WHEREAS, Juneteenth recognizes the profound significance of June 19, 1865, when the last enslaved Americans in Texas or elsewhere in the Confederate States obtained the freedom that had been promised in Emancipation Proclamation of January 1863; and

WHEREAS, Black Texans organized a celebration of their first year of freedom on June 19, 1866, called Jubilee Day or Emancipation Day or Juneteenth; inaugurating a joyous tradition of commemorating the end of slavery in the United States; and

WHEREAS, while Juneteenth marked a significant point in the ending of U.S. slavery, the formal end of enslavement proved a prelude to a heroic struggle by African Americans for freedom, equality, and inclusion that continues to this day; and

WHEREAS, in October 2020, the Governor of Virginia signed into law legislation passed during the General Assembly 2020 special session making Juneteenth a permanent, statewide holiday for eligible state employees; and

WHEREAS, on June 17, 2021, Juneteenth became a federal holiday when the President of the United States signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act into law; and

WHEREAS, as had been the case with MLK Day and Labor Day, for the commemoration of Juneteenth at Virginia Tech to continue on a permanent basis with classes canceled and the university closed, the Presidential Policy Memoranda stated that a formal resolution must be brought forward through the university governance system following the normal process; and

WHEREAS, in the 2021-22 Faculty Handbook ratified by the Board of Visitors on August 31, 2021, Juneteenth was inadvertently included as a faculty holiday before a resolution had gone through the governance process;
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that recognizing the significance of Juneteenth, beginning in 2022, Virginia Tech will commemorate Juneteenth each year by canceling classes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University Academic Calendar Criteria as established in Presidential Policy Memorandum No. 228 will be revised accordingly and all other criteria will remain unchanged.

LASTLY, BE IT RESOLVED that following the passage of legislation making Juneteenth a federal and state holiday, and the subsequent incorporation of Juneteenth as a faculty holiday in the 2021-22 Faculty Handbook approved by the Board of Visitors in August 2021, this resolution canceling classes is the last step needed to enable the university to be closed beginning in 2022 for the Juneteenth holiday. With President Sands’ approval, Juneteenth will be included in university policy 4315: Guidelines on Holidays and listed as a nationally observed holiday when classes are not in session and the university is normally closed with only essential personnel designated to work.
The GPSS reviewed CUSP 2021-2022O and voted as a general body to waive our right to comment on the resolution.

The GPSS also reviewed CUSP 2021-2022N and moved to endorse the resolution. The senate body was excited about the resolution and wanted to go beyond waiving our right to comment in order to express support.
April 8, 2022

To: Vice President of Policy and Governance

The Staff Senate Committee on Policy and Issues has reviewed and approves CUSP Resolution 2021-22N. We do have a few comments about this resolution.

In the first “Whereas” statement it states that Juneteenth was “the day the last enslaved Americans learned that they had been freed by the Emancipation Proclamation…” This implies that all those who were enslaved were freed by the Emancipation Proclamation. In fact, the Emancipation Proclamation only applied to and freed those enslaved in states who had seceded from the United States [https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation#:~:text=President%20Abraham%20Lincoln%20issued%20the,and%20henceforward%20shall%20be%20free%22]. Perhaps a better wording would be “the day that the last enslaved Americans in the Confederate States learned that they had been freed by the Emancipation Proclamation”.

In the second “Whereas” statement it states that Juneteenth marked the end of slavery. This is in fact incorrect since the 13th amendment to the Constitution, which ended slavery in both the north and the south, was not ratified until December 1865. People were still legally enslaved in several states until this time including the Union states of New Jersey and Kansas and the border states of Delaware, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, Missouri, and our nation’s capital of Washington D.C. Perhaps a better wording would be “WHEREAS the 13th amendment officially marked the end of slavery…” or “WHEREAS the official end of slavery did not come until the ratification of the 13th amendment, Juneteenth was an important milestone, and it was only the beginning…”.

Lastly, we are concerned with the wording of the last two “Be it resolved” sections. Would this resolution make Juneteenth a University Holiday where the University is closed, classes are canceled, and both faculty and staff are off? Other parts of the resolution seem to indicate this, but it is not specifically stated in the be it resolved sections.

We would also like to comment that we recognize that this holiday would occur during the summer session and that the scheduling of that session is particularly tight. We want to be sure that the financial and scheduling impacts this could create have been considered.

We do support this resolution and have no further comment.

Thank you,
Amber Robinson, Chair Staff Senate Policies and Issues Committee
April 11, 2022

To: Vice President of Policy and Governance

From: A/P Faculty Senate Policies and Issues Committee

The A/P Faculty Senate has reviewed and approves/endorse the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP) Resolution 2021-22N to Establish Non-Class Holiday Status for Juneteenth.

The following comments were collected during the review process:

- When is Juneteenth celebrated? Will the university close only if June 19 falls on a M-F? What if it falls on a Saturday or Sunday? Will we recognize it on the preceding Friday or following Monday?

- The last whereas needs revising if in fact the university is going to be closed . . . it simply indicates the cancelling of classes.
  
  NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that recognizing the significance of Juneteenth, beginning in 2022, Virginia Tech will commemorate Juneteenth each year by canceling classes; - I would add at the end "by canceling classes and closing offices"

We have no further comment.
Resolution CUSP 2021-22N

The Faculty Senate strongly supports the intent of this resolution, as senators agreed that Virginia Tech should honor America’s “second Independence Day.”

Our unreserved support is contingent upon resolving a question about the historical accuracy of this whereas statement:

WHEREAS, Juneteenth recognizes the profound significance of June 19, 1865, the day the last enslaved Americans learned that they had been freed by the Emancipation Proclamation, which had been signed more than two years earlier; and

Based on the information provided during the meeting, we believe the following statements more accurately reflect the history of this day and are suggested as replacements for the first two whereas statements:

WHEREAS, Juneteenth recognizes the profound significance of June 19, 1865, when African-Americans in Texas were freed by the Union Army under the Emancipation Proclamation, which had been signed more than two years earlier; and

WHEREAS, African-Americans organized the first celebration of what became known as Juneteenth on June 19, 1866, inaugurating a tradition that makes Juneteenth the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States; and

WHEREAS, while the first Juneteenth celebration commemorated the end of slavery, it was only the beginning of a long, arduous struggle for freedom and equality by African-Americans that continues to this day.

We ask that the authors of this resolution review the history of Juneteenth to resolve the questions raised by the Faculty Senate.

Respectfully,

Dr. Robert Weiss
Faculty Senate President
Professor of Natural Hazards
Center for Coastal Studies (Coastal@VT), Director
DRRMVT, Director
Department of Geosciences