

STAFF SENATE Minutes
2420 North End Center, Thursday, June 19, 2014
12:00 noon – 1:00 P.M.

Attending: Bonnie Alberts, Susan Archer, Dan Cook, Lori Greiner, Velva Groover, Anna Hawthorne, Cathy Hill, Albert Moore, Janet Murphy, Alex Parrish, Ashley Roberts, Becky Saylor, Wyatt Sasser, Judy Taylor, Sue Teel, Tom Tucker, Tami Watson, Ken Wieringo, Beverly Williams, and Jon Wooge.

Excused: Bhadra Gunsekera, Robert Sebek, Leslie Thornton-O'Brien

Opening: President Sue Teel called the meeting to order at 12:08 PM. The agenda was adopted. Minutes of the May 15 meeting are to be sent out for approval later.

Committee Updates: None presented.

Program: Provost Dr. Mark McNamee, the chief academic officer of the university opened his presentation requesting comments and questions.

Update on the state of the University: Dr. Sands is moving in. VT is looking at general education courses for undergraduates in terms of their value added, a pilot program. VT has been awaiting final approval of the state budget, hoping for a comprehensive merit salary increase. As it turned out, University Staff are OK, but VT is not authorized to give increases to Classified Staff. That is why there will be an open window for Classified Staff to change over to University Staff.

Question: What is VT's game plan for growth? Dr. McNamee said that we would need to grow our revenue base, which is a more challenging endeavor. One of the advantages of research money is that it allows us to fund more GRA positions. VT is not growing the undergraduate population right now. Each new faculty position comes with an addition \$10K in operation expenses. It would be nice if every faculty position funded came with a specified amount of operating support as well.

Questions: How do you see the shift from Classified to University staff? It will probably shift more through attrition than opting to switch over. Right now they are about evenly divided with roughly 1700 in each category. There are still about 600 Classified Staff who were grandfathered in under the old sick leave plan.

Question: Are in-band adjustments okay for Classified Staff? Yes, but not just for Classified.

Question: How do you see the trend in tuition increases and their impact on families? Families with less than \$30K income have seen no tuition increase in seven years. VT students who graduate with debt have less than \$24K debt to pay off, a very low amount compared with other universities, per Career Services' respondents to surveys. VT has a 2018 goal of being able to offer 1000 new GRAs enough money for assistantships. This would be the University's most significant budget increase in support of graduate students.

Question: How do you see expansion of the undergraduate student population? VT agreed to add 50 new undergraduates per year for the last four years, and has done so. However, support from the state is that money lost on each in-state undergraduate we add.

Question: How do you square this with the strategic plan to grow the undergraduate student base? Capacity isn't necessarily the issue. We can grow students by state agreement to support them. Virginia Tech's tuition plus fees, room, and board is the second lowest among the top thirty universities. One of the most cost-efficient ways to grow the undergraduate student population is through growing our on-line programs which require the lowest percentage of tuition to administrative support

Closing: Sue Teel closed this meeting by handing over two gavels to new President Dan Cook. The meeting adjourned at 1:10 PM.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Thursday, July 17, in 2420 North End Center. The guest speaker will be announced at a later date.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan L. Archer
Acting Senate Secretary