

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
STAFF SENATE

Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Thursday, March 21, 1996
Room 102, Phase II, Vet Medicine

Senators Present: Spencer Allen, Billie Cline, JoAnn Craven, Phoebe Crofts, Judy Davis, Marge Dellers, Debra Duncan, Matt Gart, Sandy Graham, Wanda Grubb, Patti Hall, Tom Hergert, Delbert Jones, Adelene Kirby, Dee Lee, Joyce Longrie, Richard Lovegrove, Bhaba Misra, Eileen Moccia, Valerie Myers, Mary Pennington, Ben Poe, Bill Ranck, Wyatt Sasser, Widget Shannon, Chuck Shorter, Tony Sutphin, Virginia Viers and John Wooge.

Alternates and Guests Present: Charles Goodsell, representative from Faculty Senate, Spencer Foster, Nancy Gruber for Cindy Harrison, Virginia Gurdy, Brenda Husser, Ted Leinhardt, Tom Sherman, President of Faculty Senate, Tom Susano for Karla Soukup, Vivian Rich, Sherri Settle, Netta Smith for Spectrum, and Janet Wimmer.

The meeting was called to order at 5:35pm by President Wyatt Sasser. Sasser welcomed the senators and alternates to the meeting. He announced that Secretary Hall will be leaving Staff Senate effective on March 21. Sasser thanked her for her dedication, input and the work she has done for the Senate. Sasser then introduced the guest speakers, Tom Sherman, President of Faculty Senate and Charles Goodsell, representative from the Faculty Senate. Before turning the meeting over to Sherman, Sasser explained that he did not believe that the proposed Assembly representative numbers will stand as proposed. He explained that there had been a lot of discussion concerning the numbers and Goodsell and his working group were aware of the concerns. Sasser expressed that he was for a change in the governance system at Virginia Tech. He went on to explain that for the past two months, the Staff Senate has not had a quorum. Sasser said that he did not think it was because staff was not concerned with the issues but that each and every staff member has more to do now because of the decrease in staff members without the work load decreasing. He expressed that there needs to be a governance system which represents classified staff fairly but is also effective and efficient in what it does.

After Sasser's introduction, Tom Sherman gave a brief overview of the proposed "Assembly" which the Faculty Senate has initiated. He explained that the Faculty Senate decided that a change was needed to the current governance system. This change should allow the process to become more effective and efficient. In pursuing that goal, a work group was formed to look at how to make changes and what changes needed to be made to the current governance system. He went on to explain that Charles Goodsell is the leader of that work group. Sherman explained that this process was an inclusive process, not an exclusive process. The work group believes it is very important to get the input and representation from each group on campus. He went on to explain that the proposed "Assembly" would be purposeful, to set an agenda and work ahead, rather than always responding to issues which affect the different governance bodies. He then turned the meeting over to Charles Goodsell who gave a brief overview of the details for the proposed Assembly.

Goodsell explained that he was placed into the work group because he expressed concern about the "slow and ineffectual" process the current

governance system has and the fact that it did not appear to have any impact on anything. He expressed that the meetings were very long, boring and tedious and attendance was down. The work group decided that the problems went beyond the Faculty Senate to the larger system of governance in the University. They decided that they needed to look at very basic changes because just minor changes would not help. At this time, the work group is talking with the different governance bodies to get their input into the proposal. He then opened the floor for questions.

Senator Misra asked about the difference in charge between the old system and the proposed new system. Goodsell responded by saying that the charge would probably remain the same unless the President or Board of Visitors decided to change that in some way. He also said that there will be a change in structure to one body which would promote better communication.

Senator Moccia then asked for feedback from the Staff Senate about this change. She asked if there really needs to be a change. Senator Lovegrove expressed that he believes there does need to be a change. He went on to say that the current governance system does not promote communication and it also is so big and complex that not all those who are involved know what is going on at any given time. Lovegrove expressed that he was not completely sure that the proposed Assembly was the answer, but it could possibly be.

Senator Lee asked how the numbers for representation were determined and did anyone know the faculty/staff ratio at Virginia Tech. She expressed concern over the representation of staff. Senator Hergert responded that there are 2,449 full-time faculty members and 109 part-time faculty members and 2,864 full-time staff members, 67 part-time staff members and more than 4,000 wage staff members. Goodsell responded by saying that the work group is aware of the inequities in the current rough draft. He also said that he had heard this same concern from the Staff Senate Executive Board, and he immediately saw what the group was trying to point out. Goodsell expressed that he believes that the numbers need to be changed but he will take this information back to the work group which will have to work on a system of equities. Sherman responded that clearly the proportions are unfair. One issue to resolve, however, is the size of the Assembly. He cautioned that it should not be as large as the governance system is now because it would not be changing anything at all. Another issue to resolve, he explained, is how representatives are chosen.

Senator Shorter questioned if there really are common interests among faculty and staff. Sherman responded that this idea of a one body governance system presents a real different way of working in the type of community that now exists rather than building on special interest groups. He expressed that our common interest is the same, which is to educate students, to discover new information and ideas and communicate this information, and to serve. Sherman also expressed that we need to speak as one voice on issues that affect either faculty or staff. Goodsell expressed that there could be different committees or sub-committees that would concentrate their time on issues that affected either faculty or staff.

Senator Misra asked if there had been any discussion concerning the Assembly meeting for the full 12 months like Staff Senate currently does. Goodsell responded that, yes the Assembly would have to meet year round in order to get the necessary work done.

Senator Sutphin asked if anyone had looked into how this change affects the

current Constitution and wouldn't a change like this have to be approved by the Board of Visitors. Sutphin expressed also that he has served on the Commission on Classified Staff Affairs for the past three years and would hate to see this commission dissolved because it has been a very hard-working, dedicated group which has made significant changes for classified staff. Goodsell responded that he understood how Sutphin felt and said that there might be a counterpart committee similar to the Commission on Classified Staff Affairs which could pick up the duties. He also responded that he did not know whether or not the Board of Visitors would have to "legally" approve this new Assembly and it is true that the BOV could refuse to accept this new governance structure.

Senator Ranck made a suggestion that maybe the faculty representation system could be different than the staff representation since faculty usually are in the colleges of the University and staff are not restricted to colleges but also are working in administrative and other areas. Goodsell responded that it might be a feasible way to handle the different areas of representation.

Senator Shannon expressed that she is concerned about representation from the administrative areas and that some committees that are currently in the governance system are not being represented (i.e. the Transportation and Parking Committee). Goodsell responded by saying that this was an oversight on the part of the working committee and that it was not intentional.

Senator Hergert said that he believed that if this change was to take place that there are two challenges. One is the external component and the other being the internal component. He expressed that the University needs a governance system with teeth in order to make a difference. He suggested that the work group make the document do something and to look at the details before presenting it to the President and Board of Visitors for approval. Sherman responded that the whole idea of the Assembly is to allow faculty and staff to act intentionally instead of reacting only to decisions which have been made. This Assembly would allow these two groups to work and act together as one voice.

Spencer Foster expressed a concern about the overtone of "us vs. them" with them meaning the administration. He asked about the plans to get input from the administration. Goodsell responded by saying that there are plans to get input from the administration and that the work group will meet with administrators to get their feedback concerning the Assembly. Senator Misra expressed his thanks to the Faculty Senate for taking the initiative in preparing the rough draft and expressed that maybe one way to get administrative input would be to have administrative members on committees instead of serving on the Assembly. Goodsell responded by saying that as a public university, this approach would not be appropriate.

Senator Dellers asked the work group to continue looking at the proposed Assembly and to include staff members in their discussions and during the re-writing process. Goodsell responded that President Sasser and Vice President Myers are going to be included in the work group sessions to give input from the staff.

Sherman reminded staff members of the upcoming Faculty/Staff sponsored forum on March 27 from 12-1PM in 341-345 Squires. This forum features Dr. Torgersen. Sasser then thanked both Tom Sherman and Charles Goodsell for coming to speak to Senate on this issue.

The minutes from February 15, 1996 were then approved with corrections.

Senate Standing Committee Reports:

Communications Committee - no report

Elections and Nominations Committee - Senator Davis reported that the minutes from the February 6, 1996 meeting are on the table.

McComas Leadership Seminar Committee - Senator Longrie reported that the flyers for the seminar have gone out and should be returned to Vicky Jo Duncan by the deadline date.

Policies and Issues Committee - Senator Dellers reported that the committee met March 19. The discussion revolved around the Faculty Senate's proposal for an assembly.

University Council, Commission, Committee Reports:

Senator Shannon reported that the Transportation and Parking Committee met on March 21. The items discussed were parking at rental properties. The question was whether or not an employee should have to pay the parking fee to park there or not. She said that those University employees who work at the ISB Building should be purchasing a staff parking pass because Virginia Tech does provide services to that parking lot. However, she reported that the policy is not quite clear concerning other rental properties. Shannon asked that senators and alternates send their comments and suggestions to her.

Sasser reported that at the Advisory Council-Strategic Budgeting and Planning meeting he received a copy of the new budget. Basically, there is money set aside for faculty raises in agency 208 and 229, monies that are going to be provided for staff raises, and the University basically received more money this year than was received last year. He reported that copies of the new budget are on the table with the agenda packet. Sasser also reported that a copy of the new pay increases are available on the table. He reported that beginning December 1996, classified staff will get a 4.35% raise, broken down to 2.05% being a scale shift and 2.25% being a step increase. He also reported that the General Assembly passed that all University personnel should have their pay periods shifted to be more in line with private industry. This would mean that an employee would work through one pay period and then get paid the following pay period. In order for the General Assembly to do this, they decided they would slide the pay dates. A copy of this is available on the table for your review. Netta Smith reported that she is checking into seeing how this affects wage employees and reported that as soon as she got information, it would be published in the Spectrum.

Under Old Business, Senator Davis reported that at the April meeting, candidates for Staff Senator officers will introduce themselves and their biographies will be available then. She asked that each senator let her know when their staff association has conducted their elections and the results of them. She then opened the floor for nominations for:

President - Adelene Kirby is on slate. No nominations from the floor were made.

Vice President - Valerie Myers is on slate. No nominations from the floor were made.

Secretary/Treasurer - currently no one is on the slate. No nominations from the floor were made.

Parliamentarian - Delbert Jones is on the slate. No nominations from the floor were made. Nominations were then closed.

Under New Business, Sasser announced that he needed volunteers to serve on the Airport Committee, Donaldson Brown Renovation Committee, and the Cochrane Dining Hall Committee. All names should be sent to him. He also reported that a workshop on sexism is planned for April 1 from 2-4PM. Sasser reported that Representative Shuler will meet with the College of Agricultural Classified Staff Association on Tuesday, March 26 from 12-1PM in 1810 Litton-Reeves.

Concerning lack of attendance, Senator Shorter asked if the bylaws of the Senate addressed attendance at Staff Senate meetings. Senator Myers responded that the bylaws said that if a senator misses three consecutive meetings that they were no longer considered a senator. Senator Sutphin expressed that maybe the associations should be held accountable and maybe there could be a letter sent from the President to the staff association presidents when their senators do not attend meetings. Alternate Susano asked if there is a correlation between the management styles or work environment and staff involvement. Sasser responded that he did not think there was a correlation.

Senator Sutphin reported that more than half of the nominees for the President's Award for Excellence were either current or former Staff Senators or Alternates.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:40PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Patti Hall, Secretary
Staff Senate