

2014-2015 Annual Report of the Faculty Senate

Michael G. Noll, President

The Faculty Senate met nine times during the 2014-2015 academic year and most of these meetings began with a Q&A session with President McKinney. During each meeting the statutory committees, the standing committees, and any existing special or ad hoc committee gave their reports to the Faculty Senate. The 2014-2015 academic year also saw a special session on February 26 in response to communication and shared governance issues at VSU. The minutes of each meeting (plus the report by the Executive Committee on the special session) can be found on our website (<http://www.valdosta.edu/administration/faculty-senate/minutes.php>).

Summary of Important Issues Addressed during the 2014-2015 Academic Year:

August 28, 2014 meeting:

- a) Events during the summer brought into question the state of academic freedom, email policies, and freedom of speech on campus. President McKinney addressed questions in regard to the controversial shut-down of Dr. Mark George's email account and in regard to funds belonging to the Mary Turner Project.
- b) Faculty Affairs Committee will take a closer look at sick-leave policies, particularly in regard to the possibility of applying accrued sick leave time toward retirement.

September 18, 2014 meeting

- a) The Faculty Senate remanded the question of the state of academic freedom and protected scholarly activism at VSU to the Faculty Affairs Committee.
- b) The Faculty Senate asked the Technology Committee to examine and update existing email policies at VSU and to bring them up to par with BOR and AAUP guidelines.
- c) The Faculty Senate discussed and unanimously passed a modified resolution to add a study abroad emphasis to VSU's strategic plan.

October 16, 2014 meeting

- a) President McKinney and Dr. Rogers discussed with the Faculty Senate the proposed FY 2016 budget (including expected cuts in state appropriations) plus FAQs in regard to the VSU Faculty Salary Model.
- b) The Faculty Senate unanimously passed a "Resolution on Sexual Harassment" in the context of the Sigma Nu incident at a VSU football game.
- c) Suggested changes to the guidelines of the Faculty Scholarship and Research Committee were unanimously accepted via affirmation by the Faculty Senate.

November 20, 2014 meeting

- a) The Faculty Senate supported by affirmation suggested changes by the Academic Committee to the Academic Renewal Policy to allow students to return earlier to VSU and finish their degrees.
- b) The Faculty Senate will be working on a resolution to sustain academic integrity and quality at VSU in the light of potential budget cuts and possible personnel decisions.

January 22, 2015 meeting

- a) The Faculty Senate passed a “Resolution on Sustaining Academic Integrity and Quality at VSU”.
- b) The Faculty Senate discussed the effectiveness and usefulness of SOIs and remanded the issue to the Educational Policies Committee.

February 19, 2015 meeting

- a) The interim VP for Finance and Administration (Traycee Martin) gave a report to the Faculty Senate on the FY 2016 budget and answered general questions in regard to VSU’s operating budget. Senators were encouraged to attend regular meetings of the Planning and Budget Council (<http://www.valdosta.edu/administration/planning-budget-council/>).
- b) The Faculty Senate approved the name change of the former “Minority and Diversity Committee” to “Diversity and Equity Committee”.

February 26, 2015 (Special Session)

- a) The Faculty Senate held a special session in response to recurring communication and shared governance issues at VSU which was open to all faculty and staff members.

March 19, 2015 Faculty Senate meeting

- a) The Faculty Senate approved a “Resolution Concerning A University System of Georgia Retiree Healthcare Strategy”.
- a) Based on the report by the Executive Committee on “Communication, Efficiency, and Shared Governance at VSU” (following the February 26 Special Session) President McKinney answered a number of questions he received prior to the meeting.

April 16, 2015 meeting

- a) Resignations by the Chief of Staff in late March and by President McKinney in early April were discussed. Moreover a brief bio of the interim President Cecil Staton was shared. Dr. Staton plans to make his first visit to our campus in late April.
- b) The Faculty Senate was informed about progress in regard to a new and more streamlined version of the VSU Statutes, plus the search for a new Chief of Police.

May 21, 2015 meeting

- a) Faculty Senate elections: Peggy Moch was elected as President-elect, Sean Lennon as Parliamentarian, and Bonni Cohen as Secretary.
- b) The Faculty Senate unanimously approved changes to the Faculty Senate Bylaws.
- c) The Faculty Senate approved a motion to let the Office of Institutional Research administer faculty evaluations of administrative positions (e.g. Department Heads, Deans, Provost, President)
- d) The Faculty Senate approved by affirmation changes to academic probation rules as proposed by the Academic Committee.
- e) The Faculty Senate approved the final exam schedule for 2015-2016 as proposed by the Academic Scheduling and Procedures Committee.
- f) It was reported that the President's Sustainability Committee voted in support of fossil fuel divestment, thereby affirming similar votes by the Environmental Issues Committee, the Faculty Senate, and the Student Government Association.
- g) The Faculty Senate approved the creation of an ad hoc committee (as proposed by the Educational Policies Committee / to be chaired by Steve Downing) to evaluate and improve currently used SOI models at VSU.
- h) Said Fares was nominated and approved as the General Faculty Representative to the Planning and Budget Council for the next two years.

Issues Carried Forward to the 2015-2016 Academic Year:

Committee on Committees (CoCo): Procedures and timelines of CoCo are outdated (last updated in 2008) and too cumbersome. CoCo needs to develop more simplified procedures and timelines in sync with new Faculty Senate bylaws, changed faculty sizes, and new college compositions.

Faculty Affairs Committee: Faculty Affairs Committee needs to continue its work on two issues: 1) Academic Freedom and 2) Sick Leave Policy. (Nancy Swanson agreed to chair the Sick-Leave subcommittee and Alicja Rieger agreed to chair the Academic Freedom subcommittee).

Institutional Planning Committee (IPC): The IPC needs to review policies and practices related to non-tenure-track faculty in 2015-16 in the context of declining enrollment figures and subsequent cuts in state appropriations, possibly leading to a push for more adjunct positions.

Educational Policies Committee: The committee will continue its analysis of the current SOI model used at VSU, its strengths and its weaknesses, and make recommendations to create a more effective, reliable and useful SOI model.

Technology Committee: The Technology Committee revised the Email Communication Policies at VSU. These revisions were approved by the committee and successfully presented and discussed at our May meeting. However, the Faculty Senate still needs to vote on the revised Email Communication Policies so that they can become official and can be shared with organization like F.I.R.E. (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education).