

Staff Senate

<http://www.staffsenate.vt.edu/>

December 15, 2016
12:00 Noon – 1:00 P.M
Duck Pond Room, The Inn at Virginia Tech

MINUTES

Attendees: Bonnie Alberts, Jackie Blevins, Debbie Breon, Dan Cook, Chad Dalton, Lee Ann Ellis, Anna Hawthorne, Carolyn Hopkins, Brian Huddleston, Robena Hughes, Robin Lawson, Katrina Loan, Albert Moore, Steve Nagle, Alex Parrish, Heather Parrish, Robert Sebek, Tammie Smith, Sue Teel, James Venable III

Excused: Judy Alford, LaTawnya Burleson, Carolyne Dudding, Velva Groover, Kelli Hall-Manning, Linda Hazelwood, Rob Jacks, Sheree Montgomery, Zerita Montgomery, Janet Murphy, Hannah Parks, Lenora Stover, Judy Taylor, Tami Watson, Sarah Woodward, Jon Wooge

Guests: Amy Ingram, Tammy Guynn, and Ingrid Skenderian
Guest Speaker: Jim Dubinsky

Call to order by president, Alex Parrish 12:01

The agenda was emailed out to the Staff Senate listserv prior to the meeting and copies available at the meeting. Sue Teel made the motion to accept the agenda, with a second made by Robena Hughes.

Approval of November minutes were done electronically with one revision being made.

The Staff Senate website has been moved over to a new management system, many changes made, and has gone live. Thanks to Heather Parrish and Tammie Smith for all their work on it. As part of the communication committee, Heather and Tammie will continue to work on the website and make updates.

Staff Senate Standing Committees

President Parrish shared the process for getting the constitution changes approved. Once the change(s) is approved by the Staff Senate, it then gets sent to the Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs for approval, then onto University Council for approval and from there it goes to the Board of Visitors. Once the Board of Visitors makes the approval then the change that originated in the Staff Senate is finalized.

Communications Committee, led by Katrina Loan is busy working on different communications avenue with Staff Senate: e.g. Facebook, website, listserv, informational flyer.

University Council, Commission, Committees – No updates.

Guest Speaker

Jim Dubinsky, Dept. of English, was the guest speaker on behalf of the Veteran's Caucus at Virginia Tech. Jim, a retired Army veteran and currently the Caucus's chair, came to Staff Senate to share his commitment for veterans. Currently the Veterans Caucus has 27 members. Its purpose is "to improve the working, learning, and living environment for employee and student veterans; advocate for the mentoring of and transitional support for veterans returning to work and/or school and recommend actions to improve the recruitment and retention of employee and student veterans." Overall, the Veterans Caucus is (1) trying to build a community where VT's veterans feel like they have a voice in helping to address their issues and (2) working with the university to envision and then offer more services and resources.

Key issues and concerns: (1) While Virginia Tech holds the honor of being one of six schools in the nation classified as a Senior Military College, it no longer is listed as a Military Friendly institution. (2) Despite having a strong Corps of Cadets, it has one of the lowest percentages of veteran students in the Commonwealth. (3) Unlike other major public universities in the Commonwealth (e.g. ODU, GMU), veterans find it difficult to obtain academic credit for years of service and or/ leadership experience.

One reason for these issues is that it is hard for veterans to find assistance. The Veterans Caucus hopes that Virginia Tech will consider creating a one-stop shop where veterans (students, staff, and faculty) can go for assistance. Doing so would be another way to demonstrate the commitment Virginia Tech has for its veterans.

One staff senator felt the university was a very liberal place and that it didn't welcome a conservative body, such as the military. She suggested that perhaps this could be one reason that very little effort has been made to help veterans.

Still, there have been some positive changes. For example, currently all veterans who apply for student status at Virginia Tech get their application fee waved. And Virginia Tech has made strides to develop an academic focus on Veterans in Society (Veterans Studies).

The veteran's caucus is working on a website and will share it with the Staff Senate once they have it.

Group work

Following the guest speaker, Tammie Smith shared a scenario from the Virginia Public College and University Staff Forum that she and Robert Sebek attended. Tammie split the room into four groups and gave each group the same scenario to read and work through following the three questions. The scenario was an issue that took place in a work place and the questions asked, "how would you handle it". Having the opportunity to work through the questions with staff senators was a good way to learn from one another about different issues.

Final business from President Parrish: We still need staff senators on two of the Committee/Commissions. The Athletics Committee and University Council. Robena Hughes offered to be the senate representative for the Athletics Committee. Albert Moore offered to take the seat on the University Council.

With no further business to discuss, Tammie Smith made the motion to adjourn the meeting with a second by Katrina Loan at 1:02 p.m.

Sincerely submitted by Tammie Smith, Staff Senate Secretary.

NOTE: The January meeting is cancelled as it falls on the first week of spring semester. Staff Senate will resume in February, 2016.

SAVE THE DATE:

Staff Senate Meeting
February 16, 2017
Location: TBD