



## Faculty Senate

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

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

# Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

## April 04, 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, Lisa Belden, Kristen Benson, Jan Helge Bøhn, Bradley Bowen, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Anamaria Bukvic, Anamaria Bukvic, Young Cao, Kevin Cheng, Sherwood Clements, Joshua Clemons, Rebecca Cockrum, Carolyn Commer, Carolyn Copenheaver, Kristy Daniels, Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Matt Eick, Candace Fitch, Rodney Gaines, Scott Gartner, Yuba Gautam, Aaron Gross, Wes Gwaltney, James Hawdon, Rebecca Hester, Dan Hindman, Mantu Hudait, Scott Huxtable, E. Fanny Jasso-Hernandez (alternate for Lizette Zietsmann), Ran Jin, Sarah Karpanty, Bryan Katz, Bryan Katz, Alex Kinnaman, Jake Lahne, Catherine Larochelle, Renee LeClair, Justin Lemkul, Kimberly Loeffert, Charles Lowery, G.Q. Lu, Luca Massa, Shelly Maycock, Harold McKenzie, Joe Merola, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Gregory Novack, Albert Pan, Nicole Pitterson, Jane Robertson Evia (alternate for Leanna House), Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Steven Rowson, Ian Shoemaker, Richard Shryock, Stephanie Smith (Communications), Stephanie Smith (SPIA), Jay Teets, Alp Tural (alternate for Bill Green), Jeff Walling, Jerald Walz, Terri-Ann Wattsman, Angelica Witcher, Erin Worthington, David Xie, Yan Xu

**Guests:** April Myers, Demetria Somervell

**Absent with Notice:** Joel McGlothlin, Bimal Viswanath, Lizette Zietsmann

**Absent:** Biko Agozino, Manish Bansal, Warren Booth, Mark Coggins, Nick Copeland, Logan Dandridge, John Entwistle, Bill Green, David Gregory, Leanna House, Joseph Hughes, Eli Jamison, Casey Jim, Evan Lavender-Smith, Gary Long, Silvio Macias , Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Luca Massa, Ali Mehrizi-Sani, Marc Michel, Phil Nelson, Zhange Nicole Ni, John Richey, Nino Ripepi , Syrenthia Robinson, Adrian Sandu, Karen Schnatterly, Eric Stanley, Keith Stephenson, Chelsea Thompto, Jim Tokuhisa, Byron Tsang, Kwok Tsui, Shane Wang, Ashley Wilkinson, Diane Zahm

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

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

- Consent agenda was adopted:
  - Minutes for 03-21-2025 ([Link](#))
  - Agenda for 04-03-2025 ([Link](#))

### **Business Agenda**

#### **Updates and Announcements**

1. An interest form has been distributed for senators to indicate interest in serving as a representative for University Council and shared governance commissions and committees. Senators who are not yet serving as shared governance representatives are encouraged to complete the survey.
2. The proposed slate of Faculty Senate officers for the 2025-2026 academic year will be presented at the April 18 meeting.

#### **Unfinished Business**

3. Justin Lemkul presented for second reading and vote CFA 2024-25H: Resolution to Codify the Faculty Reconciliation Process within the Faculty Affairs Office.
  - a. No comments were received after the Faculty Senate first reading. Minor typographical changes were made during the commission second reading and vote.
  - b.** A motion was made and seconded to approve the resolution. No questions or discussion were presented from the floor. Motion carried. Voting (49 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain)

4. Justin Lemkul presented for second reading and vote CFA 2024-25J: Resolution to Integrate Chapter 12 into Chapters 2 and 5 of the Faculty Handbook.
  - a. This resolution presents administrative changes, incorporating information about the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine currently contained in Chapter 12 into Chapters 2 and 5. No changes have been made since the senate first reading.
  - b. The resolution underwent legal review, and there were no identified concerns.
  - c. A motion was made and seconded to approve the resolution. No comments or discussion from the floor. Motion carried. Voting (55 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abstain)
5. Justin Lemkul presented for second reading and vote CFA 2024-25K: Resolution to Amend the Faculty Handbook to Codify Interest- or Discipline-Based Faculty Organizations.
  - a. The resolution previously referred to “interest- or discipline-based faculty associations.” The word “association” was changed to “organization” because faculty associations already exist and serve a different purpose. Grammatical changes were made in the Commission on Faculty Affairs.
  - b. Motion was made and seconded to approve the resolution. No discussion or comments from the floor. Motion carried. Voting (53 Yes, 1 No, 1 Abstain)
6. Nicole Pitterson presented for second reading and vote COR 2024-25A: Resolution to Clarify Eligibility for Postdoctoral Associate Status.
  - a. This resolution amends the Faculty Handbook to clarify eligibility requirements for postdoctoral associate status. No additional comments have been received since first reading.
  - b. Motion was made and seconded to approve the resolution.
  - c. A comment was made regarding the word “senior” to describe faculty in Section 6.1.2. Previous comments have requested that the word “senior” be removed.
  - d. A recommendation was made to remove the word “senior” as an administrative, editorial change. Senators expressed agreement with this friendly amendment. The resolution, as amended, was approved. Voting (50 Yes, 1 No, 1 Abstain)

### **New Business**

7. Rachel Miles introduced Ken Eriksson, Faculty Reconciliation Coordinator and Professor Emeritus of Sedimentary Geology, for a discussion on faculty reconciliation.
  - a. Dr. Eriksson provided background on his experience with faculty reconciliation, which has spanned over 20 years, first with the Faculty Senate

and later the Office of Faculty Affairs. A resolution approved by the Faculty Senate will move Faculty Reconciliation from the Faculty Senate to the Office of Faculty Affairs.

- b. Faculty reconciliation services are available to all faculty: teaching-research, collegiate, clinical and research faculty, professors of practice, and instructors. The purpose of faculty reconciliation is to resolve conflict by facilitating conversations, with a goal of reaching a mutually agreeable, win-win solution. Fairness, equity, justice, respect, trust, and responsibility are promoted through reconciliation. The reconciliation process is confidential, and client driven. Dr. Eriksson acts as a neutral third party.
  - c. Types of issues addressed in the reconciliation process and possible outcomes were shared. A main difference between the department of Faculty Reconciliation and the University Ombuds is that the faculty reconciliation office adopts a more prescriptive and proactive role in resolving problems.
  - d. Reconciliation can be accessed through the Office of Faculty Affairs, by directly approaching the department of Faculty Reconciliation, through Virginia Tech Human Resources/HR, College Directors, and through the Faculty Senate.
  - e. Questions and comments from the floor focused on (1) concerns with limitations many have experienced with TimelyCare, the Employee Assistance Program, and difficulties obtaining care through insurance carriers; (2) the grievance process found in Sections 3.1.2, 4.76, 5.4.6, and 6.12.6 of the Faculty Handbook, including identification of grievable and non-grievable issues.
  - f. Dr. Eriksson is willing to speak to, and provide training for, small groups.
8. Renee LeClair presented for first reading CGPSP 2024-25C: Resolution to Update the Graduate Catalogue. This resolution amends the graduate catalog, providing updates to clarify three areas:
- Removes the requirement that courses cannot be taken pass-fail if a graded option is available.
  - Adds a statement updating admissions criteria for international students applying to the Graduate School.
  - Modifying language on repeating courses in a plan of study.
- a. No questions or comments were received from the floor.
  - b. Any comments should be forwarded to the commission for consideration.
9. Rachel Miles provided a recap of the Town Hall Meeting with President Sands and provided opportunity for discussion.
- a. The town hall focused on the DEI resolution approved at the March 25 Board of Visitors (BOV) meeting. The resolution disbanded the Office of Inclusive

Strategy and Excellence and affirmed commitment to diversity and inclusion and the Virginia Tech mission statement.

- b. President Sands shared that the BOV's primary motivation for the resolution was to remain compliant and protect Virginia Tech. It was noted that other colleges and universities have taken similar approaches.
- c. Constituent groups were provided with the opportunity to submit questions to be answered at the Town Hall. President Sands stated that these were then grouped into 5 themes, and he spoke about each one and provided opportunity for questions from the floor. The five themes follow.
  - i. What is the status of DEI programs at VT?
  - ii. What will happen to organizations associated with DEI?
  - iii. Can we resist and how?
  - iv. How will faculty be impacted?
  - v. How will Virginia Tech continue to support student success?
- d. A summary of the Town Hall is available on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site. These notes can be shared.
- e. Discussion following the recap included the following topics: concerns reported by international students and faculty; the committee that has been convened to assess current federal concerns and the expectation for a Faculty Senate representative to be added to committee membership; Pathways curriculum Core Concept 7; the roles of the BOV and senates in shared governance.
- f. Suggestions were made for Faculty Senate consideration, including continuing activities and communication over the summer, and inviting administrators to attend future meetings. A senator announced the presence of a Virginia Tech American Association of University Professors (AAUP) chapter and reported that this organization is a good source of information for faculty.

### **Open Floor Discussion**

- 10. No topics were presented for open floor discussion.

Motion to adjourn and seconded at 4:07p.m.