

Commission on Faculty Affairs
March 28, 2025
10:30 am – 12:00 pm
Burruss 330E and Zoom

Present: J. Lemkul (presiding), R. Fricker (ex officio), D. Agud (Faculty Senate), J. Lahne (Faculty Senate), I. Bradburn (proxy for K. Benson, Faculty Senate), A. Efrid (Undergraduate Student Senate), R. Jin (Faculty Senate), R. Gaines (Faculty Senate), J. McGlothlin (Faculty Senate), V. Buechner-Maxwell (Faculty Senate), J. Hawdon (Faculty Senate), N. Connors (A/P Faculty Senate), K. Pitts (Dean).

Absent with Notice: K. Benson (Faculty Senate), L. Learman (Dean), E. Lavender-Smith (Faculty Senate).

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

Guests: E. Kim (Faculty Affairs), A. Myers (Governance), K. Schneiderman, E. Cooper (Faculty Affairs), R. Gabriele (Faculty Affairs).

J. Lemkul called the meeting to order at 10:32 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 February 28, 2025.**

The consent agenda was adopted without objection.

3. Reports from Senates

- A/P Faculty Senate: No updates.
- Staff Senate: N/A (waiting for new representative).
- Undergraduate Senate: A. Efrid has stepped in as the new President of USS. No updates.
- Graduate Senate: N/A (absent).
- Faculty Senate: At the previous meeting, the BOV materials were discussed, R. Miles presented topics to appear on the upcoming constituency report, CGPSP 2024-25B was approved and is now heading to University Council.

4. Unfinished Business

Second Reading of CFA 2024-25H

Resolution to Codify the Faculty Reconciliation Process within the Faculty Affairs Office

J. Lemkul presented the resolution for second reading. A motion was made to approve and was seconded. J. Lemkul informed the commission that no substantive revisions have been suggested for CFA 2024-25H from other constituent groups. R. Gabriele raised language considerations in regard to mediation which may need to be reconciled given a related CAPFA

resolution; this will likely amount to an administrative change. There being no further discussion, a vote was taken on the motion, and the motion passed.

Second Reading of CFA 2024-25J

Resolution to Integrate Chapter 12 into Chapters 2 and 5 of the Faculty Handbook

J. Lemkul presented the resolution for second reading. A motion was made to approve and was seconded. J. Lemkul relayed that UCC recommended a legal review on this resolution as it involves employment policies. There being no further discussion, a vote was taken on the motion, and the motion passed.

Second Reading of CFA 2024-25K

Resolution to Amend the Faculty Handbook to Codify Interest- or Discipline-Based Faculty Organizations

J. Lemkul presented the resolution for second reading. A motion was made to approve and was seconded. J. Lemkul noted that the word “associations” was replaced with “organizations” due to confusion from other senates. While there were no other substantive edits that were recommended, the CFA agreed on a number of small wording edits for the purposes of grammar and syntax. J. Lemkul called for a motion to adopt the resolution as amended. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken on the motion as there was no further discussion, and the motion passed.

5. New Business

Discussion

Update on BOV actions on CFA resolutions

The BOV approved all four CFA resolutions that were brought before them at the March meeting.

Discussion

CFA representative on UMI committee

J. Lemkul informed the CFA about open spots on the UMI committee. There will be one faculty co-chair and one graduate student co-chair. There are a total of 15 spots, and the plurality will be faculty members. There will be one meeting this semester to establish a top line budget number for increasing graduate student financing, but the bulk of the work will most likely occur in Fall 2025. The three co-sponsoring commissions are able to nominate a representative, and CFA members are encouraged to send any eligible names to J. Lemkul as soon as possible. This representative will ideally be a faculty member who has done work alongside graduate students with external funding.

6. Open Discussion

The CFA held a discussion on outcomes relating to the recent BOV meeting.

- *Will the DEI-related BOV changes have an impact on coursework?* The provost has made it clear that professors have full academic freedom in determining the content of their courses (e.g., syllabus, teaching material). Course content cannot be dictated by political entities. The university is still permitted to offer classes relating to DEI topics, but it cannot enforce any mandates that students register for these courses as requirements

for graduation. At this time, no academic programs are being reviewed. Similarly, students also have the academic freedom to take whatever courses they choose.

- *How do these changes impact student organizations?* In general, as long as student organizations are not exclusive in terms of membership, they should be allowed. Even if the student organization is non-academic, they still have the freedoms afforded to them by the first amendment (e.g., speech, assembly, etc.).
- *What are the reactions from the provost?* R. Fricker provided an overview of the provost's statement at the BOV meeting titled, "Principles Guiding Virginia Tech's Policies and Practices." In summary, he affirmed that Virginia Tech's First Amendment rights and right to academic freedom are core principles of higher education. The BOV resolution to dissolve the Office of Inclusive Strategy and Excellence was discussed. While it requires a change in the organizational structure of the university, it is also an opportunity for the university to weave these functions into all of the work that we do, as opposed to having the work siloed in separate organizations. This document is posted in the CFA SharePoint, is memorialized in the BOV meeting minutes, and will soon be made public.
- *Are there potential impacts on promotion and tenure?* It is very unlikely that tenure would be retroactively revoked for Virginia Tech faculty; there are safeguards in place, as well as procedural and financial considerations that make this highly unlikely. However, the BOV is the governing body that approves tenure, so it is possible that the Board could impact the awarding of tenure P&T moving forward. However, doing so would come at a steep price to the university, particularly the university's reputation, and it would catastrophically negatively affect the university's ability to attract and retain faculty.
- *Would it be possible to have a faculty forum, listserv, or collective platform to speak and gather with other faculty members?* The CFA is generally supportive of the idea behind this initiative, but a number of logistical and functional issues were discussed about the possibility of scaling a project of this size.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 12:03 pm.