



## Faculty Senate

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

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

# Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

## September 27, 2024 @ 2:30 – 4:15 pm

### Torgersen 1000 or Via Zoom

#### Check-In:

**Present:** Rachel Miles (presiding), Luke Achenie, Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Rick Ashley, Paul Avey, Manish Bansal, Kristen Benson, Jan Helge Bøhn, Bradley Bowen, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Anamaria Bukvic, 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, Yuba Gautam, Aaron Gross, Wes Gwaltney, James Hawdon, Dan Hindman, Mantu Hudait, Scott Huxtable, Ran Jin, Sarah Karpanty, Bryan Katz, Bryan Katz, Alex Kinnaman, Andrea L’Affilitto (alternate for Ran Jin), Jake Lahne, Catherine Larochelle, Renee LeClair, Justin Lemkul, Kimberly Loeffert, Charles Lowery, G.Q. Lu, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Shelly Maycock, Joel McGlothlin, Harold McKenzie, Ali Mehrizi-Sani, Joe Merola, Marc Michel, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Phil Nelson, Laura Nesar, Zhange Nicole Ni, Gregory Novack, Albert Pan, Nicole Pitterson, Jane Robertson Evia (alternate for Leanna House), Steven Rowson, Karen Schnatterly, Ian Shoemaker, Richard Shryock, Jay Teets, Chelsea Thompto, Jim Tokuhisa, Kwok Tsui, Bimal Viswanath, Jerald Walz, Terri-Ann Wattsman, Angelica Witcher, Erin Worthington, David Xie, Yan Xu, Diane Zahm, Lizette Zietsman, Ali Mehrizi-Sani, Alp Tural (alternate for Bill Green), Lijuan Yuan

**Guests:** Demetria Somervell, T. Nicolaus Tideman

**Absent with Notice:** Azziza Bankole, Evan Lavender-Smith, Gary Long

**Absent:** Lisa Belden, Warren Booth, Mark Coggins, John Entwistle, Scott Gartner, Bill Green, David Gregory, Rebecca Hester, Leanna House, Joseph Hughes, Eli Jamison, Casey Jim, Ran Jin, Silvio Macias, John Richey, Nino Ripepi, Syrenthia Robinson, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Adrian Sandu, Stephanie Smith (Communications), Stephanie Smith (SPIA), Eric Stanley, Keith Stephenson, Byron Tsang, Jeff Walling, Shane Wang, Ashley Wilkinson

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

### **Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Rachel Miles)**

- Consent agenda was adopted:
  - Minutes for 09-13-2024 ([Link](#))
  - Agenda for 09-27-2024 ([Link](#))

### **Business Agenda**

#### **Unfinished Business**

1. Updates & Announcements
  - a. Updates from committees, commissions, and University Council are available on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site.
  - b. Rachel Miles, Faculty Senate President, is hosting open office hours weekly on Thursdays from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. and will be available in-person and via Zoom. Meetings can be scheduled outside of this time at <https://calendar.lib.vt.edu/appointments/rachelmiles>. These office hours are open to all faculty members, not only faculty senators.
  - c. The complete list of questions gathered for the September 13 Q&A session were provided to President Sands. Additional information and answers are expected.

#### **New Business**

2. Justin Lemkul presented for first reading CFA 2024-25B: Resolution to Amend the Faculty Handbook Description of Administrative Support for University Distinguished Professors.
  - a. University Distinguished Professors (UDP) report directly to the President of the university. Administrative support for the UDP process may be more efficient by allowing the President to delegate certain tasks to the Executive Vice President and Provost and the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.
  - b. This resolution updates Section 3.2.3 of the Faculty Handbook, allowing administrative aspects of appointments to be overseen by the Executive Vice President and Provost and the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs at the direction of the President. This is a one-sentence change in the Faculty Handbook.
3. Jim Hawdon presented for first reading Amendments to the Faculty Senate Bylaws.
  - a. Approval of amendments to the bylaws is completed in the Faculty Senate and does not require further approval.

- b. Many of the proposed amendments are focused on making the bylaws consistent with the constitution and providing editorial changes for improved clarity and readability.
- c. Additional amendments include the following main topics.
  - i. Proposed change to faculty senate composition removes the current statement that the senate will consist of 100 members with the ability for that number to be increased, if necessary and under certain provided reasons. New language states that number of faculty senators will be determined annually, based on procedures provided in the bylaws.
  - ii. Changes in representation include adjustments for individual departments. (1) The bylaws currently state that every department shall be represented by at least one senator. Proposed amendments state that no department shall have more than two senators. (2) Additional proposed changes regarding departments that fall below the representation threshold state that, if the Faculty Senate Operations Officer concludes that a department falls below the representation threshold, that department must join with another but may choose which department it joins.
  - iii. Proposed amendments add representation for research faculty employed outside of academic colleges and specifies that this group will be represented by a set number of senators, much like the University Libraries faculty. Amendments state that this group will consist of six at-large senators but requires that the total number be reviewed annually. Elections for research faculty would be administered by the Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation or designee.
  - iv. Proposed language adjustments change the reference from “departments” to “constituencies.” This change reflects the diversity of representation in the senate, such as seen in the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, and is in line with terms used by other senates.
  - v. Amendments regarding Faculty Senate officers. (1) Proposed changes for the Immediate Past President states that the Faculty Senate president must remain a senator for one year following their service as president. If their senate term ends, they will serve as senator in an ex officio capacity to complete their term as Immediate Past President. (2) The addition of a Parliamentarian as a Faculty Senate officer is proposed, and the duties of this position are specified.

- vi. Language has been added stating that, if possible, the final plenary meeting of the Faculty Senate should be held after the final University Council meeting of the academic year.
    - d. Discussion from the floor included the following.
      - i. If composition and representation changes are approved, the total number of senators for the next academic year would be 106 senators. The Faculty Senate Constitution states that the senate represents research faculty, and these changes are an effort to address the current representation gap. The Commission on Faculty Affairs and Commission on Research both contributed to discussion on this topic. Further discussion focused on funding for research faculty positions. Additional comments were made regarding the criterion used for research faculty representation, the number of institutions from which these representatives would join the senate, the at-large nature of their representation, and the fact that most research faculty members are not required to perform service activities.
      - ii. Discussion was held concerning departments that currently have three senators and the benefit of making the suggested change to a maximum of two. Currently, there are two departments with three senators. It was stated that the Math and English Departments have very large instructor populations and that the third senator in those departments was intended to represent instructors. Departments ultimately decide whether a senator seat is filled by an instructor.
      - iii. Conversation around the use of the word constituency and how Research Faculty is defined.
- 4. Rachel Miles introduced Carrie Cox, Senior Director for Auxiliary Services, who provided an update on Transportation and Parking.
  - a. Transportation and Parking decisions are guided by the Campus Master Plan and Virginia Tech's Climate Action Commitment. Growth is increasing in the central campus area, which is pushing parking further out. A new transportation master plan is in process but not yet ready; this plan will include consideration of mobility.
  - b. The Transportation and Parking Committee is a shared governance committee whose membership includes representation from the Faculty Senate and other senates and provides insight into concerns and recommendations.
  - c. Strategies have been implemented to offset parking loss experienced by growth in central campus. (1) Creation of the Transit Center. While the building itself is not yet open, new routes are fully operational and the

university has seen an increase in Transit ridership. (2) Some reallocation of spaces was completed during the summer, including reducing the number of dedicated visitor and specialty/service spaces; changes to parking spaces in the North End Center parking garage; and both new and fewer contractor permits, requiring that most contractors park remotely. New citations have been implemented upon recommendation of the Transportation and Parking Committee. These changes have provided increased parking opportunities for faculty, staff, students, and ADA.

- d. Specific details were provided regarding the Transit Center: Regional partners are now utilizing the transit center, with bays 1 and 2 dedicated to regional partners. This has reduced bus traffic around campus and increased safety. Campus shuttle loops and additional routes were described. These routes and stops continue to be reviewed and improved. Off-campus routes provided by Blacksburg Transit have been adjusted to be more in line with the Transit Center.
  - e. Lower-cost parking options are now available for individuals who park at the Chicken Hill lot and ride a shuttle bus to central campus. This route begins at 6 am.
  - f. Sustainability initiatives were discussed. The Hokie Bike Hub is currently located in Perry Street Garage but will move to the Transit Center when it opens. Gobbler Gears is a student bike rental program and has been successful, with all available bikes rented. Locks, lights, helmets and free repairs are provided with the program. EV charging stations continue to be added. The Connecting VA app can assist people with ride share opportunities. Additional information can be found at [getaround.vt.edu](http://getaround.vt.edu).
  - g. Comments, questions and limited discussion focused on the CRC shuttle and the need for a more timely and direct shuttle to central campus; the NEC Parking Garage and complications using new hang tags during the first weeks of class; concerns with lighting in the Perry Street garage staircases; and problems experienced in the Spring semester with non-EV vehicles parking in EV spots, with the suggestion that the citation process for these types of infractions be reviewed.
  - h. Senators are encouraged to send any additional comments or questions to Parking Services and to contact them when any specific issues arise.
5. Rachel Miles introduced Dave Andrews, Associate Director of Employee Wellness, who presented updates from Hokie Wellness.
- a. Virginia Tech will be participating in the National Faculty and Staff Health Assessment survey, which is sponsored by the American College Health

Association. Survey links will be distributed via email to faculty and staff on October 21, with responses accepted through November 1. Links are unique to the individual receiving them and should not be forward. All responses are confidential and everyone who responds will be entered to win prizes.

- b. This survey was last completed in 2019. Data will be used to identify programs and resources needed for employees. Once survey result data is received, Hokie Wellness would be happy to present it to groups and departments.
  - c. Additional information will be available in campus notices and can also be accessed through the FAQ page: [https://hokiewellness.vt.edu/employees/National Faculty Staff Health Assessment.html](https://hokiewellness.vt.edu/employees/National_Faculty_Staff_Health_Assessment.html).
6. Rachel Miles introduced the election of three members to the Faculty Senate of Virginia.
- a. Nominations for Guopeng (Kevin) Cheng and Ali Mehrizi-Sani were previously received.
  - b. The floor was opened for additional nominations. One nomination was received from the floor, Luke Achenie.
  - c. Elections were conducted. All three nominees were elected to the Faculty Senate of Virginia.
    - Guopeng (Kevin) Cheng (Voting: 66 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstain)
    - Ali Mehrizi-Sani (Voting: 67 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstain)
    - Luke Achenie (Voting: 67 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstain)
7. Rachel Miles introduced the election of two representatives to the Faculty Honorifics Committee.
- a. The nominees for the Faculty Honorifics Committee are Joe Merola representing the Academy of Faculty Leadership and Kerry Redican representing the Academy of Faculty Service.
  - b. The election was conducted. Both nominees were elected to the Faculty Honorifics Committee.
    - Joe Merola (Voting: 65 Yes, 2 No, 1 Abstain )
    - Kerry Redican (Voting: 66 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain )

### **Open Floor Discussion**

8. No items were presented for open floor discussion.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 4:01 p.m.