

Staff Senate minutes: March 17, 2016

Noon, VBI Conference Center

Attending: Bonnie Alberts, Blair Allen, LaTawnya Burleson, Dan Cook, LeeAnn Ellis, Alex Guest, Velva Grover, Anna Hawthorne, Linda Hazelwood, Robena Hughes, Robin Lawson, Katrina Loan, Janet Murphy, Steve Nagle, Jason Oberoi, Alex Parrish, Heather Parrish, Danette Poole, Louellen Sharp, Tamarah Smith, Amy Splitt, Sue Teel, Laura Tollin, Beverly Williams, Jon Wooge

Excused: Judy Alford, Cyndi Booth, Steve Myers

Mr. Cook called to order the regular meeting of the Staff Senate at 12:00pm. Mr. Parrish made motion to adopt the agenda and Mr. Wooge seconded the motion.

I. Menah Pratt-Clarke- Vice Provost for Inclusion and Diversity & Vice President for Strategic Affairs.

Dr. Pratt-Clarke Presented her speech on Inclusive VT and Diversity. Dr. Pratt-Clarke joined Virginia Tech on Feb 1st and will be building upon the foundation and commitment of Inclusive VT. Her speech was very informative on Inclusive VT and Diversity and what is needed to help students, staff and faculty members to communicate appropriately to the community around us and in their work environment. To better define what Inclusive VT is, we have to ask questions such as: What do we serve? And who are we serving? The current Principles of Community were connected to this ongoing effort. Dr. Pratt-Clarke will be presenting an online module in the Fall lasting 30 minutes on the Language of Diversity for the freshmen and Graduate students and it will be entitled: How to choose a friend. She hopes this online session will help the students be more comfortable with speaking the diversity language throughout the community.

The question was raised on the extension of an online module for staff and faculty members as well. Dr. Pratt-Clarke stated that this is in the works, but it will probably be at least a year before it is available. The second question was regarding any plans on trying to implement further assistance for the physically disabled in the college. Dr. Pratt-Clarke stated that there are nine different caucuses and one of them is for the Physically Disabled. This caucus would be one that would address this question.

In conclusion, she hopes to get representatives from the staff, faculty and students to join the Inclusive VT initiative. Please view this link to learn more about Inclusive VT and Diversity. <http://dms.tlos.vt.edu/content/adhoc/q4893/>

II. Elizabeth Howard - Local Knowledge Survey

Ms. Howard is seeking volunteers to fill out a brief survey that will help us learn more about the skills and forms of creativity that New River Valley residents and Virginia Tech staff pursue on their own time. You can go to the following link to take the survey: <http://tinyurl.com/gulver2>.

III. Commission/Committee Updates:

Alex Parrish - Staff Association Leadership Group

The Staff Association Leadership Group is comprised of Association Presidents/Chairs and was created as an ad hoc committee to enable and encourage collaboration between all VA Tech Staff Associations. Their next meeting which will be on March 24, 2016 at 3 PM in the Newman Library.

Alex Parrish - Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs

In March a meeting was held with Rodney Irvin about the process staff follow to make complaints. A presentation on several state and university organizations was given, questions followed. Minutes are posted online at <http://tinyurl.com/CSPA0316>

Katrina Loan - Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs

Ms. Loan explained that due to the lack of members, no meeting has been held formally. However, there have been issues that have been brought to the attention of the chair. Once the committee membership is clarified, the first issue is to evaluate the Election Section of the Staff Senate by-laws to clarify some wording issues. Ms. Loan will have an update on these issues at the next meeting.

Velva Groover - Commission on Faculty Affairs

Resolution to approve collegiate professor series or non-tenure track instructional faculty members especially discussing the relevance of the journal impact factor.

Melissa Elliott - Campus Development Committee

1. Upper Quad - with Pearson Hall complete, Brodie Hall is now under construction and will be completed later than the contract date. The Addison Caldwell Statue will be located to the updated plaza between Brodie and Pearson.
2. New Classroom Building - Jason Soileau explained the merits of the classroom building and the collaboration/common spaces that will be inside. When the project is complete the committee will take a tour.

3. 460 Interchange - Under construction currently, with the bridge and road structure to be in place Summer 2017/Fall 2017. The final finish date should be sometime during the fall of 2018. Jason Soileau plans to provide a more detailed update at next month's meeting.
4. Drillfield Paths - Starting with a quick review, Jason Soileau shared the process and progress of the Drillfield Paths. Since the first comment period, two materials have been eliminated due to failure. There is currently a comment period underway. Please remember to comment and encourage others to do so. Challenged with inventing the future path material, there were three proposals for a grant to investigate this possible path material. Two were complimentary and the groups will work together. The process should begin next month.

Peter Johnson - Commencement Committee

Our last meeting was February 3, 2016. The idea was put forth to possibly have more ushers in order to help escort those in wheelchairs more efficiently. There was also discussion about relocating the check stand, which was bumped into and knocked over three times last time. There was mention of concern about the traffic patterns that day – the two suggestions that were put forth was to open the university at noon or close it entirely on Friday due to the congestion. The advertised start time is going to be pushed back 30 minutes to account for tardiness that ends up disrupting the set timeline. There was also mention of concern over the business school breakfast timeline and several coordination issues stemming from it.

Quinn Steen - Library Committee

At our last meeting held on Dec. 1st, we returned to the topic of library space utilization, and also discussed how the library may support the CLE Pathways minors. Among other possible action items, the Library Committee Addressed concerns raised by our Graduate Student Representative on behalf of the graduate student body regarding library space dedicated as graduate student work areas.

Jon Wooge - Elections and Nominations Committee

Jon reported that the senate election will be held the first week of April and there are still some committees that don't have any candidates nominated for the seats.

They are as follows:

- Energy and Sustainability Committee (two seats-staff senator or senate alternate)

- Commission on Research (one seat-staff senator or senate alternate)
- Staff Senate Secretary

Jon asked that if we know of anyone to nominate to please do so by the end of the day.

- Election of officers shall be held by secret ballot by April 1. Election and/or nomination of representatives to the University Council, Commissions, Advisory Councils, and Committees and other appointments shall also be completed by April 1.
- A majority vote shall be necessary to elect officers and/or representatives. In case no candidate receives a majority, the candidate receiving the fewest votes shall be removed from each successive ballot until one candidate receives a majority.

The question was raised as to where one would go to get a description of the Committees/Commissions and what would be expected of the person that is running for the seats. A brief description of each commission/committee can be found at <http://www.governance.vt.edu>. For more details you would need to contact the committee/commission chair.

Mr. Wooge asked that we close the nominations for seats that have nominees. Mr. Parrish motioned for the close and Mr. Nagle seconded it.

Dan Cook - President of Staff Senate

Mr. Cook stated that the McComas Leadership Seminar filled within 24-hrs of the registration announcement. The list was culled of non-staff so as to allow additional staff to attend. Ms Poole stated right now the seminar is full and there are 55 people already on the waiting list.

The question was raised as to why the McComas Seminar registration wasn't opened to Staff Senators before VA Tech staff as it had been done in the past. Ms. Parrish explained that she didn't know about this previous policy, but said that she would see that it gets reinstated next year.

Mr. Cook asked if anyone has speaker suggestions for future Staff Senate meetings. Jason Soileau who is over Campus Planning was suggested as a possibility. Another suggestion was to maybe bring in Thanassis Rikakis who is Executive Vice president and Provost.

Mr. Cook informed everyone that due to scheduling conflict, our next staff meeting will be held at VBI Auditorium again because North End Center was not available.

Mr. Cook made a motion to close and Mr. Parrish seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 1pm.

Next Meeting: April 21, 2016, Thursday - Noon at VBI Conference Center

Minutes presented by: Katrina Loan and Alex Guest

Minutes approved by: Dan Cook and Alex Parrish