

University Council Minutes
December 2, 2019
3:30 PM
Steger Hall Conference Center

Present: Cyril Clark (presiding) for Tim Sands, Dan Thorp for Laura Belmonte, Greg Daniel, Karen DePauw, Bryan Garey, Peter Ziegler for Alan Grant, Scott Midkiff, Ken Miller, Sally Morton, April Myers, Harrison Blythe for Kelly Oaks, Kim O'Rourke, Julie Farmer for Charles Phlegar, Dwayne Pinkney, Tara Frank for Frank Shushok, Julia Ross (via Zoom), Robert Sumichrast, Don Taylor, Tyler Walters, Kim Akers for Lisa Wilkes, Paul Winistorfer, Jonathan Bradley (via Zoom), Urs Buehlmann, Bob Hicok, John Hole, Kimberley Homer, Alan Michaels, Kerry Redican, Serena Young, Diane Agud, Eric Kaufman, Bettina Koch, Cayce Myers, Robin Queen, Anthony Wright de Hernandez, Lynn Abbott, Daniel Hindman, David Tegarden, Velva Groover, Brandy Morse, Sue Teel, Janice Austin, Khaled Hassouna, Inga Haugen, Blake Barnhill, John Ferris, Tamarah Smith, & Madelynn Todd

Absent: Tim Sands (with notice), Richard Blythe (with notice), Michael Friedlander, Guru Ghosh, Lee Learman, Steve McKnight, Tyler Walters, Menah Pratt-Clarke (with notice), Greg Fansler (with notice), Collin Shelton, Monty Abbas, David Bieri, Matthew Gabriele, Jia-Qiang He, Chris Lawrence, Mary Marchant (with notice), LaTawnya Burleson (with notice), Katrina Loan, Teresa Lyons, Kase Poling (with notice), Glenda Scales, Caitlyn Stokes, Hani Awni, Alexis Hruby, Sharon Stidham, Jayme Bibbins, Conrad Briles, Kaitlyn Cole, Jack Shebat, Adi Sircar, and Ryan King

Guests: Lori Buchanan, Douglas Cannon, Robert Denton, Sam Felber, Seth Finkel, Jack Finney (via Zoom), James Jewitt, Scott Nachlis, Reese Ramos, Jackson Ribler, & Rick Sparks.

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

1. Adoption of Agenda

Dr. Clarke requested changing the order of the agenda to move old business as the first item and new business as the second item with the remainder of the items to follow in the order listed on the agenda. A motion was made and seconded to approve the resequencing of the agenda. The motion was approved. A motion was then made and seconded to adopt the agenda in the new order. The motion carried.

2. Old Business

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies

Resolution CUSP 2019-20B

Resolution to Approve New Major, Studio Art, in Bachelor of Fine Arts

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies

Resolution CUSP 2019-20C

Resolution to Approve New Major, Creative Technologies, in Bachelor of Fine Arts

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies

Resolution CUSP 2019-20D

Resolution to Approve New Major, Graphic Design, in Bachelor of Fine Arts

Kerry Redican presented these resolutions for second reading and made a motion to approve the group of three resolutions. The motion was seconded, and the motion carried.

3. New Business

Commission on Faculty Affairs

Resolution CFA 2019-20A

Resolution on Accommodating Religious Observances

Bob Hicok presented the resolution for first reading. Mr. Hicok indicated that this change will encompass religious, cultural, ethnic, meaning-making, and faith-based beliefs. If a student cannot attend a class, the student can notify their instructor directly or contact the Office of the Dean of Students, whose staff can verify the nature of the absence using the Interfaith Calendar. The faculty member will still have the authority to determine if a student can miss a class, but having the Office of the Dean of Students verify requests for absences will allow records to be kept of requests that are made by students. A question was raised as to exactly what the authority of the Office of the Dean of Students will have in verifying these absences because it is difficult to declare any request illegitimate when dealing with the personal element of a person's faith. A suggestion was made that the "Now, therefore, be it resolved," statement should clarify that the faculty member has final approval on whether or not a student is granted an excused absence. Language should be explicit so as to not cause confusion as to what the Office of the Dean of Students can and cannot do.

A question was then raised as to what "further assistance" means in the proposed new third paragraph under 9.6.2 of the Faculty Handbook. It was indicated that sometimes it is difficult for students to go directly to the faculty member, and the Office of the Dean of Students can assist students with how to proceed with a request. A suggestion was made to add the word "guidance" to the language to read "If upon a good faith evaluation an instructor believes that accommodating an absence negatively affects the course of study, students can contact the Office of the Dean of Students for further assistance and guidance."

This resolution is supported by the Faculty Senate, the Student Government Association, the Graduate Student Assembly, the Jewish Student Union, the Asian American Student Union, HokiePRIDE, the Latin American Student Organizations, the Muslim Student Union, Native at VT, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, and the Sikh Student Association.

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies

Resolution CUSP 2019-20E

Resolution for the Establishment of the School of Communication and Digital Media

Kerry Redican presented the resolution for first reading. The domain of communication has grown in terms of specialization, areas of expertise, and methodologies, and having a School of Communication and Digital Media will align resources more efficiently. This resolution has been following the formal approval process as specified in Policy 6150 (Policy and Procedures for Establishment of New Schools at Virginia Tech).

4. Announcement of approval and posting of minutes of November 4, 2019

Dr. Clarke 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>).

5. Announcement of Approval and Posting of Commission 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 Commission minutes is to accept them for filing. University Council By-laws require that policy items be brought forward in resolution form for University Council action.

- Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs
October 9, 2019
- Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity
October 22, 2019
- Commission on Faculty Affairs
October 11, 2019
- Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies
October 16, 2019
November 6, 2019
- Commission on Outreach and International Affairs
October 17, 2019
- Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies
September 23, 2019
October 28, 2019
November 11, 2019

6. For Information Only

Minutes from the University Advisory Council on Strategic Budgeting and Planning
October 17, 2019

7. Remarks

Dr. Clarke introduced Reese Ramos, Director of the new university ombuds office, who provided information about the function of this new office and how employees can get assistance if needed. The ombuds office is a resource for faculty, staff, students, teams, caucuses, etc. and for purposes of Title IX is a confidential resource (i.e., NOT a required reporter). Although the office is located on the third floor of Steger Hall, it is possible to schedule a meeting outside the normal 8-5 work day and/or at an alternate location.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:22 p.m.