

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY  
STAFF SENATE

Minutes of the Regular Meeting  
Thursday, November 16, 1995  
Room 102, Phase II, Vet Medicine

Senators Present: Joyce Bohr, Phoebe Crofts, Judy Davis, Marge Dellers, Debra Duncan, Sandy Graham, Wanda Grubb, Patti Hall, Tom Hergert, Richard Lovegrove, Eileen Moccia, Valerie Myers, Mary Pennington, John Peterson, Ben Poe, Wyatt Sasser, Widget Shannon, Chuck Shorter, Tony Sutphin, Virginia Viers, and Jon Wooge.

Alternates and Guests Present: Nancy Gruber for Cindy Harrison, Sherri Settle for Delbert Jones, Ted Leinhardt for Bhaba Misra, Milko Maykowskyj, Tom Susano for Karla Soakup, Netta Smith for Spectrum, Janet Wimmer, Mary Whitlock, and Allison Blake for Roanoke Times.

The meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m. by President Sasser. Sasser introduced the guest speaker, Dr. Paul Torgersen, President of Virginia Tech. Torgersen started his presentation by giving an overview of the 1990-1995 plan for the University which he stated lacked foresight because at that time it was difficult to predict the budget reductions the University was forced to face. He also stated that because resources were intended to flow as they had in the past, the plan was in favor of everything. He continued by explaining that Rector Garvin mandated that the University prepare a new plan for the time period 1996-2000 and submit it to him in draft or semi-final form by February 1996 so it could be approved at their April 1996 meeting. Torgersen stated that the University is working on that plan now. The items which are being addressed are: what is the university in terms of focus? Should it be more narrowly focused or should we continue to address curricula across the whole spectrum of the university? He said that Gordon Davies recommended that the University think of itself as part of a system of higher education and focus more on the traditional strengths of the University. Torgersen said that this plan would have to happen rather quickly.

Torgersen then moved on to talk about the College of Education. He gave a brief background about the budget reductions and the College of Education. He stated that about two years ago, the College of Education was asked, by then Provost Carlisle, to bring their focus back to the initial intent of the College and to do so by reducing their operating monies by two percent (about 1.6 million dollars). He stated that in the initial charge to the College, Provost Carlisle said he wanted the College to also give very serious consideration to merging with another college. Torgersen said that about a year ago, a letter went out to the College expressing the idea of merging with another college. He went on to say that as part of the 1996-2000 planning some organizational changes were considered, and he has been looking at the merging of the College of Education into another college for about two months. He believes that this merging would save the University in operating costs and would allow the faculty to be integrated into the University to profit the University instead of school systems only. Torgersen went on to say that he spoke with Provost Peggy Meszaros, and she is in agreement with this merger. He explained that the next question was how would this decision be announced. He spoke with Dean Wayne Worner about the announcement. Torgersen expressed that the next appropriate step might have been to talk with some faculty in the College

of Education, particularly their executive committee and their faculty organization. He indicated that because of the meeting of the search committee appointed to look for a dean to replace Worner was scheduled to meet in the very near future and it would not be fair to ask the search committee to begin their search for a dean when one wasn't going to be needed, the decision was made to put the search committee on hold. Torgersen stated that these circumstances made him move more quickly than he would have liked and that he did not want to be dishonest with the search committee. Torgersen and Meszaros spoke with the academic deans informing them of the change, and he sent a letter to the faculty in the College of Education announcing that they would like to see the merger and that Meszaros would chair a committee which would decide how best to define the existing units and where these units would logically fit into the larger university. He stated that the letter stated very specifically that no one would lose employment with the University, no one would lose their jobs, no students would be affected in the sense that there will continue to be degree programs and courses, and that nothing would change. What is really changing is an administrative unit called the "Dean's Office" and basically taking two departments and placing them in other areas. Torgersen went on to say that Meszaros' committee is to come to a recommendation and resolution by mid-January. He commented that he has checked this merge with the director of the State Council of Higher Education and Secretary of Education and they fully agree with this move. The Board of Visitors also endorsed the change. Torgersen stated that the "error" that he made is not having the time to alert some of the "key" faculty in the College of Education before making the public announcement.

Torgersen then opened the floor for questions. Senator Sasser has heard several concerns, one being the loss of identity for the College of Education would lose and the other being the lack of shared governance playing a part in the decision. Sasser asked Torgersen to respond to these issues. Torgersen stated that the College of Education would not lose its identity by moving into another college as a department. He said that departments can have pride in what they do, and he indicated that it was the change that was causing the "hurt." He went on to explain that what really establishes the quality of a program is the students, the courses that are being taught and the faculty and not the administrative structure. On the shared governance part of the question, he responded by saying that the president and provost have the authority to make these types of administrative decisions and that the Board of Visitors ultimately has the final authority to approve the change--which they did.

Senator Pennington asked how those in the dean's office of the College of Education would be affected. Torgersen responded by saying that no one would lose their job or salary or grade. He said that he is totally committed to making sure that everyone has a challenging and professional position this time next year within the University.

Pennington asked if those who are being relocated will have an input in where they are placed, and what process is going to be used in helping them relocate. Torgersen responded yes. He said that he doubted that any physical change would occur until the end of June. He also said that he didn't know where those individuals would be working but once again, he explained that he is committed to not just finding a job for those individuals but to find a job that those employees find interesting.

Pennington asked what happens to those staff members who are on restricted

positions. Torgersen asked where this money comes from. Pennington responded that it came from their overhead monies. Torgersen responded that the funding would stop. He also said that he would do everything he could to make sure that no one lost their job. He asked Pennington to send him the names of people who send questions for him to respond to and to send him the name of the person who is on the restricted position. Pennington responded that she would be glad to send him the information.

Senator Sasser asked if there is any structure or process in place to make the change. Torgersen responded that Provost Meszaros will meet with the College of Education executive committee of the faculty organization and hopefully some staff to draft a transition process to make this move possible. Once this has been laid out, there would be time between January 15 and June 30 to "fine tune" the details.

Senator Hergert asked Torgersen to give his own personal view between entrepreneurial (i.e. individual departments and faculty) and "wall-building" initiatives within the University and shared governance (i.e. working together) and cooperative initiatives in the University. Torgersen responded that administrative decisions must be made by administrators and the elimination of a college is an administrative decision. He continued to explain that an administrative decision is one that has no impact on faculty, students, degree programs, course content, curriculum matters, etc.

Hergert questioned if this decision had no impact on those matters. Torgersen responded that the impact was in the loss of pride, which he hopes will be short-lived. He continued that he had studied programs across Virginia and found that there are thirteen public universities and twenty private universities that offer something in education. He went on to say that only two of those outside of Tech are Colleges of Education.

Another senator asked if Torgersen had any suggestions as to where the College of Education should go. He responded that he wanted the faculty on the committee to decide where it is that they would like to go.

Senator Lovegrove asked about the Board of Visitors' recommendation that faculty receive a 6% raise and if there is a similar effort by the University for classified staff. Torgersen responded that all the Board of Visitors did was endorse a recommendation that was made by the State Council of Higher Education. He said that the bottom line is whether the Governor will allocate the funds and what the revenue stream and economy looks like. He stated that he believed that higher education, in the General Assembly, has real supporters.

Senator Shannon asked if there was any plans in the near future to put the College of Forestry back into the College of Agriculture. Torgersen responded that not at this time and that there is only one College of Forestry in Virginia.

Senator Shorter asked when Torgersen foresees the positions lost to WTAs restored, if at all. Torgersen said that the University is still in the process of paying for those people who took WTA. He indicated that he thought some of them would come back and he does not think the University can continue to operate at the level it is operating at now. He went on to explain that for his tenure at this university, he has never seen people working as hard as they are now and believes they cannot continue at this

pace.

Senator Sasser said he had heard a rumor about another buy-out. Torgersen responded that he has not heard anything about this.

Senator Moccia asked if there are any plans to move Alumni Relations into another department. Torgersen said no immediate plans at this time and went on to explain that they are a separate entity. They have their own Board of Directors, help raise money for the University and do recruiting events.

Another senator asked about the rumor going around about privatizing some aspects of the University. Torgersen responded that there are some individuals in Richmond which are encouraging privatization but indicated that he did not know what was going to happen in that area. Another senator asked about the purpose of privatization. Torgersen responded that it would save money and run things more efficiently. He said that the Minnis Ridenour is the person in the University to discuss this with. Senator Hergert asked what types of things could be privatized. Torgersen commented that food service and the operation of the dormitories could be privatized.

Guest Mary Whitlock expressed that as a taxpayer, she was concerned with why the University allowed the College of Education to go through with the restructuring activities which cost time, money and energy. Torgersen commented that he did not think that the restructuring plan that the College put together would be effected by this administrative change. He went on to comment that when the College was initially charged with these restructuring activities, they were charged to look into merging with another college. He said that he was sorry for the hurt and the person he felt most sorry for Dean Worner. He indicated that he felt like there were faculty and staff within the College of Education who thought that Worner could have done something to change this decision.

Alternate Maykowskyj, who works as a 1500 hour wage employee, asked about the purpose of the 1500 hour limitation since once the hours are worked, the employee is permitted to draw unemployment. Torgersen responded that the University uses wage employees to get jobs done that do not require full-time salaried individuals. He said that this was a more economical way of getting work done. Torgersen also said that he did not agree with this type of employment which he believes is wrong. He went on to explain that with downsizing, more and more businesses are employing more wage employees and he is sorry that the University is doing this.

Senator Hergert asked if the decentralization plan would change the 1500 hour wage limit. Torgersen said that it might.

Senator Shorter asked if privatization would promote this type of attitude. Torgersen responded that he hoped not and would like to think that the University would play an active role in this process. Another senator asked how Torgersen believed this could be changed. Torgersen responded that the University needed more money.

Sasser then thanked President Torgersen for coming to the senate meeting and discussing these issues.

The October 19, 1995 minutes were then approved as written.

Sasser then called for Senate Standing Committee Reports. Senator Hergert reported that the Communications Committee met and agreed that there was a need for a Senate home page. He also reported that the committee was working on a reference handbook for senators and alternates concerning their roles in shared governance. Another item of business for the committee was the Staff Senate Office and how it should be run.

Senator Davis reported that the Elections and Nominations Committee met on November 7 and reminded the membership that the forms the committee sent to each senator, alternate and staff association officers are due back to her by the end of November. Davis reported that the staff association officers will meet on Monday, November 20 at noon in 400 Burruss Hall. All were encouraged to attend.

Senator Hall reported that the McComas Leadership Committee met on October 25 to start planning the next seminar. Some possible speakers included Richard Harshberger, Richard Alvarez, Larry Moore and Brian Warren. Members are checking on the availability of these individuals. Hall reported that the possible dates for the seminar are Friday, March 22, Friday, March 29 or Friday, April 5.

Senator Dellers reported that the Policies and Issues Committee had not met yet. They are scheduled to meet on Tuesday, November 21.

Under University Council, Commission & Committee Reports, Senator Davis reported that the President of the Graduate Student Association was elected chair of the Commission on Student Affairs.

Senator Shannon reported that the minutes of the last Transportation/Parking Committee were distributed and that the parking meters in front of the University Bookstore were now open for free parking at 5:00PM instead of 7:00PM.

Under Old Business, Sasser asked Senator Dellers to report on the Staff Senate Office. Dellers reported that those who are involved in getting the Staff Senate office up and running met to evaluate the status of the office. It was decided that the office lock would be rekeyed with keys going to the president and secretary and a permanent one left in Ann Spencer's office for authorized use. Dellers reported that it was agreed that the office is sufficiently organized and for the time being the need for a work study person does not exist but that the secretary needed a work study for three hours a month to help copy and disseminate the Senate packet to senators and alternates. Dellers reported that it was requested that Senate members cover the office during lunch hours (12-1:00PM) on Mondays and Thursdays until March 15, 1996 at which time this process would be re-evaluated. Dellers asked for at least seven Senate volunteers to cover the lunch hour every two weeks. Those who will volunteer please contact Marge at dellersm@vt.edu, Patti Hall at hallpb@vt.edu or Valerie Myers at vamyers@vt.edu. Dellers reported that there will be a short orientation/training session for these volunteers. Dellers reported that it was decided that the secretary would check the office phone for messages once a day and refer the calls to the appropriate area. If there is a problem rather than a question, the secretary will refer the call to the appropriate office and notify the President of Staff Senate of the call. The secretary will check the computer mail in the same manner.

Sasser asked that the secretary send an e-mail notice to all senators and alternates asking for volunteers for the Staff Senate office lunch hours.

Under New Business Sasser reminded members of the Faculty Senate sponsored Open Forum Meeting on December 7 with Minnis Ridenour being the featured individual. He reported that he attended the meeting with Dr. Torgersen and the major focus was the College of Education.

Sasser reported that he had been asked to find a better way for senators and alternates to receive deans, directors and department heads memos because of the ever changing Senate membership. It was decided that all the senators and alternates currently on the deans, directors, and department heads list be deleted and be replaced with the Senate officers. Once a deans, directors and department heads memo is received by the Secretary, it would then be forwarded to the entire Senate membership. It was decided that this process would be a cleaner way of handling this information since usually the secretary knows the current members. Senator Shannon asked that a standing item be placed on the agenda asking for any senator or alternate changes. Sasser responded that this was a good idea and would place it on the next agenda as a standing item.

Sasser reported on the holiday schedules which are one-half day on Wednesday, November 22 for Thanksgiving, one-half day on Friday, December 22, full day on Monday, December 25 and 26, and one additional day to be taken between December 27 and January 2. He said that if these days are not taken, they will be used as compensatory days like other designated holidays.

In other new business, Sasser reported he had spoken with Pam Orcutt concerning the locked Vet Medicine doors and Staff Senate. She indicated that because of budget cuts, they no longer have a lock-up staff and are now closing and locking the doors at 5PM everyday but that the doors to the animal hospital were kept open all the time. Sasser reported that Senate members could enter in those doors and turn to the left, go through the double doors which will lead them into the hallway where Room 102 is located.

Sasser then opened the floor for discussing an issue brought forward about the way decisions have been made concerning the College of Education and decisions in general. Senator Hergert commented that he is concerned that the decisions have been made by administration without going through the governance system or any input from others in the University. He questioned that if decisions are going to be made without consulting the shared governance system, is Staff Senate and other shared governance bodies just wasting their time. Sasser commented that what concerns him is the role of shared governance and does shared governance really serve a viable purpose. Sasser went on to say that who makes decisions, he believes, is part of this and that it is very vital that shared governance exist and that it survives. There was much discussion about the way decisions, whether administrative or not, are made. Senator Shorter made a suggestion to ask Minnis Ridenour to a senate meeting to discuss the