

**MINUTES**

**Faculty Senate**  
**September 12, 2025**  
**2:30 – 4:15 PM**  
**Torgersen 1000 or via Zoom**

**Present:** Justin Lemkul (presiding), Joe Adams, Diane Agud, Aaron Ansell, Rick Ashley, Azziza Bankole, Kristen Benson, David Bieri, Nathaniel Bishop, Myra Blanco, Jan Helge Bøhn, Bradley Bowen, Curtis Bower (alternate for Keith Stephenson), Anamaria Bukvic, Ryan Calder, Sherwood Clements, Sarah Clinton, Rebecca Cockrum, Nick Copeland, Carolyn Copenheaver, Logan Dandridge, Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Naomi Dunn, Bob Edmison, Matt Eick, Ihudiya Finda Williams, Candace Fitch, Rodney Gaines, Nicholas Goedert, Wes Gwaltney, Ramtin Haghnazar Kouchaksaraei, William Headley, Rebecca Hester, Leanna House, E. Fanny Jasso-Hernandez (alternate for Isis Quinlan), Ran Jin, Bryan Katz, Andrea L'Afflitto, Jake Lahne, Catherine Laroche, Renee LeClair, Kimberly Loeffert, Charles Lowery, G.Q. Lu, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Stephen Martin, Joel McGlothlin, Harold McKenzie, Marc Michel, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Phil Nelson, Gregory Novack, Albert Pan, Mark Philen (alternate for Mark Psiaki), Nicole Pitterson, Shelly Rhoads, Steven Rowson, Angela Scarpa-Friedman, Karen Schnatterly, Yi Shi, Ian Shoemaker, Richard Shryock, Keith Stephenson, Chelsea Thompto, Jim Tokuhisa, Diego Troya (alternate for Caroline Saouma), Byron Tsang, Alp Tural, Jerald Walz, Jeff Warfford, Terri-Ann Wattsman, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, David Xie, Boya Xu, Gordon Yee

**Absent with Notice:** Jim Hawdon, Alex Kinnaman, Mark Psiaki, Maria del Carmen Caña Jiménez

**Absent:** Luke Achenie, Biko Agozino, Warren Booth, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Mark Coggins, Cassandra Efekman, Mark Freeman, David Gregory, Aaron Gross, James Hawdon, Dan Hindman, Kenneth Hodges, Eli Jamison, Daniel Karolyi, Sarah Karpanty, Lara Khansa, Alex Kinnaman, Lakshmi Madhavan Miller, Ron Meyers, Rachel Miles, Mark Psiaki, Isis Quinlan, Nino Ripepi, Syrenthia Robinson, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Caroline Saouma, Stephanie Smith (Communications), Stephanie Smith (SPIA), Erin Worthington

**Guests:** April Myers, Demetria Somervell, Tim Sands

Dr. Justin Lemkul, Faculty Senate President, called the meeting to order at 2:33. A quorum was present.

## **1. Adoption of Consent Agenda**

A motion was made to adopt the consent agenda, which included the following items:

- Approval of minutes from August 29, 2025
- Approval of agenda for September 12, 2025

A senator requested that the minutes of August 29, 2025, be amended to include his recommendation that election procedures for internal committees should be reviewed and potentially changed. There were no objections to this amendment to the minutes.

The consent agenda was approved with the amended minutes.

## **2. Announcements and Updates**

- Justin Lemkul announced that a representative from the Architecture, Arts and Design College Faculty Association is needed to serve on the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP).
- Justin Lemkul provided a correction from the elections held on August 29. Rodney Gaines was elected to the Commission on Graduate and Professional Student Affairs (CGPSA). The ballot and presentation from the August 29 meeting incorrectly listed the vacancy as for the Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies.
- Justin Lemkul announced a vacancy on the Faculty Senate Cabinet for the College of Veterinary Medicine.
- The October 24 Faculty Senate meeting will be fully virtual due to university offices closing at 2:00 PM that day.

## **3. Unfinished Business**

### **Appointments to the Faculty Honorifics Committee**

Justin Lemkul announced the need to fill two seats on the Faculty Honorifics Committee. Specific requirements and term dates were shared.

Recipient of the Alumni Award for Excellence in Extension. The floor was opened for nominations for this seat. No nominations were received.

Member of the Academy of Faculty Leadership. Donna Wertaik was previously nominated for this seat. The floor was opened for additional nominations. No additional nominations were made. A vote was taken, and Donna Wertaik was elected to this position.

A motion was made and seconded that the Faculty Senate vote to approve the appointments made by the Faculty Senate President. Upon discussion and review by the chair, it was noted that the Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws state that the Faculty Senate President shall appoint members to the Policy and Procedure Committee in consultation with the Cabinet and with confirmation by the Senate. The confirmation step has not occurred in the recent past. Procedures for the appointment of the Chair of the Policies and Procedures Committee and the role of Parliamentarian are also outlined the Constitution and Bylaws and not subject to confirmation.

After extensive discussion, the question was called. The motion on the floor was put to a vote and carried. The chair noted that, due to earlier misinformation regarding the need for Senate confirmation of specific presidential appointees, the slate of appointees to the Policies and Procedures Committee will be presented as an agenda item at the upcoming Faculty Senate meeting for confirmation.

## **4. New Business**

### **Appointment to Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies**

Justin Lemkul announced the need for two faculty representatives to serve on CUSP.

Representative to serve a 1-year term. The floor was opened for nominations. Sherwood Clements was nominated for the 1-year term. A motion was made and seconded to vote for the 1-year term. Sherwood Clements was elected.

Representative to serve a 2-year term. The floor was opened for nominations. No nominations were received.

## **Appointment to Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA)**

Justin Lemkul announced the need for a faculty senator to serve on CFA. Term dates and meeting information were provided. The floor was opened for nominations. Rachel Miles was nominated. The floor was closed for nominations. Additional nominations can be made before the upcoming Faculty Senate meeting, and an election will be held for this position at that meeting.

## **5. Open Floor Discussion**

- A senator asked if there are any updates for the Provost search. The deadline for applications is September 17 for applications. Review is scheduled to begin soon and is expected to move forward quickly. Finalists will provide public presentations. Faculty Senators will be invited to participate in public meetings.
- A senator asked whether there is a process for the Senate to formally express its sentiment regarding the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors. This is guided by the Faculty Senate Bylaws, Article XII. Policy Review and Recommendation Process, Section 4. Senate Position Development Process. The process begins with submission to the Faculty Senate Cabinet for determination if the topic is in alignment with the process. The role of the cabinet is advisory in terms of process. Further discussion was held on BOV authority and responsibility, the Code of Virginia, and delegation to the university President.
- A suggestion was made that the Senate allow time for suggestions to be researched, communicated, and processed prior to enacting parliamentary rules during Faculty Senate meetings, as a means for constructive communication and decision-making for both senators and Senate leadership.

## **6. Discussion with President Tim Sands**

Justin Lemkul welcomed President Tim Sands to the Faculty Senate. Senators previously submitted questions for discussion. These will be addressed with opportunity for follow-up questions if time allows.

The first question focused on enrollment growth, which was a topic at the most recent Virginia Tech Board of Visitors (BOV) meeting. President Sands provided an overview. The actual growth plan for the next several years is around 1% for undergraduate growth and a faster growth for graduate students. Virginia Tech aspires to increase the number of graduate students. The BOV charged the administration with modeling a case for Virginia Tech growth of 40,000 undergraduate and 10,000 graduate students at an undetermined point in the future, with consideration of how much infrastructure stress would be experienced with this level of growth and how faculty would be impacted. The rector requested that models predict impact at varying growth percentages. The outcome of the modeling exercise will be presented at the November BOV meeting. No decisions have been made.

President Sands provided historical information on the university's growth rate cycles and stated that many stress points experienced after the growth in 2019 have been addressed. He mentioned

viewpoints of Virginia Tech's growth within the local community and the Commonwealth and noted the university's land grant mission and the need to retain all mission areas. He reported on two items of help for the short term: the BOV approved a new residence hall and renovations for Campbell Hall are set to begin.

Several follow-up questions focused on the following topics.

- Relationship of growth for undergraduate and graduate students through thematic institutes as well as colleges/departments. A balance is needed in this area.
- The potential for utilizing the Roanoke campus as a strategy for enrollment growth. The original vision was to include an undergraduate program in Roanoke, but action has not yet been taken on that vision. There is also a growth presence in the greater Washington region. The new campus has focused on graduate students and research but also presents some undergraduate opportunities.
- Some BOV members have recently joined university committees. The university considers the Faculty Handbook and specific procedures in these instances. Membership on committees can be helpful for providing opportunities to understand the university and shared governance and when members act as participants and liaisons and are not influencing decisions. At times alumni have wanted to be more engaged and they have been part of certain search committees. VT BOV members currently serving on committees have not triggered the Faculty Handbook.
- The option of considering on-line programs and degrees as a method of growth. At Virginia Tech, online education has a role and has typically been at the graduate level. It was also successfully implemented in response to the COVID pandemic. Virginia Tech is a full-time in-person university with all the benefits and costs that come with that position. One of the main considerations surrounding this issue is determining to what degree the faculty would want to take on a new business model.
- The landscape of higher education and events that have occurred at other universities. While Virginia Tech has had their own experiences, the university has not been focused on at a federal level. From Virginia Tech's perspective, there have been two main challenges: impacts to international enrollment and the experience of international students. The university has recently been winning significant rewards and expenditures are up again. An internal group meets twice weekly to review situations and discuss strategies. The administration is paying attention and will continue to do so.

The next submitted question was regarding compliance with the March DEI resolution, with specific questions about the Lavender House, Ujima, and the Women's Center. President Sands stated that, based on recent federal information, two gender-based living learning communities will continue for this year. However, they will be discontinued next year and alternative programming will be provided. An analysis on programming for the Women's Center is ongoing.

The third question focused on funding for Athletics. President Sands began by providing a historical overview of athletics funding at Virginia Tech, then moved to more recent changes in the ACC and limitations based on state laws, subsidies, and fees. Moving forward, ACC member institutions will no longer receive equal distributions. Instead, distribution will be based on viewership and focused on football and basketball. The BOV requested a plan to move Virginia Tech into the upper tier of public ACC institution and to request relief at the state level. Virginia Tech has the lowest student fee and the lowest subsidy in the Commonwealth. The university needs the donor base to step up and to find

unencumbered revenue streams. The plan will be donor-driven and will not be at the expense of current investment in academics. However, there may be less flexibility to build on the academic side in the future if athletics does not bring in money.

The final question asked whether President Sands sees challenges with Virginia Tech's strategic priorities. President Sands stated that the university will stay the course for the short term with its two high level initiatives, the VT Advantage and Global Distinction, as well as building frameworks to support these initiatives. As a whole, Virginia Tech has good momentum. The state has a good rainy-day fund, tax revenue was higher than expected, and the economy is stable, but a recession would be detrimental to the university and could impact state budgets and continual funding. Additionally, changes in research at the federal level could impact the university.

## **7. Adjournment**

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:14.