

Faculty Senate Minutes
October 19, 2018
NCB 160, 2:30 - 3:45

In attendance:

Monty Abbas, Masoud Agah, Biko Agozino, Robin Allnut, Susan Anderson, Richard Ashley, Osman Balci, Arthur Ball, Brian Britt, Tanyel Bulbul, John Ferris, Ellen Gilliland, Nicolin Girmes-Grieco, James Hawdon, Kathy Hosig, Bradley Klein, Bettina Koch, Roberto Leon, Paul Marek, Shelley Martin, Polly Middleton, Marie Parette, David Radcliffe, Ford Ramsey, Todd Schenk, Durelle Scott, Brett Shadle, Richard Shryock, Manisha Singal, Ryan Speer, Cornel Sultan, David Tegarden, Jim Tokuhisa, Diego Troya, Layne Watson, Anthony Wright de Hernandez.

Absent:

Alan Abrahams, Diane Agud, Mehdi Ahmadian, Michael Borowski, Robert Bush, Charles Calderwood, Leandro Castello, Virgilio Centeno, Kelly Cobourn, Sam Doak, Harry Dorn, Stefan Duma, Matt Eick, John Galbraith, William Galloway, Sierra Guynn, Dana Hawley, Bob Hicok, Eunju Hwang, Sara Jordan, Eric Kaufman, Christine Kaestle, Matthew Komelski, Jake Lahne, Chang Lu, Zachary Mackey, Margarita McGrath, Cayce Myers, Mike Nappier, Philip Olson, Susanna Rinehart, Hans Robinson, Stephen Smith, Eric Smith, Jim Spotila, Divya Srinivasan, Dwight Viehland, Bruce Vogelaar, Daniel Wodak, Ryan Zimmereman.

The meeting was called to order at 2:30.

1. Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved.

2. Approval of minutes

The files were made available in Faculty Senate CANVAS site.

- September 7, 2018 – The minutes were approved pending edits.
- October 5, 2018 – The minutes were approved pending edits.

3. Announcements

- The Senate will pilot using the Discussion Forums in CANVAS to discuss concerns and ideas regarding the proposed change in the Constitution related to the discussion of term limits for senators. The cabinet will review the discussion and then bring a new resolution to the Senate for discussion. Final voting will occur online via CANVAS to ensure that the full Senate has the opportunity to vote.
- Two Senators have volunteered to serve as representatives to CGS&P.

4. Topic: Update on strategic plan (Dr. Menah Pratt-Clarke)

Dr. Pratt-Clarke presented the current status of the strategic plan. Her presentations reviewed the process of developing of the plan and themes, highlighting multiple opportunities for individuals across campus to provide input and identifying the stakeholders who have been consulted to date. She noted that the current draft represents the integration of a wide range of views. She then reviewed the two major sets of themes: 1) themes associated with the University's core mission as a land grant university, and 2) themes deemed operational. Senators received

handouts of the current draft. The current version of these themes is available by clicking the “Emerging Themes” link in the Process sections of the Strategic Planning Process web page: <https://strategicaffairs.vt.edu/StrategicPlanning/StrategicPlanningProcessPage.html>

The Strategic Planning is now in the process of meeting with key constituency groups, including the Senate, to obtain feedback and seek responses to two key questions:

- What challenges and/or opportunities might there be with these objectives?
- What might be Beyond Boundaries Big Bets?

They have asked the Senate to weigh in on these themes and these two key questions. Several members of the Strategic Planning team were in attendance to take notes.

Senate comments

- Senators valued the recent changes made to the themes associated with faculty, moving from language around faculty productivity to language valuing the idea of VT-Shaped Faculty and Staff. Dr. Pratt-Clarke noted that we have had a lot of discussions about the VT shaped experience for students, but we need to flesh out and discuss what it means to have a VT shaped faculty experience.
- A question was asked regarding the idea of economic growth and what it means. Dr. Pratt-Clarke noted the University’s role as a land grant and our relationship to the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth’s expectations around economic development, opportunities for state growth, and key target areas. VT has a unique role in the Commonwealth in terms of our service relative to community growth and economic development.
- A question was asked regarding President Sands’ vision of VT as a global land-grant university – a concept that seems absent from the plan. Dr. Pratt-Clarke noted that this vision is implicit and embedded in both student and faculty experiences. She noted that they have been having conversations about our mission and intentionality regarding the University’s global presence, and acknowledged the need for more clarity in terms of how we conceptualize ourselves and what a “global land grant” might mean. They’ve been in discussions with the key personnel, and also considering the university’s global ranking.
- A question was asked regarding the VT shaped experience for faculty and the bullet item on competitive compensation. Senators noted that one way to broaden or deepen that would be to hire people who seek to put down roots in the community and make their careers at VT. In addition to overall compensation, the University also needs to address the issue of salary compression; compression is not quite the same thing as overall compensation. A critical issue here, then, is not just absolute compensation but how salary values influence people’s perceptions of their place among their peers here at VT (versus relative to other institutions).
- Regarding Big Bets, a comment was made to explore the possibility of a big alumni donation to address salary compression as a potential strategy.

- Regarding clarity about international engagement, a comment was made noting that faculty have a lot of clarity and a lot of energy, but the University at higher levels lacks both clarity and resources.
- Regarding the student experience, a comment was made linking back to the recent visit from the SGA and GSA representatives, who highlighted students' perceptions that VT is all about research and that teaching is not a priority. This is a critical issue that is not well-addressed in the plan.
- A comment was made regarding location: Roanoke is an exciting place with a lot of forward-looking momentum. Here in Blacksburg, it seems like the university and the town don't always get along; the University is focused solely on the campus, with seemingly very little attention to the ways in which University growth impacts the town. We have an opportunity to improve the place that we live in ways that move beyond campus and consider the town and the community as a whole. It was noted that this issue is also linked to affordability of housing in the community.
- A comment was made regarding the idea that we should become the land grant version of Cal Tech and MIT. This vision raises questions about the value and pay scales of the humanities and social sciences, and the outsourcing of certain kinds of work to Arlington, further pushing that work out of Blacksburg. Dr. Pratt-Clarke stressed that the administration recognizes VT as a comprehensive university and there are conversations going on now about how we can uphold and foreground that more clearly.
- A comment was made regarding the need to get a writer on board to trim this down and get rid of the repetition and the clichés.
- A comment was made regarding the absence of any themes or bullets regarding the role of leadership and administration. Where is the discussion of their accountability? Dr. Pratt-Clarke noted that we are not there yet. She noted that this document should next elicit plans at department and college levels, and those plans will and should connect to the PIBB. The goal is to create alignment between strategic goals, budget process, and overall accountability.
- A comment was made regarding community issues, noting that VT has a relationship not just with Blacksburg but with the NRV broadly – Montgomery County, Christiansburg, and beyond. Dr. Pratt-Clarke noted that she started a Diverse Professionals of the NRV group and is learning more about the full community. She noted that there have been conversations around public transportation between the NRV and Roanoke Valley. She also noted that there are a lot of issues surrounding disparities in educational services around the NRV. What role do we have in helping to better support educational opportunities across the NRV? Such disparities influence where people with families feel like they should live.
- A comment was made noting that the themes related to transformational research seem to lack a focus on transdisciplinarity. Dr. Pratt-Clarke noted that we have been going back and forth on terms. She noted that that we need to add language around inter/transdisciplinary research.
- A comment was made noting that people are starting to give up on DAs and SGAs. We need clarity on where and how that structure fits in. Dr. Pratt-Clarke noted that we need to continue to have an important conversation about the future of research at VT. Larger cross-DA conversations and efforts are starting to bubble up and we are beginning to see connections across areas. We thus need to have discussions around our research strategy,

articulate how we are going to advance our research mission, and define the role served by the DAs and SGAs. The DAs are currently fairly well integrated into Institutes. In these initial years, however, many of them have focused more on curriculum; they have created Pathways minors, and we now need to see if there's demand for those among the students. There's a lot to yet learn about these Pathways programs, how students are going to navigate them, and how the Pathways minors will interact with single-discipline minors. Overall, the DAs and SGAs seem to have done substantial work in the area of curriculum, with less work done around research. There has been some work there, but it is harder to generalize across DAs; some are cohesive in their connection to an institute while others are still involving.

- A question was asked regarding what's really new here? What are the concrete, measurable objectives?
- There was substantial discussion about the need for the University to identify its priorities and understand what the big bets are, what is really new here, where we should invest our money. Sometimes we can't get past the little details, the infrastructure issues, the salaries, and so on. Those may be the big bets; they may not be publicly flashy or exciting, but they may be most important. We've got some big bets in Roanoke with the medical college, in the NCR, in the new ventures in the College of Business.
- A comment was made regarding continuous strategic planning and the need to make sure faculty are in there in terms of governance (including Faculty Senate). Dr. Pratt-Clarke noted the need to be clear about where and how decision-making happens, and which commissions and committees are involved. Dr. Pratt-Clarke raised again the issue of committees and commissions needing to be really visionary and see beyond the immediate day to day operations to think big.
- A comment was made regarding noting that comments received at last week's meeting of the Commission on Faculty affairs have already been integrated into the current version, and those changes were much appreciated.
- A final comment was made regarding what it means to "actualize the potential of the university." That verbiage translates these kinds of themes into actionable items. We need to generate momentum to go from lists to verbs and actions.

5. Topic: Discussion of adjustment of status application (Ian Leuschner)

Ian Leuschner began by clarifying the actual changes. VT is not abandoning the foreign residency process for VT faculty. He explained that the current process to obtain a green card typically involves 3 steps.

1. Show US Dept of Labor that a qualified US citizen is not available.
2. Show that the foreign national meets requirements for the position and that the University can pay the necessary salary.
3. File an Adjustment of Status Application. This application requires foreign nationals to demonstrate that they are eligible to work in the U.S., and it includes physicals as well as other types of records. This part of the process is essentially proving to the U.S. government that the

person is admissible to work in the US on a green card. The government assumes someone is inadmissible, and the burden of proof is on the individual to prove they are admissible.

It is this third step that International Support Services will no longer provide. Reasons for this are as follows:

- The U.S. government now requires every green card application to have an interview. This requirement raised questions about whether or not VT/ISS can go to interview with them, whether we can continue to support family applications, etc.
- Additional forms have been added and existing forms have been expanded.
- Processing time has begun to slow considerably. VT typically files multiple forms at once along with the green card application, and now delays in the green card process are leading to the need to file extensions on a variety of other forms.
- The U.S. government is currently asking a lot more questions and requiring substantially more documentation.
- Overall, the process is more burdensome now and the ISS staff hasn't increased. ISS asked for either more staff or the ability to direct people toward other available resources. The Commonwealth of Virginia appoints several law firms across the state that are eligible to work with adjustment of status applications, and the decision was made to direct individuals to these firms rather than keep the process in house. Colleges and/or departments need to provide approximately \$1800-2000 per person (for employee + 1 dependent), and \$500 for each additional dependent. These law firms have been vetted by the state attorney general.
- In Virginia, only JMU continues to support adjustment of status applications. Based on a review of public web pages, Mr. Leuschner determined that only 3-4 land grants in the US support adjustment of status applications.
- He recognizes the concerns about the issue of competitiveness.

Senate Comments

- When international faculty don't feel that they are supported by the university, then they are likely to leave. Mr. Leuschner encouraged people to take that concern to department heads and the Provost, and noted that this is a decision by the Provost's office in terms of where to put resources. Adding a position to ISS was an option.
- International faculty feel that this is a move in the negative direction in terms of the messages sent to faculty. They also question the efficiency of this process since it now distributes the work to the departments.
- A question was asked regarding which institutions do and don't support adjustment of status. Mr. Leuschner reported that Penn State, Michigan, and Michigan State do not. Purdue does. Ohio State does.
- One senator noted that their experience of working with a Commonwealth-approved attorney was a nightmare and was very expensive. They noted that the cost was significantly higher because every form and every change was charged several hundred more dollars. The process was fairly awful.
- Mr. Leuschner noted that the process was brought in house in 2007 or 2008. The first two steps are the most difficult; the third requires a lot of information, but is not as hard. The first two steps are staying in house, and those are the most challenging; those are the ones

the university is going to continue to do. He acknowledged that the process is going to be less efficient.

- A comment was made about an overall increase in faculty worry and uncertainty because of the change. Mr. Leuschner noted that faculty involvement will remain the same – whether it’s in house or external, the employee still has to interface with whoever is doing the process.
- Mr. Leuschner reiterated that the key issue is resources: ISS either needs to have another position or the process has to move to an external provider because they cannot provide the service with their current resources.
- In response to a suggestion, Mr. Leuschner cautioned against working with volunteers who work pro bono to support the adjustment of status process.
- A compromise might be for ISS to act as a conduit or ombudsperson or liaison as individuals transition from University support for the first two steps to outside counsel for the third step. Mr. Leuschner expressed concerns about that idea and noted that it can be complicated for the University to try to insert itself into the work of another law firm.
- The U.S. Immigration Service is now much tougher on H1B visas, and they announced 2 days ago that they are going to announce even tougher standards in January.
- The cost to departments will be approximately \$1800-2000 per employee + 1 dependent, in addition to a filing fee of \$1250 that departments already pay.
- The highest number of applicants in one year for a college was 10 (in the College of Engineering); the average is about 4 per year per College.
- The Senate wants to invite the Provost to advocate.

Motion: The Faculty Senate would like the Provost to add a position to ISS so that the ISS office can continue to process Adjustment of Status Applications in house.

The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

6. Proposal to amend the Faculty Senate bylaws (second consideration) (10 minutes)

Whereas the Faculty Senate Legislative Affairs work group may not be active and should therefore not be specifically identified in the bylaws; and

Whereas the choice of representation on the Faculty Senate of Virginia should be left to the discretion of the Faculty Senate; and

Whereas the correct abbreviation of Faculty Senate of Virginia is FSVA;

Therefore we propose the following change to the Faculty Senate bylaws, Article X. Faculty Representation On the Faculty Senate of Virginia:

A. Membership: The Virginia Tech Faculty Senate elects two faculty representatives, each of whom serves a three-year term, to the Faculty Senate of Virginia (FSVA). ~~Two additional, ex-officio representatives to the FSV are the president of the Virginia Tech Faculty Senate and the chair of the Virginia Tech Faculty Senate Legislative Affairs work group.~~

B. Functions and Duties—The functions and duties of the faculty representatives to the FSVA are:

To represent the position of the Faculty Senate and the faculty on pertinent matters considered by the FSV A.

To inform the Faculty Senate of pertinent matters to be considered and of actions taken by the FSV A.

To bring matters of faculty concern before the FSV A.

The motion passed on a voice vote.

7. Other business

Staff Salary

Senate President John Ferris noted that to raise faculty salaries from the 35th to 50th percentile among our peers would cost something on the order of \$25 million. To increase staff salaries to a living wage would cost \$5 Million. He asked the Senate for a sense of the room regarding asking the University, and particularly the BOV, to increase the staff salary first.

The discussion noted that the staff salary increase has to be a flat dollar amount increase for pay bands 1 and 2. A suggestion was made that perhaps it should be a dollar amount or 3%, whichever is higher.

The sentiment among the Senate was strongly in favor of adjusting staff salaries first.

A comment was made noting that classified staff and university staff are two different groups, and if classified staff convert to university staff, they lose a large portion of their sick leave.

Ferris requested an email with more details on these different staff categories.

Another comment noted that hourly wage staff should also be considered.

Ferris will bring this up to the BOV in his address, and will send out a summary of the issue to the Senate.

Town of Blacksburg

Susan Anderson, member of the Blacksburg Town Council, noted that the town has formed a task force to look at the housing issue, and that includes working with the VT Foundation and others to generate multiple creative ideas. Some key issues noted in the discussion were as follows:

- People can afford to buy a house but not renovate it, so renovation funds could help.
- Land is expensive, so non-profits could buy land and individuals could buy the house itself.
- Rentals are another major concern since virtually all rentals in town are geared toward students.
- A suggestion was made to consider University-owned housing for married grad students and first-year faculty, with CU Boulder cited as an example.

Faculty Benefits

Todd Schenk noted the need for priorities for the Faculty Benefits Committee for the year.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:50.