



MINUTES

Faculty Senate
November 21, 2025
2:30 – 4:15 PM
Torgersen 1000 or via Zoom

Present: Justin Lemkul (presiding), Luke Achenie, Joe Adams, Diane Agud, Aaron Ansell, Rick Ashley, Azziza Bankole, Nathaniel Bishop, Jan Helge Bøhn, Bradley Bowen, Curtis Bower, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Anamaria Bukvic, Ryan Calder, Sarah Clinton, Nick Copeland, Carolyn Copenheaver, Margaret Cowell (alternate for David Bieri), Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Naomi Dunn, Anna Duraj-Thatte, Bob Edmison, Matt Eick, Jonathan Everett (alternate for Sherwood Clements), Ihudiya Finda Williams, Candace Fitch, Rodney Gaines, Nicholas Goedert, Aaron Gross, Wes Gwaltney, Ramtin Haghnazar Kouchaksaraei, James Hawdon, William Headley, Rebecca Hester, Dan Hindman, Kenneth Hodges, Adrienne Holz, Leanna House, Laura Iancu (alternate for Logan Dandridge), E. Fanny Jasso-Hernandez (alternate for Isis Quinlan), Ran Jin, Sarah Karpanty, Bryan Katz, Lara Khansa, Alex Kinnaman, Matthew Komelski (alternate for Kristen Benson), Andrea L'Afflitto, Jake Lahne, Catherine Larochelle, Renee LeClair, Kimberly Loeffert, G.Q. Lu, Lakshmi Madhavan Miller, Jason Malone, Eric Martin, Stephen Martin, Joel McGlothlin, Harold McKenzie, Marc Michel, Rachel Miles, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Phil Nelson, Gregory Novack, Nicole Pitterson, Mark Psiaki, Shelly Rhoads, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Caroline Saouma, Karen Schnatterly, Yi Shi, Ian Shoemaker, Richard Shryock, Chelsea Thompto, Jim Tokuhisa, Tammy Trimble (alternate for Myra Blanco), Byron Tsang, Alp Tural, Jerald Walz, Jeff Warfford, David Xie, Boya Xu, Gordon Yee

Absent with Notice: Kristen Benson, David Bieri, Sherwood Clements

Absent: Biko Agozino, Myra Blanco, Warren Booth, Rebecca Cockrum, Mark Coggins, Logan Dandridge, Naomi Dunn, Anna Duraj-Thatte, Cassandra Efke, Mark Freeman, David Gregory, Eli Jamison, Daniel Karolyi, Bettina Koch, Charles Lowery, Ron Meyers, Albert Pan, Isis Quinlan, John Richey, Nino Ripepi, Steven Rowson, Stephanie Smith, Terri-Ann Wattsman, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, Erin Worthington

Guests: April Myers, Laura Naser, Demetria Somervell, Lijuan Yuan

Dr. Justin Lemkul, Faculty Senate President, called the meeting to order at 2:30. A quorum was present.

1. Adoption of Consent Agenda

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

- Approval of minutes from November 07, 2025
- Approval of agenda for November 21, 2025

Motion carried.

2. Announcements and Updates

- Justin Lemkul provided a recap of the November 17-18, 2025, Virginia Tech Board of Visitors (BOV) meeting and provided a summary of the following: (1) A presentation on the enrollment scenarios exercise. The rector of the BOV explained that this is a modeling exercise used to inform, not a growth plan. (2) A report about the Academic Resource Alignment process. The BOV were supportive of this process as an assessment tool. (3) Approvals were given for two residential facilities construction projects, a 600-bed upfit to an existing dorm and a new building near the Inn at Virginia Tech which will provide an additional 600 beds. (4) No action was taken on Living-Learning programs.
 - The faculty constituency report took BOV members through a day in the life of a faculty member and is available for review on the Faculty Senate website. One issue brought forward was the state of classrooms and facilities support. Senators were asked to email concerns on this topic and to share the request with colleagues.
 - A question was raised concerning the Agricultural Research and Extension Centers (AREC) report. The report will be ready prior to the winter break, encourages visioning for the future, and provides recommendations.
 - Comments regarding areas of continued concern that may impact the university and the focus of the research presentation given at the BOV meeting were shared.
- A question was raised at the November 7, 2025, Faculty Senate meeting regarding informational updates on the Academic Resource Alignment process. In response, a timeline of those updates has been created and is available on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site.
- Senators were asked to encourage colleagues with instructor titles to complete the Instructor Workload and Compensation Task Force survey.
- Dean Amy Surprenant has provided a presentation titled “From the Grad School: Presentation on International Students,” and a link was provided.
- An RSVP link for the retirement celebration for Kerry Redican to be held on December 17, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. was provided.
- Amy Sebring, EVPCOO, will be visiting the Faculty Senate on December 5. Please email questions for the discussion to Justin Lemkul.
- The next Faculty Senate President Office Hour will be held on December 5, 2025, in the Faculty Affairs Suite.

3. Unfinished Business

Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA) 2025-26E: Resolution to Revise Faculty Handbook for Instructor Rank

Jim Hawdon presented CFA 2025-26E for second reading and vote. Updates to the Faculty Handbook in this resolution remove the required minimum of 5 years of service in rank prior to promotion.

A motion to approve the resolution was made and seconded. There was no discussion. A vote was conducted, and the resolution passed (Yes: 69, No: 0, Abstain: 2).

Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies (CGPSP) 2025-26B: Resolution to Explore Alternative Curricular Avenues for Graduate Education Requirements

Renée LeClair presented CGPSP 2025-26B for second reading and vote. Several changes have been made to the resolution in response to feedback given during first readings in the commission and the senate, including changing the title of the resolution itself. An overview of these changes was provided.

A motion to approve the resolution was made and seconded. There was no discussion. A vote was conducted, and the resolution passed (Yes: 61, No: 1, Abstain: 2).

4. New Business

Elections to the Faculty Senate of Virginia

The Virginia Tech Faculty Senate has three vacant one-year representative positions on the Faculty Senate of Virginia. Meeting information was provided. The floor was opened for nominations, and Ryan Calder was nominated. A vote was conducted, and Ryan Calder was elected to serve as a VT Faculty Senate representative to the Faculty Senate of Virginia.

Election to the Academies of Faculty Leadership and Service Review Committee

A faculty senator is needed to serve as a representative on the Academies of Faculty Leadership and Service Review Committee. Diane Agud has been nominated. The floor was opened for nominations; no additional nominations were received. A vote was conducted, and Diane Agud was elected to serve on the review committee.

Election to the National Advisory Committee for the Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

The Faculty Senate has been given limited information about this committee. However, known meeting information was provided. The floor was opened for nominations, and Andrea L’Afflitto was nominated. A vote was conducted, and Andrea L’Afflitto was elected to serve on the advisory committee.

CFA 2025-26B: Resolution to Revise Faculty Handbook to Defer Tenure Cases with Legal Complications

Jim Hawdon presented CFA 2025-26B for first reading. Updates to the Faculty Handbook presented in this resolution will allow faculty whose tenure case has been approved through the Provost level to request that BOV review be deferred if the faculty member is involved in legal entanglements. This deferral would allow time for legal entanglements to be resolved before the case goes forward. It was noted that BOV decisions on tenure cannot be changed.

Discussion focused on tenure timelines, probationary periods, and service loads/impacts to a faculty member whose case has been deferred; whether the change could be used in negative ways and other university policies that provide legal protections; whether this same process could be utilized in cases where there may not be a legal case but a faculty member is facing another situation such as a public scandal. It was noted that the Provost does not have the authority to hold a tenure case instead of moving it forward to the BOV. Specific suggestions were made regarding use of the word “serious,” interpretations of the phrase “unresolved legal matter,” and the addition of a time component in the resolution because legal cases can linger for long periods of time.

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP) 2025-26C: Resolution to Revise Policy 6815 Undergraduate Graduation

Jim Tokuhisa and Michel Pleimling presented CUSP 2025-26C for first reading. This resolution presents revisions to Policy 6815, Undergraduate Graduation which was last updated in 2002. Suggested changes present standard graduation requirements that can be more stringent at the department level; remove the senior residency rule; revise guidance on multiple degrees by stating that students cannot earn multiple degrees under the same degree program while retaining the ability to double major; and update information on graduation ceremonies.

Follow-up discussion was held on the residency rule and potential negative impacts to community. It was noted that at least 25 percent of a student's credits must be earned at Virginia Tech. Virginia Tech also offers some on-line programs for which the residency rule cannot be met. This change provides flexibility for students who wish to study abroad.

Lengthy discussion was held on the revision that would no longer allow a student to earn multiple degrees under the same degree program. The commission was asked to provide definitions of key terms as they relate to this resolution, including degree, diploma, and major, for the Faculty Senate second reading. Additionally, Rick Sparks, University Registrar, will be invited to the meeting to answer questions and provide clarification.

CUSP 2025-26D: Resolution to Revise Presidential Policy Memorandum (PPM) 107 Midterm Assessment of Undergraduate Students

Jim Tokuhisa presented CUSP 2025-26D for first reading. This PPM addresses the mid-term assessment for first-semester undergraduate students, both first-year and transfer. Current requirements state that students should be assessed as Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory, but revisions in this resolution change the assessment to match the grade mode of the course. The intention of these revisions is to provide more granular feedback to students.

Discussion focused on the strengths and complications of both the current Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory assessment and the updated assessment to match the course grading mode; concerns for courses where most grading is accomplished later in the semester; consideration of alternative evaluations such as a survey tool or something similar to the assessments provided to student athletes.

5. Visit with Jen Irish, Faculty Representative to the Athletics Committee, and Derek Gwinn, Assistant Athletic Director Compliance

Justin Lemkul welcomed Jen Irish, a professor in Civil Engineering Education who has served as Virginia Tech's Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Atlantic Coast Conference (AAC) for about four years.

Dr. Irish provided information about her role as the faculty athletics representative, stating that a focus of this role is advocating for student athlete academic well-being. She provided statistics on student athletes: There are about 550 student athletes at Virginia Tech who represent the university through their sport. During their specific season, these students balance about 20 hours of practice per week with the requirements of being a full-time student and additional time for travel to competitions. In Spring 2025, over half of VT's student athletes were on the Dean's list and 70% earned above a 3.0. Student athletes represent all VT colleges.

Areas challenging to student athletes were summarized and include: (1) In recent years teams are traveling further than previously, which has increased travel and resulted in increased stress.

Virginia Tech does not offer a formal excused absence for students. (2) Transfers. Student athletes must also be academically eligible in order to compete. When students transfer between educational institutions and change majors, eligibility can be impacted. (3) The football transfer window is the first two weeks of January which is a short timeframe and impacted by winter closures.

Derek Gwinn serves in a compliance role with Athletics. He provided a summary of the House vs NCAA Settlement that was approved earlier this year. This settlement has resulted in many changes at Virginia Tech and other institutions. The compliance team is currently focusing on staying up to date on new information and educating coaches and staff. Name, Image and Likeness is also part of the bigger picture, which adds another layer of education, monitoring, and regulation to the roles of the Athletics Office.

The university has made the decision to invest \$229 million in athletics funding. It was noted that from the athletics perspective, VT has underinvested in athletics in comparison to their peers and other stat institutions, and that this investment enables future success. President Sands has appointed an Athletics Investment Oversight Committee for guidance and advisement.

6. Open Floor Discussion

- A senator announced that coordination is underway for an employee night out at a professional hockey game in Roanoke, Virginia. Expect information and details in the future.
- A senator stated that a protest was recently held on VT's campus that seemed to indicate that the principles of community are not working right now. It was suggested that the Faculty Senate work with the administration to support communities that have recently been impacted.
- Commission on Graduate and Professional Student Affairs (CGPSA) Resolution 2025-2026A: Resolution to Update the GPSS (Graduate and Professional Student Senate) Constitution is currently in the senate comment stage of the resolution process. A senator mentioned a comment on this resolution: the GPSS desires to represent students from all campuses, but effort must be made to recruit senators from other campus locations.
- A senator suggested that Faculty Senate work with commissions to provide alternative solutions regarding the recent discontinuation of the Ujima and Lavender House Living Learning Programs, noting a potential conflict with the Principles of Community and reduced support for underrepresented communities.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:47.