



Faculty Senate

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

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

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

February 07, 2025 @ 2:30 – 4:15 pm

Torgersen 1000 or Via Zoom

Check-In:

Present: Rachel Miles (presiding), Danna Agmon (alternate for Nick Copeland), Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Rick Ashley, Paul Avey, Kristen Benson, Jan Helge Bøhn, Warren Booth, Bradley Bowen, Anamaria Bukvic, Kevin Cheng, Sherwood Clements, Joshua Clemons, Rebecca Cockrum, Carolyn Commer, Carolyn Copenheaver, Kristy Daniels, Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Candace Fitch, Rodney Gaines, Scott Gartner, Yuba Gautam, James Hawdon, Dan Hindman, Leanna House, Mantu Hudait, Scott Huxtable, E. Fanny Jasso-Hernandez (alternate for Lizette Zietsman), Ran Jin, Bryan Katz, Bryan Katz, Alex Kinnaman, Jake Lahne, Catherine Larochelle, Evan Lavender-Smith, Renee LeClair, Justin Lemkul, Kimberly Loeffert, Charles Lowery, G.Q. Lu, Luca Massa, Shelly Maycock, Joel McGlothlin, Harold McKenzie, Joe Merola, Phil Nelson, Gregory Novack, Nicole Pitterson, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Steven Rowson, Ian Shoemaker, Richard Shryock, Stephanie Smith (SPIA), Jay Teets, Chelsea Thompto, Jim Tokuhisa, Alp Tural (alternate for Bill Green), Bimal Viswanath, Jerald Walz, Terri-Ann Wattsman, Angelica Witcher Walker, Erin Worthington, David Xie, Yan Xu, Diane Zahm

Guests: April Myers, Demetria Somervell

Absent with Notice: Lizette Zietsmann, Rebecca Hester, Nick Copeland, Wes Gwaltney

Absent: Luke Achenie, Azziza Bankole, Manish Bansal, Lisa Belden, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Anamaria Bukvic, Mark Coggins, Logan Dandridge, Matt Eick, John Entwistle, Bill Green, David Gregory, Aaron Gross, Joseph Hughes, Eli Jamison, Casey Jim, Sarah Karpanty, Gary Long, Silvio Macias, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Ali Mehrizi-Sani, Marc Michel, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Zhange Nicole Ni, Albert Pan, John Richey, Nino Ripepi, Syrenthia Robinson, Adrian Sandu, Karen Schnatterly, Stephanie Smith (Communications), Eric Stanley, Keith Stephenson, Byron Tsang, Kwok Tsui, Jeff Walling, Shane Wang, Ashley Wilkinson

Call to Order by the President Rachel Miles at 2:33

Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Rachel Miles)

- Consent agenda was adopted:
 - Minutes for 01-24-2025 ([Link](#))
 - Agenda for 02-07-2025 ([Link](#))
 - Faculty Senate recommends providing a comment on CUSA Resolution 2024-2025A: Resolution Revising the University Council Bylaws and the USS Constitution to Amend the Membership on the Commission on Undergraduate Student Affairs. The comment includes support for the intent of the resolution and the changes to the bylaws, but states that the senate feels the resolution should be advanced by University Council, not CUSA.

Business Agenda

1. Updates & Announcements
 - a. Justin Lemkul provided the Commission Chair's Report for the Commission on Faculty Affairs. Several resolutions that began the governance process last semester were passed at University Council this week and are awaiting approval by either the President or the Board of Visitors as required. Additional resolutions will be brought forward during this Spring semester. A number of other matters that are not expected to be resolutions are also being studied.
 - b. Information was shared about a recent Executive Order entitled "Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism." Faculty members have notified the senate of concerns with the order. The Faculty Senate leadership reached out to university leadership for information. The administration's response included the following: Virginia Tech is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression and is seeking information and clarification on a number of executive orders. Once directives and applications are understood, the university will follow the law. President Sands has announced that Tech will hold town halls to answer questions and listen to the community.
 - c. An announcement was made that the American Association of University Professors and the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education are suing President Trump over diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) actions.

New Business

2. Justin Lemkul presented for First Reading CFA 2024-25C: Resolution to Establish a Discussion Forum Under the Purview of the Faculty Senate. This resolution adds a single line to Article III of the Faculty Senate Constitution, providing the senate with the ability to facilitate occasional discussion forums on important issues.
 - a. There were no comments, questions, or discussion from the floor.

3. Justin Lemkul presented for First Reading CFA 2024-25F: Resolution to Amend the Faculty Handbook to Include the Statement on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom. The Virginia Tech Board of Visitors (BOV) previously charged the Senate with writing a statement on freedom of speech and academic freedom and subsequently endorsed this statement. The BOV also made recommendations for the statement, including adding it to the Faculty Handbook.
 - a. The content of the statement on freedom of speech and academic freedom was not changed. However, a small preamble could be added before the statement in the Faculty Handbook to provide an introduction.
 - b. Senators shared support for adding a preamble before the statement in the Faculty Handbook.

4. Justin Lemkul presented for First Reading CFA 2024-25I: Resolution to Rename the Department of Biomedical Engineering and Mechanics. The Engineering Mechanics Program was moved to the Department of Mechanical Engineering during the 2023/2024 academic year. This resolution seeks to rename the department to the Department of Biomedical Engineering. This change must be approved by the Faculty Senate, University Council, President Sands, the BOV and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV).
 - a. No questions or discussion were received from the floor.

Open Floor Discussion

5. Potential ways that the Faculty Senate could express support for students, employees, departments, and units on campus whose roles, work, and research are affected by new executive orders. A suggestion was made for the Faculty Senate to provide a statement of support. It was noted that statements of this sort must be initially discussed in the Faculty Senate Cabinet. Anyone interested in advancing this topic may attend the cabinet meeting.
6. Availability of resources or processes to support students who experience hardship due to a family member or parent losing federal work or employment was mentioned (for example, tuition payment plans). The Faculty Senate leadership will speak to the administration about this concern.

7. The next Faculty Pop-up Club will be held on Wednesday, February 12 at 5:30 p.m. at Moss Arts Center.
8. Concerns were expressed for faculty whose scholarship or grants may be delayed or not funded, and the resulting impact to their productivity, research, and promotion, and whether the university has considered this possibility. Additional comments regarding the need consider broader implications like this one, and the need for guidance from the Provost's Office to departments were shared. The Faculty Senate leadership will raise these concerns to the Office of the Provost.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 3:04 p.m.