



MINUTES

Faculty Senate

March 06, 2026

2:30 – 4:15 p.m.

Torgersen 1000 and via Zoom

Present – Justin Lemkul (presiding), Luke Achenie, Biko Agozino, Diane Agud, Aaron Ansell, Rick Ashley, Azziza Bankole, Kristen Benson, Jan Helge Bøhn, Warren Booth, Bradley Bowen, Ryan Calder, Sherwood Clements, Sarah Clinton, Nick Copeland, Carolyn Copenheaver, Maria del Carmen Caña-Jiménez, Naomi Dunn, Matthew Eatherton (alternate for Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz), Bob Edmison, Matt Eick, Candace Fitch, Nicholas Goedert, Wes Gwaltney, Ramtin Haghazadeh Kouchaksaraei, Samantha Harden (alternate for HNFE), James Hawdon, Dan Hindman, Kenneth Hodges, Adrienne Holz, Leanna House, Eli Jamison, Ran Jin, Lara Khansa, Alex Kinnaman, Andrea L'Afflitto, Jake Lahne, Catherine Laroche, Renee LeClair, Mark Limes, Kimberly Loeffert, G.Q. Lu, Jason Malone, Joel McGlothlin, Harold McKenzie, Marc Michel, Rachel Miles, Phil Nelson, Gregory Novack, Albert Pan, Nicole Pitterson, Mark Psiaki, Shelly Rhoads, John Richey, Nazila Roofigari-Esfahan, Steven Rowson, Yi Shi, Ian Shoemaker, Richard Shryock, Stephanie Smith, Jim Tokuhisa, Byron Tsang, Alp Tural, Jerald Walz, Jeff Warford, Terri-Ann Wattsman, David Xie, Gordon Yee, Lijuan Yuan (alternate for Virginia Buechner-Maxwell)

Absent with Notice: Curtis Bower, Logan Dandridge, Rebecca Hester, Robert Hildebrand, Charles Lowery, Chelsea Thompto, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, Erin Worthington

Absent: Joe Adams, David Bieri, Nathaniel Bishop, Myra Blanco, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Rebecca Cockrum, Mark Coggins, Anna Duraj-Thatte, Cassandra Efkan, Ihudiya Finda Williams, Mark Freeman, David Gregory, Aaron Gross, Barrett Gutter, William Headley, Daniel Karolyi, Sarah Karpanty, Bryan Katz, Bettina Koch, Stephen Martin, Eric Martin, Ron Meyers, Sherif Motaleb Abdelaziz, Isis Quinlan, Nino Ripepi, Caroline Saouma, Boya Xu

Guests: Rachel Gabriele, April Myers, Demetria Somervell, Rick Sparks, Tammy Trimble

Justin Lemkul called the meeting to order at 2:32. A quorum was present.

1. Adoption of Consent Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the consent agenda which consisted of the items below. Motion carried.

- Approval of minutes from February 20, 2026
- Approval of agenda for March 06, 2026

2. Updates and Announcements

COACHE Survey

Some colleges have reported low response rates. Reminder emails for the survey were distributed last week, and senators were encouraged to respond.

Spring Break – Limits on Graduate Student Working Time

An email from Dean Surprenant addressing graduate student work scheduling, policies, and spring break has been distributed and is available on the Faculty Senate SharePoint site.

Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS) requests judges for the 42nd Annual Research Symposium to be held on March 25, 2026.

A registration link was provided for anyone interested in volunteering.

DEI Landscape and Student Recognition Ceremonies

The federal government has dropped its defense of the Dear Colleague letter. The Department of Justice and the Virginia Attorney General have not changed their interpretation of the law. Additionally, the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors (BOV) has made decisions based on their interpretation of federal law. The most recent DEI-related change at Virginia Tech focuses on cultural achievement ceremonies related to graduation. The university has determined that it cannot sponsor or fund these ceremonies. Student organizations themselves can sponsor these ceremonies, but funding must be provided from outside sources.

Faculty Senate Document Posting Policies

Edits to documents in the Faculty Senate SharePoint may be made only by Faculty Senate leadership. Files in the SharePoint are now view-only to ensure archival integrity.

3. New Business

Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies (CGPSP) 2025-26C: Resolution to Form a Working Group to Review Policy 6210

Renée LeClair presented CGPSP 2025-26C for first reading. Policy 6210 addresses management of graduate assistantships. This resolution will form a working group to review the policy and provide recommendations that address sick and personal leave, policy changes for additional leave categories, and better-defined work criteria. Working group membership details are included.

Graduate students have completed research on this topic, including information about leave policies for graduate assistants at other universities. This information is provided as references in the resolution. Senators were encouraged to review these references.

CGPSP 2025-26D: Resolution to Replace Presidential Policy Memorandum (PPM) 232

Renée LeClair presented CGPSP 2025-26D for first reading. PPM 232 governs the course sundowning timeline. This resolution would replace PPM 232 with a new policy that is more consistent with the undergraduate timeline, providing that graduate courses can be deleted after five consecutive years of not being taught. The annual audit of course offerings will continue with a five-year standard.

CGPSP 2025-26E: Resolution to Revise the Policy on Graduate Academic Appeals

Renée LeClair presented CGPSP 2025-26E for first reading. This resolution clarifies the academic appeals policy contained in the Graduate Catalog and puts it in alignment with undergraduate policies. Currently, there is no timeline included for appeals. Proposed changes state that appeals must be initiated no later than the end of the next academic term of the regular academic year.

A concern was raised as to whether a slightly longer timeline should be considered for graduate students who are involved with study abroad and not currently residents.

CGPSP 2025-26F: Resolution to Review Presidential Policy Memorandums that Address Graduate Education

Renée LeClair presented CGPSP 2025-26F for first reading. The resolution seeks to retire 40 current PPMS whose content has already been captured in the 2025-2026 or earlier editions of the Graduate Catalog.

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP) 2025-26A: Resolution for Review Process for Pathways Concept 7

Jim Tokuhisa presented CUSP 2025-26A for first reading. This resolution is in response to the Virginia Tech BOV resolution on DEI and Virginia Tech President Tim Sands' suspension of Pathways Core Concept 7. Pathways Core Concept 7 was originally created and approved by faculty through shared governance. Faculty were not consulted about the suspension of Pathways Concept 7.

A four-year assessment cycle for Pathways was previously developed by the University Curriculum Committee for General Education (UCCGE), and the upcoming academic year 2026-27 calls for a thorough review of the program. This resolution states that the 2026-2027 review process will be used to determine how to revise the Pathways program, including Core Concept 7. Through this review process, UCCGE, faculty, and the university community will utilize the process of shared governance to return responsibility for the curriculum to the faculty.

Comments and discussion focused on strengthening the language in the first Now, Therefore, Be it Resolved statement; continuing to be forward-thinking; and include potential ways in which the goals of Pathways Concept 7 can be met.

CUSP 2025-26G: Policy on the Use of Text Messaging

Jim Tokuhisa presented CUSP 2025-26G for first reading. This resolution addresses text messaging as a means of communicating with students for official business purposes. As written, it applies to employees, students, and affiliated organizations and departments who use text messaging for official purposes. Rick Sparks, Associate Vice Provost and University Registrar, was available to answer questions.

CUSP has received feedback from the university community on the policy. Comments have included: 1) the policy should be narrowed to the academic environment; 2) communications for organizations and employer/employee relationships would not be included; 3) categories in section 2.2 should be better delineated; and 4) suggestions regarding the opt-in and opt-out section.

There was lengthy discussion regarding the proposed policy, with comments including the following topics. This policy focuses on mass communication and was not drafted under the assumption that personal phones would be utilized to send mass texts. Other avenues for providing communication, such as through CANVAS or messaging systems, were mentioned. There is currently no university system that allows for broad messaging and no central opt-in or opt-out for students. Students have reported concerns that this will result in the receipt of too many texts. The impact of this policy on FOIA requirements and liability were mentioned.

CUSP 2025-26H: Updating Foreign Language Requirement

Jim Tokuhisa presented CUSP 2025-26H for first reading. Rick Sparks was available for questions. This resolution provides historical data around the foreign language undergraduate admissions requirement. PPM 68 set forth admissions requirements for several subjects including English, math, social and lab sciences, as well as two units of a single foreign or classical language. However, for the foreign language requirement, students were allowed to be admitted

and fulfill this requirement during their time at Virginia Tech. Proof of completion of the foreign language requirement was required for graduation, and these credits could not be used to count toward graduation. This practice is still in place and requires monitoring throughout a student's college career. This resolution seeks to change the foreign language admissions requirement enforcement to occur at admissions and not at graduation.

Rick Sparks provided further details about students and reported numbers for the 2017-2019 student cohorts. These years were identified because typical undergraduate graduation times for students range from 4-6 years and students can take the classes during any semester prior to their graduation. From these cohorts, 98 percent of a total of 23,684 students met the requirement prior to admission. Of the remaining students that were required to take a foreign language as an undergraduate, 232 met the requirement at Virginia Tech.

The Registrar's Office has looked closely at the group of 232 students and looked at each student individually to determine if there are patterns. They considered many characteristics including in-state, out-of-state, by college/department, first generation, underrepresented, athletes, and Corps of Cadets. Of the total impacted students, there was no concentration noted in any particular group. A concentration was defined as a group with commonalities. The office will continue to monitor for barriers and concerns if this resolution is approved.

A senator voiced concern about the loss of these students from foreign and classical language classes due to the small size of those classes. If sessions are cancelled, this would impact other students who may also want to take the classes. Additionally, these classes assist with building durable skills, which President Sands spoke about at the last Faculty Senate meeting. Self-reported numbers were shared regarding students who report taking classes at Virginia Tech to fulfill the admissions requirement, the number of those who were interested in obtaining a minor in the language, and then the number of those who declared a minor. Differences between self-reported numbers may be explained by misunderstanding of degree audit processes.

Comments regarding workload concerns as a reason for this change were shared. Rick Sparks stated that the "Whereas" statement in this resolution has been adjusted to note that this is a factor in, but not the reason for, proposing the change. The largest administrative burden for the current procedure is placed on academic advisors, who report spending large amounts of time contacting students to obtain their foreign language paperwork prior to graduation. The information about the administrative burden that has been collected has been anecdotal but is widely reported.

Senators asked about similarities between this resolution and a previous one that failed at Faculty Senate in the Fall. The commission felt that the conversation at Faculty Senate did not mirror the conversation in CUSP and felt that rewriting and clarifying information would be helpful.

Additional topics of conversation focused on student responsibilities regarding paperwork, currently there is better access to foreign language instruction at the high school level than was available when the PPM was written, the difficulty of enforcing provisional requirements, and support for including foreign language instruction at the university generally or relating to Pathways Concept 7.

PPM 68 is marked as retired in the policies database; the information from the original PPM is now included in the Academic Catalog. A suggestion was made to clarify this.

Commission on Faculty Affairs (CFA) 2025-26H: Promotion Expectations of non-Tenure Track Faculty

Jim Hawdon presented CFA 2025-26H for first reading. This resolution does not change anything of substance, but it adds a paragraph concerning expectations guidelines which directs faculty regarding whom to contact for expectations guidelines for promotion and tenure.

CFA 2025-26I: Revision of Section on Part-Time Faculty Appointments

Jim Hawdon presented CFA 2025-26I for first reading. This resolution focuses on the two types of part-time appointments for faculty, term and permanent. Proposed changes clarify language and streamline the format. Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 are merged into one section.

CFA 2025-26J: Revision on Cap on Additional Compensation

Jim Hawdon presented CFA 2025-26J for first reading. This resolution addresses the procedures relating to additional compensation for work completed outside of usual responsibilities. There have been inconsistencies regarding the 33 1/3 percent cap on additional compensation, and proposed changes address those inconsistencies.

Chapter 2, section 2.3.6, is changed to Additional Compensation. Language is added stating that faculty on academic year (AY) and calendar (CY) appointments may receive additional compensation for tasks clearly outside of usual responsibilities and as determined by their department head, chair, director, or supervisor and the dean or vice president. Details about tasks and additional compensation are included in this section, and it is noted that additional compensation should not be used to supplement base salary.

A section addressing overload payments was added and includes a listing of considerations that a department head, chair, or school director should take. Additional edits include information regarding reasons for additional responsibilities, specifics for summer and winter sessions, clarification on overload payment calculations, and overload payments cannot be used to compensate faculty for work on grants or contracts.

Follow-up discussion focused on (1) the university provides information on what is considered to be usual duties for individual faculty members, and (2) tasks outside of usual job responsibilities that result in additional compensation should be temporary.

CFA 2025-26L: Revision to Faculty Handbook Section on Clinical Instructors

Jim Hawdon presented CFA 2025-26L for first reading. Earlier this semester, the Senate passed a resolution that removed the requirement that instructors must be in rank for a minimum of 5 years before they could be considered for promotion. The Faculty Handbook currently requires that Clinical Instructors also have a minimum of five years in rank before being considered for promotion. This resolution removes that 5-year requirement and stays, in alignment with the previously passed resolution.

Commission, Committee, and University Council Vacancies College of Faculty Affairs

One vacancy, with a term end date of June 30, 2027, needs to be filled. Jeff Warfford has been nominated for this position. Jeff Warfford was elected to CFA by unanimous consent.

Commission on Graduate & Professional Student Affairs

There is one vacancy for CGPSA, with a term end date of June 30, 2028. The floor was opened for nominations, but none were received. The Senate will revisit this vacancy at a later meeting.

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies

One vacancy for CUSP, with a term end date of June 30, 2027, needs to be filled. Matt Eick was nominated. Matt Eick was elected to CUSP by unanimous consent.

University Council

A short-term position for University Council needs to be filled by a senator from the College of Agriculture and Life Science. This position has an end date of June 30, 2026. Jared Walz was nominated for this position. Jared Walz was elected by unanimous consent.

Employee Benefit Committee

A short-term position for the Employee Benefits Committee, with an end date of June 30, 2026, needs to be filled. The floor was opened for nominations, but none were received. This position will be considered again at a future Faculty Senate meeting.

University Academic Curriculum Governance Vacancies Provost's Working Group on Academic Governance

There are two vacancies for this working group, one STEM and one non-STEM. The floor was opened for nominations. Jim Hawdon was nominated for the non-STEM vacancy and Bob Edmison was nominated for the STEM vacancy.

Jim Hawdon was elected to the non-STEM position by unanimous consent.

Bob Edmison was elected to the STEM position by unanimous consent.

4. Open Floor

Due to time constraints, there was no open floor discussion.

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:16.