

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Staff Senate

Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Thursday, August 18, 1994
Room 102, Phase II, Veterinary Medicine

Senators Present: Janet Bryant, Shannon Casey, Billie Cline, Judy Davis, Betsy Davis-Jones, Marge Dellers, Les Fuller, Leslie Graham, Wanda Grubb, Sandra Hamblin, Mary Holliman, Julia King, Richard Lovegrove, Sherilyn McConnell, Valerie Myers, Brenda Neidigh, Mary Pennington, Fred Phillips, Rocky Price, Peggy Rasnick, Wyatt Sasser, Widget Shannon, Elizabeth Shifflet, Elaine Southworth, Charlie Stott, Tony Sutphin, Sarah Wheeler, Deb Williams, Debbie Wilson.

Alternates Present: Danny Belcher for Chuck Shorter, Alyson Bowling.

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 5:36 PM.

Guest Speaker

President Stott introduced Elyzabeth Holford, director of the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Office, who addressed the proposed changes to the Sexual Harassment Policy.

She stated that sexual harassment is about abusive power and creating an environment that is unwelcoming.

There is a new section on responsibilities of administrators and supervisors. If an administrator or supervisor directly or indirectly learns that an employee is being sexually harassed, it is their legal obligation to report it. If it is not reported, the university is at risk.

One major change requires that the person under investigation for sexual harassment be not notified; under the old policy the person was not notified.

If the claim is against a classified staff member, before a resolution or recommendation comes out of the EO/AA office, the office consults personnel services to be sure it is within proper procedure.

Senator Sutphin expressed concern about documentation. If someone alleges sexual harassment out of spite and that goes into the employee's personnel file, it could ruin a career.

Holford stated that in her office the first report is called an initial consultation. The office does not keep a formal record until a formal investigation is made.

Senator Sasser stated that he felt that the policy was asking the supervisor to make determination of guilt.

Holford responded that they don't want supervisors to make that determination, but you have to assess the situation and use your judgement.

Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of the July 21, 1994 Staff Senate meeting were approved with the following additions or corrections. Under Approval of Minutes, July 21 should be corrected to read June 16.

Senate Committee Reports

Communications Committee did not meet

Elections and Nominations met August 15. Replacements are needed for Senators Aliff and Murray. Other councils, commissions, and committees also need some slots filled. Any names should be sent to Senator Rasnick at user ID RASNICK. They are going to try to establish a database, so that future vacancies can be easily filled.

Policies and Issues -- Senator McConnell has agreed to be the liaison for the Policies and Issues Committee for the Council of Presidents. Fourteen of 27 members attended the meeting. She encouraged all members of the committee to please attend the meetings on the second Thursday of each month at 12:00 noon in 400-D Burruss Hall.

Senator McConnell announced that the Council of Association Officers will meet the first Thursday of every month, room 400-D Burruss Hall at noon. All staff association officers are welcome.

Old Business

Blue Ribbon Strike Force -- Senator Sasser stated that there are currently 16 items under review. The biggest issue related to staff is the leave policy. Ann Spencer addressed the commission, but she is limited, at this point, as to what she can say.

The Task Force is reviewing the input they have received and will have public hearings. As soon as we get dates and times, we will pass them forward.

There was concern that a note had been circulated concerning the Strike Force. The note stated that they had just come from a commission meeting. The note was not signed and no one seemed to know where it came from.

President Stott requested that we not spread rumors. Right now, the 16 items are only ideas and they don't even have a complete proposal yet.

Senator McConnell suggested that when the meeting is reported in the Spectrum, that a statement be included that materials passed by senate or commission will give credit or blame to the senate

or commission and that we do not make a practice of distributing unsigned, unattributed material.

President Stott stated that we need to also get that information to the associations.

New Business

Senator Fuller said the College of Forestry and Wildlife Resources had a meeting with Dennis Eavey concerning evaluations. In the upcoming year, if you get an "exceeds expectation" you do not automatically receive the higher increase.

Senator Stott read a paragraph from the Personnel Communique. The legislature did not fund merit raises even as much as last year. There is training going on now for managers and supervisors. He questions how you can make a valid evaluation tied to pay if you can't come up with the pay.

President Stott suggested that you talk to your supervisors now about your evaluations.

Senator Holliman said that if the new grievance procedure passes, pay issues become a part of the process. At the last meeting, they went over the public hearing responses and there were a lot of good items.

The management responses to the changes in the grievance procedure were almost all negative. They are scared of added paperwork and that a poor manager will be in trouble and will need a support person. They have called a special meeting to try to deal with some of those issues. At least three of those called to the meeting are not managers.

Some of the sponsors of the legislation are saying that they will not support it now because something has been added about protection from "whistleblowers". Senator Holliman suggested that people write Shuler or Marye and let them know you are interested in the new grievance procedures.

President Stott announced that he would be stepping down as president. He has accepted a faculty position in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and as a faculty member, cannot continue as president of the Staff Senate. Wyatt Sasser will assume the presidency. Stott stated that he has confidence in Wyatt.

As his last official act, Stott asked the Executive Committee to stay after the regular meeting to start the process of filling the vice president's position and making any transitions necessary.

He also stated that he has enjoyed his work and association with all the senators. He also hopes that he has been able to make a contribution. He read a line from Tom Hopkins, motivational guru, that reflected his feelings: "I'll meet the right people, in the right place, at the right time, to the betterment of all." This has been his experience with this group and he hoped that it was the same

for all us.

Senator Dellers stated that change is a slow, educational process, and she is delighted to think that we have someone going on to the other part of this university who will continue to nurture that seed of change.

Meeting adjourned at 7:06 PM.