

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY  
STAFF SENATE

Minutes of the Regular Meeting  
Thursday, October 19, 1995  
Room 102, Phase II, Vet Medicine

Senators Present: Spencer Allen, Shelia Blankenship, Joyce Bohr, Phoebe Crofts, Judy Davis, Betsy Davis-Jones, Marge Dellers, Debra Duncan, Wanda Grubb, Patti Hall, Cindy Harrison, Delbert Jones, Julia King, Joyce Longrie, Richard Lovegrove, Bhaba Misra, Eileen Moccia, Valerie Myers, Mary Pennington, John Peterson, Bill Ranck, Wyatt Sasser, Widget Shannon, Karla Soukup, Tony Sutphin, Virginia Viers, and John Wooge.

Alternates and Guests Present: Danny Belcher for Billie Cline, Barbara Hise for Matt Gart, Netta Smith for Tom Hergert and for Spectrum, Shari Settle and Larry Moore, guest speaker.

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. by President Sasser. Sasser introduced the guest speaker, Dr. Larry Moore, department head in Plant Pathology, Physiology, and Weed Science, who gave us an overview of shared governance and the Senate's role in shared governance. The idea of shared governance came out of the University's self-study that was done in 1988 which pointed out the importance of having the classified staff, professional and administrative faculty, graduate students, and others represented in the governance system. Under Dr. McComas' leadership, the University worked towards having a shared system where everyone would work together for the benefit of the whole group. On July 1, 1992, the Board of Visitors approved the Staff Senate Constitution which brought staff into shared governance. He explained that before that time, staff had not been represented on any committee or commission, nor was there a Commission of Classified Staff Affairs. Moore explained that all items of policy are developed and set forth in the commissions through the University Council and the process through which policy changes occur. He also explained that each commission and committee has complete representation of each governance group. Moore expressed the importance of staff continuing to be actively involved in the governance system by their serving on different committees or commissions, which is where decisions and policies are made. Moore took the members through the steps of academic policy changes. He explained that the change or policy came from any of the following: college commission/committee/associations, Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, Graduate Student Assembly, Student Government Association, a university standing committee or a member of University Council to the appropriate university commission which prepares a resolution and passes it on to University Council for approval. When approved, they forward it on to the president who then forwards the change on to the Board of Visitors for their final approval.

He strongly encouraged each member to become actively involved in the commission they serve on because it is through that commission that policy is made. Members are actually the "watch dogs" of the University and should not take their responsibilities lightly.

Moore then opened the floor for questions. Senator Shannon asked at what point does the president of the university have the right to make a decision without going through the proper commission. Moore responded that the president has absolute control. He also pointed out that for as long

as he has been at the University he has never known a president to not take the recommendation or vote of the University Council. Senator Sutphin asked Moore what he recommended to help people get involved. Moore responded by saying that the classified staff needs to sell shared governance to their supervisors and to also sell shared governance to other staff members who are not involved. Several different avenues that could be used are one-on-one interaction and persuasion through the university president and deans. President Sasser asked what role do staff associations play in shared governance. Moore answered that they play a very important role. They are the "feeder" group into the Senate. Senator Harrison asked if a brochure printed by the Staff Senate might be helpful to educate the local associations. Sasser commented that this might be a very useful tool. Senator Davis inquired if there is a written rule that addresses when associations, Staff Senate committees, or University committees must meet. Moore responded that he would take that question to the Commission on Classified Staff Affairs and ask them to report back about this issue.

President Sasser thanked Larry Moore for sharing his information on shared governance. In announcements, Sasser reported that he had received the university restructuring report that was sent to SCHEV. Spectrum will print the e-mail address where an electronic copy of the report will be available. Sasser also announced that on October 24 from 8:30-2:30PM in Squires Student Center, there will be a Commonwealth Benefits Fair. He encouraged members to attend. Sasser extended his appreciation to the Business Affairs Staff Association for getting the U.S. Postal Service to place a postal box near Southgate for Virginia Tech employee's outgoing personal mail. Sasser also pointed out that there is a University policy in place which prohibits Virginia Tech employees from placing their personal mail into campus mail.

The September 21, 1995 minutes were then approved with corrections.

Sasser then called for Senate Standing Committee Reports. Senator Davis reported that the Elections & Nominations Committee met on October 10 to assemble the fall mail-out. Davis encouraged the members to complete the report asking for nominations for University Councils, Commissions, and Committees and send back to her by November 30.

Senator Longrie reported that the McComas Leadership Seminar Committee had its first organizational meeting on September 27. They are in the process of planning next year's seminar.

Senator Dellers thanked the Committee for their attendance at the focus group meeting and last month's meeting.

Sasser then called for reports from the University Council, Commission, or Committee. Senator Misra reported that University Council clarified that students could chair a University Commission. Misra also reported that the Commission on Student Affairs is drafting a resolution to change the University Council's constitution and bylaws to have a student chair the commission. He reported that there is not a lot of support for the passing of this resolution at University Council. Senator Davis reported that the chair of the Commission on Student Affairs gave the commission the impression that it was accepted pretty well when it was taken forward. The deans have promoted the resolution. Misra reported that he thought that their concern was they don't want students directing faculty members.

There was then discussion about the October 23 report from the Employee Benefits Committee. Senator Belcher reported that the Employee Benefit Committee will meet on October 23, 1995. President Sasser reported that the Commission on Classified Staff Affairs has forwarded a request to the Employee Benefit Committee to review the possibility of the University providing wage employees with affordable health insurance. He stated that it is not expected that the University co-pay on premiums but through the buying power of Virginia Tech that they will try to make affordable insurance available to those who would want health insurance.

Senator Shannon announced that she has been elected chair of the Transportation/Parking Committee.

President Sasser gave a brief report on the Advisory Council-Strategic Budgeting & Planning held a four-hour seminar on how to develop a focus and direction for the University. The Advisory Council is developing criteria for selective allocation of funds and how to deal with programs that may or may not be strongly supported. He reported that the Rector of the Board of Visitors has asked Dr. Torgersen for our restructuring plan revisited before next year. The Advisory Council-Strategic Budget and Planning committee must have a completed plan by the end of February to give the Board ample time to act on the plan before the end of the Rector's term. Sasser reported that it will have an impact on how the University proceeds in the next three or four years.

Under Old Business, President Sasser asked for comments from the membership concerning the possibility of closing Spring Road. Senator Shannon commented that the Transportation/Parking Committee discussed this possibility. She also solicited comments from her staff association and will submit them to President Sasser. Senator Ranck commented that the closing of Spring Road will directly affect him. He stated that it would make his commute longer and believes it will make it harder getting onto campus from outlying areas. Ranck also expressed concern about the Buildings and Grounds vehicles having to go through neighborhoods to get to their destination. There were concerns that closing Spring Road could possibly cost emergency vehicles critical response time. Sasser commented that closing Spring Road would impact the operational cost (gasoline and time) of Physical Plant. One senator pointed out that if Spring Road is closed, it would increase the traffic on the Plantation Road area. After lengthy discussion it was decided that the comments made at the meeting along with the written comments received from Senator Shannon or others would be forwarded on to the appropriate individual.

President Sasser then turned the meeting over to Senator Davis who presented the slate of nominations for Vice President and opened the floor for nominations. Those who were nominated were Senator Valerie Myers and Senator Chuck Shorter. There were no nominations from the floor and after voting, Senator Myers was elected Vice President of Staff Senate.

Under New Business, one senator commented that events from staff participation seemed to be scheduled without thought of what staff activities are going on at that time. In particular, the Commonwealth and Benefits Fair which was scheduled on the last day for students to turn in their opscans for registration for Spring 1996 semester. It is virtually impossible for some staff members to participate during "peak" times. Senator Dellers suggested that Senate draft a letter and send to Bridget

Mitchell asking that she consult the University and student calendars when scheduling events which might conflict with staff activities. President Sasser will compose a letter expressing the concerns and send it to Bridget Mitchell.

President Sasser reported that he received a letter from Dr. Torgersen asking for a staff member to serve on the President's Award for Excellence committee. Senator Sutphin was nominated and elected to serve on this committee.

A senator asked if there was any truth in the University being closed during the Christmas holidays and staff being asked to be on leave-without-pay status. President Sasser responded that at this point it is a rumor and nothing official has been received concerning which days the Governor is granting besides Christmas day.

President Sasser reported that the Commission on Classified Staff Affairs forward to the EOAA Committee a request that they review the sexual harassment e-mail policy. He received a note back from Elizabeth Holford, Director of EOAA and a member of the committee, which stated that the sexual harassment policy, even though it does not say specifically about e-mail, that it deals with being sexually harassed and doesn't need to be identified how it is done but if it is done, then it is covered under the policy. Senator Sutphin reported that the individual who had sent the e-mail note has been severely punished and the issue has been resolved.

There being no further business, Staff Senate was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Patti Hall, Staff Senate Secretary