Minutes for Vanderbilt University Faculty Senate
November 4th, 2021, Meeting

Attendees


Ex-officio members in attendance: Vanessa Beasley, Donald Brady, Doug Christiansen, Daniel Diermeier, Tracey George, Kathy Gould, Ben Harris, Eric Kopstain, John Lutz, John Penn, Jennifer Pietenpol, Cybele Raver, and Cleo Rucker.

Ex-officio members absent: Gordon Bernard, André Churchwell, Steve Ertel, Nathan Green, Anders Hall, Candice Lee, Padma Raghavan, David Raiford, Alex Sevilla, Ruby Shellaway and Brett Sweet.

Guests in attendance: Holly Algood, Ray Blind, Jordan Bowen, Jessica Brotherson, Nancy Carrasco, Mary Dietrich, Kent Dolezal, Christin Essin, Queen Henry-Okafor, David Hess, Martha Jones, Jeff Johnston, Rolanda Lister, Rene Marois, Stacey McCarty, Dan Morgan, Bunmi Olatunji, Belinda Otukolo-Saltibain, Sohee Park, Mariann Piano, Bethan Rhoten, Claus Schneider, Sharon Shields, Kosha Tucker, Tiffany Tung, Dawn Turton, Daniel Usner, Markus Voehler, Gilman Whiting, Sheree Wright, and Chengwen Zhou.

Call to Order
A meeting of Vanderbilt Faculty Senate was held on November 4th, 2021, on Zoom. It began at 4:10pm 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

Approval of Minutes
Chair Magnuson motioned for approval of the minutes as circulated of the October 7th, 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. (34 ayes, 0 nays, 5 abstentions).
Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

Report of the Executive Committee
Chair Magnuson remarked:

- Chair Magnuson discussed topics that the executive committee has been working on. These included:
  - Pre-meeting discussions with guest speakers
  - Meetings with Chancellor Diermeier and Provost Raver
  - Discussions on chemical safety
  - Discussions about off-hour access to parking
  - Planning for December Faculty Senate meeting
  - Communication with TFAE chairs and co-chairs
  - Preparation for the upcoming BOT presentation
  - Preparation for another senator survey
  - Launch of spring faculty awards

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

Chancellor Remarks
Chair Magnuson turned the floor over to Chancellor Diermeier.

Chancellor Diermeier remarked:

- Things have been improving regarding COVID-19 at Vanderbilt, and he hopes this will continue into next semester. Diermeier mentioned traveling a lot lately, communicating and conversing with Vanderbilt alumni. He said there were extremely positive conversations, and a lot of gratitude expressed towards faculty.

Chair Magnuson turned the floor over to Provost Raver.

Provost Raver remarked:

- Provost Raver shared comments about last month’s senate meeting:
  - She said that October’s Faculty Senate meeting served as a great forum for recognizing Vanderbilt’s strengths and challenges regarding research. Provost Raver mentioned that taking research to the next level is one of her highest priorities as Provost. She mentioned that she has been working extensively with other members from the Office of the Provost to learn about the most prominent issues of grant administration, which she views as one of the greatest hurdles in winning national recognition and grant funding for our research and creative expression. Provost Raver ended this summary with saying how the Office of Research is planning to announce how they plan on making these hurdles reduce, soon.

- Provost Raver shifted to talking about today’s meeting, regarding teaching and education.
  - She highlighted that she views teaching as central to the university’s mission and common purpose. Training the next generation of leaders is one of the most important bottom lines at the university. Provost Raver then mentioned that students are key collaborators of the university in pursuing innovative work and scholarly inquiry. She highlights the belief that teaching undergraduate students is also central to Vanderbilt’s purpose, and that she is deeply
inspired by faculty’s dedication in training the students even outside of the classroom. Provost Raver has been impressed with the innovation in teaching, even throughout COVID-19, and the ability to invent new ways of teaching - operating at a higher-level than she ever thought was possible.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

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

Remarks by Faculty Manual Chair Friedman:
Chair Friedman reported that there is a proposal to update the faculty manual:
- The tenure process at Blair has been moved to the Promotion and Tenure Review Committee (PTRC).
- The change been approved by Chancellor Diermeier, Provost Raver, and the Board of Trust.
- In December, the faculty senate will discuss and vote to approve the two changes to the text of the faculty manual.
  - Language describing a separate process for Blair will be removed from the manual.
  - Faculty representation on the PTRC will be expanded to include someone from Blair and someone from the School of Nursing. Nursing became part of the PTRC process years ago and it was an oversight that representation was not added.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

Ad Hoc Committee Reports
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 turned the floor over to the scheduled guest speakers.

Remarks by Vanessa Beasley (Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of Residential Faculty):
Vice Provost Beasley highlighted a section of the 2014 academic strategic plan focused on learning and discovery and explained that our mission requires constantly innovating and trying new things, striving for our work to stand out, and equitable access for all to the educational process. Vice Provost Beasley then discussed some examples of innovation in education at Vanderbilt:

- Undergraduate business minor of Owen (launched in fall of 2017), where students take five classes from research-active faculty at Owen for their core classes, and electives to fill the rest of their degree requirements. Vice Provost Beasley says that Vanderbilt has never done this before, and it is a great way to bring the best faculty minds of research among to the classroom.
- Residential colleges, where faculty-lead programming (inviting faculty to live by the students) is used to focus on how these interactions are distinct. The innovation here is the faculty-student relationship, which encourages both parties to listen, learn, and have confidence when it comes to looking into something new.
- Learning assistants, where undergraduate students in STEM disciplines can come back and get involved with teaching/coaching/peer mentoring students that are currently in the classes, which helps these undergraduate students learn how to be leaders in the classroom.

Vice Provost Beasley discussed examples of quality and continuous improvement and said that the university should continuously be asking ourselves how we can get better. Some examples of continuous improvement at Vanderbilt she mentioned are:

- Global safety, which is how make safety assessments are made. Knowing all details of any hospital where we have students working is very important.
- Health professions advisory office, which has ended up on top 10 lists that discuss the overall number of students that Vanderbilt is placing in medical schools, especially the number of placements in top medical schools and the number of historically underrepresented minority students placed in top schools as well.
- Trans-institutional programs including Immersion Vanderbilt, which provides opportunities for undergads to work with faculty from all 10 of the schools and colleges at the university, and Bass Military Scholars program, which is designed for veterans who want to continue their professional education at Vanderbilt.

Vice Provost Beasley then mentioned how important access is to academic support. She gave some examples of initiatives that the university has taken to ensure access and support. These include:

- Campus Connector program, which includes 90+ academic affairs staff members who volunteer as a point of contact for every undergraduate student on campus, answering questions about anything students may need and referring them to campus partners.
- English Learning Center, which helps students for whom English is a second language.
- Immersion Vanderbilt, which communicates the vision of the faculty/mentor relationship with students. This can accelerate access for first-generation, low-income students that do not come to our campus already, having such networks.

Q: Can you please elaborate on the changes happening with the library?

A: Vice Provost Beasley said the plan is to think of libraries as active research support centers for students and faculty and need to make sure faculty/students know how to access these resources. Being proactive in offering students the skills that are helpful for weighing evidence, as this is important as a tool for citizenship, broadly defined.

Remarks by Camilla Benbow (Dean of Education and Human Development for Peabody College):

- Dean Benbow mentioned how Peabody College shares the same goals and aspirations as all the other schools, however their scholarship is focused on learning and development from Pre-K onward. She mentioned how Peabody brings a learning and development spectrum to the education process.
Dean Benbow discussed pedagogy, the Peabody approach, which consists of principles of human development. She said that the goal of this at Peabody is to prepare students not only with domain knowledge, but with the cognitive tools that will serve them over a lifetime. Dean Benbow also states that Peabody is relatively unique – offering undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs, which utilizes each faculty member’s talents differentially.

Dean Benbow mentioned the topic of tenured faculty at Peabody. She said that Peabody faculty submitted more than 200 research proposals, requesting more than $200 million in funding. Total research expenditures have exceeded $52 million. Dean Benbow then mentioned non-tenure track faculty and that they care deeply about students and want them to succeed. These faculty members teach over 1,500 different undergraduate majors, making up about 70% of the total faculty at Peabody, but teaching over 80% of our students (in 2020-2021).

Dean Benbow laid out an idea of creating an Associate Dean of Teaching. She said that Peabody has an obligation to faculty to support both their research talents, and therefore Peabody is considering structural changes to Dean’s office. This new associate Dean for teaching to would complement the existing Associate Deans at Peabody.

Q: Can you please describe examples of synergy between Peabody and other colleges at Vanderbilt?
   o A: Peabody could not do its job if they did not have these collaborative and cross-disciplinary work efforts. Peabody works with public policy, human and organizational development, Arts and Sciences, Blair college of music, educational neuroscience, and more. For most Peabody majors, half of their courses are in A&S.

Q: What type of duties will the new Dean of teaching have?
   o A: Helping faculty with teaching, accessing resources, and carrying out scholarships of teaching. This new Dean will not consider curriculum or program development but will be more concerned with supporting the faculty side of teaching.

Remarks by André Christie-Mizell (Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School):

Vice Provost Christie-Mizell mentioned the topic of mentoring being a key issue in graduate education across the country. He defined mentorship as close individualized relationships between faculty members and their students, where faculty can provide students with resources, social and emotional support, identify transitioning, and more. Vice Provost Christie-Mizell then described the goals for mentoring at Vanderbilt as developing the system so that all students have access to excellent mentoring happening at VU, and that students truly understand the process of mentoring.

Vice Provost Christie-Mizell discussed the next steps for improving mentoring at VU, which include more training and programming for students and faculty on mentoring and exploring opportunities to connect both parties in dialogue around effective mentoring. Vice Provost Christie-Mizell mentioned that a general mentoring resource guide is currently in its beginning stages of creation.

Q: How do we compare with peer institutions regarding mentoring programs?
   o A: We have all the necessary programs, but we just need to work on making it consistent and spreading it across all students.

Q: Are higher-level educational students involved in the process as mentors?
   o A: Yes, there is peer mentoring that happens. The graduate student council is interested in working with the graduate school.

Q: How are different graduate programs able to join the mentoring program?
   o A: This is very complicated as departments and disciplines vary – no one size fits all. Trying to meet with graduate programs now, to see how to best support faculty (over the life cycle of the graduate students).
Remarks by Kathy Gould (Senior Associate Dean for Biomedical Research, Education, and Career Development, School of Medicine):

- Senior Associate Dean Kathy Gould mentioned the BRET (Biomedical Research, Education and Training) Office of Career Development ASPIRE (Augmenting Scholar Preparation and Integration with Research-Related Endeavors) program for biomedical trainees in the School of Medicine at Vanderbilt, and that it was a coordinating center for all BEST (Biomedical Excellence for Safer Transfusion) institutions. She said this program included six inter-linked activities including trainee professional development and engagement, and they have integrated professional development of fundamental skills into the 1st year curriculum. They have also launched Badgr micro-credentialing and participation in ASPIRE activities are recognized with specific badges.

- Senior Associate Dean Gould said that once students complete the three specific initiatives of equipping, exploring, and engaging, they are rewarded badges.

- Senior Associate Dean Gould discussed the tracking of program outcomes from 2006 to the present day, which include the publication of research and trainees taking on a variety of roles in academia, for-profit, government, and nonprofit organizations.

- Q: What are the challenges you foresee for biomedical education?
  - A: Revising the curriculum to focus on the acquisition of competencies including more quantitative skills needed for future life scientists.

- Q: Is there proof that the badge rewards work?
  - A: They are helpful for students in the achievement realm, but it is also important for the future employer to quickly determine what exactly a trainee did in their ASPIRE experience.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

Good of the Senate

Chair Magnuson opened the floor to comments.

- Q for Vice Provost André Christie-Mizell: how do you look at education?  
  - A: As producing leading-edge scholars and leaders. It is important that our students truly want to do this. I also look at it as adding ‘belonging’ to the EDI process.

- Q: Anyone want to comment on mental health at VU?
  - A: Provost team recognizes that students cannot learn if they are not well and feeling psychologically safe. There are so many resources, but if students do not know about them this does not matter. Knowing that somebody sees the students, is important to them. University counseling center and center for well-being are the most visited by students this academic year.
  - A: Mental health issues among students have exceeded previous years just this semester at Peabody. Students at Peabody and other programs are really struggling mentally. There have been students reaching out with concerns that they cannot be seen at the UCC and believe that services are not available at the level that they need.
  - A: A group of faculty students at the medical center worked as a group to draft a report with detail considering the mental health needs of students. In the report, there are a lot of recommendations and VUMC is beginning to implement these recommendations as we speak.
  - A: It is important that we begin to reframe the way that students are told they are ‘deficient’ or
‘Unhealthy.’

- A: Our students are still noting that they are having difficulty accessing support at the UCC. They are trying to access support but are being told that they must wait for 2 or more weeks.

- A: I care for students at the psychiatric hospital and have had a few students feel that the UCC was not meeting their needs, yet that is the main resource we refer them back to for follow-up. Increasing the resources or effectiveness of the UCC can be a focus for the mental health reform for students.

- A: Vice Provost Beasley shared Office of Student Care Coordination email.
  - The Student of Concern form is a great way to quickly get a student help when he/she may be in danger. They were fabulous – even on a Friday night.
  - Email (studentcare@vanderbilt.edu) to complete a Student of Concern form. It is monitored 24/7. Student of concern form is on ‘Dean of Students’ webpage.

Chair Magnuson proceeded to the next item of business.

Motion to adjourn meeting. There was a second.

**Adjournment**

It was moved that the meeting should be adjourned. There was a second and the meeting adjourned at 5:35pm.

December 9, 2021

Ryan Middagh, Secretary
Faculty Senate Vice Chair

Date of Approval