Council Minutes

Executive Committee of the Department Heads Council

325 Burruss Hall

8-9:30am

September 1, 2015

**Attending:** Stephanie Adams (Engineering Education); S. A. Ahmed (Biomed Sciences & Pathology); Jackie Bixler (Foreign Languages & Lit.); Kevin Concannon (School of Visual Arts); David Cox (Chemical Engineering); Greg Daniel (Small Animal Clinical Sciences); Ron Fricker (Statistics); Paul Herr (Marketing); Matt Hulver (HNFE); Nancy McGehee (Hospitality and Tourism Management); Rick Rudd (Agriculture & Extension Education); Bob Smith (Sustainable Biomaterials); Joel Snodgrass (Fish and Wildlife Conservation); Anisa Zvonkovic (Human Development); Jack Finney (Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs); Thanassis Rikakis (Executive Vice President and Provost).

- Not in attendance: Henri DeHan (Architecture & Design); Nancy Ross (Geosciences);

Rapporteur: Maureen McCusker

**Welcome**

**Welcome from Department Heads (“DH”) Council Chairs:** Chairs welcomed attending executive committee members.

**Breakfast discussions:** The first discussion involved what to get for breakfast on Tuesdays. It was decided that each DEPARTMENT HEAD will donate $20 for the entire year in order to pay for coffee and breakfast.

**Dr. Finney Welcome and Update on New Provost:** Dr. Finney reported that working with the new Provost, Dr. Thanassis Rikakis, has been “energizing, very interesting.” He has very much enjoyed it. Dr. Finney explained that the Provost will be entering the meeting shortly.

**Dr. Finney Update re: BOV Meeting:** Dr. Finney discussed the BOV meeting in Northern Virginia, on Monday, August 31. He explained, “nothing very exciting took place” on the Board’s agenda, so they spent the day touring campuses. First they toured the Arlington campus. They received several demonstrations and heard presentations from key faculty and staff at the Arlington campus, then they went to Falls Church campus for a presentation by Kenneth Wong. They then went to the Alexandria Campus to hear some speakers from current students and alumni who discussed how their schooling at VT Alexandria Campus has propelled them in their careers.

**Dr. Finney Update re P & T Committee:** The promotion and tenure process will involve governance for changes that were recommend by the University P & T Committee last year. Specifically, the discussion will be what information will be shared with the external reviewers, process for choosing external reviewers, and information to be provided to each candidate as the process proceeds. Dr. Finney believes that these suggestions should to go through governance. The 2015-2016 guidelines do incorporate some minor changes, but some of the larger ones will be incorporated in the next cycle.
• **DH Question:** What about international reviewers?
  - **Dr. Finney Response:** Jack thinks maybe we just rely on the DH to tell them why they selected someone for the committee.

• **DH Question:** Will there be any guidance on requests for honoraria?
  - **Dr. Finney Response:** Yes, that is something that we need to bring up. Payment requests have ranged from $500-$1000. This is a trend it seems in more in small/private schools. Dr. Finney will ensure this is part of the discussion. He would not want to ban it and then find out that it is a common practice in several fields. He does also not want to encourage it.

**Dr. Finney Update re: Start Up Package Study:** One of the government bodies is conducting a research study on the return on investment on start-up packages for faculty members. VT has been notified by the state that it will be participating in it. UVA has already gone though this, and VT will be receiving a copy of UVA’s results. This will allow us to make some comments and changes to various terms, such as “what constitutes ‘return.’”

**Dr. Finney Update re: the NAS:** National Association of Scholars, a highly conservation academic organization, has learned that our guidelines now include 7 prompts about faculty members’ contributions to “Diversity and Inclusion.” They have posted an article comparing the old vs. new guidelines, highlighting how shocking it is that VT is asking what faculty are doing to promote diversity and inclusion. The Richmond Times Dispatch has picked up on it, and our new Provost will be responding.

**Begin Q & A Session with Dr. Finney.**

**DH Comment:** The area by Surge is very bad, and it’s extremely dangerous. She is very worried about someone is getting hurt.
  - **Dr. Finney Response:** He thinks it is going to get worse before it gets better. Sherwood Wilson is coming in the near future to discuss some of these problem areas.

**DH Question:** What can you tell us about the new building? There is talk that it is only going to have 15 classrooms.
  - **Dr. Finney Response:** He is unsure of the exact number of rooms, but the classrooms are going to be of the size we need. There will be some flexibility in the size of the building at a semester building (e.g. Spring we need some smaller classes, but Fall we need the larger ones)
  - **Dr. Finney Response:** He will try to get Ken Smith to put together an executive summary of the space.

**DH Question:** Is it true there is also supposed to be a Dean’s Summit where they discuss space?
  - **Dr. Finney Response:** We know there are lots of underused spaces that could be redefined, but someone needs to take on the Study. We have new leadership who would likely be responsive, but someone else needs to conduct the research.

**Dr. Finney Announcement re: Merit Process:** Faculty should have received their new salary increases.
DH Comment: “I have not received one complaint or comment from faculty about merit increases,” so thank you to the administration!

Dr. Finney Announcement re: FAR: Dr. Finney is encouraging people to move to calendar cycle FAR. To be on the schedule that Dr. Finney envisions, FARs will be completed by the faculty by the end of January. Then he wants to take the merit increases to the June BOV meeting, so that they will be ready by July.

DH Question: what percentile ranking are we at now?

- Dr. Finney Response: VT is 35% among our SCHEV peers, which is up from 27% last year.

9:08am: Enter Thanassis Rikakis

Meeting with Provost Thanassis Rikakis

Introductions to Provost: Each member presented him/herself. Dr. Adams and Dr. Zvonkovic discussed the goals of the DHEC meetings and how meetings will typically unfold.

- Meetings are 90 minutes. The first 60 minutes will be discussions with the DHEC only. The last 30 minutes will be for Dr. Finney and the speakers to present and information and to receive comments and questions from the DH.
- Each month, there will be different speakers and administrators attending the forums to discuss each of their specialties.
- Another goal is for the Provost to “take a temperature” of the Department Heads.
- Dr. Rikakis Comment: He is very happy this forum is in place, and he thinks it will be very useful. Also, he appreciates the ability to “take the temperature of this University at different spots.”

Dr. Rikakis Announcement re: Department Meetings: Dr. Rikakis explained one of the ideas he had: There are about 60 Departments at Virginia tech. He would like to attend each of the Departments with Jack Finney and spend an hour with each one to launch the relationship. The goal is to have all 60 visited within 12 months. Department Heads were receptive.

Dr. Rikakis Announcement regarding: issues to discuss within the next few years:

- Decision-making: Recently, a faculty senate representative brought up the need to involve everyone in decision-making processes.
- Growth & University Profile: This is a prime opportunity to think about what we want the overall profile of the University to be in terms of graduate, undergraduate, and faculty. Then, once established (hopefully by Spring 2016), then we can ask the academic structure to map itself into that (i.e. where do you see yourself in this plan). His hope is that we can create a consensus about the entire university and how each of the academic groups on campus into the profile, then aggregate them.
  - Dr. Rikakis explained what he meant by “profile”:
    - What do we want VT to look like in terms of composition?
      - Ex: One health
    - Perhaps it includes gender, race, income. What is the right balance of people that we need in order to achieve the type of research goals we’ve set?
• E.g. “Envisioning VT beyond boundaries”
  o **DH comment:** This is an interesting idea, but we need to consider the level of analysis; Perhaps this is something that should be done at the college level.
  o **DH comment:** We need to think about other elements, such as students and faculty with disabilities.
    ▪ Provost agreed that these are exactly the types of elements we need in a profile.

• **Dr. Rikakis comment regarding gifts and “destination areas”**: We need to raise the bar with regard to what “gift” means.
  o He believes we can maximize our gift donations when we create a story of Virginia Tech defined by, or branded by, specific “destination areas.”
  o Currently, VT is very athletics driven, and athletics brings in lots of gifts. If VT creates other “destination areas” to which people can donate, he believes these similar gifts will come in for those participating areas.
    ▪ “Autonomous systems” could be one type of destination, for example.
  o The hope would be that these areas are cross-disciplinary and span many different areas.
    ▪ For example, one could get a major in “autonomous systems” in different degrees.

• **Dr. Rikakis Set a Goal:** Within the next 6 months, find Virginia Tech 5 “destination areas” that people agree upon and divert energy to developing (“tackle”) those 5 areas.
  o **Criteria**
    ▪ They are to be developed from the ground up (i.e. from the faculty/staff/departments/students to the administration)
    ▪ **DH comment:** one area that we have not pursued but could be one is the Latino population.
  o **DH response:** The whole STEM issue is a mess, mainly because there is no point person. So if we want to do this, there needs to have one point person to lead this endeavor. She likes the idea of destination areas, but the leadership for it is lacking.
  o **Dr. Rikakis Response:** In response to STEM, he agrees. He’s not on board with just adding new letters; that’s aggregation, not integration. With regard to who will be the leadership: he does not want to have leadership decide. He wants the people of the University, themselves, to find the destination areas. He wants leadership to step back and let the departments self-integrate and to cluster themselves, then let the most potent clusters prevail.

• **Dr. Rikakis:** The idea is for the clusters to present what resources they need for their destination areas and then make a proposal for those resources. The Provost and the CFO will transition from the decision makers to the watchdogs.
  o **Timeline:** to publish the 5 goals of “VT Beyond Boundaries” in the Spring and to have numbers attached to them then.