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**MINUTES**
**COMMISSION ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES AND POLICIES**
**JANUARY 27TH, 2025**
**3:00 PM**
**VIA ZOOM**

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**PRESENT**: J. Tokuhisa (presiding); N. Akers; E. Austin; K. Goyne; K. Heiderscheit; R. Holloway; S. Huxtable; M. Kimbrell; V. Nguyen; S. Over; M. Pleimling; S. Rinehart; J. Russell; M. Seref; S. Shupe; R. Sparks; N. Staley; S. Sumner; D. Thorp; N. Tran; K. Thompson; J. Walker

**ABSENT:** J. Bedore; K. Edgar; Z. Fu; A. Phan; R. Poff; L. Ricci; C. Ruktanonchai; N. Tasnim

**GUESTS:** E. Anderson; J. Leech; R. Pitcher; L. Rose; Z. Tucker; G. Vu

J. Tokuhisa called the meeting to order at 3:01 PM. A quorum was present.

## ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda. The motion carried.

## APPROVAL OF OR ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPROVAL AND POSTING OF MINUTES

J. Tokuhisa noted that these minutes have been voted on electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Governance Information System on the web (http://www.governance.vt.edu) and the Office of the University Registrar webpage (registrar.vt.edu/governance).

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

M. Pleimling presented on the university Foreign Language Requirements policy.

- The commission discussed potential enrollment loss if the foreign language requirement is removed.

- Several commission members worried that removing the requirement might suggest the university doesn't value foreign languages or affect high school students' focus on foreign languages.

- The discussion will continue in the commission's next meeting with an Admissions representative present. R. Sparks volunteered to collect additional data concerning the 232 students from M. Pleimling' s presentation, that would be affected by a policy change.

J. Tokuhisa and R. Sparks opened the floor for discussion regarding overlapping credits between programs (SACSCOC Requirements).

- R. Sparks shared guidance from Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) related to standard 9.2. An excerpt from SACSCOC standard 9.2 has been included below:

**Combination Degree**

A combination degree is a situation where the same institution awards more than one degree from an overlapping course of study. Combination degrees often allow a shorter time for completion due to the "double-counting" of some coursework. Where this occurs, institutions have an obligation to explain how the quality and integrity of each degree involved is maintained. See Standard 9.2 (Program Length) (Core Requirement) in the Resource Manual for more detail.

**Rationale and Notes**

Another area in which appropriate justification is often required is combined programs, where students earn multiple degrees while progressing through a program, either at the same level or at different levels. Such combination programs often involve degrees earned from different institutions (dual degrees) or two degrees earned from the same institution (combination degrees). In these types of degrees, some of the same course credit hours are essentially "double-counted" by different institutions or within the same institution. When these programs involve transfer of credit articulation across institutions, care should be taken that the institution follows its own policies and procedures for transfer of credit [see Standard 10.8 (Evaluating and awarding academic credit)], but generally articulated transfer of credit programs pose few problems under this current standard.

For combination degrees offered by a single institution, excessive "double-counting" of credits can affect the integrity of the degrees offered. As an example, consider an institution that offers two distinct master's degrees that require 30 semester credit hours each (the minimum allowed under this standard). If the institution allows a student to earn both degrees by taking 42 total semester credit hours (double-counting six three-semester credit hour courses as applying to each degree), then the institution may face a high burden of proof in justifying this arrangement from an academic perspective. A reasonable reviewer might view this acceptable as a second major under the same degree but have difficulty accepting that two degrees were earned in separate fields.

Another common situation is to allow students to begin graduate work before completing the undergraduate degree, then "double-counting" some of the graduate work to award both a baccalaureate and a master's degree upon completion of the work. For exceptional students, a limited amount of this activity could easily be academically justified. However, if the combined coursework falls far short of 150 total semester hours, or if any student can take part in the program regardless of academic merit, it calls into question the integrity of the undergraduate degree and/or the rigor of the graduate degree. These circumstances require an appropriate justification under this standard. Institutions and reviewers must use their professional judgment in such cases.

## NEW BUSINESS

R. Sparks spoke on the recently approved Continuous Enrollment Policy at Virginia Tech and some revisions that may need to be addressed by the commission:

- Under the revised policy, undergraduate students are expected to stay enrolled throughout the duration of their program. If students take a break of a year or more, they must follow the new catalog requirements when they return.

- The policy does not currently address students that graduate from their programs. Graduates remain "active" until a year after they completed their degree.

- R. Holloway and R. Sparks mentioned that any negative repercussions of changing the policy would be avoided by removing the students' major upon graduation.

- A policy revision will be drafted by R. Sparks and N. Smith will review the revisions before the next meeting.

## ACCEPTANCE AND POSTING OF COMMISSION/COMMITTEES/SUB -COMMITTEES REPORTS AND/OR MINUTES

**Academic Support Committee**

No report.

**Academic Policies Committee**

No report.

**Athletics Committee**

No report.

**Commencement Committee**

No report.

**Honor Council**

No report.

**Library Committee**

No report.

**University Curriculum Committee for General Education**

No report.

**Administrative and Professional Faculty Senate**

No report.

**Staff Senate**

No report.

**Faculty Senate**

J. Tokuhisa shared that they discussed DEI nomenclature, but nothing has come of the conversation at this time. VT Police Department gave a presentation on how to approach students struggling with their mental health.

**Undergraduate Student Senate**

No report.

**Graduate and Professional Student Senate**

No report.

## OTHER BUSINESS:

M. Pleimling mentioned that **Resolution 2024-25A** *Resolution to Revise Policy 6305, Satisfactory Academic Progress for Associate and Undergraduates* is up for a vote at the University Council next week.

K. Thompson moved for approval of the posthumous awarding of the ~~Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, Major: Computer Science~~ **\***Bachelor of Science in Computer Engineering, Major: Computer Engineering, to Jared Williams, effective Spring 2025. K. Thompson indicated that the request was based on the recommendation and support of the faculty of the Department of ~~Computer Science~~ **\***Computer Engineering and the College of Engineering.

**\***During CUSP, it was indicated that Jared Williams would be posthumously awarded a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, Major: Computer Science, but this was an error. Jared Williams will be posthumously awarded with a Bachelor of Science in Computer Engineering, Major: Computer Engineering.

The motion passed unanimously.

## ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 3:49 PM.

*Respectfully Submitted,*
*Zach Tucker & Rachel Pitcher, Office of the University Registrar*