University Council Minutes
October 6, 2025
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, James Bridgeforth for Frances Keene, Kim O'Rourke, Aimée Surprenant, Jill Sible, Mary Burrows for Mario Ferruzzi, Daniel Givens, Kevin Pitts, Tsai Lu Liu, Saonee Sarker, Amanda Morris, Justin Lemkul, Rachel Miles, James Hawdon, Jennifer Jones, Nicole Connors, Amber Hagan, Gabe Petry, Emma Roshioru, Aarav Parikh, Thomas Feely, Lindsay Ricci, Pooja Bhagawat, Gyang Chung, Taylor Peele, Katie Drinkwater Gregg, Nicole Pitterson, Karen Schnatterly, Rodney Gaines, Kim Loeffert, Marc Michel, Rebecca Hester, David Xie, Renée LeClair, Terri Pecora, Amber Robinson, Jennifer Clevenger, Ronnie Mondal, Jim Tokuhisa, Jan Helge Bøhn

Absent with Notice: Marlena Lester and Serena Young

Absent: Menah Pratt, Bryan Garey, Guru Ghosh, Laura Belmonte, Saskia van de Gevel, Julia Ross, Lee Learman, Tyler Walters, Rebecca Bot-Knutson, Jennifer Johnson, Jasmine Boyd, Ron Meyers, and Clay Crumpler

Guests: Ron Fricker, Rachel Gabriele, Kyle Johnson, Monique Logan, Kat Nelson, Lori Rose, Sally Shupe, Demetria Somervell, Rick Sparks, Lauren Thomas, and Larry Cox II

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 September 15, 2025

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. Announcement of actions taken under exigent circumstances

Dr. Sands provided background information regarding actions taken under exigent circumstances.

Federal executive guidance related to DEI from the White House and agencies (DOJ and DOE/OCR) continues to evolve, and the university's responses are being framed primarily through an institutional risk management lens. A Board of Visitors resolution in March 2025 addressing DEI, including elimination of an office, necessitated additional decisions. Most recently, the White House invited nine higher ed institutions (Virginia Tech not included) to sign a compact for higher education, and we are reviewing it for potential implications should its application be expanded to include Virginia Tech. Academic freedom remains a fundamental principle for Virginia Tech.

In the September 2 memo (copy attached) that President Sands sent to University Council Cabinet, he explained that two actions were taken under the exigent circumstances provision. First, the Graduate School diversity education requirement that was previously suspended has been repealed and referred to shared governance for recommendations. Departments and programs should continue critical, non-proscribed training and adjust content as needed. Second, Pathways Core Concept 7 (Critical Analysis of Identity and Equity in the U.S.) was suspended to enable redesign through governance. Prior analysis indicated that approximately 78 percent of students satisfied the general education requirement by taking a small set (about five) of courses under other core concepts, raising questions about Concept 7's effectiveness independent of federal concerns.

Relatedly, the Academic Resource Alignment Project that is under way is expected to recommend updates to the Pathways curriculum such as reducing under-enrolled courses and integrating AI in disciplinary contexts through the normal governance process with strong faculty input.

During discussion, a question was raised about the breadth of potential changes and whether goals could be amended. The Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP) has referred the draft CUSP resolution to the University Curriculum Committee for General Education, and CUSP is considering resurrecting a prior Pathways subcommittee with many of the original members. Draft language for the Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies (CGPSP) resolution is in early stages and community feedback is welcome. Provost Clarke advised that CUSP and CGPSP may draft resolutions that affirm or oppose the President's action under exigent circumstances principles; commissions should avoid simply repackaging DEI elements in ways, which will increase institutional risk, and instead focus on retaining non-DEI-related, high-value components that would be considered compliant. Provost Clarke expressed confidence in the commissions' collective judgment and emphasized the debate-and-revise nature of shared governance. Departments were encouraged to promptly fill the training gap for graduate students while avoiding proscribed elements. External counsel may be engaged as needed.

4. 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.

- University Council Cabinet
  September 8, 2025

- Budgeting and Planning Committee
  September 5, 2025

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 3:57 p.m.

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
VIRGINIA TECH

Timothy D. Sands, President (0131)
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Memorandum

TO: University Council Cabinet

FROM: Timothy D. Sands, President

DATE: September 2, 2025

SUBJECT: Actions Taken Under Exigent Circumstances

New federal regulatory requirements, coupled with the Board of Visitors' DEI Resolution passed by the board on March 25, 2025, created an exigent circumstance requiring the university to act quickly to eliminate or adjust a number of university programs and services, including some changes to academic programs. I am writing to inform the University Council Cabinet of two specific actions that have been taken and to solicit your guidance as to how to honor and fulfill the "Principles of Shared Governance" incorporated in the University Council Constitution, which state in part:

> *. . . [I]in the rare instances exigent circumstances require university leaders to act outside the structure of shared governance, they will explain the exigent circumstances and discuss the action or actions taken in open forums and in a timely manner. . .*

Actions taken by the university administration impact two matters (described below) that were approved through the university's system of shared governance some years ago, specifically:

- Resolution to Incorporate an Inclusion and Diversity Education Component into Graduate Education: Resolution CGSP 2017-18A – This resolution and the ensuing Presidential Policy Memorandum 307 are repealed in their entirety.

- Pathways Core Concept 7: Critical Analysis of Identity and Equity in the United States - Pathways Core Concept 7 has been suspended pending outcome of the review of all Pathways concepts currently under way as part of the Academic Resource Alignment process. Accordingly, the following policies and resolutions are also suspended: PPM 299: Addressing Intersectional Diversity in Pathways Curriculum and accompanying Resolution CEOD 2015-16C, PPM 290-Revision 1: Resolution to Revise Pathways General Education Curriculum* (attached) and accompanying Resolution CUSP 2016-17G. *Note: With the suspension of revision 1 of PPM 290, the original PPM 290 issued April 6, 2015, is in effect.

I welcome the guidance of the University Council Cabinet with regard to next steps.

Timothy D. Sands, President

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PRESIDENTIAL POLICY MEMORANDUM NO. 290-Revision 1
Supersedes PPM 125

To: All Virginia Tech Faculty and Students

From: Timothy D. Sands

Date: March 27, 2017

Subject: Resolution to Revise Pathways General Education Curriculum

Approved by the Commission on Undergraduate Studies & Polices:	**February 13, 2017**
Approved by the University Council:	**March 27, 2017**
Approved by the President:	**March 27, 2017**
Effective Date:	**Students entering Fall 2018**

Appended to this PPM 290-Revision 1 is the original PPM 290, which adopted the Pathways General Education Curriculum and superseded Presidential Policy Memorandum No. 125, University Core Curriculum.

Following is the text of the 2017 resolution to revise the Pathways General Education Curriculum to adopt a 3-credit, double-counted core outcome area as described in the "Pathways General Education Curriculum Revision Proposal: Critical Analysis of Identity and Equity in the United States" for students entering in the fall of 2018 or later.

WHEREAS, the University Council approved CEOD Resolution 2015-16C calling for a working group composed of CEOD and UCCGE members to review and update the Pathways curriculum to incorporate intersectional diversity in the United States; and

WHEREAS, members of the Virginia Tech faculty have been engaged for consideration of the manner in which intersectional diversity in the United States may be addressed in general education; and

WHEREAS, faculty members with expertise and interest in diversity support the approach of addressing diversity through engagement with the complex ways in which identities interact with one another and with social structures, space, place, and cultural expression and artifacts; and

WHEREAS, faculty members also emphasized the need to engage students in discussion and analysis of the nature of power, privilege, and equity; and

WHEREAS, the resultant proposal has been discussed preliminarily with representatives of each college enrolling undergraduate students, student government, and the Faculty Senate; and

WHEREAS, engaging Virginia Tech undergraduate students in a meaningful consideration of diversity fulfills the institutional commitment to Ut Prosim and the Principles of Community

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that the University revise the *Pathways General Education* curriculum (approved April 2015) to adopt a 3-credit, double-counted core outcome area as described in the accompanying "Pathways General Education Curriculum Revision Proposal: Critical Analysis of Identity and Equity in the United States" for students entering Fall 2018, effecting revisions to the *Implementation of the Pathways General Education Curriculum (Spring 2016)* guide as follows:

1. That all Pathways forms and materials will reflect the addition of the new core outcome and indicators as referenced in the accompanying proposal (pp. 9).
2. That any courses already approved for Pathways that wish to add this designation will provide an addendum to the Pathways course proposal as described (pp. 10-11).
3. That any courses not yet approved for Pathways that wish to add this designation will follow standard procedures outlined in the *Implementation of the Pathways General Education Curriculum* guide as described (pp. 10-11).
4. That any courses that carry this designation will participate in all aspects of the assessment process as outlined in the *Implementation of the Pathways General Education Curriculum* guide as described (pp. 11-12).

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- Presidential Policy Memorandum #290 adopting the Pathways General Education Curriculum was issued by President Timothy Sands on April 6, 2015, upon recommendation of University Council

- Revision 1 to adopt a 3-credit, double-counted core outcome area as described in the "Pathways General Education Curriculum Revision Proposal: Critical Analysis of Identity and Equity in the United States" for students entering in the fall of 2018 or later was issued by President Timothy Sands on March 27, 2017, upon recommendation of University Council.

VirginiaTech

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PRESIDENTIAL POLICY MEMORANDUM NO. 290
Supersedes PPM 125

To: All Virginia Tech Faculty and Students

From: Timothy D. Sands

Date: April 6, 2015

Subject: Adoption of Pathways General Education Curriculum

Approved by the Commission on Undergraduate Studies & Polices:	**January 26, 2015**
Approved by the University Council:	**April 6, 2015**
Approved by the President:	**April 6, 2015**
Effective Date:	**Fall 2016 (or upon approval of Implementation plan, whichever occurs last)**

Upon implementation, this resolution will supersede Presidential Policy Memorandum No. 125, University Core Curriculum

Following is the text of the resolution to adopt the Pathways General Education Curriculum.

WHEREAS, the State Code of Virginia established Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University as a land-grant university with its mission to serve the people of the Commonwealth of Virginia, providing an education to prepare its graduates for leadership in their chosen field of work and as productive citizens; and

WHEREAS, national organizations, including the Association of American Universities (AAU), the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU), challenge universities to provide access to high-quality, effective learning opportunities to develop students' intellectual and civic capacities, thereby preparing them to live and work in a rapidly changing global world; and

WHEREAS, disciplinary accrediting organizations identify broad categories of knowledge and experience in the areas of oral and written communication, multidisciplinary problem solving, ethical understanding and reasoning, societal and global awareness, and understanding of contemporary issues as essential elements of a high-quality undergraduate education; and

WHEREAS, educational research demonstrates that deep learning occurs when foundational learning experiences support increasingly challenging, integrated experiences within the context of disciplinary learning; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Tech's status as a research university positions it to provide undergraduate students with depth in disciplinary learning as well as integrated learning drawn from a broad range of disciplines; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Tech must demonstrate to its stakeholders, including students, parents, alumni, and accrediting bodies, the value of all elements of the curriculum for its graduates; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Tech has not undertaken a comprehensive revision of general education requirements since the Core Curriculum inception in 1992; and

WHEREAS, the 2012-2018 Strategic Plan, "A Plan for a New Horizon," calls on the university community to modify the current Curriculum for Liberal Education to provide "strong foundations for the major course of study while facilitating the integration of a broad base of knowledge" and "to embrace alternate pathways to general education"; and

WHEREAS, constituents across campus including faculty, faculty committees, staff, and students, were engaged in a multi-year process of information gathering, curriculum design and proposal development; and

WHEREAS, undergraduate students at Virginia Tech deserve a vibrant, flexible, and meaningful general education program, one that helps them to integrate learning for use throughout their lifetimes,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the University adopt the *Pathways General Education* curriculum for students entering fall 2016 or upon approval of the implementation plan (whichever occurs last) and thereafter as explained in the accompanying "Revision of General Education at Virginia Tech," with guiding principles as follows:

1. That the mission statement and guiding principles of integration, inclusivity, and relevance be adopted as referenced in the proposal (pp. 4-5).

2. That the three pathways: distribution, Pathways Minors, and Alternative Pathways are approved as described (pp. 5-7).

3. That learning outcomes and corresponding indicators of learning be adopted as described (pp. 7-11).

4. That the credit hour requirements associated with each core learning outcome be as follows:
    - DISCOURSE: 9 credits--6 foundational + 3 advanced/applied writing and/or speaking courses (pp. 8, 11-12)
    - QUANTITATIVE AND COMPUTATIONAL THINKING: 9 credits—6 foundational + 3 advanced/applied (pp. 8, 12)
    - REASONING IN THE NATURAL SCIENCES: 6 credits (with an additional 2 lab credits for students in some majors) (pp. 9, 12)
    - CRITIQUE AND PRACTICE IN DESIGN AND THE ARTS: 6 credits—3 design + 3 arts OR 6 integrated design and arts (pp. 9, 12)
    - REASONING IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES: 6 credits (pp. 9, 12)

5. That to support optimal integration of Ethical Reasoning and Intercultural and Global awareness in the curriculum, the goal is that every course approved to meet general education requirements incorporates learning in one or both of these areas (pp. 10-13) (no additional credit hours will be associated with these integrative outcomes).

6. That any course that meets the stated outcomes may be approved as a general education course with no arbitrary exclusions or restrictions against double-counting (pp. 11).

7. That the University Curriculum Committee for Liberal Education (see PPM #240)will develop specific guidelines for course approvals that will be shared with the university community via the 15-day review process. Upon responding to feedback received from the university community, UCCLE will present criteria to the commission (CUSP) for approval as outlined in the Course Approvals section on (p. 13).

8. That the University Curriculum Committee for Liberal Education, the Office of General Education, and the Office of the Provost will support continuity, stability, and transparency to maximize opportunities, use resources effectively, and reward the efforts of students and faculty.

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