Minutes for Vanderbilt University Faculty Senate
September 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2021, Meeting

**Attendees**


**Ex-officio members in attendance:** Alex Sevilla, André Churchwell, Ben Harris, Brett Sweet, Cleo Rucker, Daniel Diermeier, Eric Kopstain, G.L. Black, John Lutz, Kathy Gould, Padma Raghavan, Steve Ertel, Tracey George, and Vanessa Beasley.

**Ex-officio members absent:** Anders Hall, Candice Lee, David Raiford, Donald Brady, Gordon Bernard, Jennifer Pietenpol, John Penn, Nathan Green, and Ruza Shellaway.


**Call to Order**

A meeting of Vanderbilt Faculty Senate was held on September 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2021, 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 42 voting members of the Faculty Senate.

**Approval of Minutes**

Chair Magnuson motioned for approval of the minutes as circulated of the May 6\textsuperscript{th}, 2021, meeting. Chair Magnuson asked whether there were any corrections to the proposed minutes. No corrections were made.

Secretary Middagh confirmed that the minutes were approved (30 ayes, 0 nays, 4 abstentions).

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.
Report of the Executive Committee

Chair Magnuson remarked:

- Chair Magnuson discussed the demographic results of the survey sent out to all faculty senators, then moved to discuss his goals for this academic year of 2021-2022. He then explained the top issues of interest from faculty senate members based on the survey results, followed by what senators should expect at each meeting for this semester, as well as next semester. He then discussed the common goals that the senate should have for this academic year.

- Chair Magnuson introduced the chairs and co-chairs of each committee, as well as describing the goals of each committee individually (see Faculty Senate website). He then discussed the importance of having senate standing committees, as they enable information exchange between faculty and administration and play a critical role in shared governance at Vanderbilt.
  
  o Academic Policies & Services Committee: Chairs Adam Anderson and Queen Henry-Okafor
  o Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee: Chairs Johnathan Waters and Ji Hye Jung
  o Faculty Manual Committee: Chair Katherine Friedman
  o Faculty Life Committee: Chairs Katherine Hartmann and ML Sandoz
  o Grievances Committee: Chair Catherine McTamaney
  o Senate Affairs Committee: Chairs Debra Friedman and Cindy Reinhart-King
  o Strategic Planning and Academic Freedom Committee: Chair Saralyn Williams
  o Student Life Committee: Chairs Sandra Rosenthal and Alissa Hare

- Chair Magnuson moved on to discuss how the faculty senate information flow functions. He explained how standing committees and ad hoc committees report to the faculty senate office, which then report to Vanderbilt University and Vanderbilt University Medical Center, and how this flow process is currently not very efficient. He then introduced the idea of committees working more closely with specific administrative offices, and how this could improve document management as well as flow of communication. He then asked the committees to explore linkages to where they get their information, and to define how administrative and faculty roles will stay protected and distinct.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

Chancellor Remarks

Chair Magnuson turned the floor over to Chancellor Diermeier.

Chancellor Diermeier remarked:

- Chancellor Diermeier thanked Past Chair McTamaney and Past Vice Chair Harris for their work last year and stated his excitement to work with Chair Magnuson and Vice Chair Middagh this year. He recounted university experiences for students this past week, including move-in, as they got to give the sophomores a move-in experience that was missed last year due to COVID-19. He discussed how wonderful the move-in process was, watching everyone all over campus work together (volunteers, families, students, faculty). He also said that Vanderbilt had the opportunity this year to bring in new faculty, and how his hopes about these faculty members were vastly exceeded. He explained that about 82% of faculty jobs in the computer science department were accepted, which was unheard of at Vanderbilt. He exclaimed his excitement for the opportunities this academic year.
• Chancellor Diermeier then went on to explain how the Delta Variant is negatively impacting the University, as well as the recent hurricanes. He stated that the university needs to envision how its mission will guide it through any issues this year, just like how we proved we could handle it last year. He also discussed the university being able to give 2020 and 2021 graduates a graduation ceremony, and how he is thankful that we were able to pull this off in 2-3 months, twice, under COVID-19 protocols and more.

• Chancellor Diermeier explained how we will not deviate from the norms we have now been able to put in place and the university will continue to work with the medical center and adapt our approaches throughout this year. Also, he shared how there will always be things that we did not foresee. He was confident that the decision processes used last year will help guide us through this year once again.

• Lessons we learned from COVID-19:
  • If we are united, we can move mountains. We all had to step up and do what we had to do, together through a common set of values.
  • We can operate at a high level of metabolism (make decisions quicker, accept that there is a risk). There is no certainty in this world, and we need to be comfortable with this. We were able to operate extremely successfully last year, and we will continue to do so this year.
  • We did this our own way – we charted our own path. We made decisions that were best for Vanderbilt, while following other universities, but also not looking over our shoulders to blindly follow others. We need to have confidence in what we are doing (with a sense of confidence in who we are).

Chair Magnuson opened the floor for comments/questions.

• Question: Brought up how they liked hearing from Pam Jones about the contact-tracing team, and how well the team have been doing.
  o Chancellor Diermeier: Our plan is to get that information launched by next week.

• Question: In the context of higher inflation, why did the faculty not get raises these past couple years?
  o Chancellor Diermeier: We made the conscious decision to get rid of raises, as it allowed us to keep a vast majority of university employees. 1 in 8 jobs in higher education have been lost in the past year. At Vanderbilt there were minimal cuts to jobs, pay, and benefits, to preserve the jobs of our employees, and raises were sacrificed due to this decision. We are the only other university to do this besides Princeton.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

Standing Committee Reports
Chair Magnuson called for reports from the standing committees.

No reports were made.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

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 remarked:

- Chair Magnuson mentioned how Provost Raver was unable to attend the meeting today.
- Town hall conversations were hosted by Provost Raver and Chancellor Diermeier. Chair Magnuson said that he is optimistic about our progress this upcoming year.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

**Good of the Senate**

Chair Magnuson opened the floor to comments.

Chair Magnuson announced he would like to use the Good of the Senate portion of meetings for open discussion amongst Senators.

Questions/Comments:

- Question: How long do committee members who have been appointed have to tell that they cannot fulfill their duties? Will committee co-chairs be notified about their duties soon? Mentioned how ‘.edu’ emails have not been working for medical center employees.
  - Chair Magnuson: We put together the committees in certain ways to incorporate broad representation across Vanderbilt.
- Comment: If the polar vortex (COVID-19) happens again this year, will there be some sort of daycare for faculty that have children? States that if daycares and Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) are closed, then Vanderbilt should be closed as well.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

**Adjournment**

It was moved that the meeting should be adjourned. There was a second and the meeting adjourned at 5:21pm.

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Ryan Middagh, Secretary  
Faculty Senate Vice Chair

October 7, 2021

Date of Approval