

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Staff Senate

Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Thursday, April 21, 1994
Room 102 - Phase II, Veterinary Medicine

Senators Present: Carolyn Alls, Pat Ballard, Les Fuller, Leslie Graham, Betty Greene, Patty Hall, Richard Lovegrove, Don Massie, Sherilyn McConnell, Bhaba Misra, Diane Patty, Mary Pennington, Carlile Price, Peggy Rasnick, Wyatt Sasser, Lynne Schaefermeyer, Widget Shannon, Chuck Shorter, Elaine Southworth, Charlie Stott, Tony Sutphin, Sarah Wheeler, Deb Williams.

Alternates Present: Betsy Davis Jones for Buddy Shaver, Brenda Husser for Lorrie Sumpter

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 5:38 pm.

Approval of Minutes

Under "Alternates Present," Cindy Harrison's name should be removed and placed under "Guests."

University Councils, Commissions, Committee Reports

Communications Committee met April 6 - They discussed Earv Blythe's address to the Senate. They questioned whether we need to follow-up with questions or concerns that affect staff, such as training, computer access, university licensing committee activity, etc.

Policies and Issues - Committee did not meet, meeting has been changed to May 3, scheduled jointly with Staff Association Officers. The subcommittee that was directed to develop a proposal to address inclement weather policy met with Spencer Hall. They have the proposal ready to submit to Policies and Issues Committee.

Nominations and Elections - Senator Massie conducted balloting to elect officers and fill vacancies on university councils, commissions, and committees.

Old Business

Blue Cross/Blue Shield Changes and Notification Delay - Senator Lovegrove reported that letters have been written, revised, and reviewed by Senators Stott, McConnell, and Sutphin. Once the letter is finalized, it will be sent to Mr. Edwards and his supervisor. Senator Sutphin commented that it was nice that we received the newest information in advance of the changes.

Mediation training - Senator Sutphin and Senator Holliman have a copy of the state mediation handbook for senate. They are now qualified to mediate at other institutions, along with Virginia Tech employees Doug Martin and Susan Webb.

Senator Sasser requested clarification of the purpose of this training. Senator Sutphin stated that it was for conflict resolution, for those involved to come together in a non-hostile environment and listen to both sides. The hope is to get both parties to sign a contract agreeing to certain conditions acceptable to both. Any reasonable issue can be mediated. This can speed up resolution of conflicts and, it is hoped, obviates the need for the formal grievance process in some cases. The university is looking at adding a mediation center. Mediators from Virginia Tech will not mediate at this university, but will travel to other institutions. Mediators from other institutions will mediate at Tech.

Senator Holliman added that the intention is to get things taken care of before they get to be a grievance. Both parties have to agree to try mediation. There is no cost to the department involved, except for travel expenses if you have to relocate for mediation.

Senator Wheeler questioned if you have to accept the mediators' opinion. Senator Holliman responded that the mediator does not make a decision, he just facilitates in helping the parties find a solution.

College of Education restructuring - Senator Pennington stated that there have been articles in the Spectrum and Collegiate Times. The college still is putting out a newsletter; let her know if you wish to receive it. The dean of the college also has distributed his preliminary report. The college is canceling about five programs. One program is moving from the College of Education to another college. Eight faculty members are preparing to go other places, and several faculty members are interested in an early retirement buyout. They will be losing five-and-a-half full-time staff positions. All this will be spaced out over a three-year period. People remain upbeat, and it is possible that they won't have to use lay-off procedures.

New Business

Revised Benefits Committee - Senator Stott reported that the Employee Benefits Committee has had only one staff member, so University Council is changing the Bylaws. Previously, there were more ex-officio administrators than there were committee members. The charge of the Committee will remain the same and it will report to the Commission on Classified Staff Affairs and the Commission on Faculty Affairs. The membership will be three staff members nominated or elected by Staff Senate, one nominated by the Commission on Classified Staff Affairs, three members nominated or elected by Faculty Senate, one nominated or elected by Commission on Faculty Affairs, and one from the Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty. The chair will be

elected from the non ex-officio members. All will serve three-year terms. There will be no students on the committee at this time pending the outcome of President Clinton's health-care reform legislation. All these changes will take effect in the fall.

UVa visit - Early in April President McConnell and Senator Stott went to UVa and visited with 15 staff members there. Their staff discovered that they had formed individual organizations similar to ours, but none of these small groups realized how many other small groups there were on campus. They have strong support from their administration and they will proceed to a universitywide elected representative body. They have been invited to come to one of our senate meetings to observe. President McConnell said she would like to see a statewide senate executive body.

Meeting with President Torgersen - President McConnell and Senator Stott met with President Torgersen and discussed a number of concerns that covered leadership and management, employee involvement, restructuring of the Benefits Committee, communications, need for involvement and participation, and the rewards system. He indicated a willingness and desire to meet with senate officers on a regular basis. They shared with him a copy of the CSAC final report. He was enthusiastic and said that he would see what he could do to support us.

EO/AA office has a new director, Elyzabeth Holford, who is a lawyer and comes to the position from the College of Education. She has volunteered to meet with us. Motion was made to have her meet with us, possibly at the May meeting. The motion was seconded and carried. Senator Holliman added that Holford was involved in the Women's Network.

VCU was here for a visit a couple of months ago. They have since presented their proposal for an organization similar to ours to their president and he has given them his encouragement and support, both verbal and financial.

Senator Shannon asked what has happened to the smoking policy revision. She also wondered why there is no more smoking in Burruss Hall. President McConnell stated that it was banned because several employees in Burruss had brought doctor's notes blaming their health problems on second-hand smoke.

Senator Wheeler asked about the status of a committee that had been looking at allowing people to take classes on an audit basis instead of for a grade. President McConnell told her to consult the Policies and Issues Committee. Senator Williams stated that she thought that Clara Cox dealt with some of that last year.

Senator Sutphin reported that the issue over taking more than nine credit hours per year is resolved; you can do anything you want to after 5 p.m. as long as it is not a conflict of interest.

Senator Stott attended a health-care forum recently. He had sent a profs message to senators telling them that if they had questions or issues, they should call the 800 number in Richmond. Senator Stott then received a letter listing dates of health-care forums. The letter was

received approximately three days before the forum was to take place, and said that the forums were limited to only those who had called ahead. Ann Spencer called Carolyn Graves, Benefits Administration Manager, and requested that the forum be opened to more than just those who had called. They opened it up slightly. Approximately 20 people showed up and spoke.

If you have questions or comments, the address is Health Benefit Procurement Project, Department of Personnel and Training, 101 North 14th St., Richmond, VA 23219. They would like to have the comments by May 15th. General consensus was that UBS should be thrown out of the system because of the lack of service and the kind of treatment people received over mental health concerns. Another issue is confusion is over the referral numbers and where the responsibility lies. Senator Hall stated that BC/BS told her that it was her responsibility to make sure the correct referral numbers are entered. Also discussed was the mishandling of claims. A question was raised as to why there are not more provisions for preventative medicine. More and better communication is needed.

Senator Holliman stated that when she talked to the state task force to make changes to the grievance procedure, there was no one from western Virginia on the task force. She has since been appointed to the task force. The legislation must be passed again in 1995 to take effect. She welcomes any concerns or questions so that she may pass them along at future meetings.

President McConnell has received several telephone calls and profs messages concerning the anonymous letters many people received about A/P faculty positions. If interested, she will fax or send a copy of information about employment policies and categories of A/P faculty positions. She does not know what the intent of the letter was.

Senator Patty asked about the purpose or advantage in having A/P faculty. President McConnell stated that in some cases you can convert a staff position to an A/P faculty position. Department heads are instructional positions, deans are A/P faculty positions. A/P faculty have no tenure and they are subject to notice of non-reappointment, which requires a full 12-month notice. If you are classified employee they can hand you the "pink slip" and you have 16 days to vacate. President McConnell read the following from the Faculty Handbook: "Administrative faculty perform work directly related to management of the activities of the institution, the department, or subdivision. Incumbents in these positions exercise discretion and independent judgement and generally direct the work of others. Qualifications for administrative faculty positions include an advanced degree or training and work experience at a level which equates to an advanced degree. Performance of duties and responsibilities associated with this category more than 50% of the contractual time. Regular exercise of discretionary actions and a reporting relationship, normally no lower than three levels below the President. In general, the vice presidents and deans and their immediate staff, are designated as administrative faculty. Also, directors of major administrative units reporting to the vice president are

categorized as administrative faculty. Heads and chairs of academic departments are categorized as instructional faculty. These policies do not apply to academic departmental administrators. Professional faculty positions are normally limited to librarians, counselors, extension agents, coaches, physicians, and other professional positions servicing education, public service, research, athletic, medical, student affairs, and development functions and activities."

Basically, A/P faculty members are staffers with advanced degrees and/or experience working in jobs that need more flexibility than normally given in a classified position description. All A/P faculty have written job descriptions. These positions can be proposed at any level in the institution. The comment about people being targeted for dismissal through this process is false, and is not the intent of the A/P faculty designation. It was the consensus that the person who wrote the anonymous letter was misinformed.

President McConnell received a profs message about the Johnson Student Center Bookstore being burglarized. There was no sign of forcible entry. Nine people worked there; two were full-time staff, the others were full-time students. Three of the employees had keys and were encouraged to take polygraph tests, which they passed. The locks have not been changed for at least three years. The Bookstore decided to lay all of them off. At last report, the six without keys had not been called back to work. An article in the Collegiate Times implied that the employees had been laid off the week of spring break so that they could close the Bookstore and conduct an investigation, when in fact the Bookstore was open the entire week. The person who sent the profs message asked if the senate had any information or ideas for recourse for the employees. Since the bookstore is an auxiliary it does not fall under Virginia Tech policies. It was suggested that these employees contact agencies that deal with these types of grievance procedures, such as the ACLU. The consensus of the senate is that there really isn't much we can do for them, but Senator Williams will draft a letter for President McConnell to suggest some alternatives and to let them know that we are concerned.

Senator Massie announced the results of the elections as follows:
President - Charlie Stott; Vice President - Wyatt Sasser;
Secretary - Valerie Myers; Parliamentarian - Bhaba Misra;
Commission on Classified Staff Affairs - Marge Dellers, Chuck Shorter, Tony Sutphin; non-senator classified staff member from the academic area to serve on Commission on Classified Staff Affairs - Betty Greene; non-senator classified staff member from the administrative area to serve on Commission on Classified Staff Affairs - Wanda Garrison; Commission on Faculty Affairs - Jamie Evans; Commission on Public Service and Extension - Deb Williams; Commission on Student Affairs - Judy Davis; Commission on University Support - Richard Lovegrove; Intellectual Properties Committee - Tom Hergert, Steve Shaffer; EO/AA Committee - Richard Hayman, Susan Truelove, and Deborah Young.

Meeting adjourned at 7:02.