

# Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs

## October 27, 2020

### Attendees:

- Serena Young, Chair
- Curtis Mabry, ex officio
- Rajesh Bagchi, Executive Vice President and Provost representative
- Patricia Donovan, Staff Senate
- Judy Alford, Staff Senate
- Tami Foutz, Staff Senate
- Bruce Harper, Staff Senate
- Nicole Akers, Staff Senate
- Lisa Boothe, Staff Senate
- Sue Teel, Staff Senate
- Joseph Baker, Faculty Senate
- Margaret Radcliffe, Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs (CAPFA) representative
- Dryden Epstein, Graduate Student Assembly representative
- Dani Chowen, Student Government Association representative
- Harrison Blythe, Director of Compliance and Conflict Resolution, Office of Equity and Accessibility
- Dale Robinson
- April Myers, Associate Director, Governance Administration
- Debra Stoudt, Associate Dean, Academic Policies and Procedures

### Opening:

The regular meeting of the Commission on Staff Policy and Affairs was called to order at 2:01 p.m. on Tuesday, October 27, 2020 by Chair Serena Young.

### Approval of Agenda

The agenda was verbally approved as presented.

### Discussion

The meeting began with a brief introduction of all committee members and guests. Margaret Radcliffe shared that the first reading for the Faculty Senate had been held, and Serena mentioned that a resolution by multiple groups, including CSPA, regarding reporting structure for governance would be meeting on Friday.

With no other committee updates, Harrison Blythe and Dale Robinson offered a presentation on Policy 1025 - Virginia Tech's Anti-Discrimination Policy. Harrison gave a brief background of the Office of Equity and Accessibility's responsibilities, including ensuring VT's compliance with laws, policies, and regulations. Policy 1025 defines discrimination and harassment, rules regarding mandatory reporting, and procedures, especially where to report concerns. OEA is reviewing policy for clarity for potential revision.

New Title IX regulations were released in May 2020 to be effective August 2020, and a Title IX working group was formed with Policy 1026 for Title IX created. To remove overlap and conflict between Policy

1026 and 1025, a Policy 1025 Advisory team to review and revise the policy. The revised version will be presented to commissions for feedback in spring for finalization before being presented to the Board of Visitors. Harrison encourages everyone read the policy and compare it to other institutions. Are the rules defined in policy clear? Is what constitutes harassment clear? Are reporting details clear? There is a short anonymous survey to provide feedback; Harrison will provide the link to Serena.

Bruce Harper asked about sharing compensation information and how it could be considered discrimination when state employee pay is public information? Harrison answered that compensation is a protected trait, and discrimination would be if a person was punished for disclosing or discussing compensation, not for sharing. Serena suggested including breastfeeding in the current definitions of discrimination and harassment. Harrison stated that pregnancy is inclusive of breastfeeding, but he will take the suggestion back to the working group.

Regarding filing complaints, OEA investigates and makes findings; they do not administer disciplinary action. There is a time limitation for filing complaints. Harrison asked the group for final thoughts and questions regarding the policy. Joseph Baker agrees that it makes good sense to review the policy for clarity. Rajesh Bagchi believes it is important to discuss policies regularly, and suggested adding cyberbullying to policy. Dale Robinson stated that unless it connects directly to some identity trait (race, age, religion), cyberbullying is not applicable in this policy. Margaret shared her agreement with Joseph and Rajesh and stressed the importance of making the policy content accessible to all by simplifying the language. She asked Dale to share his thoughts about what needs to be clarified as he administered Title IX trainings and would have some insight. Dale responded that there is a need to operationalize definitions. For instance, discrimination requires a transaction between power/authority, while harassment - does not require any power/authority and is more behavioral.

### **Adjournment:**

Meeting was adjourned at 3:01 p.m. by Chair Serena Young. The next general meeting will be at 2:00 p.m. on November 17, 2020.