



## Faculty Senate

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

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

# Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

## October 25, 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, Azziza Bankole, Kristen Benson, Jan Helge Bøhn, Warren Booth, Bradley Bowen, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Anamaria Bukvic, Anamaria Bukvic, Young Cao, Kevin Cheng, Sherwood Clements, Rebecca Cockrum, Carolyn Commer, Carolyn Copenheaver, Kristy Daniels, Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Rodney Gaines, Scott Gartner, Yuba Gautam, James Hawdon, Dan Hindman, Mantu Hudait, Scott Huxtable, Eli Jamison, E. Fanny Jasso-Hernandez, Morgan Holder (alternate for Wes Gwaltney), Ran Jin, Greg Kogan, Jake Lahne, Renee LeClair, Justin Lemkul, Kimberly Loeffert, Gary Long, Charles Lowery, G.Q. Lu, Jason Malone, Luca Massa, Shelly Maycock, Joel McGlothlin, Harold McKenzie, Joe Merola, Marc Michel, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Phil Nelson, Gregory Novack, Albert Pan, Nino Ripepi, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Ian Shoemaker, Richard Shryock, Stephanie Smith (Communications), Stephanie Smith (SPIA), Jim Tokuhisa, Kwok Tsui, Alp Tural (alternate for Bill Green), Bimal Viswanath, Jeff Walling, Cassie Wallwey, Jerald Walz, Terri-Ann Wattsman, Angelica Witcher, Erin Worthington, David Xie, Yan Xu

**Guests:** Cyril Clarke, Stuart Feigenbaum, Ron Fricker, Rachel Gabriele, Eryn Geigel, Ellen Graves, April Myers, Michel Pleimling, Nasim Schwab, Demetria Somervell

**Absent with Notice:** Evan Lavender-Smith, Chelsea Thompto

**Absent:** Manish Bansal, Lisa Belden, Joshua Clemons, Mark Coggins, Nick Copeland, Logan Dandridge, Matt Eick, John Entwistle, Candace Fitch, Bill Green, David Gregory, Aaron Gross, Wes Gwaltney, Rebecca Hester, Leanna House, Joseph Hughes, Casey Jim, Sarah Karpanty, Bryan Katz, Alex Kinnaman, Catherine Laroche, Silvio Macias, Eric Martin, Ali Mehrizi-Sani, Zhange Nicole Ni, Nicole Pitterson, John Richey, Syrenthia Robinson, Steven Rowson, Adrian Sandu, Karen Schnatterly, Eric Stanley, Keith Stephenson, Jay Teets, Byron Tsang, Shane Wang, Ashley Wilkinson, Diane Zahm, Lizette Zietsman

## **Call to Order by President Rachel Miles at 2:33**

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

- Consent agenda was adopted:
  - Minutes for 09-27-2024 ([Link](#))
  - Agenda for 10-25-2024 ([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. The National Faculty and Staff Health Assessment (American College Health Assessment) survey has been distributed via email from Hokie Wellness. Senators were encouraged to complete the assessment.
  - c. Replies to questions submitted to President Sands during the September 13 Faculty Senate meeting are available on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site in two separate documents, one for questions addressed during the senate meeting and one for questions answered by President Sands following the meeting.
  - d. A Staff and Non-Student Wage Compensation Task Force has been convened in response to CSPA (Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs) Resolution 2024-25A: Resolution to Form a Task Force to Review Compensation for Staff and Non-Student Wage Employees. The task force has asked for three-four faculty to join the committee. Senators interested in serving are asked to contact Rachel Miles or Justin Lemkul.
2. Justin Lemkul presented for second reading and vote CFA 2024-25B: Resolution to Amend the Faculty Handbook Description of Administrative Support for University Distinguished Professors. This resolution updates Section 3.2.3 of the Faculty Handbook, allowing administrative tasks related to the University Distinguished Professor appointment process to be overseen by the Executive Vice President and Provost and managed by the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, at the direction of the university president.
  - a. No substantive comments or changes have been made since the Faculty Senate's first reading.
  - b. Ron Fricker, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, provided a memo of support for the resolution including background information and assurance that the Office

of Faculty Affairs has the capability to complete the required administrative tasks.

- c. Motion was made and seconded to approve CFA 2024-25B: Resolution to Amend the Faculty Handbook Description of Administrative Support for University Distinguished Professors. Motion carried (Yes: 61, No: 0, Abstain: 0).

### **New Business**

3. Rachel Miles welcomed Provost Cyril Clarke and introduced a Q & A session with the Faculty Senate. Provost Clarke provided brief opening remarks and thanked the Senate for the invitation. Questions and topics discussed include the items below.
  - a. Consequences resulting from the protest held in the spring as compared to those reported from other Virginia colleges and universities. Provost Clarke could not speak to specific information from other institutions. He emphasized Virginia Tech's commitment to first amendment rights and academic freedom and its duty to manage protests. Provost Clarke is hopeful that the university community will find consensus around their commitment to the university and to the principles of community. Several campus groups have been convened, including a faculty working group and multiple student advisory groups. These groups are meeting separately at this time. Legal outcomes from the protest are outside of Virginia Tech. Related university conduct processes were measured.
    - i. Limited discussion was held on related topics: (1) Campus protests, including those held inside buildings, must go through the appropriate registration process which is designed to be permissive with certain limits. (2) Questions regarding neutrality. Provost Clarke stated that Virginia Tech is doing its best to be neutral and feels that it has a duty to provide forums for expression and to bring people together in the context of the principles of community.
  - b. University support for hiring graduate students and the relationship of graduate students to Global Distinction.
    - i. Provost Clarke stated that graduate students drive research across the university. The university has been achieving undergraduate enrollment growth targets, but this has resulted in a disproportionate number of graduate students. When compared to peers, particularly land grant peers, Virginia Tech needs to add about 2,000 graduate students for balance.

- ii. The question of how research-based education is resourced must be addressed when considering graduate student enrollment growth. Virginia Tech's current policy requires that the tuition waiver for graduate students must be funded from the same resource as the assistantship, increasing cost. The tuition remission policy should be reviewed. Additionally, undergraduate courses taught by graduate students who could be contributing to research should be looked at. In pursuing global distinction, Virginia Tech has an opportunity to transform specific practices and increase graduate student enrollment.
    - iii. Because this issue involves the university broadly, it meets the criterion for a university mission initiative as defined in the University Council Constitution and Bylaws. A university mission initiative on this topic has been introduced by the Commission on Faculty Affairs, with support from other commissions, the administration, and graduate students. This initiative will be presented today for first reading as a resolution to the Faculty Senate
    - iv. Additional limited discussion on the following: time commitment requirements for graduate assistantships; student success and timely program completion; challenges of assistantships that guarantee only 1-2 years of support and support for the academic year versus 12 months.
  - c. A question was asked about CLAHS, how a qualitative and value focus rather than metrics focus, can be implemented, and the university's vision for CLAHS. Provost Clarke stated that Virginia Tech is a comprehensive institution that must have strength across the full scope of disciplines, including the arts and humanities, which are critical components.
    - i. Pathways was briefly discussed, including past implementation of the Pathways model and incentives which have resulted in a mushrooming of courses. Limited discussion followed on academic resource alignment and the need to determine what constitutes an appropriate class size with consideration given to specific courses, for example, courses such as languages or music require a smaller class size.
    - ii. Efforts are being made to find ways to recognize scholarship in the humanities and the need to find ways to incorporate this in the budget model. Provost Clarke asked the faculty to provide viewpoints on this topic.
- 4. Justin Lemkul introduced for first reading UC 2024-25A: Resolution to Form a University Mission Initiative Committee to Recommend Updated Policies for Funding

Doctoral Research at Virginia Tech. This resolution is being advanced by the Commission on Faculty Affairs with support from the Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies and the Commission on Research.

- a. This resolution will set up the University Mission Initiative Committee and sets forth the committee goals with a deadline of spring semester 2025.
  - b. UC 2024-25A will follow the process of other resolutions in shared governance.
  - c. If senators have additional comments on this resolution, please provide them to Justin Lemkul.
  
5. Justin Lemkul introduced for first reading CFA 2024-25A: Resolution to Amend the Faculty Handbook Description of Clinical Faculty Ranks. The changes recognize the unique roles of clinical faculty. Many comments have been previously received and incorporated.
  - a. The resolution includes additional details regarding clinical faculty, including the requirement for responsibilities to be provided upon appointment. Clinical instructor tracks have been added and reflect the language used in other tracks.
  - b. Clinical professor tracks were updated and expanded. The acceptance of an appropriate terminal degree was added, allowing college deans to determine eligibility. Additionally, language codifies that clinical professors would engage in scholarship and research but are not expected to participate in research programs typical of other tenure-track faculty appointments.
  - c. If senators have additional comments on this resolution, please provide them to Justin Lemkul.
  
6. Justin Lemkul introduced for first reading CFA 2024-25D: Updates to the Faculty Handbook Regarding Ethics of Intimate Relationships Involving Faculty. This resolution seeks to address consistencies in the Faculty Handbook and specifically updates Section 2.25. The resolution was created in collaboration with the graduate students, graduate school, and others. It is still under review by University Legal Counsel.
  - a. The word “consensual” may not meet legal standards and has been changed to “intimate” throughout this section.
  - b. There is a legal case to be made that the university cannot prohibit two adults from engaging in a relationship. This resolution defines a process that must be followed in such cases.
  - c. It was noted that the graduate students first brought this issue to the attention of the Faculty Senate and are supportive of the changes.

7. Renée LeClair presented for first reading CGPSP 2024-25A: Resolution to Form a Task Force to Propose a University-wide Policy to Combat Unprofessional Behaviors Towards Graduate and Professional Students. This resolution resulted from a task force convened over the summer in response to a graduate student survey. The resolution provides a clear reporting process.
  - a. The resolution directs the creation of a Working Group comprised of graduate students, faculty, staff, and administrators.
  - b. The working group will provide a public report and policy recommendation which will address specific parameters included in the resolution and provides a deadline of Fall 2025.
  - c. The CGPSP 2<sup>nd</sup> reading will be held on November 6. Please send Renee LeClair any comments.
  
8. Michel Pleimling presented for first reading CUSP 2024-25A: Resolution to Revise Policy 6305, Satisfactory Academic Progress for Associate and Undergraduate Students. This resolution is focused on providing clear and consistent degree progression standards across departments, and presents a framework for timely intervention, support, and removing unnecessary barriers.
  - a. Specific changes include the following: The main tool used to monitor student progress will be the in-major GPA. Guidelines are provided that will align progress to degree statements with university policies and graduation requirements. Updates have been made regarding academic eligibility, including changes in academic probation and suspension.
  - b. Questions were addressed regarding the number of attempted credits and the role of the Registrar in the process.
  - c. Please direct any further questions or comments to Jim Tokuhisa.

### **Open Floor Discussion**

9. There being no additional time following new business, there was no open floor discussion.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 4:16 p.m.