

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
STAFF SENATE
1810 Litton Reaves
Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Thursday, February 19, 1998

Senators Present: Spencer Allen, Mary Conrad, Reba Crawford, Jack Davis, Barbara Day, Judy Fielder, Cindy Harrison, Delbert Jones, Nancy Phillips, Tina Shanklin, Jennifer Simba, Joy Thorn, Jon Wooge

Alternates: Jeanie Baker voting for Joyce Longrie, Jill Elswick voting for Tom Hergert, Rebecca Barlow, Billie Cline

Excused: Janet Francis, Matt Gart, Tom Hergert, Terry Lawrence, Joyce Longrie, Ben Poe, Peggy Rasnick, Charles Rose, Janet Town, Virginia Viers

The meeting was called to order at 5:40 PM

Approval of Minutes for the November 20, 1997, meeting was postponed due to lack of a quorum. Approval will be attempted via E-mail. Note: UPDATE: We have 29 Senators on roster. The secretary had erroneously marked a Senator "absent" that was present, so there were 15 voting members present and there was a quorum.

Announcements:

President Torgersen will be the guest speaker at next month's meeting. Questions and issues should be submitted ahead of time to Spencer Allen by E-mail so that President Torgersen can be better prepared for the meeting.

Nominations for vacancies on the University Councils, Commissions & Committees will be taken from the floor at the March meeting. Introductions of nominees attending and handouts of their biographies will be at the April meeting. Elections will be held at the May meeting. If you know someone who is interested in serving, please submit their name at the March meeting or contact Virginia Viers, vviers@vt.edu, 1-4811, or Jon Wooge, jwooge@vt.edu, 731-0589.

Representatives from Staff Senate are needed to serve on the Staff Appreciation Day Committee. If you are interested, contact Spencer Allen.

McComas Leadership Seminar is set for April 16, 1998, 8:00 –12:00, at Hillcrest Dining Hall. Invited are Staff Senators, Alternates and Staff Association Officers. Speakers will include: Larry Moore, Linda Woodard, Peggy Meszaros, and Wayne Worner will serve as Moderator. The Working Title is "Roots to the Future: Staff Senate and Shared Governance, 1988-1998-2008".

The College of Arts and Sciences Staff Association, CASSA, is sponsoring a blood drive to be held March 9, 1998, in the Performing Arts Building parking lot.

All staff will receive something from the "Campaign for Excellence".
Participants are needed.

Guest Speaker Linda Woodard, Director of Personnel Services –

Pay for Performance - She said that Governor Allen proposed two types of pay increases for classified staff employees before he left office: 1) across the board, and 2) incentive based. These proposals have to pass through the legislative process for approval. In a recent Richmond Times Article, Governor Gilmore expressed interest in state employee compensation. In February, representatives from six state agencies talked to the Senate Finance Committee on compensation for classified employees and voiced concerns about pay equity, consistency of funding for increases, competitiveness of state employee pay, and the lack of any reward system. Virginia Tech was one of the agencies represented in this meeting. The need for a redesign of the state pay system was discussed and support for this effort has been included in the Senate version of the Appropriations Act. It appears highly likely that there will be some changes made to the pay system, subject to approval by the 1999 General Assembly. The proposal provides for communications with employees and significant opportunities for agencies to participate in the study.

Health Insurance - Blue Cross/Blue Shield will allow us to continue to use the Montgomery and Pulaski Columbia Hospitals through the current Trigon contract period (Summer, 1999); use of Lewis-Gale in Roanoke is still being evaluated by Trigon and the Department of Personnel and Training. A bill proposing a health insurance plan for graduate assistants and part-time employees is being proposed, but it does not appear that the state will pay any employer portion of the premium. Under the current plan for full-time salaried employees, the cost could be as high as \$200 a month for the single plan and \$500 a month for family coverage. It was not clear whether wage employees would be included in the bill proposing coverage for "part-time" employees, but more information is being sought about their eligibility. (UPDATE - Both Bills, HB1233 and HB741, have been carried over to 1999 so no action will be taken in 1998.)

Guest Speaker Doug Martin, Benefits Manager

Senate Bill 126 - Sickness and Disability Program for State Employees. He explained that this bill was proposed last year and was postponed until this year because of the implementation of lag pay in 1997. This proposed bill affects sick leave, family and personal leave, and short term and long term disability for classified employees and faculty that are members of the Virginia Retirement System. One of the purposes of the bill is to address the needs of new employees whose coverage under current sick leave

policies is often inadequate because they have not had time to accumulate sufficient balances to cover short-term disabilities. Annual leave is not affected by the new leave policy. The new program is totally optional for all full-time salaried employees hired before January 1, 1999, but will be mandatory for classified staff hired after that date. Permanent, part-time salaried employees working at least 20 hours a week as well as full time employees are included. The plan allows for 8-10 days of sick leave and 4-5 days of family and personal leave (depending on your length of service) each year. You are allotted your sick leave allocation when you come to work. The balance of sick leave at the end of the year is not carried forward. At this time you are given a new allotment of 8-10 days. For an extended illness or injury, short-term disability may be used after a waiting period of seven calendar days not to exceed six months. The first five days can consist of sick leave or other leave balances (earned compensatory time or annual leave) or leave without pay depending upon available leave balances. Illness/injury continuing after six months (180 day waiting period) will be switched to long term disability, at the pay rate of 60% of your salary up to age 65. The time spent on long term disability also counts towards your retirement. A board will be formed to develop, implement, and administer the sick leave, short-term disability, and long-term disability benefits programs and policies in accordance with the terms of SB 126. Personnel Services will conduct informational meetings and workshops to help current employees determine whether or not participation in the new system is beneficial for them when more information is available and prior to the enrollment period of January 1, 1999 – March 31, 1999.

Guest speaker Elyzabeth Holford , Director of EOAA

Workgroup on Campus Climate - She has been appointed by the Provost and the President to Chair the newly formed "Workgroup on Campus Climate" which consists of eight people who are to provide a benchmark for Virginia Tech on Diversity. The workgroup has established four stages of work to follow:

- 1) Program Analysis – will consist of a web page questionnaire for any program involved with minorities, to determine which programs are actually working.
- 2)"Climate Analysis- will be a professionally done survey of all faculty and staff to get a feel for the current "environment" on campus. The survey will be about four pages long with 21 questions, but the final wording has not yet been completed. Topics covered by the survey will include for example "types of things that make us uncomfortable". The survey will be a bubble scan type and will be anonymous. Next fall a sample of the student body will also be surveyed. Funds are not available to survey the entire student body. There will be voluntary follow up focus groups to discuss the results, but basically this is a "benchmark" survey to compare future surveys.
- 3) Policy Analysis - will mainly be a comparison of departmental policies.

4) Status Indicator Base - consists of information that has already been collected but is not being utilized due to lack of organization.

Dr. Holford is asking for everyone's cooperation in completing this survey. If you have any suggestions concerning this effort, please contact her at holford@vt.edu.

New Business:

Staff Senate has been pushing for the university to look at tuition/fee waivers for spouses and dependents but funding is not available for it. Staff Senate needs to write a letter stating its commitment to having this issue addressed. A vote of consensus was taken and unanimously approved

Cindy Harrison will give a report on VGEA in the near future.

Cindy Harrison announced the CPS Group (Certified Professional Secretary) sponsored a luncheon seminar at the Donaldson Brown Hotel and Conference Center. There were 45 attendees and 26 would like to pursue the training and degree program to attain this status. There is university backing of this program and more information is available through Personnel Services.

Staff Senate will hold an open forum featuring Joan Dent, VGEA Representative, on Monday, March 23, 1998, at the Donaldson Brown Hotel and Conference Center. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. More information will be sent out.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Joy Thorn, Secretary
Krissie Thrasher, Recorder