion**

- a. J. Lemkul updated the commission on the status of CFA 2024-25D: Resolution To Amend The Faculty Handbook Regarding Ethics Of Intimate Relationships Involving Faculty. This will be put on hold until K. Heidbreder from Legal Counsel has time to review the language and provide feedback.
- b. J. Lemkul updated the commission on the status of CFA 2023-2024C, the resolution to form a task force to study instructor workloads and salaries. This issue is now within Faculty Affairs, as there is a need for additional support for the task force working group.

7. **Adjournment.** There being no further business, a motion was made, seconded, and members of the commission unanimously voted to adjourn at 11:51 am.