

University Council Minutes
March 2, 2026
3:30 p.m.
2420 North End Center and Zoom

Present: Tim Sands (presiding), April Myers, Julie Ross, Amy Sebring, Daniel Sui, Bryan Garey, Menah Pratt, Frances Keene, Kim O'Rourke, Guru Ghosh, Aimée Surprenant, Stephen Biscotte for Jill Sible, Tommy Thompson for Mario Ferruzzi, Daniel Givens, Laura Belmonte, Tsai Lu Liu, David Knight, Saonee Sarker, Lee Learman, Tyler Walters, Sara Vandyke for Rebecca Bott-Knutson, Amanda Morris, Jennifer Johnson, Justin Lemkul, James Hawdon, Marlena Lester, Amber Hagen, Gabe Petry, Jasmine Boyd, Atharva Shashank Kokane, Thomas Feely, Lindsay Ricci, Pooja Bhagawat, Gyang Chung, Taylor Peele, Katie Drinkwater Gregg, Marc Michel, Nicole Pitterson, Eric Martin, Kim Loeffert, Rebecca Hester, David Xie, Renée LeClair, Serena Young, Amber Robinson, Jennifer Clevenger, Jim Tokuhisa, and Jan Helge Bøhn

Absent: Saskia van de Gevel, Rachel Miles, Jennifer Jones, Nicole Connors, Emma Roshioru, Ron Meyers, Terri Pecora, Clay Crumpler, and Ronnie Mondal

Guests: Larry Cox, II, Janice Austin, James Bridgeforth, Holli Gardner Drewry, Ron Fricker, Rachel Gabriele, Monique Logan, Laurel Miner, Kat Nelson, Lori Rose, Lynn Byrd, Dee Dee Somervell, Rick Sparks, and Lauren Surface.

President Sands called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. A quorum was present.

1. Announcement of Order of the Day

President Sands announced the order of the day for the meeting. Items to be placed on the agenda must be submitted to the secretary at least ten days prior to the meeting date. Follow the procedures in Section 2(2) – University Council Bylaws, Article IX, Section 2(2-3).

2. Announcement of review and approval of minutes of February 16, 2026

President Sands noted that these minutes have been voted on electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Governance Information System on the Web (<http://www.governance.vt.edu>).

3. Unfinished Business

Commission on Faculty Affairs
CFA Resolution 2025-26F
Resolution to Revise Appeals Procedure in Faculty Handbook

Jim Hawdon presented the resolution for second reading and made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded, and the motion passed.

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

Jim Tokuhisa presented the resolution for second reading and made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded, and the motion passed.

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies
CUSP Resolution 2025-26D
Midterm Assessment of Undergraduate Students (PPM 107)

Jim Tokuhisa presented the resolution for second reading and made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded, and the motion passed.

4. New Business

Commission on Faculty Affairs
CFA Resolution 2025-26G
Resolution to Revise Faculty Handbook Section on Sanctions

Jim Hawdon presented the resolution for first reading. The resolution proposes revisions to the Faculty Handbook to formally establish a process for addressing minor sanctions, which are not currently codified in the Faculty Handbook and are instead handled through ad hoc administrative practices such as letters of caution or counseling memos. The goal is to create a clearer, more consistent process that incorporates faculty oversight and voice.

The proposed change includes a four-step process beginning with a conversation, followed by, if needed, a review from a college-level faculty committee to determine whether a minor sanction is warranted and to recommend an appropriate sanction. If the committee finds no basis for a sanction, the matter ends. If a sanction is recommended, the administrator retains decision-making authority but must obtain supervisory sign-off if deviating from the committee's recommendation. All outcomes remain subject to the grievance process.

Discussion focused on the relationship between this new process and the existing grievance system. Questions were raised about potential redundancy, the continued availability of grievances, legal protections for committee members, information-sharing in cases involving confidential investigations, and recusal mechanisms. It was confirmed that the proposal has undergone legal review, that recusal procedures will be determined at the college level, and that grievances will remain available. It was emphasized that the new process is intended to reduce unnecessary grievances, promote consistency, and strengthen shared governance by incorporating faculty review earlier in the sanctioning process.

Additional clarification was provided that the proposal does not necessarily create entirely new committees but would likely rely on existing college-level committees such as the P&T committees. Concerns were also raised about faculty workload and institutional adherence to grievance procedures. The discussion concluded with acknowledgment that further clarification may be needed.

Commission on Research
COR Resolution 2025-26A
Resolution to Revise Research Faculty Non-Professorial Rank Structure in Faculty Handbook

Jan Helge Bøhn presented the resolution for first reading. The resolution proposes revisions to the Faculty Handbook to streamline the research faculty non-professional rank structure. Over

time, multiple research ranks have evolved, and the proposed changes aim to consolidate these into a more efficient and competitive structure that better aligns with practices at peer institutions.

Specifically, the resolution merges the Research Associate track, Research Scientist track, and Research Professional Faculty track into a single Research Faculty rank. This unified structure will include six levels: Research Associate I, Research Associate II, Research Scientist I, Research Scientist II, Senior Research Scientist, and Principal Research Scientist.

In addition to the six rank levels, approximately 60 specialty designations will be established and will be equivalent to academic departments.

5. Announcement of approval and posting of UC Cabinet, Commission, and Committee Minutes

These minutes have been voted on electronically and will be posted on the University web (<http://www.governance.vt.edu>). Note that the purpose of voting on minutes of the University Council Cabinet, Commissions, and Committees reporting to University Council Cabinet is to accept them for filing. University Council Bylaws require that policy items be brought forward in resolution form for University Council action.

- University Council Cabinet
February 9, 2026
- Commission on Faculty Affairs
December 12, 2025
- Commission on Graduate and Professional Student Affairs
December 10, 2025
January 14, 2026
- Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies
January 21, 2026
- Commission on Research
December 11, 2025
- Budgeting and Planning Committee
December 9, 2025
February 2, 2026

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 3:55 p.m.

University Council Voting – March 2, 2026

First name	Last name	Do you approve CFA Resolution 2025-26F?	Do you approve CUSP Resolution 2025-26C?	Do you approve CUSP Resolution 2025-26D?
Laura	Belmonte	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pooja	Bhagawat	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stephen	Biscotte	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jasmine	Boyd	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gyang	Chung	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jennifer	Clevenger	Yes	Yes	Yes
Katherine	Drinkwater Gregg	Yes	Abstain	Yes
Thomas	Feely	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bryan	Garey	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dan	Givens	Yes	Yes	Yes
Amber	Hagan	Yes	Yes	Yes
James	Hawdon	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rebecca	Hester	Abstain	Yes	Yes
Jennifer	Johnson	No response	Yes	Yes
Jennifer	Jones	Yes	Yes	Yes
Frances	Keene	Yes	Yes	Yes
Atharva Shashank	Kokane	Abstain	Yes	Yes
Lee	Learman	Yes	Yes	Yes
Renee	LeClair	Yes	Yes	Yes
Justin	Lemkul	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lu	Liu	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kimberly	Loeffert	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marlena	McGlothlin Lester	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marc	Michel	Yes	Yes	Yes
Amanda	Morris	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kim	O'Rourke	Yes	Yes	Yes
Taylor	Peele	No Response	Yes	Yes
Gabe	Petry	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nicole	Pitterson	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kevin	Pitts	Yes	Yes	Yes
Menah	Pratt	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lindsay	Ricci	Yes	Yes	Yes
Amber	Robinson	Yes	Yes	Yes
Saonee	Sarker	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aimee	Surprenant	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tommy	Thompson	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sara	Vandyke	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tyler	Walters	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hehuang	Xie	No Response	Yes	Yes
David	Knight	Yes	Yes	Yes