

University Council Minutes
December 2, 2024
3:30 p.m.
2420 North End Center and Zoom

Present: Tim Sands (presiding), April Myers, Cyril Clarke, Amy Sebring, Laurel Miner for Daniel Sui, Bryan Garey, Menah Pratt, Frances Keene, Kim O'Rourke, Guru Ghosh, Aimée Surprenant, Rachel Holloway, Mario Feruzzi, Daniel Givens, Laura Belmonte, Tsai Lu Liu, Kevin Pitts, Paul Winistorfer, Saonee Sarker, Lee Learman, Tyler Walters, Natalia Guerrero, Justin Lemkul, Janice Austin, Marlena Lester, Enriqu Noyola, LaTawnya Burleson, Callan Bartel, Kari Evans, Kiera Schneiderman, Leslie Orellana, Alex Efrid, Rachel Maizel for Ronnie Mondal, Quiyana Murphy, William Poland, Gary Long, Nicole Pitterson, Jason Malone, Rodney Gaines, Kim Loeffert, Jim Hawdon for Rebecca Hester, Renée LeClair, Holli Gardner Drewry, Serena Young, Tasia Persson for Amber Robinson, Sally Shupe, Vincent Wang, Donna Westfall-Rudd, Kelly Oaks, Larry Cox, II, Francisco Carvallo, and Jim Tokuhisa

Absent with Notice: Rachel Miles and Evan Lavender-Smith

Absent: Julia Ross, Amanda Morris, Aarav Parikh, and Ranald Adams

Guests: Madeline Boudville, Eric Cooper, Ron Fricker, Rachel Gabriele, Monique Logan, Kat Nelson, Michel Pleimling, Lori Rose, Demetria Somervell, Rick Sparks Lauren Surface, Dee Harris, Whitley Johnson, Amber Hagan, Kyle Johnson, and Ellington Graves

Dr. Sands called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. A quorum was present.

1. Announcement of Order of the Day

Dr. Sands announced the order of the day for the meeting. Items to be placed on the agenda must be submitted to the secretary at least ten days prior to the meeting date. Follow the procedures in Section 2(2) – University Council Bylaws, Article IX, Section 2(2-3).

2. Announcement of review and approval of minutes of November 4, 2024

Dr. Sands noted that these minutes have been voted on electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Governance Information System on the Web (<http://www.governance.vt.edu>).

3. Unfinished Business

Commission on Faculty Affairs
CFA Resolution 2024-25B
Resolution to Amend the Faculty Handbook Description of Administrative Support for University Distinguished Professors

Justin Lemkul presented the resolution for second reading and made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded, and the motion was approved.

4. New Business

Commission on Faculty Affairs
UC Resolution 2024-25A

Resolution to Form a University Mission Initiative Committee to Recommend Updated Policies for Funding Doctoral Research at Virginia Tech

Justin Lemkul presented the resolution for first reading on behalf of the Commission on Faculty Affairs, the Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Polices, and the Commission on Research. This resolution was developed through extensive discussions with the University Council Cabinet, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the Faculty Senate.

The resolution represents the initial step in a University Mission Initiative (UMI) to establish a committee tasked with examining doctoral research and training at the university. The committee will explore potential policy amendments aimed at improving funding and support for these programs. As part of its charge, the committee will develop recommendations for policy changes within this domain.

This resolution outlines a two-phase deliverable timeline:

1. By the conclusion of the spring semester (contingent upon approval of this resolution), the committee will provide the administration with budgetary forecasts to illustrate the potential impact of increased enrollment.
2. In the subsequent fall semester, the committee will submit detailed policy recommendations for consideration through the shared governance process.

This initiative emphasizes the university's commitment to enhancing doctoral education and research through thoughtful and collaborative policy development.

It was mentioned that this is the first time a UMI is going through the governance process. While the UMI process is outlined in the University Council Constitution and Bylaws, certain procedural aspects lack clarity. For instance, there are no specific guidelines on handling a UMI request that does not originate from the University President or the Board of Visitors. Additionally, the governing documents do not explicitly require a UMI to be introduced through a commission with subsequent endorsement of a senate before being presented to University Council.

To address these uncertainties, the University Council Cabinet determined that in this particular case, the standard resolution approval process should be followed (e.g., two readings by a commission and senate before advancing to University Council) and that this originating resolution should proceed through the Commission on Faculty Affairs. Based on experience gained through this first UMI process, the University Council Cabinet will recommend to University Council proposed revisions to the UMI process in the University Council Constitution and/or Bylaws.

It was further clarified that, as stated in the University Council Bylaws, the University Council Cabinet, in collaboration with the UMI sponsors, is responsible for determining the chairs of the UMI committee, defining its charge, and empaneling the committee. University Council is responsible for ensuring that the process outlined in this resolution aligns with these roles and responsibilities.

A suggestion was made to revise the first "therefore be it resolved" clause for clarity. Specifically, the co-sponsors were selected because they hold the roles of Executive Vice

President and Provost and President of the Faculty Senate, respectively, not because they are co-chairs of the University Council Cabinet.

Commission on Faculty Affairs

CFA Resolution 2024-25A

Resolution to Amend the Faculty Handbook Description of Clinical Faculty Ranks

Justin Lemkul presented the resolution for first reading. This resolution proposes an amendment to the Faculty Handbook to clarify the ranks within the clinical faculty track, which had not been well defined previously. This resolution brings the clinical instructor track into alignment with all other instructor tracks at the university and provides sufficient detail about promotion in those tracks.

The Staff Senate submitted comments regarding specific aspects of serving on graduate committees and promotion recommendations. After review, the Commission on Faculty Affairs opted not to include prescriptive language in the handbook. Instead, the resolution allows departments and colleges the flexibility to establish their own guidelines for hiring and promoting clinical faculty, ensuring these decisions align with their specific needs.

Commission on Faculty Affairs

CFA Resolution 2024-25D

Resolution to Amend the Faculty Handbook Regarding Ethics of Intimate Relationships Involving Faculty

Justin Lemkul presented the resolution for first reading. Revisions were discussed regarding sections of the Faculty Handbook to clarify the ethical obligations of faculty in relation to intimate relationships. The existing language was identified as vague and imprecise, particularly in addressing supervisory dynamics and ethical responsibilities.

Key updates include:

- Replacing references to "consensual relationships" with "intimate relationships" to reflect the potential lack of true consent in situations involving power imbalances within a supervisory structure. This change aims to provide clearer guidance on faculty expectations.
- Clarifying that while relationships are not prohibited under Virginia law, their appropriateness may be questionable due to professional and ethical considerations. If such a relationship emerges, the supervisory dynamic must be altered to remove any conflict of interest. This requires disclosure to a supervisor and approval by the Office of the Provost to ensure proper adjustments to the supervisory structure.

Additionally, a request was made to include language specifying that matters subject to Policies 1025 and 1026 will not be handled through the ethics process. The resolution has been reviewed and approved by legal counsel.

Commission on Faculty Affairs

CFA Resolution 2024-25E

Resolution to Amend the Faculty Handbook Regarding Procedures for Promotion and Tenure and Related Appeals

Justin Lemkul presented the resolution for first reading.

This resolution is updating the Faculty Handbook to better streamline the process and allow for different appeals at various stages. This update reflects current practice.

Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies
CGPSP Resolution 2024-25A

Resolution to Form a Working Group to Formulate University Policy to Combat Unprofessional Behaviors Towards Graduate and Professional Students

Renée LeClair presented the resolution for first reading. This resolution was developed mainly by a working group of graduate students. The core objective of the resolution is to establish a working group tasked with reviewing current policies and defining consistent terminology for concepts such as bullying, unprofessional conduct, and non-collegial behavior, particularly as they pertain to the interactions between graduate students, faculty, staff, and administrators. The goal is to standardize and centralize the grievance process across all academic units. This resolution represents the initial step in updating existing policies and creating a cohesive plan for implementation.

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies
CUSP Resolution 2024-25A

Resolution to Revise Policy 6305, Satisfactory Academic Progress for Associate and Undergraduate Students

Jim Tokuhisa presented the resolution for first reading. This policy was originally formulated in 1990. Since then, both the typical undergraduate student profile and the university have evolved significantly. Today, undergraduate students often enter with more credits, and the number of transfer students has increased. The proposed updates to this policy reflect these changes. The Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies strongly supports the development of policies that enhance undergraduate success, and this policy revision aligns with that goal.

Michel Pleimling provided background information on the resolution, which addresses two key areas:

- **Satisfactory Progress to Degree:**
This policy still references the outdated university core curriculum, which no longer exists. The resolution emphasizes the need for departmental guidelines to be more closely aligned with current policies.
- **Academic Standing:**
The primary change involves introducing an additional method for determining academic suspension. Under the current process, suspensions are based solely on overall GPA, requiring students to have two consecutive semesters with an overall GPA below 2.0 before suspension occurs. This method does not always identify struggling students in a timely manner. The proposed resolution introduces a second criterion: students with two consecutive semesters of term GPA below 2.0 would also be subject to suspension. This change aims to provide earlier intervention and more support for students.

A request was made to add definitions for the following terms to reduce confusion, as they are used differently in various contexts:

- Satisfactory academic progress toward a degree
- Satisfactory academic progress for financial aid
- Good academic standing

It was requested that language be added to section 2.1 (Continued Enrollment) to indicate that all three criteria (a, b, and c) must be met for a student to be certified as making satisfactory progress toward a degree and to clarify the second condition (b).

5. Announcement of approval and posting of UC Cabinet, Commission, and Committee Minutes

These minutes have been voted on electronically and will be posted on the University web (<http://www.governance.vt.edu>). Note that the purpose of voting on minutes of the University Council Cabinet, Commissions, and Committees reporting to University Council Cabinet is to accept them for filing. University Council Bylaws require that policy items be brought forward in resolution form for University Council action.

- Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity
March 19, 2024
April 16, 2024
October 15, 2024
- Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies
October 16, 2024
- Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs
September 24, 2024
- Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies
October 28, 2024
- Climate Action, Sustainability, and Energy Committee
September 23, 2024
- Transportation and Parking Committee
October 8, 2024
November 12, 2024

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:15 p.m.

University Council Voting Results - December 2, 2024

First name	Last name	Do you approve CFA Resolution 2024-25B?
Janice	Austin	Yes
Callan	Bartel	Yes
Laura	Belmonte	Yes
LaTawnya	Burleson	Yes
Francisco	Carvallo	Yes
LA	Cox II	Yes
Holli	Drewry	Yes
Alexander	Efird	Yes
Kari	Evans	Yes
Mario	Ferruzzi	Yes
Rodney	Gaines	Yes
Guru	Ghosh	Yes
Dan	Givens	Yes
James	Hawdon	Yes
Piedad	Henao Guerrero	Yes
Rachel	Holloway	Yes
Frances	Keene	Yes
Lee	Learman	Yes
Renee	LeClair	Yes
Justin	Lemkul	Yes
Kimberly	Loeffert	Yes
Rachel	Maizel	Yes
Marlena	McGlothlin Lester	Yes
Quiyana	Murphy	Yes
Kim	O'Rourke	Yes
Leslie	Orellana	Yes
Tasia	Persson	Yes
Nicole	Pitterson	Yes
Kevin	Pitts	Yes
William	Poland	Yes
Menah	Pratt	Yes
Saonee	Sarker	Yes
Kiera	Schneiderman	Yes
Amy	Sebring	Yes
Sally	Shupe	Yes
Tyler	Walters	Yes
Vincent	Wang	Yes
Donna	Westfall-Rudd	Yes
Serena	Young	Yes