

Minutes for Vanderbilt University Faculty Senate

February 3, 2022, Meeting

Attendees

Voting members in attendance: Brooke Ackerly, Adam Anderson, Ryan Belcher, Camilla Benbow, Dietmar Bisch, Karen Bloch, James Booth, Andrea Capizzi, Christopher Carpenter, Liz Catania, André Christie-Mizell, Nicole Cobb, Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, Philippe Fauchet, Lisa Fazio, Brian Fitzpatrick, Phillip Franck, Katherine Friedman, John Geer, Katherine Hartmann, Graham Hemingway, Tammy Hoyt, Tamika Hudson, Dawn Iacobucci, Pamela Jeffries, Eric Johnson, Ji Hye Jung, Christian Ketel, Susie Leming-Lee, Daniel Levin, David Lewis, Reid Longmuir, Mark Magnuson, Larry Marnett, Elliot McCarter, Catherine McTamane, Ryan Middagh, Bruce Morrill, Colleen Niswender, Jeremy Payne, Julia Phillippi, Cynthia Reinhart-King, Sandra Rosenthal, Florence Sanchez, ML Sandoz, Amanda Satterthwaite, Jacob Sauer, Berk Sensoy, Marcy Singer-Gabella, Rebecca Swan, Claudine Taaffe, Emilie Townes, Jonathan Waters, Saralyn Williams, and Eli Zimmerman.

Voting members absent: Brian Bachmann, Brett Byram, Frank Candelaria, Debra Friedman, Aimi Hamraie, Ingrid Meszoely, Courtney Pitts, Jan Price, ML Sandoz, and Kevin Schey.

Ex-officio members in attendance: Donald Brady, André Churchwell, Daniel Diermeier, Tracey George, Kathy Gould, Ben Harris, Eric Kopstain, John Lutz, Padma Raghavan, David Raiford, Cybele Raver, Cleo Rucker, Alex Sevilla, Ruby Shellaway, and Brett Sweet.

Ex-officio members absent: Gordon Bernard, GL Black, Douglas Christiansen, Steve Ertel, Nathan Green, Anders Hall, John Penn, and Jennifer Pietenpol.

Guests in attendance: Celia Applegate, Daniel Barocas, Charleson Bell, David Blackburn, Randolph Blake, Jana Blick, Audrey Bowden, Jordan Bowen, Josh Brewer, Jonathan Brunger, Lindsay Burgener, Eric Bymaster, Nancy Carrasco, Bapsi Chakavarthy, David Cliffl, David Cortez, Benoit Dawant, Mary Dietrich, Elsa Filosa, Ben Frazee, Doug Fuchs, Maureen Gannon, Richard Germano, Senta Greene, Scott Guelcher, Jaco Hamman, Alissa Hare, Rick Haselton, Alyssa Hasty, Brian Heuser, Sarah Igo, David Jacobson, Michael King, Stacy Klein-Gardner, Christine Konradi, Gordon Logan, Stacey McCarty, Owen McGuinness, John McLean, Timothy McNamara, Michael Miga, Melanie Moran, Victoria Morgan, Andrea Moro, Gregor Neuert, Thomas Palmeri, Sokrates Pantelides, Sean Polyn, Lynn Ramey, Dalana Robertson, Belinda 'Otukolo Saltiban, Mavis Schorn, Melanie Schuele, Doug Shadle, Samira Sheikh, Kathleen Armour Spitzer, Keivan Stassun, Roland Stein, Yuanki Tao, Jennifer Trueblood, Dawn Turton, Naomi Tyler, Robert Webster, Meredyth Wegener, Steven Wernke, John Wiksw, Thilo Womelsdorf, Lauren Woodard, Sheree Wright, and Karl Zelik.

Call to Order

A meeting of Vanderbilt Faculty Senate was held on February 3, 2022, on Zoom. It began at 4:11pm and was presided over by Chair Mark Magnuson, with Vice Chair Ryan Middagh as secretary.

Quorum as specified in the Faculty Senate Constitution (revised 4/5/2019) Article II.B.1. was met with the recorded attendance of 37 voting members of the Faculty Senate.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Magnuson motioned for approval of the minutes as circulated of the December 9, 2021, meeting. Chair Magnuson asked whether there were any corrections to the proposed minutes. Corrections were not made.

Secretary Middagh confirmed that the minutes were approved (39 ayes, 0 nays, 21 abstentions).

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

Report of the Executive Committee

Chair Magnuson:

- Discussed activities that the Executive Committee (EC) accomplished over the past two months, including monthly meetings with the Chancellor and Provost, hosting the Elected Senators only meeting in January, preparing the TFAE report for release, participating in the Town Hall relating to COVID-19, discussion with Steve Ertel on communications, discussion with Brett Sweet about Vanderbilt University's Information Technology (VUIT), discussions with chairs and co-chairs of Senate committees, reviewing of Senate Office organization and activities, and solicitation of award nominations.
- Chair Magnuson then welcomed new senators, Douglas Fisher (Engineering) replacing Leon Bellan, while on sabbatical, and Reid Longmuir (School of Medicine) replacing Jason Pollack.
- Chair Magnuson reminded the senate of a motion to make clerical changes to the Rules of Order, was presented in the May 6th, 2021, senate meeting. It will be voted on in the March 3rd, 2022, senate meeting and the motion to amend the Constitution will be voted on in the April 28th Spring Assembly. The motions and changes to the Rules of Order and Constitution are available on the Faculty Senate portal.

PROPOSED: Motion to Amend Vanderbilt University FS Constitution Re: Clerical Errors

WHEREAS insubstantial human clerical errors at times occur in the process of maintaining, updating, and formatting the Vanderbilt University Faculty Senate’s Constitution, and

Whereas such errors are specifically addressed in Robert’s Rules of Order 12th Edition, p’s. 566-567; 57:18-19, and

WHEREAS it is not expedient to occupy the full Faculty Senate with such matters, and

WHEREAS the Faculty Senate’s Constitution as last revised October April 5, 2018, does not currently address this matter, but states in **Article III. Amendments**

“Amendments to this Constitution may be proposed by the Faculty Senate or by any one of the Faculties of the several Schools or Colleges. Except as otherwise provided in this Constitution, amendments shall become effective when approved by two-thirds of those present and voting at a meeting of the Faculty Assembly. At least one month before such meeting, the members of the Faculty Assembly shall be notified in writing of the proposed amendments. [1967]”

Be it resolved that the Vanderbilt University Faculty Senate proposes that ARTICLE II, B. of the Senate’s Constitution, as last revised, April 5, 2018, be amended by addition to read:

ARTICLE II, THE FACULTY SENATE, B. Organization.

6. The Vice Chair of the Faculty Senate shall also serve as the Secretary of the Senate. The Vice Chair, serving as the Secretary of the Senate, is authorized to correct article and section designations, punctuation, and cross-references, and to make such other technical and conforming changes as may be necessary to reflect the intent of the Faculty Senate in connection with its Constitution., and

Be it further resolved, that upon passage by the Faculty Senate of this proposed motion to amend the Senate’s Constitution, Article II, The Faculty Senate, B. Organization, the Senate endorses the immediate circulation of this proposed Constitutional amendment to the University’s Faculty Assembly, and

Be it further resolved, that this proposed Constitutional amendment will be placed before the Faculty Assembly at its fall Assembly meeting, and

Be it further resolved, that, per the Faculty Senate Constitution’s Article III. Amendments, if notice of the proposed amendment is given to the Faculty Assembly one month in advance, and if the proposed amendment is approved by two-thirds of those present and voting at the fall Meeting of the Faculty Assembly, the Constitution will be amended effective immediately and the revised Constitution will be posted on the Faculty Senate’s website.

Senate Affairs Committee

- Debra Friedman
- Catherine McTamane
- Karen Bloch
- Leonard Folgarait
- Eric Grogan
- Kelsey Hatzell
- Robert Miller
- Julia Phillippi
- Marcy Singer-Gabella

PROPOSED: Motion to Amend Vanderbilt University Faculty Senate Rules of Order Re: Clerical Errors

WHEREAS insubstantial human clerical errors at times occur in the process of maintaining, updating, and formatting the Faculty Senate's Rules of Order, and

WHEREAS such errors are specifically addressed in Robert's Rules of Order 12 Edition, p's. 566-567; 57:18-19, and

WHEREAS it is not expedient to occupy the full Faculty Senate with such matters, and

WHEREAS the Faculty Senate Rules of Order as last revised October 11, 2019, do not currently address this matter, but state in **Section X. Amendments**

- A. These rules may be amended by a majority vote of the Senate except as otherwise indicated herein.
- B. Amendments to these rules shall be submitted to the Senate at a regular meeting at least three calendar weeks before they are brought to a vote. Amendments may be voted upon at a specially called Senate meeting if the intention to take such action is included in the call for that meeting.

Be it resolved that the Rules of Order of the Vanderbilt University Faculty Senate, as last revised, October 11, 2019, Section III. (Rules of Procedure, F. Vice Chair), be amended by inclusion to read:

Section III, Rules of Procedure

F. Vice Chair

The Secretary of the Senate shall also serve as Vice Chair of the Senate. All references to "secretary" and "secretary-elect" shall change to the "vice chair and secretary" and "vice chair and secretary-elect." [2006]. The Vice Chair and Secretary of the Senate is authorized to correct article and section designations, punctuation, and cross-references, and to make such other technical and conforming changes as may be necessary to reflect the intent of the Faculty Senate in connection with its Rules of Order, and

Be it further resolved that upon passage of this amendment by the Faculty Senate, its Rules of Order, Section III. F. shall be immediately revised and the Vice Chair and Secretary may take immediate action to correct any clerical errors discovered in the existing (October 11, 2019) Rules of Order as well as those that may be discovered in future revisions of the Vanderbilt University Faculty Senate's Rules of Order.

Senate Affairs Committee

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Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

Chancellor Remarks

Chair Magnuson turned the floor over to Chancellor Diermeier.

Chancellor Diermeier:

- Touched on major goals of discussions with the EC, and that transparency and communication with faculty are important. Chancellor Diermeier also emphasized the importance of providing faculty with an environment in which they can be successful, and that the TFAE report is a tangible example of this process. The chancellor then stated how he and the provost are aware of the administrative deficiencies at the university, and how useful this report has been in providing examples and illustrating the breadth of these issues. He then said that leadership is going to start developing a plan to tackle the issues brought forth by the TFAE committee.
- Chancellor Diermeier also mentioned that conversations with Senate leadership (EC) have been candid and constructive, and placed issues that need to be improved on the table. The chancellor stated that this is a great example of how shared governance should work – driven by common objectives but also engaging in productive, candid dialogue. He then pointed out that there are a lot of details to be addressed, some may involve investments, and some may involve restructuring, we do not quite know yet. However, he said, none of these efforts would have happened without the work of the Senate and the committee who has worked so diligently to make this happen.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

Standing Committee Reports

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business. Chair Magnuson announced that [mid-year committee reports](#) were distributed before this meeting, and he encouraged senators to review them to stay updated.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

Ad Hod Committee Reports

Chair Magnuson turned the floor over to the co-chairs of the Task Force on Administrative Effectiveness (TFAE), Vicki Greene and Tom Palmeri.

Co-chair Greene gave the following report:

- Co-chair Greene began the conversation by thanking the Senate and university leadership for allowing the committee to prepare this information and to be granted the opportunity to present it to the senate. She then began describing the origin of the committee formation and highlighted some quotes from previous committee members that were mainly composed of frustration about Oracle.
- She then talked about the charge of the committee, and that it consisted of mitigating concerns on how to use university resources more efficiently and trying to understand why the administrative culture has not been positive. Co-chair Greene said that the committee realized they needed to work closely with staff and administrators to make progress, so they recruited staff and faculty members to make up the existing committee and subcommittees.
- Co-chair Greene went on to say that the committee identified the pain points amongst the committee charges and then split up task force members into groups accordingly (purchasing and procurement, hiring/contract work, grants/administration/budgets, travel, and information technology). The committee then eventually received a total of 463 comments from 125 different individuals from every college and school at Vanderbilt.
- Co-chair Greene then went on to highlight certain findings outlined in the committee's executive summary including the loss of faculty morale, support regarding submitting large grants, not being able

to track how much money they have for grants at a given time, difficulty accessing certain elements in Oracle, countless purchasing approvals taking place, risk mitigation, lack of trust towards faculty by administration, and the existing barriers to communication between administrative staff and faculty.

- Co-chair Greene closed by discussing some of the perceived threats and unintended consequences of the infrastructure surrounding research and scholarship which include loss to faculty in grant-based disciplines, loss of staff, practices put in place to work around poorly functioning systems, graduate assistant performing tasks that used to be done by staff, funds being misplaced, faculty so desperate for administrative help that they are hiring family members/friends and paying out of their own pockets, expectations of faculty members getting specific certifications without providing information to know if they are correct or not, and concern with tightening cybersecurity with minimal faculty involvement.
- Lastly, she touched on opportunities from positive movements at the university, including faculty concerns for departmental staff well-being, current leadership respecting research/scholarship/creative expression as critical to the university, recognition that the university's real potential for reputational growth lies in research and graduate education, and faculty and administrators have proven to work well together to streamline processes.

Chair Magnuson opened the floor for discussion.

- Comment by voting senator:
 - Expressed appreciation of the work and said that this was the first time that senators were explained the obstacles that faculty face on a daily basis. Expressed how important this report is and gave thanks for putting it all together and presenting it, as the university needs an infrastructure of support.
- Question by voting senator:
 - Asked the likelihood of going back to having departmental secretaries. They said how faculty have found it extremely difficult to clarify who oversees what in certain departments.
 - Answer:
 - This question will be addressed later in the meeting.
- Comment by voting senator:
 - Mentioned that everything touched on in the report involving research grants is also true with training grants. This senator said they have spent at least 150 hours combing through their grant line by line because things were done wrong, people were paid when they should not have been, etc.
- Comment/question by voting senator:
 - Asked if the committee identified any distinct differences between the effectiveness and what is working/not working at Vanderbilt versus at Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC).
 - Answer:
 - This was outside the scope of the task force. Co-Chair Greene stated that the task force knows some best practices that are working at VUMC, as some of the Vanderbilt staff have moved over there to work. She said that there are clearly things going on at VUMC making it a more attractive place to work compared to the university.

Chair Magnuson thanked co-chairs Greene and Palmeri, as well as the rest of the task force for their hard work and presentation, then proceeded to the next agenda item.

Old Business

There was no old business.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

New Business

There was no new business.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

Scheduled Remarks

Chair Magnuson turned the floor over to Provost Raver and Vice Chancellor for Finance, Information Technology and Chief Financial Officer Brett Sweet.

Provost Raver:

- Expressed thanks to TFAE and gratitude for these efforts and insights into all the data, interviews, analysis, etc. She exclaimed that opportunities ahead are also recognized, and leadership really sees the research on graduate education components as a tremendous area of growth. Provost Raver said that leadership cannot move forward with this until all the wear/tear provided in the report is addressed and corrected. She knows how much training and research grants can be slowed by administrative tasks. Provost Raver added that in terms of the magnitude of the committee's findings, a sense of partnership was recognized (ex. administrative members and faculty amongst TFAE).
- Provost Raver then explained how she sees the administrative issues falling into four broad categories. These include process and systems that undergird faculty research and grants management the culture and communication, sense of trust and value put into our administrative partners (in terms of fiscal and business processes in terms of research), policies that adhere to research (how can they be simplified), and staffing in general (sizing of research staff, support for them so they feel valued).
- Emphasized ways she's been impressed on the spirit of collaboration at Vanderbilt, especially as it relates to reporting (money reporting, grant portfolios). Provost Raver reiterated that leadership hears this loud and clear and knows how essential it is to address. It also highlights the way in which shared governance dialogue (listening and responding) can be productive as we move forward.

Chair Magnuson turned the floor over to Vice Chancellor Brett Sweet.

Brett Sweet:

- Said that the point of this presentation is to give a highlighted overview of the 119-page report, as well as actionable items that everyone can work on. Vice Chancellor Sweet mentioned that the report shows 70-80 areas that leadership can focus on, and that the report can be built on when new action items may arise. He then described how he and his team grouped the action items into 10 buckets consisting of 75 recommendations, which were then color-coded based on the level of difficulty each may take to address. Vice Chancellor Sweet then mentioned that he and his team can very easily address about two-thirds of these issues as they are decisions or policy changes, while one-quarter are a bit tougher as they are process issues.
- Vice Chancellor Sweet then moved into describing which groups would be able to address the observations and said that nearly half of them can be addressed by Purchasing and Payment Services (PPS) and Information Technology (IT). He then moved on to a graph that broke the observations down by level of difficulty to address, whilst still in the groupings of who can address them. He adds that about 47 of the 75 TFAE observations, or 62%, should be relatively easy to address.

- Vice Chancellor Sweet then mentioned a few early wins, some of which were closing-out grants, managing bad debt within grants, managing purchasing approvals, and more. He lastly described some pilot experiments that leadership would like to run such as awards celebrations for when major grants are published/finished, a concierge expense report service that will help people with particularly complicated expense reports and being able to look more easily at how much money one has for a grant rather than taking several steps to get there.

Provost Raver:

- Moving forward, in terms of committee work, they are exploring creating administrative effectiveness working group to investigate what best practices are comparative at other institutions and what advice is being offered by our large federal funding agencies. Some modern approaches to compliance, managing and onboarding best practices can help to do our work more effectively and efficiently. These conversations being transparent can be helpful, seeing as it is a shared goal. It is important that the data is shared as well, so it shows that the changes are being made and taken seriously. Being able to do a demo to demonstrate faculty member experience using the system with an admin by them could be helpful in supporting leadership's momentum on their decisions on moving forward.

Chair Magnuson opened the floor for questions directed towards Provost Raver and CFO Sweet.

- Comment by voting senator:
 - The most troubling part of report is the staff reporting structure, which is undermining the work of faculty and the university overall. The administrative environment is constantly saying things like, "why can't you do that?", "how can we do this together?", "how do we move beyond major roadblocks that shape our processes?"
 - Answer (Provost Raver):
 - Staffing structures are currently organized in a way that works well in some regards and not so well in others. We want to figure out the ways that we can best build trust and allocate leadership resources as best as possible. A key resource is professional development (staff having the opportunity to navigate new resources when they are given to the university) and the best practices that are developing amongst certain areas of research.
 - There is also an underlying sense of shared mission and trust between faculty and administrative staff, so that we can all get to know each other and share our commitment to helping the problem. It is meaningful to administrators to get to know those that they work with and make everything possible.
- Comment by voting senator:
 - It would be nice to have some administrative members who would work with VUMC to advocate on their behalf, as research investigators are not clinical and therefore are not made a top priority to VU or to VUMC.
 - Answer (Provost Raver):
 - Hears that this is a major hurdle for faculty (mentoring students for doctoral training at VU and VUMC). Navigating these interdisciplinary spaces holds so many opportunities. André Christie-Mizel knows of this problem and is striving to smooth these barriers with students being able to move back and forth.
 - Answer (CFO Brett Sweet):
 - As discussed with the EC earlier this week, there are two areas in particular that the separation would make significantly worse (grants and student workers). In these two arenas, can we create automated pipelines between the two? Programs on each side that allows us to transfer students back and forth. We can do this in a way that is different than our peers.

- Comment by voting senator:
 - Thank you for acknowledging the problem. Faculty wants to work on this together with you – this is a step forward on a very complicated issue.
- Comment by voting senator:
 - The EC represents faculty and historically speaking, deans have confided in EC the lack of access to faculty to handle challenging issues. We as faculty rely on our deans' access to the upper administration and I wanted to reiterate how crucial their role is.
 - Answer by Chancellor Diermeier:
 - This is a very important point. Communication with the deans is crucial, and it's important that they communicate with the provost and myself. The deans have an essential role in leading their specific areas and leading the university.
 - Having an initiative like the task force does to look to all these issues from a faculty perspective, and I am grateful that this work was undertaken. We are all in and committed to this, but this is a group effort that involves all of us. I like how we are tackling this, as it is completely essential. We want to create an environment where our faculty and students can thrive.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

Good of the Senate

Chair Magnuson opened the floor to questions/comments.

- Question by voting senator:
 - What will be the Senate and EC's role moving forward and providing updates to the faculty regarding steps that administration will be taking to address the TFAE report?
 - Answer by Chair Magnuson:
 - We are hearing this along with you – we need to have further discussions before I can give you an answer. We need to decide what structure the TFAE needs going forward regarding members, charges, and recommendations. This is a complicated topic, but the most important thing is the open discussion and being honest in dialogue.
 - Comment by voting senator:
 - I think it would be good by the end of the semester to have the EC inform the Senate of their plans to update faculty on the progress being made. I truly believe that to mitigate the concerns, it is important to show change happening and to express them to the Senate so members may report out to their faculty.

Before moving on to the next item of business, Chair Magnuson announced what senators should expect at each of the remaining Senate meetings this semester (March being committee reports, April not yet determined, and May being the election of new Senate leaders).

Adjournment

It was moved that the meeting should be adjourned. There was a second and the meeting adjourned at 5:23pm.



Ryan Middagh, Secretary
Faculty Senate Vice Chair

March 3, 2022

Date of Approval