

Minutes  
Faculty Senate Monthly Meeting  
September 24, 2024

In attendance, Senators: Robert K. Perkins, Shaun Anderson, Charles Ford, Audrey Douglas-Cooke, Felisa Smith, Bidhu Mohanty, Ronald White, John Kamiru, Evelyn Thomas, Andrew Franklin, Stephen Magu, Tony Atwater, Claude Turner, Jocelyn Heath, Cynthia Burwell, Milton Ferguson, Kamel Albououhi, Sam Hughes.

Also in attendance: Desh Nendze, Karen Boyd, Colita M. Fairfax, Cathy M. Jackson, Batrina Martin, Lakeisha Kenneh, Jamela Martin, Erica Russell, Stephanie Howard, Danielle Flipping, Rosalyn V. Gardiner.

- I. The Approval of the April minutes were tabled because they were not ready for approval. They will be ready for the October meeting.
- II. Robert Perkins, President of the Senate opened by reminding everyone to encourage their colleagues and students to vote in the upcoming November elections.
- III. Perkins then reviewed the stated foci for 2023-24: (1) Actualizing and Emphasizing Shared Governance; (2) Examining and Incorporating Artificial Intelligence in the learning Experience; and (3) Increasing Faculty Unity Across the Disciplines.
- IV. Under Old Business, Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Chair of the Handbook Committee, discussed the feedback from the Provost regarding the Committee's recommended revisions. She presented a detailed memorandum to the Senate detailing the Committee's concerns about the Provost's feedback, particularly with regard to the proposed schedule changes to the tenure and promotion processes. First, though, she noted in her presentation and in the memo that the Committee's added descriptions of many important positions were considered by the Provost to be unnecessary because she deemed them non-academic. Nevertheless, some of those positions dealt directly with teaching and learning such as the Dean of the Library, the Honors College Dean, the Dean of Research and Graduate Studies, etc. She indicated that the Provost had recognized a few of these gray areas and was working to accommodate the Committee's concerns here.
- V. Cassandra Newby-Alexander then underscored how the decoupling of the annual evaluation and tenure and promotion process was not the best use of faculty time, placing deadlines during busy teaching and testing times throughout the year. She noted that, while the deadlines for faculty would significantly change, the deadlines for administrative approval and oversight were essentially the same. She also spelled out the Committee's concerns about the proposal to have outside Chairs to evaluate Chairs' prep for promotion. Chairs are teaching faculty and their evaluation and promotion should stay within their Department.

- VI. Robert Perkins brought up the most serious problems posed by the suggested timeline for candidates seeking tenure and promotion. Because candidates would have to declare their intent nearly six months earlier than what they would do today. This would prevent candidates from placing needed info and pending scholarship in their portfolios. Tony Atwater reacted to this possibility, saying that the administration was acting without regard to faculty concerns and schedules. To him, shared governance was different than a conventional management/labor dispute. Stephanie Howard asked about how this proposed timeline would change the number of years before someone could apply for tenure and/or promotion.
- VII. Robert Perkins had asked colleagues at Virginia State University confidentially about a similar new timeline for tenure and promotion there. They had said there was still confusion over the shifting deadlines.
- VIII. A vigorous discussion then ensued over the role of the Chair and whether Chairs should be tenured. Most agreed, however, that the Chair's evaluation and promotion should be conducted by their peers in their own Department and not by an outside Chair chosen by the Dean.
- IX. Robert Perkins then suggested a further meeting with the Provost was necessary to clarify these new timelines and suggestions. The motion to endorse the Handbook Committee's concerns and to ask for more clarification from the Provost was moved by Ronald White and seconded Cathy Jackson Perkins then called for the vote with all senators voting aye with only Andrew Franklin abstaining.
- X. Perkins then briefly discussed the other points of Old Business on the agenda. He reminded the Faculty Senate of the administration's rejection of our Budget proposal. He also reported no movement on the approval of the Senate's sabbatical Report, which had been completed and approved two years ago. He hinted that there may be favorable news in reference to our ongoing search for office space. He had no news to report about the faculty Workload Report, only to say any reforms are still in process of being drafted.
- XI. For New Business, Perkins reported the recent problems of overlapping semesters and greatly reduced preparation time in reference to the academic calendar. He recommended that a Committee with Faculty Senate representation should examine and shape the academic calendar before it is set in stone. He noted that the full implementation of the digital evaluation will happen next year, not this year.
- XII. No Committees had any formal report. Nevertheless, Robert Perkins reported that George Miller had stepped down as chair of the Strategic Planning Committee. He said he hoped Cathy Jackson may be a suitable replacement. Charles Ford suggested that the purpose of the OER Committee be expanded to include all faculty issues with the Bookstore and SAIL Program.
- XIII. The meeting adjourned at 1:28 pm.