

STAFF SENATE Minutes
Cascades Room at IVTSCC, Thursday, December 15, 2011
12:00 noon – 12:47 P.M.

Attending: Bonnie Alberts, Beth Alley, Susan Archer, Jean Brickey, Dan Cook, Joseph Goodman, Jennifer Hanratty, Anna Hawthorne, Robena Hughes, Maxine Lyons, Dennie Munson, Steve Myers, Karen Nicholson, Louellen Sharp, David Sindt, Judy Taylor, Sue Teel, Tom Tucker, and Ken Wieringo.

Excused: Judy Alford, Lori Greiner, Velva Groover, Shelly Key, and Angie Robinson.

Opening: President Maxine Lyons called the meeting to order at noon. The agenda was adopted, and minutes of the November 17 meeting were read aloud by Secretary Susan Archer. Minutes were approved as read.

Announcements: President Lyons said that she had been asked several times what the Staff Senate will be doing in the wake of the shooting of Officer Derek Crouse. She responded to the questions with a recommendation to make individual contributions to the memorial fund established for the family of Officer Crouse. She also requested volunteers to help man the Staff Senate information table at the April 4, 2012, Hokie Wellness event at Squires Student Center.

President Maxine Lyons presented retiring Jean Brickey a Certificate of Service to the Staff Senate. Jean served for two years as President of the Staff Senate, and was the first Staff Senate representative to the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors.

Program: Cynthia Rutherford, Director, Employee Wellness, was scheduled to be the program for this meeting. When she had not arrived shortly after the meeting was called to order, Hal Irvin, Associate Vice President for Human Resources, telephoned her office and learned that her calendar showed that she was scheduled to conduct a Stress Management program in Burruss Hall. In lieu of the scheduled program, Hal answered questions and followed up on details from the November meeting program about the state proposal to reform the leave

The Human Resources web link set up to record staff responses to the Leave Reform proposal and provide information for the Virginia Tech representative to the Virginia General Assembly received 524 comments. In general, 97% of the responses were not in favor of the proposed changes. The only thing that received a positive response was the combination of all leave types into Paid Time Off (PTO). Opposition to the reduction in leave days was particularly focused on employees with ten or more years of service. Limiting the carry forward amount of leave was opposed by 43% of the respondents. Hal reported a lot of confusion expressed by respondents, particularly because only 20% of all VT employees are not participants in the Virginia Short Term Disability Plan (VSDP). At the Richmond Town Hall meeting, Virginia Tech was the only organization represented that had asked for employee opinions and input prior to the meeting.

When asked about the ultimate outcome Hal Irvin responded that the General Assembly, the state Department of Human Resources Management, and the Governor want some sort of reform, but the form that will take is still undecided. The Joint Legislative and Audit Review Commission (JLARC) suggested that the current defined benefit retirement plan be changed to a defined contribution plan, primarily because of the market volatility. That decision was put off last spring.

Results of the recent campus climate survey indicated that total compensation is marginally competitive. Pay is less than in private sector employment, but benefits and retirement are better. The Governor recently said he has decided to put \$2.1 million into the Virginia Retirement System (VRS). This cash infusion will not make up for what the state has not put in for ten of the past eleven years.

When asked about changes to benefits for University Staff employees, Hal responded that VT does not have to follow the benefit plan of state employees for them. In the past Virginia Tech has chosen to mirror those benefits for University employees, but it is not required. Until the General Assembly makes a firm decision, Hal would not speculate on what VT would do about benefits for University employees.

Tom Tucker asked for a clarification of the proposed change to the VT conviction check policy that will soon come before University Council for approval. All new VT employees, or those individuals changing positions, will be subject to a conviction check. Only student wage employees will be exempt.

Committee Reports: Discussion at the most recent meeting of the Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies raised the issue of the proposed bus terminal in the Perry Street parking lot affecting sensitive equipment in nearby labs. Robena Hughes reported that the Athletics Committee has not met since the last Staff Senate meeting. Commission on Faculty Affairs met November 18, where Patricia Hyer discussed proposed changes to Policy 130130, Faculty Conflicts of Interest and Commitment. The commission also reviewed the edit to the Resolution on Initial Appointment for Extra-Collegiate Library and Extension Faculty on the Continued Appointment Track.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Thursday, January 19, in a location yet to be determined. The guest speaker will be announced at a later date.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan L. Archer
Senate Secretary