



Faculty Senate

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

<https://www.facultysenate.vt.edu/>

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

September 13, 2024 @ 2:30 – 4:15 pm

Torgersen 1000 or Via Zoom

Check-In:

Present: Rachel Miles (presiding), Luke Achenie, Diane Agud, Rick Ashley, Paul Avey, Azziza Bankole, Manish Bansal, Kristen Benson, Jan Helge Bøhn, Warren Booth, Bradley Bowen, Anamaria Bukvic, Ralph Buehler (attending for Stephanie Smith, SPIA), Carol Cash (for James Hawdon), Kevin Cheng, Sherwood Clements, Joshua Clemons, Rebecca Cockrum, Carolyn Commer, Nick Copeland, Carolyn Copenheaver, Logan Dandridge, Kristy Daniels, Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Matt Eick, Candace Fitch, Rodney Gaines, Scott Gartner, Yuba Gautam, Dan Hindman, Leanna House, Mantu Hudait, Scott Huxtable, Eli Jamison, Ran Jin, Bryan Katz, Alex Kinnaman, Jake Lahne, Catherine Laroche, Renee LeClair, Justin Lemkul, Kimberly Loeffert, Gary Long, Charles Lowery, G.Q. Lu, Silvio Macias, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Shelly Maycock, Joel McGlothlin, Harold McKenzie, Joe Merola, Phil Nelson, Laura Nesar (for Marc Michel), Zhange Nicole Ni, Gregory Novack, Nicole Pitterson, John Richey, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Steven Rowson, Ian Shoemaker, Richard Shryock, Jay Teets, Chelsea Thompto, Jim Tokuhisa, Byron Tsang, Kwok Tsui, Alp Tural (for Bill Green), Bimal Viswanath, Jeff Walling, Jerald Walz, Terri-Ann Wattsman, Erin Worthington, David Xie, Yan Xu, Lizette Zietsman

Guests: E. Fanny Jasso-Hernandez, Dee Dee Somervell, April Myers, Isis Quinlan

Absent with Notice: Wes Gwaltney, James Hawdon, Evan Lavender-Smith, Stephanie Smith (Communications)

Absent: Biko Agozino, Lisa Belden, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Mark Coggins, John Entwistle, Bill Green, David Gregory, Aaron Gross, Rebecca Hester, Joseph Hughes, Casey Jim, Sarah Karpanty, Ali Mehrizi-Sani, Marc Michel, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Albert Pan, Nino Ripepi, Syrenthia Robinson, Adrian Sandu, Karen Schnatterly, Eric Stanley, Keith Stephenson, Shane Wang, Ashley Wilkinson, Angelica Witcher, Diane Zahm

Call to Order by the President Rachel Miles at 2:32

Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Rachel Miles)

- Consent agenda was adopted:
 - Minutes for 08-30-2024 ([Link](#))
 - Agenda for 09-13-2024 ([Link](#))

Business Agenda

Unfinished Business

1. Updates and Announcements
 - a. Updates from committees, commissions, and University Council can be found on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site.
 - b. An Academic Affairs Council Retreat was held on September 12, 2024. The retreat focused on AI integration in future curriculum development.
 - c. In response to a request during the August 30 Faculty Senate meeting, a summary of changes to Policy 5000, University Real Property (Building, Grounds, Infrastructure) Usage and Events, has been provided to the Faculty Senate and is available on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site.

2. Rachel Miles introduced the election of college representatives to University Council from the following colleges: Pamplin College of Business; College of Natural Resources and Environment; College of Architecture, Arts, and Design; College of Veterinary Medicine.
 - a. Nominations have been received for the following:
 - i. Pamplin College of Business - Jason Malone.
 - ii. College of Architecture, Arts, and Design - Kim Loeffert.
 - b. No nominations have been received for representatives from the College of Natural Resources or the College of Veterinary Medicine.
 - c. No additional nominations were received from the floor.
 - d. Elections were held.
 - i. Jason Malone was elected as representative to University Council for the Pamplin College of Business. (58 yea, 0 nay, 0 abstentions)
 - ii. Kim Loeffert was elected as representative to University Council for the College of Architecture, Arts, and Design. (58 yea, 0 nay, 0 abstentions)

New Business

3. Rachel Miles announced an election to fill a one-year term on the Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA). The floor was opened for nominations.
 - a. A nomination from the floor was received for Kristen Benson.

- b. The election was conducted. Kristen Benson was elected to serve a one-year term on CFA. (59 yea, 0 nay, 1 abstention)
- 4. Rachel Miles introduced President Tim Sands and a Q&A session with the Faculty Senate.
 - a. President Sands provided opening remarks. Comments included the following:
 - i. The Global Distinction Initiative, its connection to Virginia Tech's land grant mission, expected benefits to Virginia Tech, and University Mission Initiatives.
 - ii. The VT Advantage. Students are positively impacted from participating in paid internships and study abroad. Virginia Tech's fundraising goal will increase the opportunity for activities like these along with guidance, mentoring, support, and connection, helping more students achieve successful careers.
 - iii. The Wall Street Journal/College Pulse recently ranked Virginia Tech as sixth among all US public schools in their listing of the 2025 Best Colleges.
 - b. Questions and discussion on a variety of topics followed.
 - i. Support for faculty during efforts to achieve Virginia Tech's current goals, including the Global Distinction Initiative. President Sands provided historical context on enrollment and research growth. He stated that faculty are essential to continued growth and mentioned the need for additional infrastructure such as laboratory facilities and biomedical space. The university wants to recruit and retain the best faculty and has been focused on market compensation. This can affect salary compression and can be a stress point. The university has made efforts to keep up with inflation. Virginia Tech realizes that there is more to do, and carefully monitors this area.
 - ii. The role and value of the arts and humanities and their relation to Global Distinction metrics. President Sands explained that the arts and humanities are critical to Virginia Tech as a comprehensive university, and the university values these areas and the strength realized from their combination with other areas. Examples such as the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT) and the field of artificial intelligence which currently includes both technology and ethics considerations were mentioned. Identified metrics are considered a reasonable approximation of what the university needs to do to advance, but Virginia Tech needs to fill in where there are gaps in

metrics. Senators and departments are encouraged to be involved in this process and to define how they characterize distinction. Limited discussion was held on the Partnership for an Incentive Based Budget (PIB).

- iii. During the last academic year, senators asked for information on behalf of colleagues who reported challenges obtaining support from the Cranwell International Center. At that time, the office was experiencing staffing problems. President Sands reports that there has been some progress and will provide further follow-up.
- iv. Lengthy discussion was held on academic freedom, including comments on Virginia Tech's relationship with the Virginia legislature and current administration, public viewpoints around Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), Inclusive VT, Virginia Tech's flexibility in pathways courses, and the focus of the VT advantage. College and university presidents have asked SCHEV to provide metrics to define DEI.
- v. Results of a graduate student climate survey conducted during the last academic year and the process included in the Faculty Handbook for addressing policy or legal violations by tenured faculty were described. Workgroups are expected to convene to look at issues raised by the survey; members of the Faculty Senate will be included.
- vi. Lengthy discussion was held regarding personal viewpoints, scholarship, and activism. President Sands believes that faculty members can provide contributions to this area and help create definitions. A senator recommended the following resource: Versions of Academic Freedom, From Professionalism to Revolution, by Stanley Fish.
https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/V/bo1646263_3.html. This year, the university is providing opportunities for groups to focus on students and their individual experiences at Virginia Tech. These groups include faculty representation.
- vii. Recent updates to Policy 5000 were discussed. Updates to the policy include clarifications for known issues and provide exemptions for university business. The university feels that there are opportunities for freedom of expression and demonstrations that respect the rights of others and do not disrupt university business. Other disruptions experienced on campus that result from university operations were mentioned.
- viii. President Sands would like to see campus-wide conversations on important topics such as those mentioned today. The Commission on Faculty Affairs was recently given approval by the University Council

Cabinet to advance Resolution 2024-25C, Resolution to Establish a Discussion Forum Under the Purview of the Faculty Senate, which will provide for an external discussion forum to address topics of interest that are outside of the scope of the Faculty Senate but are important to faculty.

Open Floor Discussion

5. There was no open floor discussion.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 4:14 p.m.