

**ACADEMIC, RESEARCH, AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
VIRGINIA TECH BOARD OF VISITORS
MINUTES**

June 1, 2020

The Academic, Research, and Student Affairs committee of the Board of Visitors of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University met on Monday, June 1, 2020, at 1:30 p.m. On this date, the Commonwealth of Virginia was operating under a state of emergency as declared by Governor Northam due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was an entirely electronic meeting held via Zoom videoconference to conduct regular business as permitted by legislation passed by the General Assembly on April 22, 2020, and signed into law by Governor Northam. A quorum of the Academic, Research, and Student Affairs committee was present on the videoconference.

Academic, Research and Student Affairs Members Present:

Ms. Greta Harris (Chair)
Ms. Sharon Brickhouse Martin
Mr. Chris Petersen
Mr. Horacio Valeiras (Rector)

Other Board Members Present:

Mr. Edward Baine
Ms. Shelley Butler Barlow
Mr. C.T. Hill
Ms. Anna James
Ms. Letitia Long (Vice Rector)
Dr. Melissa Byrne Nelson

Constituent Representatives Present:

Dr. John Ferris (Faculty Representative)
Ms. Tamarah Smith (Staff Representative)
Mr. Ryan King (Graduate Student Representative)
Ms. Madelynn Todd (Undergraduate Student Representative)

Also present on the Zoom videoconference were the following: President Timothy Sands, Ms. Kim O'Rourke (Secretary to the Board), Dr. Catherine Amelink, Ms. Beth Armstrong, Dr. Richard Blythe, Dr. Cyril Clarke, Mr. Al Cooper, Dr. Karen DePauw, Mr. Corey Earles, Mr. Juan Espinoza, Ms. Kari Evans, Dr. Jack Finney, Dr. Mike Friedlander, Ms. Rachel Gabriele, Dr. Luisa Havens-Gerardo, Dr. Guru Ghosh, Mr. Dave Guerin, Ms. Kay Heidbreder, Dr. Rachel Holloway, Ms. Sharon Kurek, Dr. Scott Midkiff, Dr. Dwayne Pinkney, Dr. Ellen Plummer, Dr. Menah Pratt-Clarke, Ms. Lenore Schatz (captioner), Dr. Frank Shushok, Dr. Ken Smith, Mr. Rick Sparks, Dr. G. Don Taylor, Ms. Tracy Vosburgh, and Mr. Chris Yianilos.

In addition, 51 members of the university community and public viewed a live stream of the videoconference on YouTube Live.

Ms. Greta Harris, chair of the Academic, Research, and Student Affairs committee, convened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Ms. Harris and Rector Valeiras mentioned recent events and underscored the importance of working together and remaining focused on the university's land grant mission for educating leaders who can lead with a focus on equity.

1. Approval/Acceptance of Consent Agenda Open Items*

[*Note: Items on the consent agenda are matters of importance reviewed carefully in preparation for the meeting and have been determined not to require discussion by the board or its committees.]

Ms. Harris asked for a motion to approve/accept the consent agenda items as listed. A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

2. Consent Agenda

- A. November 18, 2019 Minutes
- B. Report of Reappointments to Endowed Chairs, Professorships, and Fellowships – March and June
- C. Resolution to Accept Report of Completion of Guidelines for Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Textbooks
- D. Resolution to Change the Terms of Service for Faculty, Students and Staff on University Council and Commissions
- E. Resolution to Approve New Degree Bachelor of Science in Behavioral Decision Science
- F. Resolution to Approve the 2020-2021 Student Code of Conduct and to Retire the Hokie Handbook

3. Provost's Update

Ms. Harris called on Dr. Cyril Clarke, executive vice president and provost to present his update. Dr. Clarke identified key administrators who are available to answer questions as needed. Dr. Clarke thanked Ms. Harris for her exceptional leadership as chair of the committee and thanked Mr. Petersen and Ms. Brickhouse Martin for their service as ARSA committee members over the past year.

Executive Search Updates. In executive personnel matters, Dr. Clarke shared that Dr. Frank Shushok was appointed as vice president for student affairs effective April 10, 2020. The search for vice president for research and innovation remains underway. Interviews resulted in the selection of two candidates for additional consideration. The goal is to complete an additional phase of remote interviews and to bring a finalist to campus as soon as this is possible.

Undergraduate Student Enrollments. Considerations were informed by the Enrollment Management Advisory Committee including members from the Faculty Senate, the academic colleges, the office of budget and finance, and a number of modeling experts. Relative to last year, despite far fewer offers being made initially, the acceptance rate was high and then moderated as we approached the May acceptance deadline, requiring a well calibrated release of offers from the waitlist, informed by modeling of data.

Outcomes. Consistent with the last two years, the university received over 31,000 freshman applications. On May 30, 2020, the university had 7,152 acceptances (790 fewer than 2019). The university anticipates a higher than normal melt over the course of the summer to bring the enrollment headcount close to the 6,675 target. International student acceptances are down by 400 compared to 2019, resulting in potential revenue implications. The university has met its target for transfer students by admitting 1,132 students from over 2,875 applications. Not including international students, the percentages of underrepresented minorities and underserved students who have accepted freshman offers of admission are higher than in 2019:

- African American – 8.0% of the class (2.1 % point increase)
- Hispanic/Latinx – 10.5% of the class (2.6 % point increase)
- USS (Pell-eligible and/or First Gen.) – 25.7 % (1.3 % point increase)

In particular, the College of Engineering and the Pamplin College of Business have opportunities to advance the underserved and underrepresented students this year. Combined freshman and transfer underserved and underrepresented students is 38%, the highest proportion on record towards the university's 40% strategic goal. Thus far, there is continuing strength in recruitment of computer science and computer engineering students for the Tech Talent pipeline. Although encouraging, the university still has much to do to achieve true diversity.

Fall Instruction. The plan for fall semester is scheduled to be announced by President Sands on Monday, June 8. A number of options have been informed by ongoing input from constituent groups, particularly the Faculty Senate cabinet. This summary is subject to change as additional insight and direction is received from state law, regulations, and executive orders and by guidance received from a working group convened by the Virginia Secretary of Education.

Design of the Academic Plan. Guided by three primary factors, the intersections of these factors, with the appropriate balance of safety, must be optimized to achieve respective goals to the greatest extent possible:

- Public health, with the goal of preventing resurgence of COVID-19;
- Academic program quality, with the goal of presenting as much in-person instruction as possible; and
- Resource capacity, with the goal of not exceeding instructional space, class scheduling time, and course preparation time, financial and other resources.

Integration of In-Person and Online Academic Program Delivery. The goal is to make progress in transitioning from online delivery of the curriculum to in-person instruction by incorporating new and effective modalities. The transitional phase is anticipated to include online courses and hybrid courses involving online and in-person instruction. Emphasis will be placed on in-person instruction to support experiential learning opportunities in courses, including wet laboratories, design-build laboratories, research, fieldwork, performance and creation of the arts, and clinical training. For in-person experiential learning, standard operating procedures (SOPs) will guide the public health practices appropriate to each specific learning activity. These procedures will comply with the university's Guidelines for Implementation of Public Health Measures (published 5/21/20) and include consultation with the assistant vice president for emergency management and the university's Incident Management Team. Due to the limited capacity of most lecture spaces (updated to enable physical distancing), most lectures will be delivered online. Faculty members have primary responsibility for selection of the mode of instructional delivery (online versus in-person) and the design of public health SOPs for in-person learning, in consultation with academic department heads. Particular attention will be committed to protection of vulnerable individuals, identified by self-disclosure. Department heads will have responsibility for assigning faculty to instructional duties, taking into consideration the willingness and availability of faculty to deliver in-person instruction and adopting a flexible approach that may necessitate asking faculty to cover for one another. Graduate student assistants will be incorporated into these plans, with similar provisions and flexibility to address personal health risk circumstances. Initially, a third to half of the instructional contact hours may be in-person, but the educational value of this experiential learning will be far greater. As the semester progresses, in-person instruction will increase as faculty become more comfortable with understanding and mitigating health safety risk.

Student Services. Students will be provided accommodation in on-campus residence halls on a double-occupancy basis. This approach allows the university to manage the public health of students within a more structured environment than would otherwise be the case if these students were forced to live off campus, where there is limited vacancy. Student accommodation in residence halls will be subject to them signing a wellness

commitment agreement. Sufficient space will be set aside in a residential hall dedicated to single occupancy quarantine of students who test positive for active COVID-19. Depending on availability of space, students who have a documented vulnerability to COVID-19 will be assigned to single-occupancy rooms. Grab-and-go meals will continue to be available, otherwise students will be served in dining facilities, in compliance with state standards relating to such facilities, including physical distancing standards.

Fall semester schedule. Several options have been considered: (a) to address concerns that students leaving and returning to campus on the Thanksgiving weekend may cause an increase in infections; and (b) to mitigate the risk of having to manage a possible resurgence of COVID-19 during the winter months. These options would all terminate in-person and residential instruction before Thanksgiving, and might vary in regard to when the fall semester would start and whether instruction would continue online after Thanksgiving.

Research. The university's sponsored research enterprise is adopting a phased approach to recovery of operations.

Recovery of Research Operations. The goal is gradually to increase the density of researchers and projects while adhering to safety guidelines for laboratories and common spaces. Phase One Reopening Guidance for research and laboratories was issued by the university on May 22. Generally, the following conditions apply:

- Employees are encouraged to telework whenever possible. A partial return of non-essential research will be permitted with approval by the researcher's college dean, institute director, or vice president.
- Approvals depend on appropriate, site- and situation-specific adherence to public health measures.
- Application of these measures is facilitated by completion and posting in the research site the university's COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures for On-Site Laboratories form.
- Research with human subjects will be carefully considered and will require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

COVID-19 Seed Funding. University funding was established to promote research into COVID-19 and its effective management. Nine projects have been approved, with research study topics ranging from pathogenesis and treatment to community care.

Continued Research Activity. Research activity across the university includes, for example the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC which submitted 33 grants in March, April and May with a total value of \$28.1M. In addition, 17 new grants were awarded to FBRI faculty in March, April, May with a total value of \$25.4.

Outreach. The outreach mission of the university continues across the Commonwealth and beyond.

Virginia Cooperative Extension. Extension faculty are working with Virginia's county and city governments to open cautiously with application of appropriate public health measures and continued remote service. In-person engagement is by appointment. Examples of creativity in virtual programming include: a bull sale, youth livestock shows, volunteer training in 4-H that virtually reached over 500 in 20 states, virtual field days for producers

Veterinary Hospitals. Clinical services will resume in the summer in accordance with Commonwealth approval, with appropriate application of public health measures.

The Inn at Virginia Tech. The Inn reopens for business today (June 1, 2020) under strict guidelines and will follow the highest standards set by the hospitality industry. In person conferences at the Inn are scheduled to resume in August and will adhere to density limitations in force at the time.

Outreach Centers. The university's outreach centers around the Commonwealth are in telework status and rural employees have been provided hotspots where appropriate. Reopening of outreach centers is predicated on personal protective equipment (PPE) availability for staff and guidance from the university's Incident Management Team (IMT) with staggered in-person reopening through June.

Committee discussion included acknowledgement of the enrollment management team's efforts to increase undergraduate student diversity. On-campus students can expect to be welcomed and guided by public health data and guidance to optimize safety. This will include social distancing and alternatives for food delivery/take out; events will be in smaller rooms and smaller in scale; residence life will include masks in common areas/restrooms; sacrifices will be needed as we do things differently, but try to make residence life best it can be. The faculty will be working to determine the appropriate mode for delivery of curriculum in the fall with a commitment to safety. Students will be provided with guidelines for social distancing, wearing of masks, and other measures designed to maximize safety. Success depends on community cooperation and the university community's collective commitment to safety and health.

4. Report from the Council of College Deans.

Provost Clarke Provost thanked Dean Richard Blythe for serving as lead to the committee for Council of College Deans for past year.

Dr. Richard Blythe, dean of the College of Architecture and Urban Studies and representative to the committee from the Council of College Deans highlighted the many ways in which the colleges have responded to the COVID-19 crisis. The academic deans worked closely with the college faculty to focus on essential research and to pivot to online learning and teaching for the last part of the academic year. The shift to an online commencement impacted colleges in many different ways. Deans worked to manage communications and setting expectations aligned with the university and state. Colleges are working through the impact on accreditation arising from the loss of practicums of various kinds in professionally accredited schools, particularly in medicine and veterinary sciences. The deans and colleges are working to manage the university's hiring freeze and addressing issues associated with off-site operations. In addition, colleges are working to solve the challenges associated with bringing students and faculty back to the US/Blacksburg and are working on re-assigning student assistantships.

Deans and their colleges are planning ahead for various uncertain and reduced budget scenarios. College plans include preparing for delivery of programs and courses in challenging circumstances with reduced budgets and with teams affected by the hiring freeze. Work continues to plan for opening back up and managing research around public health concerns and working with faculty to understand the interface of teaching, space and public health. Across the university, faculty are dedicated to finding the benefits of increased online teaching and learning capacity. Faculty are specifically working to transition from an emergency online pivot to a summer session delivered online (noting the significant difference between online as an emergency solution and online as the delivery mechanism); and then a further pivot to an as yet uncertain mixed mode of delivery in the fall semester. In classrooms and facilities, colleges are managing the spatial implications of working with COVID-19. For example, how much face to face can we deliver given the campus resources at our disposal; thinking in new ways - for example how much outdoor teaching can we do and if so how will we manage outdoor space; and what does experiential learning look like in a hybrid model. College leadership aims to maintain a focus on continuing with key strategic initiatives and strategic planning with new purpose while acknowledging and working with stress around job and income security at a time when that same workforce is being asked to step up and beyond to maintain the enterprise of undertaking world class research and providing every student with an outstanding education.

5. Student Support.

Dr. Frank Shushok, vice president for student affairs, Dr. Karen DePauw, dean and vice president for graduate student education, and Dr. Rachel Holloway, vice provost for

undergraduate academic affairs provided the committee with information regarding student support efforts.

Student support efforts are guided by information and data collected in a number of ways from undergraduate, graduate and professional students including: Student Emergency Fund applications, student wellbeing outreach survey, Division of Student Affairs outreach to 1,600 students, academic advisor outreach to 2,000 students, Student Opportunities & Achievement Resources Program (SOAR) outreach to 3,800 students, a Graduate Student Assembly survey, focus groups with student leaders, and applications for residency on-campus. Physical, emotional, financial needs of students are diverse. Themes that emerge from the data include: students face challenges rent, food, medical care, and travel costs. Academically students face problems with the change to an online format and to internet access. Some students face emotional and mental health issues and challenges with overall wellbeing. Students expressed concerns with a loss of healthy living environments on campus when home is difficult and a loss of internships and employment. Most students are faring well and others are not well at all.

Academically, challenges are significant with access to effective study spaces and support away from campus. Academic advisors moved quickly to provide support services online. Retention rates for this spring are comparable to past years, showing students are committed to contouring their studies at Virginia Tech. Student orientation is successfully being delivered online. Graduate students have circumstances unique to their status as graduate students. COVID-19 impacts include disruptions to research efforts, assistantships, income, and visa status.

Committee discussion included comments from Provost Clarke who mentioned that the university has been proactive and thoughtful in surveying and engaging students to find out about needs and concerns. The graduate school, student affairs, provost's office and others will continue to work closely with student and faculty governance groups and representatives to ensure they are part of planning response processes and are able to communicate needs and concerns.

The reasons for increased summer enrollment is not entirely clear, however out-of-state student enrollment may be due to tuition cost savings.

The university does not yet know if faculty and staff are making decisions not to return to work due to Covid-19 concerns. Faculty are asking questions and some are expressing concerns about their safety. The availability of child care is important and we are engaged in communications with Montgomery County and Blacksburg to gauge their ability to accommodate child care services.

6. **Adjourn**. A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously and the committee meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Greta Harris, ARSA Chair

Kim O'Rourke, Secretary