

STAFF SENATE Minutes
Cascade Room at IVTSCC, Thursday, October 20, 2011
12:00 noon – 1:00 P.M.

Attending: Bonnie Alberts, Susan Archer, Brent Bowden, Jean Brickey, Dan Cook, Joseph Goodman, Lori Greiner, Velva Groover, Amanda Grose, Jennifer Hanratty, Anna Hawthorne, Robena Hughes, Denise Jones, Zerita Montgomery, Steve Myers, Angie Robinson, Wyatt Sasser, Robert Sebeck, Louellen Sharp, David Sindt, Judy Taylor, Sue Teel, Tom Tucker, and Patricia Williams,

Excused: Judy Alford, Hal Irvin, Maxine Lyons, and Jon Wooge.

Opening: Vice President, in the absence of President Maxine Lyons, called the meeting to order at noon.

Announcements: Committee sign-up sheets were passed around with the reminder that EVERY SENATOR is required to serve on at least one standing committee. Velva Groover reported that Jon Wooge is working on updating the Staff Senate roster.

Director of Staffing and Recruiting Curtis Mabry came to this meeting to explain the changes in the Conviction Check Policy. Originally they were required by the types of positions: cash handling, dormitory workers, individuals with office access, and certain departments such as Human Resources. All Vice Presidential areas, all Administrative and Professional Faculty, all staff, and 1500-hour wage staff were added in the fall of 2009. Now conviction checks will be required going forward on all new hires for non-student positions. This change is not retro-active, but will affect current employees when they change into a new job. Only 2,500 conviction checks were run in FY2011, but 3,700 have been run to date in FY2012. Human Resources is staffing up to meet this new employment requirement.

Standing Committee Reports:

Robena Hughes reported that the Commission on Faculty Affairs met October 7 and heard a presentation on Virginia Tech's Long Range Planning Process and progress from Frances Keene. A senator asked that the link for input to the planning process be put on the Staff Senate web page. Here it is as well: <http://blogs/is.vt.edu/longrangeplan/>

Robena also reported on the October 12 meeting of the University Athletics Committee where Head Basketball Coach Pete Hughes was the guest speaker. His program was on "Habitudes, Images that Form Leadership Habits and Attitudes", a program being used to develop leadership.

Program: "Staff and the Future of the University" presented by Senior Vice President and Provost Mark McNamee. Throughout the discussion, he invited us to ask him questions about whatever was on our minds concerning the Long Range Plan and what Dr. Knox will present to senior management.

Dr. McNamee does not expect to see revolutionary change because there is little appetite for growth in terms of undergraduates. The current 23,000 may increase to 24,000 in the next five years. If we grow, what would it take? If we increased by 5,000 students, the increase in money to fund that growth would be in the hundreds of millions. The plan is to support grad student growth, particularly at the PhD level in the STEM-H areas of science, technology, engineering, math, and health. Currently there are 6,000 grad students on the Blacksburg campus plus 1,500 – 2,000 at other locations. Increasing student numbers raises the question of how to use summer time.

Dr. McNamee then addressed ways to cope with the current strains on facility and staffing resources. Current academic calendars are left from days of our agrarian economy. "Head Start" classes for incoming freshmen could be a way to effectively utilize the summer. Perhaps three equally spaced trimesters might ease some of the scheduling issues. When asked about staff morale from doing more without financial increase, he responded that the new plan makes no mention of staff. Faculty salaries are addressed, but not those of staff. Distance Learning has no clear strategy for the near future and is not an emphasis yet.

There is a perceived sense that governance is clumsy. The system requires too long to accomplish movement. Administration is looking into ways to streamline the process and make it easier. One of the suggestions has been that if nothing is passed by the end of spring semester, then it should be carried over into the next year rather than dropping it and starting over again in the fall. University Council may go into hibernation, but business thought won't go away.

Dr. McNamee discusses the misunderstandings about the timeline for the Long Range Plan. The goal of the committee is to produce a "working document" at high levels for the presentation at the March meeting of the Board of Visitors, not a final plan to present to the BOV for approval. March is not the end of the planning process.

Dr. Steger's commission on the future of health sciences on campus reported that there is no support for a new organizational structure or senior management area. The commission recommended partnerships and establishing a Faculty of Health Sciences that will ask individuals to join and provide guidance on opportunities and priorities, new graduate programs, and research emphasis. This faculty would also address such issues as how to grow and what partnerships to form.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Thursday, October 20, in a location yet to be determined. The guest speaker will be John Beach from the CVC Campaign. .

Respectfully submitted,
Susan L. Archer
Senate Secretary