

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
STAFF SENATE
1810 Litton Reaves
Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Thursday, April 20, 2000

Senators present: Jeannie Baker, Becky Barlow, Sue Ellen Crocker, Elva Douthat, Jessie Eaves, Janet Francis, Cathy Hansen, Cindy Harrison, Delbert Jones, Jimmy Martin, Ben Poe, Christy Porterfield, Virginia Viers, Debbie Wilson, and Kathryn Young

Alternates present: Geneva Dalton, Terry Lawrence, Suzanne Piovano (representing Judy Fielder), Deb Wilson (representing Harry Biggs)

Excused: Harry Biggs, Judy Fielder, Pam Raines

Guests: Gin McCabb, Wyatt Sasser

The Virginia Tech Staff Senate was called to order by President Delbert Jones at 12-noon.

The minutes of March 16, 2000 were approved electronically.

Cathy Hansen, who is addressing a grievance, is our official recorder today. Cindy Harrison will act as temporary Staff Senate secretary. Senator Hansen called the roll (there were 15 senators, 4 alternates and two guests present; 3 senators excused).

Announcements: President Jones distributed information from the Creed Committee concerning the term, "Ut Prosim." The creed is proposed for use by students at Virginia Tech and is expected to be more meaningful to students. Currently, there are three proposed versions of the creed. President Jones asked that all Senators take the versions back to their departments, distribute the versions, and ask employees to mark the version which has the acronyms they like best. Students/faculty/staff on campus have been asked to choose a version; the results of the voting will be compiled and the version with the highest number of votes will be chosen.

Speaker #1: Terry Lawrence, speaking on the Virginia Tech Staff and Faculty Dependent and Spouse Scholarship Fund, stated that there are two recipients of the first two \$500 scholarships. This scholarship was initiated last year and had been in the works for five years. A concentrated fund raising effort for the scholarship fund was mounted by University Development last year. Lawrence said, "We feel confident that the biggest part of the University is not aware that this scholarship exists." Lawrence had just taken two photographs of the recipients, and within the next week, all classified staff at Virginia Tech should receive a letter from Linda Woodard's office revealing information about the scholarship awards. It is important that news of the fund raising efforts be announced to all employees at Virginia Tech so they will be aware. He stated

that Virginia Tech employees can contribute to the scholarship by payroll deduction or make a lump sum payment; anyone can give, designate what the gift is for, and send the form on to the Development Office. It was suggested that this be put into the Staff Senate newsletter. There will be an article in "The Spectrum." Senator Harrison volunteered to help Terry Lawrence with this publicity.

Speaker #2: Charlotte Waggoner, a safety engineer with Environmental Health and Safety Services, spoke on the Multicultural Fellows Program, established in 1998 as an initiative of the Dean of Students Office, the Political Science Department, and the Office of Multicultural Affairs. She provided an overview of the program and explained how it had affected her life. "The Program is designed to provide a formal mechanism for faculty, administrators and staff to contribute to the University mission of fostering a welcoming community for all," Ms. Waggoner explained. She provided copies of the **Virginia Tech Conductor**, a newsletter designed by the first fellows group, which is published twice per semester. The group meets once per month in the Multicultural Center in Squires Student Center. Anyone wishing to have more information may contact Benjamin Dixon (231-1820) or check out www.multicultural.vt.edu. There is an application process to becoming a member of the Multicultural Fellows Program.

Standing Committees:

Communications Committee - Senator Douthat stated that the Staff Senate newsletter is in the planning stage. The two-minute dialogue for the new employee orientation packet is being used in Personnel's orientation program. Senator Harrison requested any articles of information that staff employees might enjoy reading be forwarded to Jeannie Baker, Patrick Donohoe, Elva Douthat, Jessie Eaves, or Cindy Harrison by May 22.

Elections and Nominations Committee - Senator Barlow introduced candidates to fill vacancies on Committees, Commissions and Councils of the University and distributed biographical information on the candidates. Barlow will get the information on the nominees to those senators and alternates not present. President Jones explained that persons elected will receive a letter from President Steger that will excuse the member from his/her job during working hours in order that they might serve on these assignments. President Jones added, "If there are ever any problems with (your being away from the office to serve), please contact me and this will be rectified." He also requested that certain matters of importance to Staff Senate and which need to be shared with all Senators should be sent to the Staff Senate secretary. This includes approved minutes and important decisions of committees, councils and commissions. Currently, this type of information may be forwarded to canoe@vt.edu.

McComas Leadership Seminar Committee - Senator Eaves has received 44 reservations for the seminar, plus 5 people will be attending from the Radford University's Staff Senate. The Seminar will be held on May 4 from 8am-12noon in Owens Banquet Hall. Attendance is open to Staff Senate senators, alternates, staff association officers, and any other people who might like to know more about staff

governance.

Founders Day - President Jones will present a one-minute speech pledging Staff Senate support to President Steger at Founders Day on April 28, 2000. Jones read his planned remarks, "Dr. Steger, as representative of staff members of Virginia Tech, I wish to congratulate you on becoming the 15th president of Virginia Tech. We wish you good health and keen wisdom in leading our University to continued greatness in the new century. On behalf of the 4000+ staff members, we pledge to you that we will work with you, the faculty and administration and the students to make Virginia Tech the cleanest, best-groomed, best-fed, most efficiently-run and technically-supported campus in America. Best wishes to you and Mrs. Steger." It was suggested that the first time President Jones mentions the university, that he call it by its full name, **Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University**. It was also suggested that he put students first in his list.

Policies and Issues Committee - Senator Martin stated that the Staff Senate has been officially notified that the resolution to change the Staff Senate bylaws so that Staff Senate may make changes to its own bylaws without going through the Board of Visitors has been approved by the President. We now have control over our own bylaws.

Benefits Committee. Senator Viers reported on the Benefits Committee meeting of April 14 and its sub-committees. The sub-committees are studying three policies, one on tuition waiver, one on educational leave, and one on reimbursement. Senator Viers reported that the Governor approved a separation of the **King and Lee/Jackson holidays**, which means an added holiday, not an instead-of holiday (essentially, this will be a 4-day weekend in January). Senator Viers reported a brochure concerning the **new medical insurance plans** is available and was mailed to home addresses of employees. Open-enrollment for medical plans will be in the **month of May**. She also explained that a **long-term care** plan will soon be implemented. The **cash-match program** will have the state's portion doubled as of July 1, 2000, to \$20/pay period if an employee invests \$40/pay period. The maximum of the state match each month is \$40 (\$20 each pay period), which requires a minimum of \$80 in tax-exempt contributions per month. Forms to enroll may be requested from Personnel. **Salary increases:** State employees are scheduled to receive a 3.5% increase as of November 24, 2000. Senator Viers announced that **Terry Lawrence** will represent the Benefits Committee on the VT Faculty and Staff Dependents and Spouse Scholarship Committee; this is a three-year appointment. **Service Awards.** Virginia Tech recognizes its employees with service awards in recognition of years spent at Virginia Tech. A new program from the Commonwealth of Virginia now recognizes cumulative service from all Virginia agencies where an employee may have worked. Any employee interested in a state pin to recognize cumulative years of service may contact Doug Martin.

Senator Harrison requested that anyone who would like to become a member of VGEA or receive the VGEA newsletter, please contact her at canoe@vt.edu. VGEA is the Virginia Governmental Employees Association, which is a legislative group which

lobbies for benefits for state employees.

President Jones informed the Senators that employees are being written up for passing chain letters. Senator Harrison stated that Internal Audit is looking very closely at computer use here at the university. Some employees receiving and saving non-essential emails are overloading their computers. When non-essential mail is not deleted, it can cause a computer to crash. Also, many viruses come in on jokes and other materials where the original sender may be unknown.

The meeting adjourned at 1:20 pm.

NOTE: Next Staff Senate meeting will be May 11, 2000 at 12-noon at 1810 Litton Reaves Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Hansen, Recorder