

Staff Senate minutes: **October 16, 2014**

Noon – 1:00pm, 2420 North End Center

**Attending:** Susan Archer, Dan Cook, Amanda Grose, Bhadra Gunesequera, Robena Hughes, Maxine Lyons, Ron Mecham, Janet Murphy, Steve Nagle, Alex Parrish, Heather Parrish, Wyatt Sasser, Llyn Sharp, Louellen Sharp, Quinn Steen, Sue Teel, Tom Tucker, Christine Watkinson, Beverly Williams

Monty Abbas, Faculty Senate representative

**Excused:** Judy Alford, Valerie Henderson, Donna Raines, Katie Reaves, Amy Tanner, Judy Taylor, Ken Wieringo, Bonnie Alberts, Kevin Martin, Amy Tunison.

**Guests:** Dale Robinson - Compliance & Conflict Resolution Manager

**Opening:** The agenda was adopted and the minutes of the last meeting were approved electronically.

Discussion on [Policy 5000](#) (animals in buildings): There was a question on policy for companion animals and who enforces any policy on this. We will ask Laura Neff-Henderson to put out a campus notice on this policy.

Tom Tucker - VEA update: [VGEA](#) has a new incentive program: one out of three new members can win a gift certificate. Contact Tom to get an application.

Hokie Swap: Grad student giveaway program (stuff for kids and families) will be open for staff after grad students

Mikah's Backpack: seeking lunch food items, can bring to future Senate meetings

**Program:** Dale Robinson, conflict resolution presentation

- Conflict resolution department is now under HR and located in the North End Center.
- Services have been enhanced.
- Available resources
  - Mediation
    - Mediation is confidential
    - Process
      - Dale meets with each individual
      - Dale selects mediator
      - Mediation scheduled, convenes
      - Agreement reached or impass declared
        - Sharing and accountability: individuals are responsible for carrying out agreement; parties generate and evaluate options
  - Conflict management
  - Professional development opportunities
- Outcomes
  - 80% of participants reach agreement
- Relationship to grievance process and EO complaints
- Not limited to issues for those in protected classes
- [Dale](#) is available to come to departments for free workshops
  - Handling conflict effectively (2 hours)
  - Email, your career, and your organization (45 minutes)

Next meeting: November 20, 2014: Mike Mulhare – Director of Emergency Management, VBI Conference Center

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Sebek

Staff Senate Secretary

# **Commission and Committee reports**

## **Commission for Student Affairs (Robert Sebek)**

CSA continues to discuss child care options and is expecting an announcement from the Grad School very soon. We also had a long discussion on a Budget Board funded event.

## **Employee Benefits Committee (Sue Teel)**

**Supplemental Insurance** – Virginia Tech would like to offer its employees supplemental insurance as a benefit that employees can purchase at a lower group rate. The university had planned to add on to JMU's policy with Aflac; however, that policy expires at the end of the year. JMU is currently in the bid process and is reviewing 11 proposals that they received. Once they have selected a vendor, the university will review the plan and if it believes it is a good option for Virginia Tech as well, they will add on to the JMU policy and offer the supplemental insurance next year.

**Tuition Waivers and Tuition Reimbursements** – just a reminder that the tuition waiver is available to university employees. Some did mention in the meeting that not all employees qualify. Tuition reimbursement is based upon department budgets –so if you take classes from another university, your department decides if they have funds to reimburse you for the tuition cost. The question was raised why Virginia Tech no longer partners with New River CC to offer credit classes and that is something those in the meeting are going to look into.

## **Library Committee (Mark Steen)**

The University Library Committee discussed proposed strategies for enhancing the libraries' role in advancing the University strategic plan through requests for increased support to augment library spaces and collections and reviewing comparative information on library facilities from peer institutions.

## **CEOD Sept. meeting summaries:**

### **Scheduling events and religious holidays**

It was brought to the attention of the commission that a large campus event was scheduled on a major religious holiday, which precluded faculty (and potentially student) involvement. Given that major religious holidays are posted on the University Faculty-Staff Planning calendar and on the Religious and Ethnic Holidays section of the University Registrar's website (which utilize the comprehensive Interfaith calendar), a course of action to prevent such future personal and professional conflicts is needed.

### **Changes to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion**

Dr. Jack Finney spoke with members about the open letter that had gone out to the Virginia Tech community on June 30th, 2014 from President Timothy Sands announcing changes to Diversity and Inclusion. Dr. Finney added that President Sands had asked Senior Vice President and Provost Mark McNamee to work with the university community to implement a new model of shared responsibility and accountability. This new structure is adapted from best practices at other universities and will be designed to ensure that university leadership and representatives take personal and collective responsibility for inclusive excellence. David Travis Jr. has agreed to serve as the president's advisor and interim vice provost. David added that CEOD will play an important part and role as we continue to move forward.

### **Role of university governance-Jack Finney**

Dr. Jack Finney provided members with a hard copy of Virginia Tech's Governance Structures. He added that people who populate commissions should be communicating and reaching out to other commissions, so they can take information back to constituency groups. There was discussion of the roles of commission members in facilitating communication.

### **Constituent group discussion**

Brought to the attention of the commission that an initiative to find affordable childcare for undergraduate students on campus is underway. Short-term solutions have been suggested but it was asked of commission members to help find long-term answers.

It was brought to the attention of a commission member in Appalachian Studies Program that staff and students from the local area and the Appalachian region feel they are treated differently (implying discrimination), based upon the way they talk. In the past, CEOD had working groups that discussed faculty/staff and student issues.

### **Working groups**

To address concerns about campus event scheduling and religious holidays, the education of the university community on the changes to Policy 1025 (inclusion of gender identity and gender expression as protected entities), faculty/staff/student instances of harassment, and the overall mission, membership and charge of the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity, working groups were formed.

## **Commission on Student Affairs summary**

The CSA always starts the semester by listing potential issues and topics for future meetings. A concern that has been discussed at two meetings is availability of affordable child care for graduate and undergraduate students, with the acknowledgement that this issue also affects faculty and staff. The Grad School is working on this issue for grad students and will announce a program soon. That announcement will drive CSA to contact other constituent groups, including Staff Senate, to look at a university-level solution to this problem.

Robert Sebek, representative to CSA

## **Summary of B&P Council meeting on 9/25/14**

Update on state budget as it impacts Virginia Tech – highlights:

- the state did not achieve its projected revenue growth in 2013-14
- anticipated a 1.6% increase, but only achieved a 0.9% increase
- projected revenue growth for FY 2014-15 and 2015-16 has been revised downward from 5.2% and 4.1% respectively, to 2.7% for each year
- statewide reduction targets for higher education for the biennium have been reduced to \$45 million in each year
- Virginia Tech's General Fund reduction target for 2014-15 and 2015-16 is 3.93% each year for 208 E&G
- Agency 229 and Student Financial Aid are exempt from cuts
- the state has asked that Higher Education try to bridge the shortfall by productivity gains and avoid mid-year tuition increases
- the priority for FY 15 is to protect university initiatives such as the faculty and university staff merit program and identify one-time strategies for cost savings to provide time to allow thoughtful planning
- FY16 state budget is currently \$272 million short
- for FY 17, the state will need to manage the \$235 million draw from the Rainy Day fund
- council members were asked to bring ideas for one-time savings to future meetings

## **Summary of Commission on Research meetings held 9/10/14**

What the Commission will be looking at this year:

- Revision to policy 13015, Ownership and Control of Research Results
- Predates digital era
- Sub-committee has been formed
- Pursuing discussion of safety protocols in laboratories
- National Science Board document: Reducing Investigators' Administrative Workload for Federally Funded Research
- Review what recommendations to bring forward to Virginia Tech
- Evaluating the barriers to research for teaching faculty
- Working with the Commission on Faculty affairs to review self-plagiarism as a possible addition to the policy on misconduct in research
- Barriers to research

## **University Council on International Affairs (UCIA)**

The international undergraduate student population has grown with the fall semester. Chinese and South Korean students now number 600 of the total 1153. International student population is also growing at our peer institutions. International Support Services is working on increasing its cultural activities for the non-degree exchange program. The challenge is that these students do not pay the student activity fee and therefore, don't have access to some activities.

Career Services has new brochures and handouts that explain how they can help with cover sheets, resumes, study/work abroad and other services.

It was discussed as to how to increase the number of nominations for the alumni award. It was noted that there was a glitch in the People Admin system that held up about a dozen applications for a director position and it is important for departments to note that this same issue might happen to other applications.

The UCIA bylaws were last updated in 2010. A subcommittee was formed to collect feedback, make updates and bring before the committee.

There was a discussion as to who needed access to the information on the new Health Disclosure Form. There was a difference of opinion as to what constitutes relevant parties. A small group will reach out to Services for Students with Disabilities to see what might need changing.

There was a discussion as to where to house international visiting professors since the university does not have any international guest housing.

Judy Taylor