

MINUTES

**Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies
February 23rd, 2026
3:00 PM
Via Zoom**

Present – J. Tokuhisa (presiding), D. Agud, E. Austin, A. Ball, J. Bedore, K. Goynes, M. Kimbrell, H. Lexer, S. Over, M. Pleimling, L. Ricci, S. Rinehart, M. Seref, J. Sible, R. Sparks, S. Sumner, K. Thompson

Absent with Notice: N. Akers, S. Clements, J. Russell, D. Thorp

Absent: M. Acosta; M. Caddick S. Dip; K. Edgar, C. Middleton, R. Poff, C. Ruktanonchai,

Guests: J. Gallagher, R. Pitcher, L. Rose, K. Wells, Z. Tucker

J. Tokuhisa called the meeting to order at 3:02. A quorum was present.

1. Adoption of Agenda

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

2. Approval or Announcement of approval and posting of minutes of February 9th, 2026.

J. Tokuhisa noted that the February 9th, 2026 minutes have been voted on electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Office of the University Registrar's website:

<http://www.registrar.vt.edu/governance.html>

3. New Business

CUSP 2025-26G – Resolution for Policy on Use of Text Messaging (1st Reading)

J. Tokuhisa shared that the draft of this resolution is similar to the draft the commission looked at previously. Right now, there is a policy for email communications with students, but there is no policy for SMS Messaging.

H. Lexer requested background on the proposed policy. J. Tokuhisa explained that there has been an ongoing interest to establish a university-wide text messaging policy to prevent overuse and to avoid overwhelming students. Text messaging is useful in specific, urgent contexts, and the aim is to maintain that effectiveness.

J. Sible noted that the draft policy does not address the role of student employees or volunteers. She emphasized that texting students should occur only when it is mission-critical. Students may understandably text their supervisors in emergencies, but some situations have involved excessive or inappropriate volumes of text communication. The policy will need to define boundaries to ensure that texting is not misused in these contexts.

M. Pleimling shared that research groups may use platforms such as Slack instead of text messaging. This raised the question of whether the policy should explicitly include these types of group-messaging platforms to avoid creating loopholes. Participants questioned whether focusing solely on cell phone messaging is outdated, citing Slack, GroupMe, and WhatsApp as common tools. Discussion also covered how students connect to GroupMe group and some faculty rely on

QR codes because they do not have student phone numbers. H. Lexer noted that students can join with email or phone number.

R. Sparks described earlier efforts to create a policy governing mass telecommunication at the university. Challenges at the time stemmed from units that did not know whether or how they should use such tools. This new policy would likely apply most directly to offices needing to communicate with large numbers of students at once. His comments provided broader governance context for the policy discussion.

H. Lexer asked how the university can prevent students from mistaking legitimate text messages for spam, especially since students are accustomed to receiving official messages via email. M. Seref noted that many students do not respond to email, suggesting a multistage communication approach—email first, followed by text messaging if needed. J. Sible raised concerns about privacy, asking what happens if a text notification is visible to someone other than the intended student. Some of these issues may be addressed in the “shall not be used for…” section of the policy.

The group discussed uncertainties around how text messages would be sent and what type of phone numbers or systems would be used. D. Agud asked whether messages would originate from personal numbers or from university-controlled numbers. J. Bedore shared that the admissions office uses a mass text messaging platform. R. Sparks noted that Banner and Canvas contain tools that could potentially support sanctioned texting, and that the policy may need to specify approved sending platforms. He also explained that additional infrastructure would be necessary, particularly on the Banner side, to ensure anonymity where appropriate. Also, students must have a clearly defined means to opt in or out.

A. Ball shared that Undergraduate Academic Affairs developed a text messaging policy through EAB Navigate because there was no existing university guidance. S. Rinehart recommended gathering input from other units that already communicate with students through messaging tools, as their experiences could provide valuable insight for shaping a comprehensive institutional policy.

Based on feedback from the commission, additional edits will be made to the resolution before it is sent to Faculty Senate for first reading on March 6th.

CUSP 2025-26H – Updating the Foreign Language Requirement (1st Reading)

R. Sparks explained that this resolution emerged from questions and discussion at the CUSP meeting following the no vote at the Faculty Senate meeting. The earlier presentation lacked clear explanation of the supporting data, which caused misunderstandings. This revised resolution is intended to prevent confusion and present the data more clearly.

D. Agud added that Faculty Senate worried that moving the requirement to the time of admission may not give students who needed to take a language course the opportunity to explore MCLL programs. Also, they were concerned that students from high schools without foreign languages courses would be disadvantaged. J. Tokuhisa explained that all Virginia high schools offering the Advanced Studies Diploma must include a foreign language component, so gaps should be rare.

M. Pleimling noted that the College of Science required only 2 foreign language units starting in 2018–2019 and suggested including that detail. He also asked whether conversations would continue with Faculty Senate. R. Sparks said he had spoken with the department head for Modern Classical Languages and Literatures. J. Tokuhisa clarified that the prior vote was influenced by concerns related to the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences.

Participants discussed the need for clearer data, including how many students transfer in foreign language credits and what the figure of 232 VT courses over three cohorts represents. H. Lexer asked whether students lacking two units would be denied admission, and the answer was yes. She also raised questions about students with disabilities who did not take a language; R. Sparks said he would consult with admissions. D. Agud asked about the possibility of placement tests, as used elsewhere.

The group also discussed challenges with transfer students who often do not submit high school transcripts, which creates administrative burdens. Suggestions included asking targeted questions on applications, improving transcript processes, or granting provisional admissions. J. Sible expressed concern about provisional admissions because of the potential impact on individual students.

Commission members agreed they need more clarity on the 232 students. The Office of the University Registrar will provide more details for this group of students. They also discussed the experiences of students who can complete language requirements during their academic career. J. Bedore shared that in animal science, students are encouraged to take language courses or minors—often Japanese or Spanish—which supports the MCLL department. The group concluded that additional data will be essential when presenting the resolution again.

Based on feedback from the commission, additional edits will be made to the resolution before it is sent to Faculty Senate for first reading on March 6th.

4. Reports

- Academic Support Committee – Sherwood Clements: No report.
- Academic Policies Committee – Michel Pleimling: No report
- Athletics Committee – Dan Thorp: No report.
- Commencement Committee – Monica Kimbrell: M. Kimbrell shared that the Commencement Committee is continuing to reach out to colleges ahead of the upcoming commencement ceremony.
- Honor Council – Hannah Lexer: H. Lexer discussed the document she provided that is sent to associate deans monthly. It included upcoming staffing changes and the number of cases that are active and closed for the month of February.
- Library Committee – Sarah Over: No report.
- University Curriculum Committee for General Education – Khanh Ngoc Tran: No report.
- Constituent Reports – Administrative & Professional Faculty Senate – Nicole Akers: No report.
- Constituent Reports – Staff Senate – Misti Acosta: No report.
- Constituent Reports – Faculty Senate – S. Clements: No report.
- Constituent Reports – Undergraduate Student Senate – L. Ricci; C. Middleton: No report
- Constituent Reports: Graduate and Professional Student Senate – S. Dip: No report.

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:31.