



## MINUTES

**Faculty Senate  
January 23, 2026  
2:30 – 4:15 p.m.**

**Torgersen 1000 and via Zoom**

**Present** – Justin Lemkul (presiding), Luke Achenie, Joe Adams, Diane Agud, Aaron Ansell, Rick Ashley, Azziza Bankole, Kristen Benson, David Bieri, Jan Helge Bøhn, Bradley Bowen, Curtis Bower, Sherwood Clements, Sarah Clinton, Rebecca Cockrum, Nick Copeland, Carolyn Copenheaver, Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Naomi Dunn, Bob Edmison, Matt Eick, Ihudiya Finda Williams, Candace Fitch, Mark Freeman, Rodney Gaines, Nicholas Goedert, Aaron Gross, Wes Gwaltney, Ramtin Haghazar Kouchaksaraei, James Hawdon, William Headley, Rebecca Hester, Dan Hindman, Kenneth Hodges, Nicole Holt (alternate for Ryan Calder), Adrienne Holz, Eli Jamison, E. Fanny Jasso-Hernandez (alternate for Isis Quinlan), Ran Jin, Sarah Karpanty, Lara Khansa, Alex Kinnaman, Andrea L'Afflito, Jake Lahne, Renee LeClair, Kimberly Loeffert, Charles Lowery, G.Q. Lu, Jason Malone, Stephen Martin, Joel McGlothlin, Ron Meyers, Marc Michel, Rachel Miles, Phil Nelson, Gregory Novack, Nicole Pitterson, Mark Psiaki, Shelly Rhoads, John Richey, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Steven Rowson, Caroline Saouma, Yi Shi, Ian Shoemaker, Richard Shryock, Jim Tokuhisa, Tammy Trimble (alternate for Myra Blanco) Byron Tsang, Alp Tural, Jerald Walz, Jeff Warfford, Terri-Ann Wattsman, Erin Worthington, Boya Xu

**Absent with Notice:** Ryan Calder, Stephanie Smith, Chelsea Thompto

**Absent:** Biko Agozino, Nathaniel Bishop, Myra Blanco, Warren Booth, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Mark Coggins, Logan Dandridge, Naomi Dunn, Anna Duraj-Thatte, Cassandra Efkeman, David Gregory, Barrett Gutter, Leanna House, Daniel Karolyi, Bryan Katz, Bettina Koch, Catherine Larochelle, Mark Limes, Eric Martin, Harold McKenzie, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Albert Pan, Isis Quinlan, Nino Ripepi, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, David Xie, Gordon Yee

**Guests:** Julie Allen, Lynn Byrd, Robert Hildebrand, Laurel Miner, April Myers, Demetria Somervell, Tyechia Thompson

Dr. Justin Lemkul, Faculty Senate President, called the meeting to order at 2:35. A quorum was present.

### **1. Adoption of Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda, which consisted of the items below, was adopted.

- Approval of minutes from December 05, 2025
- Approval of agenda for January 23, 2026

## 2. Updates and Announcements

### **Special Virginia Tech Board of Visitor's (BOV) Meeting, February 5**

The meeting is virtual and will be livestreamed for public viewing. Materials for the meeting and the meeting link will be available on the BOV website. Meeting topics include buildings and grounds and a closed session.

### **Academic Resource Alignment Committee Final Report**

The report is complete and was released earlier than expected in response to a FOIA request, and a link to the report was provided. Justin Lemkul noted that the FOIA request required two previous versions of the report, but only the final version should be considered. The release of the report signaled the beginning of further conversations with colleges, departments, and administrative offices. The Office of the Provost has provided an anonymous form that faculty may use to provide feedback.

### **Report from Virginia Higher Education Advocacy Day (VHEAD)**

Virginia Tech Faculty Senators that attended VHEAD provided a summary of advocacy efforts and bills of interest. The next Faculty Senate of Virginia meeting will be held in April, and notes from the previous meeting will be made available.

### **Faculty Senate President Office Hours**

Office Hours will be held on February 6, 10:00 a.m. – noon in Burruss 38B and are open to all faculty members.

### **Feedback sought on classroom and facility issues**

Faculty members can email comments on classroom and facility issues to Justin Lemkul.

### **General Faculty Questions and Concerns Submission Form**

Faculty with general questions and concerns can submit those through the submission form; a link to the form was provided.

## 3. Unfinished Business

### **Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA) 2025-26B: Resolution to Revise Faculty Handbook to Defer Tenure Cases with Legal Complications**

Jim Hawdon presented CFA 2025-26B for second reading and vote. This resolution will allow the provost to defer making a recommendation on tenure under certain circumstances if a faculty member has unresolved legal matters. Following comments received during the Faculty Senate first reading, an update was made to include the addition of a timeframe, allowing for deferral in increments of one year.

A motion was made and seconded to approve CFA 2025-26B. There were no questions or discussion. A vote was taken to approve the resolution, and the motion passed (Yes: 62; No: 1; Abstain: 4).

## 4. New Business

### **CFA 2025-26F: Resolution to Revise Appeals Procedure in Faculty Handbook**

Jim Hawdon presented CFA 2025-26F for first reading. This resolution adds clarification for the

appeals procedure for negative promotion and tenure decisions. Specific updates address notification of candidates, the requirement to provide substantive reasons for negative recommendations, procedures for the appeal of negative college decisions, and the role of the provost. The process includes convening of an ad hoc subcommittee of the University Promotion and Tenure Committee. Membership will be appointed by the provost.

### **CFA 2025-26G: Resolution to Revise Faculty Handbook Section on Sanctions**

Jim Hawdon presented CFA 2025-26G for first reading. As currently written, the Faculty Handbook section on sanctions lacks clarity and does not address minor sanctions. However, minor sanctions are imposed at Virginia Tech. This resolution defines minor sanctions and provides guidelines around a practice that is already occurring.

Updates include the following: Details on adequate cause, a definition of minor sanctions, and a process for imposing minor sanctions. The addition of language regarding adequate cause for severe sanctions consistent with text in the A/P Faculty section of the Faculty Handbook, and a procedure for imposing severe sanctions. Changes in the Dismissal for Cause section, stating that an informal inquiry will be conducted by a Faculty Senate Review Committee rather than a faculty committee having concern for personnel matters. The resolution is not meant to expand reasons for faculty dismissal but provide additional protections for faculty, including the ability to file a grievance if a department chair acts in a manner inconsistent with guidelines. Currently, there is no oversight, and a grievance cannot be filed.

Questions and comments included the following topics:

1. Suggestions that details regarding the Faculty Senate Review Committee and a timeline for the process be included.
2. General practice has been to refrain from overly prescriptive language in the Faculty Handbook. Concerns regarding the broad nature of the descriptions of adequate cause were shared and suggestions were made to review specific phrases to determine if any are redundant and covered by other terms. A recommendation was made to review the language used in section 3.1 which states that an extensive record of repeated minor sanctions could constitute a significant offense.
3. The Faculty Senate Review Committee. This is a committee of peers and is intended to enable faculty to establish an appropriate code of conduct. Currently, administrators make determinations regarding minor offenses with no oversight.
4. Faculty privacy. In the sections on the imposition of minor and severe sanctions and the dismissal of cause, Step one allows individuals to decide whether to move forward with the following steps. A recommendation was made to clarify step one language.
5. Discussion regarding potential sanctions on items that could be a violation of academic freedom. The Statement on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom is located prior to this section in the Faculty Handbook and supersedes everything that follows. Expectations are that the review committee and provost will uphold academic freedom should this type of sanction come forward.
6. A question was raised on whether the updates included in this resolution, which apply to Chapter 3 of the Faculty Handbook, will be applied to other sections pertaining to other faculty types. The commission is beginning with this section but expects that the same updates will be applied to other faculty types at a later time.

7. The process for sanctions on department chairs and deans was mentioned and is governed by other parts of the Faculty Handbook.

A lengthy conversation followed and focused on the process for this resolution and shared governance. This discussion included the following topics: background information on the resolution including requests received from faculty which led to the resolution; the steps taken in the Commission on Faculty Affairs to gather information, drafting the resolution, and advancing it in the shared governance process; the steps of the shared governance process as set forth in the University Council constitution and bylaws including first and second readings at the commission and senate levels; the roles of commissions in regard to resolutions; and the ability for commission members, faculty senators, and faculty to provide comments and concerns during the process. Comments were made on the possibility of the Faculty Senate as a whole to participate in initial discussions of potential topics and the ability to adjust processes.

### **Commission on Research (COR) 2025-26A: Resolution to Revise Faculty Research Faculty Non-Professional Rank Structure in Faculty Handbook**

Jan Helge Bøhn presented COR 2025-26A for first reading. Lynn Byrd, Human Resources Division Director for the Office of Research and Innovation, and Laurel Miner, Assistant Vice President and Chief of Staff for the Office of Research and Innovation, provided additional information and answered questions.

This resolution updates current research faculty tracks and ranks for Research Associate and Research Scientist by combining them into a single Research Professional Faculty rank. This will increase recruitment, retention, and promotional opportunities for professionals in this series. Only one of the current research faculty ranks may be recruited at less than a doctoral degree. Updates will enable the consideration of exceptions for individuals from industry, government, and other sectors who do not have a terminal degree but do hold significant professional training or certifications. Six ranks will be available in the research professional faculty track. Details on the ranks are not contained in the handbook, but a leveling document outlining the ranks is available and will be provided for review.

An overview of the principal investigator (PI) status process was provided. This resolution does not impact PI status process but does provide opportunities to be more competitive in recruitment and retention of research faculty. Updates apply to both regular and restricted appointments.

### **Election to University Council**

A representative from the Pamplin College of Business is needed to serve on University Council. The Pamplin college faculty association is responsible for providing a nomination for this position, and Eric Martin was nominated. A motion was made and seconded to elect a representative. A vote was conducted, and Eric Martin was elected to serve on University Council.

### **Election to the Commission on Faculty Affairs**

A vacancy on the Commission on Faculty Affairs, with a term expiring 2028, needs to be filled. Rachel Miles has been nominated for this position. The floor was opened for additional nominations. No additional nominations were received. A vote was conducted, and Rachel Miles was elected to serve on CFA.

## **5. Open Floor**

### **Announcements on topics of interest**

Announcements about three items of interest to faculty senators were provided: The Office of Faculty Affairs has shown interest in creating a Black History Month in the future. Additional information will be provided as this moves forward. Discussions have been held with Dining Services and the Office of Faculty Affairs to create a faculty dining plan and dedicated dining space. Information will be shared when available. Rodney Gaines shared his intention to run for faculty senate president and planned campaign activities.

### **Potential Future Faculty Senate Speaker**

A recommendation was made for members of the University Legal Counsel office to present information at a future Faculty Senate meeting addressing understanding on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The Civil Rights Compliance and Prevention Education Office was also mentioned as a resource that could present information on this topic.

### **Request regarding consideration of changes to resolution process in the Faculty Senate**

A suggestion was made that the Faculty Senate Executive Committee consider the senate's approach to shared governance. An example was given of providing a second first reading if a particular resolution generates extensive comments or concerns at first reading. It was noted that the process is governed by the University Council constitution and bylaws, and changes would require a large effort and multiple levels of approval at the university. The committee will consider whether there are existing procedures that may address this type of circumstance.

A viewpoint was shared on the role and responsibility of commissions. Commissions are effective bodies for bringing stakeholders together. They receive a lot of information and input to generate resolutions. However, all resolutions that are created by a Faculty Senate commission must also come through the Faculty Senate. It can be challenging for commission chairs to ensure that each party with a voice in the resolution creation and all the relevant information is communicated effectively.

## **6. Adjournment**

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