

Minutes
ACADEMIC, RESEARCH, AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Inn at Virginia Tech, Latham Ballroom CDEF
March 22, 2021
10:00 – 11:45 a.m.

Committee Members Present:

Greta Harris (chair), Melissa Nelson, Carrie Chenery, Jeff Veatch.
Eric Kaufman, (faculty representative), Camellia Pastore (undergraduate representative),
Sabrina Sturgeon (graduate student representative).

Guests:

Laura Belmonte, C.L. Bohannon, Cyril Clarke, Lance Collins, Karen DePauw, Corey Earles, Jack Finney, Rachel Gabriele, Henri Gendreau, Kristin Geshmann, Kay Heidbreder, Rachel Holloway, Sharon Kurek, Thomas Miller, Ellen Plummer, Tim Sands, Frank Shushok, Ellie Sturgis, Daniel Sui, Judy Taylor, Tracy Vosburgh, Chris Wise.

OPEN SESSION

1. Motion to Return to Open Session.

The committee voted unanimously to move into Open Session.

2. Welcome and Acceptance of Agenda. Greta Harris, chair of the committee, welcomed committee members and attendees to the Open Session.

The committee voted unanimously to accept the agenda as presented including all items on the Consent Agenda.

3. Report of Closed Session Action Items. G. Harris reported that the committee met in closed session and approved six faculty appointments to emeritus/emerita status, 11 appointments to endowed chairs, professorships, or fellowships, three tenure appointments, four appointments to University Distinguished Professor, 65 faculty research leaves, and ratified the Personnel Changes Report.

4. Consent Agenda. Approval of November 16, 2020 Meeting Minutes, Report of Reappointments to Endowed Chairs, Professorships, and Fellowships, Resolution to Approve New Bachelor of Science in Education Degree in Elementary Education, Resolution to Approve New Undergraduate Education Degree with Two Designations: Bachelor of Arts in Education Degree in Secondary Education and Bachelor of Science in Education Degree in Secondary Education, Resolution to Establish a Scholarly Articles Open Access Policy, Resolution to Approve Appointment to the Virginia Coal and Energy Research and Development Advisory Board, Resolution to Revise Faculty Handbook Promotion and Tenure Guidelines, Resolution to Revise Chapter Five of the Faculty Handbook: Employment Policies for Non-Tenure Track Instructional Faculty, Resolution to Clarify Probationary Reappointment Language in the Faculty Handbook, Resolution to Amend Virginia

Tech's Voluntary Transitional Retirement Program for Tenured Faculty (University Policy 4410).

- 5. Update: College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. Natural Resources and Environment.** Laura Belmonte, dean of the college, provided the committee with information on the instruction, research, and service of the college. The college has 4339 undergraduate students, 883 graduate students, and 509 faculty, and 107 staff. Enrollment of undergraduate students in the college is on an upward trend with a 93% first year retention rate and a 85% graduation rate. Diversity, equity, and inclusion remains a priority instructional and research focus for students and faculty. The college is supporting new initiatives that include domestic and international efforts in transdisciplinary scholarship and instruction. Research productivity continues to rise in the college with increases in external funding, national fellowships, books, poems, plays, musical scores, films, performances, albums, journal articles, and conference presentation. In addition, the college has provided leadership on and off campus on responding to the pandemic.
- 6. Council of College Deans.** Representing the Council of College Deans, Laura Belmonte, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, reported to the committee on several items. The deans continue to discuss the impact on the colleges of the university's academic budgeting process called the Partnership for an Incentive Based Budget (PIBB). The deans and office of the provost continue to assess the PIBB model and how it aligns with and incentives movement towards the university's strategic goals. The colleges are looking forward to hiring in the upcoming year, even if at a lower rate than in past years. The Future Faculty Development program is coming up in the fall, and colleges look forward to hosting diverse future scholars in a variety of disciplines. As application decisions are made, the colleges have been handling increased contact from unhappy parents and students who were not accepted. Colleges will be considering the future of telework as the pandemic approaches an end, taking into consideration a number of factors such as state and international work, the use of technology to support departmental meetings, and equitably managing service responsibilities, among other issues. The committee discussed issues around childcare, the future of instruction to accommodate varied interests and needs of students, and assure quality and leading with our values when considering a post-pandemic university.
- 7. Provost's Update and Discussion.** Cyril Clarke, executive vice president and provost, provided information on several items.

Accreditation. The university recently completed the on-site portion of the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) reaffirmation of accreditation. To prepare for reaffirmation of accreditation, the university conducts a comprehensive self-study and a proposal for a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that demonstrates a significant commitment of time, attention, and money to advance Virginia Tech's educational mission. The review team reviewed the university's QEP for the next period of accreditation, which will

focus on building bridge experiences focusing of experiential learning. Provost Clarke expressed appreciation for the hard work accomplished by the accreditation team in preparing a very detailed and comprehensive compliance certificate and hosting the on-site visit. Thanks also to the university community for engaging with the review team, and especially for the commitment of time and attention by the ARSA committee chair and the Rector.

Enrollments. Several years ago, the university embarked on a managed expansion in enrollment with the goal of achieving 30,000 undergraduates. This goal was achieved sooner than expected, so expansion has been paused pending finalization of a plan, including timeline, for further growth. This plan will need to take into account our ongoing commitments to the following: Tech Talent Identification, an appropriate mix of in and out-of-state students, diversity, including representation of underserved students and underrepresented minority students, the university's Internal capacity to teach, house, support, and serve students, and the capacity of the communities that support Virginia Tech, including Blacksburg. Committee members requested an opportunity to review the plan, possibly at the board's August retreat.

This year, there were over 42,000 application for admission to Virginia Tech, a substantial increase over last year. The admission cycle involves a series of three types of offers of admission: Early Decision, Early Action and Regular Decision. These initial offers have now all being made and acceptances are being tracked. The university expects to implement waitlists in the near future to adjust enrollments to achieve goals, including overall enrollment approximating 30,000 students.

Summer and Fall academic plans. The plan at this time is to have approximately 30% of instruction in the Summer fully in-person, compared with about 50% prior to the pandemic. For the fall, our intention is to return to in-person instruction similar to that employed prior to the onset of the pandemic, but informed by experience gained over the last year. In some cases, this will involve continuation of some online learning in those instances when a very high quality of instruction can be delivered and there is a good case to be made for expanding access to students. New River Health District is providing 1,500 doses that will be administered by appointment on March 30, 31, and April 1. The registration process will be communicated on Wednesday and more vaccination opportunities will be available in the weeks that follow. Although we are optimistic that an in-person fall will be feasible, we will continue to track the status of the pandemic and, of course, comply with necessary public health requirements. In the event that physical distancing will still be required, we will be ready to adjust our plan to address limited occupancies of teaching spaces. Our goal in this instance will be to maximize the use of these spaces.

New appointment. Jeff Earley appointed Vice Provost for Academic Resource Management, with responsibility for budget, data and space, working in partnership with colleagues in the Senior VP area. Jeff replaces Ken Smith who has moved to

the position of Chief Operating Officer for the Innovation Campus.

- 8. Student Affairs Discussion.** C. Clarke introduced the focus of the student affairs discussion as an opportunity to examine the integration of the university's curricular and co-curricular approach to supporting students. Frank Shushok, vice president for student affairs, facilitated a discussion with panel members Thomas Miller, undergraduate student, Ellie Sturgis, director of the Cook Counseling Center, and C.L. Bohannon, associate professor in landscape architecture and faculty principal, Leadership and Social Change Residential College. The discussion with committee members used ExperienceVT as a focus. ExperienceVT integrating academic and student life for holistic student development, well-being, and success. The model illustrates the university's commitment to curricular and co-curricular undergraduate education and uses a dashboard tool for articulating and achieving goals while a student at Virginia Tech.
- 9. Agenda Items for June 2021 meeting.** Committee members made a number of suggestions for topics including updates on university operations (ie food services), the future of on-line education, an overview and update on of students, faculty, and staff, an update on matching for the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, an update on student athletes, how the university participates in economic development across the Commonwealth, and how the university supports the diversity of ideas.
- 10. Adjourn.** Having no further business, the committee adjourned