



Faculty Senate

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

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

Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

March 07, 2025 @ 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, Manish Bansal, Kristen Benson, Jan Helge Bøhn, Bradley Bowen, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Kevin Cheng, Sherwood Clements, Joshua Clemons, Rebecca Cockrum, Carolyn Commer, Nick Copeland, Carolyn Copenheaver, Logan Dandridge, Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Candace Fitch, Rodney Gaines, Scott Gartner, Yuba Gautam, Aaron Gross, Wes Gwaltney, James Hawdon, Rebecca Hester, Leanna House, Mantu Hudait, Ran Jin, Bryan Katz, Bryan Katz, Alex Kinnaman, Jake Lahne, Catherine Larochelle, Renee LeClair, Justin Lemkul, Kimberly Loeffert, Gary Long, G.Q. Lu, Jason Malone, Luca Massa, Shelly Maycock, Joel McGlothlin, Ron Meyers, Joe Merola, Marc Michel, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Phil Nelson, Gregory Novack, Nicole Pitterson, John Richey, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Steven Rowson, Karen Schnatterly, Richard Shryock, Stephanie Smith, Jay Teets, Chelsea Thompto, Jim Tokuhisa, Byron Tsang, Alp Tural (alternate for Bill Green), Bimal Viswanath, Jerald Walz, Terri-Ann Wattsman, Angelica Witcher, Erin Worthington, David Xie, Diane Zahm, Lizette Zietsman

Guests: April Myers, Demetria Somervell

Absent with Notice: Anamaria Bukvic, Charles “Chuck” Lowery, Stephanie Smith

Absent: Lisa Belden, Warren Booth, Mark Coggins, Kristy Daniels, Matt Eick, John Entwistle, Bill Green, David Gregory, Dan Hindman, Joseph Hughes, Scott Huxtable, Eli Jamison, Casey Jim, Sarah Karpanty, Evan Lavender-Smith, Charles Lowery, Silvio Macias , Eric Martin, Harold McKenzie, Ali Mehrizi-Sani, Zhange Nicole Ni, Albert Pan, Nino Ripepi , Syrenthia Robinson, Adrian Sandu, Ian Shoemaker, Stephanie Smith, Eric Stanley, Keith Stephenson, Kwok Tsui, Jeff Walling, Shane Wang, Ashley Wilkinson, Yan Xu

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

Approval of Agenda and Minutes (Rachel Miles)

- Consent agenda was adopted:

- Minutes for 02-21-2025 ([Link](#))
- Agenda for 03-07-2025 ([Link](#))

Business Agenda

Updates and Announcements

1. Following approval during the February 21 meeting, the Faculty Senate Statement Reaffirming the Principles of Community has been written and is available on the Faculty Senate website. Presidents of all other senates signed the statement, confirming their support. Senators are encouraged to share the statement with their constituency.
2. Faculty Senate leadership received a question regarding adjournment procedures. Except where the University Council or Faculty Senate governing documents provide specific instruction, the Senate follows Robert's Rules or Order for parliamentary procedure.
3. Updates on a number of topics were provided.
 - a. Senators previously asked about the university's plans for supporting graduate students. Faculty Senate leadership contacted the administration and received the following information: Dean Surprenant has reached out to graduate students. There are no definitive answers at this time, but plans are being made on a case-by-case basis. The university states that supporting students is their highest priority.
 - b. Information regarding executive orders; diversity, equity, and inclusion topics; legal cases and related issues; and the Dear Colleague letter. The administration has stated that recent federal guidance does not limit academic freedom, freedom of expression, or adherence to the Principles of Community or the law. Unless there is a stop work order for a specific grant, work should continue.
 - c. Information related to NIH and USAID funding.
 - d. The administration remains dedicated to upholding academic freedom. They have stated that research, scholarship, course development, and curriculum should proceed as usual.
4. The next Board of Visitors meeting (BOV) will be held on March 25, 2025. Rachel Miles serves as the Faculty Representative to the Board. If senators would like a specific topic to be included in the Faculty Constituency report to the BOV, please notify Rachel via a provided anonymous form or by email.

5. Justin Lemkul requested an Administrative Correction to the Faculty Senate Bylaws.
 - a. During preparations for the Spring 2025 nominations and elections process, an error was discovered in language that was approved during Fall 2024 in Article II, Membership.
 - b. The proposed update is a correction to the calculation of additional Senate seats and adjusts text to align with intention. The corrected language for this section was provided.
 - c. Senators unanimously agreed to make this administrative change to the Bylaws.

Unfinished Business

6. Justin Lemkul presented an update on the Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA) Resolution to add the statement on academic freedom and freedom of speech to the Faculty Handbook.
 - a. Because the statement was previously approved by the Board of Visitors in 2023, and the BOV has already stated that the statement should be included in the Faculty Senate Handbook, this is an administrative update. Therefore, the associated resolution was not required and was withdrawn at the March 3 University Council meeting.
 - b. The statement will be added to the Faculty Senate Handbook by administrative change.
7. Justin Lemkul presented for Second Reading and Vote CFA 2024-25G: Resolution to Amend Articles V, VI, and XI of the Faculty Senate Constitution.
 - a. No comments were received at the commission second reading and no changes have been made since the first reading in the Senate.
 - b. A motion was made and seconded to approve CFA 2024-25G. There were no questions and no discussion. Motion carried. (Voting: 63 Yes, 0 No, 2 Abstain)

New Business

8. Justin Lemkul presented for First Reading CFA 2024-25H: Resolution to Codify the Faculty Reconciliation Process within the Faculty Affairs Office. The Faculty Senate currently has a standing committee on Reconciliation. However, faculty do not necessarily have the expertise to provide the services required by the committee, and it has been nonfunctional since its creation. Reconciliation services have been provided by the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

- a. The Director of Faculty Reconciliation has been providing reconciliation services. This position will be a tenured faculty member and trained mediator and is different from the Ombuds Office because they provide mediation.
 - b. This resolution updates the language repeated throughout Faculty Handbook to reflect current practice and outline the role of the director. Additionally, an update will be made to the Faculty Senate Constitution.
 - c. Clarification was provided on the committee, the grievance process, and faculty standing committees.

9. Justin Lemkul presented for First Reading CFA 2024-25J: Resolution to Integrate Chapter 12 into Chapters 2 and 5 of the Faculty Handbook. Chapter 12 includes information specific to faculty in the School of Medicine and created redundancy within the handbook. Proposed changes will remove chapter 12 and integrate that information into Chapters 2 and 5.
 - a. Additions to Chapter 2 address specific information for the faculty of the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Tenure-to-Title Track appointments.
 - b. Changes to Chapter 5 addresses the rank of visiting faculty, including changing the title from Visiting and Adjunct “Professor” to Visiting and Adjunct “Faculty.”
 - c. There were no questions or discussion from the floor.

10. Justin Lemkul presented for First Reading CFA 2024-25K: Resolution to Amend the Faculty Handbook to Codify Interest- or Discipline-Based Faculty Associations. Faculty have expressed an interest in creating organizations based on discipline and interest which would provide networking and professional development opportunities.
 - a. This resolution updates the Faculty Handbook to (1) allow for and formally recognize such groups; and (2) require a constitution to designate purpose, membership, officers, elections procedures and other information. Additionally, language clearly states that these associations have no formal role in university governance.
 - b. A comment has been received to consider calling these groups faculty organizations because there are previously existing departmental faculty associations that serve a different function.
 - c. It was noted that these groups are not exclusionary or identity-based but are based on a common interest. Examples of current faculty groups that seem to be aligned with the purposes outlined in this resolution were provided. A

potential benefit of formal university recognition includes the ability to engage in fundraising for specific events or purposes.

- d. A suggestion was made to consider how situations where national associations that may want to begin a Virginia Tech group would be handled.
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11. Renee LeClair presented for First Reading CGPSP 2024-25B: Resolution to Revise the Graduate Honor System Constitution. This resolution will streamline the graduate honor system constitution to address cases involving research misconduct, cases with multiple referrers, and Preliminary Review Panel waivers. Additionally, language was updated to reference the Graduate and Professional Student Senate.
 - a. The resolution states that misconduct in research and teaching is not a separate violation category.
 - b. The role of the Research Integrity Office was addressed.
 - c. Proposed changes allow students who have been found responsible to provide context and clarification in their testimony. Language to clarify appeals is also provided.
 - d. There were no comments or discussion from the floor.

 12. Nicole Pitterson presented for First Reading COR 2024-25A: Resolution to Clarify Eligibility for Postdoctoral Associate Status. This resolution focuses on changes to Section 6.1.2, Postdoctoral Associate, in the Faculty Handbook, specifically regarding restriction limits, eligibility, and exceptions due to extenuating circumstances.
 - a. Limited changes were made in the Commission on Research and are not reflected in the document as presented. Specifically, the word “senior” was removed from the phrase “senior faculty.”
 - b. A recommendation was made that guidelines be provided to define how extenuating circumstances will be determined.

Open Floor Discussion

13. No topics were presented for Open Floor Discussion

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 3:24 p.m.