

Commission on Faculty Affairs
February 28, 2025
10:30 am – 12:00 pm
Burruss 330E and Zoom

Present: J. Lemkul (presiding), R. Fricker (ex officio), R. Gabriele, D. Agud (Faculty Senate), J. Lahne (Faculty Senate), K. Schneiderman (Undergraduate Student Senate), R. Jin (Faculty Senate), L. Learman (Dean), R. Gaines (Faculty Senate), E. Lavender-Smith (Faculty Senate), K. Benson (Faculty Senate), J. McGlothlin (Faculty Senate), V. Buechner-Maxwell (Faculty Senate).

Absent with Notice: J. Hawdon (Faculty Senate), A. Torres (Graduate and Professional Student Senate).

Absent: K. Pitts (Dean), N. Connors (A/P Faculty Senate).

Guests: E. Kim (Faculty Affairs), D. Musick (VTCOM), C. Hutchison (Faculty Affairs).

J. Lemkul called the meeting to order at 10:33 a.m. A quorum was present (50%+1 of current membership=8).

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Consent Agenda

- a. **Review and Approval of Agenda.**
- b. **Approval of Minutes from February 14, 2025.**

The consent agenda was adopted without objection.

3. Reports from Senates

- A/P Faculty Senate: Absent.
- Staff Senate: N/A (waiting for new representative).
- Undergraduate Senate: The undergraduate senate recently had second readings for resolutions relating to their constitution and finances.
- Graduate Senate: The second reading of CGPSA 2024-25A passed unanimously, which will increase the number of representatives in CGPSA from satellite campus locations. GPSS is currently drafting a climate survey to distribute to graduate students and plans to push their constitution amendment to Fall 2025.
- Faculty Senate: The Senate voted to approve CFA 2024-25C, CFA 2024-25F, and CFA 2024-25I. Furthermore, they voted to draft a statement to reaffirm Virginia Tech's Principles of Community.

4. Unfinished Business

Second Reading of CFA 2024-25G

Resolution to Amend Articles V, VI, and XI of the Faculty Senate Constitution

J. Lemkul presented the resolution for second reading. He informed the commission that no revisions have been suggested for CFA 2024-25G from other constituent groups. However, one

Whereas statement was added to address the contents of Article V of the Faculty Senate Constitution. A motion was made to approve. The motion was seconded. There being no further discussion, a vote was taken on the motion, and the motion passed.

5. New Business

First Reading of CFA 2024-25H

Resolution to Codify the Faculty Reconciliation Process within the Faculty Affairs Office

J. Lemkul presented the resolution for its first reading, informing CFA members that under current processes, the Faculty Senate remains responsible for establishing a committee on reconciliation for complaints (not grievances). However, this committee has lacked members since its inception. Given the specialized training and unique perspective required for this role, R. Fricker and R. Gabriele have proposed housing the reconciliation process within the Office of Faculty Affairs to better align with current practice. Currently, Ken Eriksson is fulfilling this role; this resolution will appropriately codify this position as Director of Faculty Reconciliation. This change will necessitate many edits to the Faculty Handbook, including reference to members of the grievance committee. Rather than placing the Director of Faculty Reconciliation in one of the chair positions, the Faculty Senate vice president will fill this role. CFA members raised questions about functional differences between the director of faculty reconciliation and the university ombuds. The ombuds is a mediator who offers advice on resolving issues, often directs faculty to other avenues, and may be less engaged in solutions. The Director of Faculty Reconciliation, on the other hand, may get more involved in bringing parties together, has more actional ability, and brings deep faculty experience and knowledge of the Faculty Handbook to their position. The director will operate independently and confidentially from others in the Faculty Affairs office. Faculty will be able to contact the Director of Faculty Reconciliation directly, and the director will only contact other parties with the express permission of the faculty member. J. Lemkul encouraged CFA members to add comments as needed.

First Reading of CFA 2024-25J

Resolution to Integrate Chapter 12 into Chapters 2 and 5 of the Faculty Handbook

J. Lemkul presented the resolution for its first reading. Since the last discussion, members of Faculty Affairs and VTCSOM have reviewed the proposed changes, which include the elimination of Chapter 12 of the Faculty Handbook, and the relevant updates to Chapters 2 and 5 accordingly. Specifically, section 2.6.7 refers to the tenure-to-title role that is unique to VTCSOM; these individuals are specially recognized for their scholarly activities beyond the nature of their roles. This title serves an honorific purpose for those who are not employed by the university and therefore not eligible for university-based tenure, despite many coming from past tenured positions. Of the approximately 650 faculty in VTCSOM, only about 5-7% of faculty members have earned this title or are currently working towards it. Some CFA members expressed concern about the use of the word "tenure," as it is functionally different than the university-defined version of tenure and may cause confusion in the future. This title has existed since VTCSOM opened in 2010, has not yet been a source of confusion, and is markedly different from that of the clinical track; changes to this process would create significant issues at VTCSOM. This title is purposefully nested under appointments in the Faculty Handbook, as opposed to faculty types. Section 5.1, in which there were changes to the instructional faculty series for visiting and adjunct faculty. This change provides more flexibility in categorizing interns and residents, as there would be administrative issues in identifying them as instructors or post-docs, which may also impact VMCVM. This new label also allows for recognition of the role as a term appointment while generalizing the language to apply to any position in a series.

J. Lemkul will edit the text to make this more clearly tied to the faculty series that were defined previously. Furthermore, the commission was informed that all resulting renumbering of chapters and sections will be administrative changes and will not require further resolutions or amendments through the CFA.

First Reading of CFA 2024-25K

Resolution to Amend the Faculty Handbook to Codify Interest- or Discipline-Based Faculty Associations

J. Lemkul presented the resolution for first reading. J. Lemkul and R. Fricker expressed that the purpose of this resolution is to allow faculty members to organize around a specific interest or discipline. As opposed to college faculty associations, these groups will be centered around professional development. The existence of faculty affinity groups will provide a mutually beneficial opportunity to faculty members, as well as to the university in terms of increased collegiality and collaboration between faculty. The language will be added to the Faculty Handbook in Chapter 1, as a brief paragraph in section 1.1.12. These interest groups will have no role in formal governance and will speak only for themselves – not as representatives of the university. The present goal is to allow the existence of affinity groups in the Faculty Handbook and then create policies within Faculty Affairs to support this initiative with any relevant information. For example, issues of representative group statements, funding flows, the formation of foundation accounts, exclusionary practices, topic restrictions (e.g., politics) and more will likely be addressed in a future policy.

Discussion

Promotion and Tenure Guidelines

C. Hutchison introduced updates to dossier guidelines for this academic year. R. Fricker explained the Faculty Affairs process of P&T, in which guidelines for this year's cycle directly result from last year's P&T committee discussions. One commission member raised a question about timelines related to external reviewers and potential relationship biases. Virginia Tech looks to NSF guidance on this topic, particularly in terms of the number of years in determining recency and the number of authors on a paper to establish conflicts of interest. The CFA were encouraged to review the 2024-2025 P&T guidelines and to send comments to R. Fricker by March 14th, 2025.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 11:58 pm.