



## Faculty Senate

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

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

# Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

## March 21, 2025 @ 2:30 – 4:15 pm

### Torgersen 1000 or Via Zoom

#### Check-In:

**Present:** Rachel Miles (presiding), Ananda Abeysekara, Luke Achenie, Diane Agud, Rick Ashley, Paul Avey, Azziza Bankole, Manish Bansal, Jan Helge Bøhn, Warren Booth, Bradley Bowen, Young Cao, Kevin Cheng, Sherwood Clements, Joshua Clemons, Rebecca Cockrum, Carolyn Commer, Carolyn Copenheaver, Logan Dandridge, Kristy Daniels, Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Candace Fitch, Rodney Gaines, Scott Gartner, Yuba Gautam, Aaron Gross, Wes Gwaltney, James Hawdon, Rebecca Hester, Dan Hindman, Leanna House, Mantu Hudait, Scott Huxtable, Ran Jin, Bryan Katz, Bryan Katz, Alex Kinnaman, Matthew Komelski (alternate for Kristen Benson), Jake Lahne, Catherine Larochelle, Evan Lavender-Smith, Renee LeClair, Justin Lemkul, Kimberly Loeffert, Gary Long, Charles Lowery, G.Q. Lu, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Shelly Maycock, Joel McGlothlin, Ron Meyers, Phil Nelson, Laura Nesor (alternate for Marc Michel), Gregory Novack, Albert Pan, Nicole Pitterson, John Richey, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Steven Rowson, Karen Schnatterly, Ian Shoemaker, Richard Shryock, Jay Teets, Chelsea Thompto, Jim Tokuhisa, Byron Tsang, Alp Tural (alternate for Bill Green), Bimal Viswanath, Jerald Walz, Terri-Ann Wattsman, David Xie, Yan Xu, Lizette Zietsman

**Guests:** E. Fanny Jasso-Hernandez, April Myers, Haldre Rogers, Demetria Somervell

**Absent with Notice:** Kristen Benson, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Joe Merola, Stephanie Smith (Communications), Erin “Nikki” Worthington

**Absent:** Biko Agozino, Lisa Belden, Anamaria Bukvic, Mark Coggins, Nick Copeland, Matt Eick, John Entwistle, Bill Green, David Gregory, Joseph Hughes, Eli Jamison, Casey Jim, Sarah Karpanty, Silvio Macias, Harold McKenzie, Ali Mehrizi-Sani, Marc Michel, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Zhange Nicole Ni, Nino Ripepi, Syrenthia Robinson, Adrian Sandu, Stephanie Smith (SPIA), Eric Stanley, Keith Stephenson, Kwok Tsui, Jeff Walling, Shane Wang, Ashley Wilkinson, Angelica Witcher, Diane Zahm

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

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

- Consent agenda was adopted:
  - Minutes for 03-07-2025 ([Link](#))
  - Agenda for 03-21-2025 ([Link](#))

### **Business Agenda**

#### **Updates and Announcements**

1. Rachel Miles shared updates from discussions held with the university administration. The main topic right now is regarding the upcoming Board of Visitors (BOV) Meeting where a resolution that would dissolve the Office of Inclusive Strategy and Excellence and transfer permissible programs to an alternative location. The Faculty Senate has been advised that the reasoning behind this resolution is the fiduciary responsibility of the BOV and federal DEI-related directives. The administration has emphasized that the resolution will be considered by the BOV and final results will not be known until the meeting. Additional discussion on the following related topics was introduced by senators:
  - a. The Faculty Senate has been notified of a campus protest scheduled for Tuesday, March 25, prior to the BOV meeting. Information and details were included in an email to senators. Faculty do have the right to participate in protests and exercise free speech. The public (including faculty) may attend BOV meetings, but there is no public comment period or opportunity for the public to speak.
  - b. Faculty and students who are at Virginia Tech and hold visas have reported concerns and fears associated with attending protests based on information received from colleagues at other universities.
  - c. Limited discussion around the suspended requirement for undergraduate and graduate students to complete DEI-related courses. Students may still choose to take these courses.
  - d. Discussion on multiple ways that DEI-related decisions can be approached.
2. Rachel Miles gave an overview of the Faculty Constituency Report to be presented to the BOV. The topics below are currently included. Senators with other recommendations were asked to share now or by email.
  - a. Will call on the BOV and administration to adhere to and honor the Principles of Community, especially during these uncertain and volatile times.
  - b. The importance of respecting and upholding academic freedom and tenure.

- c. Acknowledgement of the necessity to comply with the law while upholding Virginia Tech's land-grant mission and motto, Ut Prosim.
- d. Provides a strong message about the need to unite through communication, leadership, and clear messaging.
- e. Senators suggested the following topics for consideration to add to the constituency report: (1) Concern regarding the potential impact of changes to the Department of Education. (2) With reports of faculty struggling with insecurity and low morale, a need exists for support and concrete strategies and action from the administration.

### **Unfinished Business**

3. Renee LeClair presented for Second Reading and Vote CGPSP 2024-25B: Resolution to revise the Graduate Honor System constitution. This resolution streamlines the review process and updates language. Comments supporting the resolution were received from the Staff, Administrative and Professional Faculty, and Graduate and Professional Student senates.
  - a. Motion was made and seconded to approve the resolution. Motion carried.
  - b. Voting: (53 Yes, 0 No, 3 Abstain)

### **New Business**

4. Nicole Pitterson presented a Commission Chair report from the Commission on Research. The following actions have been completed or are in process.
  - a. The commission has completed the revision of three policies: Policy 13030, Virginia Tech Biohazards Use; Policy 13050, Virginia Dual Use Research of Concern; and Policy 13035, Virginia Tech Animal Research Policy. These revisions were administrative and did not require shared governance approval.
  - b. The commission completed a required 5-year review of the Macromolecules Innovation Institute and a review of the charge of the Institute for Advanced Computing.
  - c. A statement on Anti-bias in Research was written, discussed, and approved. However, because of events happening this year, the statement has not yet been posted.
  - d. The commission has continued discussions around postdocs. A resolution clarifying eligibility for postdoctoral status has been written. This resolution will undergo commission first reading soon and has been distributed for senate comment. Additionally, the commission has been discussing the

creation of a commission standing committee that would provide representation for postdocs.

5. Rachel Miles introduced Ronnie Mondal, President of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS). Ronnie provided a summary of the main concerns currently being experienced by graduate and professional students.
  - a. Funding, including changes to indirect cost and grants and potential impacts to graduate student work.
  - b. The BOV will vote on tuition and fees at their upcoming meeting. An increase in comprehensive fees is expected. This increase essentially results in a pay cut for graduate students.
  - c. Concerns for international students. Many international graduate students are involved in projects or have plans related to academics or research that require international travel. These plans are proceeding. However, individuals in the US on a visa have received general advice from other sources not to leave the United States at this time. Right now, Cranwell International Center has not recommended that students do not travel but instead states that students should assess each individual situation. Students with travel plans are also concerned about financial costs of continuing with these plans and if they must be cancelled later.
  - d. Policies and programs generally considered to be DEI but are important for graduate students, such as cultural and community centers. Views on these centers have been rapidly changing, and students are concerned about whether they will be able to continue and if funding will be impacted. Details are yet unknown on what type of organizations would be affected by DEI changes.

### **Open Floor Discussion**

6. Student Life Village. A resolution will be considered at the BOV meeting that rescinds the BOV's 2022 action that adopted the 2022 Student Life Village Master Plan as a supplement to Beyond Boundaries 2047. If passed as written, this resolution would stop work and any further expenditure on the planning of this project. The resolution includes the renovation of Slusher Hall. There has been opposition from the town Blacksburg about this resolution due to the need for increased living spaces for students. A letter has been sent from the Blacksburg community to the BOV against this resolution and includes a recommendation that the university freeze enrollment if the resolution passes.

7. Faculty expressed frustration with the university's planned closure at noon May 7, the last day of classes. This change was made during the semester after faculty had provided students with their syllabus and is in response to a concert that will be held that evening. An update has been issued that classes held after noon on that day are no longer cancelled but must be offered online.
8. Updates were requested and provided on the following:
  - a. The task force to study instructor workloads and compensation created in response to a CFA resolution should be forming soon. Faculty Affairs has designated staff support for the task force, and the charge and membership recommendations are now with the Provost for review and confirmation.
  - b. The Faculty Senate does not have a representative on a similar task force to review staff and non-student wage compensation which was advanced by the Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs and has no updates.
  - c. The statement on freedom of speech and academic freedom will be included in the next version of the Faculty Handbook.
9. A Faculty Support Guide is available. The guide is provided by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Vice Provost and is designed for faculty who fear they may be targeted by groups external to the university due to the content of their scholarship. The guide can be found on the Faculty Affairs website.
10. Faculty mentioned that the Open Access Subvention Fund provided by University Libraries has been expended for 2024/2025. Faculty are encouraged to review the discounts page at <https://guides.lib.vt.edu/oa/discounts> as fees may be discounted or waived through some partnerships. Additionally, Virginia Tech offers free deposit access to VTechWorks, the university's open access repository, to those affiliated with the university. Publication of scholarly articles on VTechWorks fulfills the faculty obligation for open access publications.
11. Additional discussion related to university response to federal initiatives:
  - a. A university committee has been convened and is currently meeting almost every day. The Faculty Senate asked for a faculty representative to be part of this group but has received no response.
  - b. Limited discussion around a Faculty Senate survey to obtain faculty feedback. To obtain faster feedback, senators were encouraged to individually solicit feedback and concerns from their colleagues. The Faculty Senate will create a list of current topics that senators can present to their colleagues. Responses will allow senators to represent the viewpoints of their colleagues and constituents to the Faculty Senate.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 3:57 p.m.