**MINUTES**

**University Council meeting**

**May 4, 2017**

**Virginia Biotechnology Center, Ball Conference Room**

A meeting of the University Council was held on Thursday, May 4, 2017, at 3 p.m. at the Virginia Biotechnology Center’s Ball Conference Room.

The following members and alternates were present:

**Statutory:** Michael Rao, Gail Hackett, Liz Brooks, Cathleen Burke, Matt Conrad, Sybil Halloran, Frank Macrina

**Administration:** Doug Boudinot, Cecil Drain, Jean Giddens, Ed Grier

**Faculty:** Salvatore Agosta, Jose Alcaine, Holly Alford, Gloria Bazzoli, Sama Bilbao y Leon, Alisa Brewer, TyRuben Ellingson, Joshua Galligan, Greg Greenhalgh, Melissa Jamerson, Myung Jin, Allen Lee, Susan Lindner, Donna McClish, Libby McDaniel, Victoria Menzies, June Nicholson, Joan Pellegrini, Mary Secret, Carlos Smith, Patricia Sobczak, Scott Street, Fernando Tenjo-Fernandez, Jennifer Wayne, Heinz Roland Weistroffer, Blue Wooldridge, Shijun Zhang, Kristen Zimmerman

**Classified Staff:** Valerie Carter, Christine Costello, Austin Higgs, Lauren Katchuk, Sania Marcoccia, Evandro Moreno, Connie Peyton, JaBari Scott, Eileen Truax, Felita Tucker-Battle

**Students:** Kejdi Abazi, Katie Clark, Christine Galligan, Destinee Moragne, Christopher Richardson

**Ex-Officio**: Kevin Harris, Alex Henson, Deborah Noble-Triplett, John Ulmschneider

**Guests**: Susan Carkeek, Sandro da Rocha, Brendan Dwyer, Stephen Fong, Brittany Gerdaer, Carol Ann Irby, Jacqueline Kniska, Pat McMahon,James McPaul, Alison Miller, Tom Myrick, Tony Rapchick, Thomas Roper, Brian Shaw, Douglas Sweet, Meredith Weiss, Vamsi Yadavalli

**1. President’s Report**

Dr. Rao opened the meeting by discussing his recent trip to the Middle East, where he attended the VCU Qatar commencement ceremony. He noted how the VCU campus in Qatar has given us a strong international presence and improved international partnerships.

Dr. Rao also reminded attendees that Virginia Senator Tim Kaine will serve as the speaker for VCU Commencement on May 12, and that the school will have 5,500 graduates this spring: one of its largest classes ever. He also noted that VCU graduates more Virginians than any other school, and that the university’s graduating classes are among the most diverse in the country.

Dr. Rao reported that ground had been broken on the School of Allied Health building on the preceding Saturday. This building will provide a singular home for VCU’s allied health units.

Dr. Rao also reported that a national search for a Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations is underway. Karol Gray will chair the search, and Dr. Ed Grier has stepped in to fill the role on an interim basis.

A search for a new Vice President for Research and Innovation has begun as well, which VCU Provost, Dr. Gail Hackett, will chair. Dr. Rao thanked Dr. Frank Macrina for his previous service in this role. Dr. Rao also noted that a search for a Vice President for Inclusive Excellence will launch soon as well, thanking Dr. Wanda Mitchell for her work in this role previously as well as Dr. Kevin Allison and Dr. Rosalyn Hargraves for serving on an interim basis during the transition.

Dr. Rao concluded by thanking Susan Carkeek for her work on the VCU Human Resource Redesign.

**2. Approval of minutes**

Minutes from the University Council meetings held March 2, 2017, and April 6, 2017, were both approved.

**3. Committee reports and action items**

**Academic Affairs University Policy Committee Report** – Dr. Deborah Noble-Triplett began the committee’s report by introducing Dr. Joan Pellegrini, AAUP Committee member, to review two proposed Ph.D. programs up for discussion at the meeting.

***New Degree Program Proposals***

1. *Proposal to create a new Ph.D. program in Chemical and Life Sciences Engineering (presented by Joan Pellegrini) –* This proposal would create a standalone Chemical and Life Sciences doctoral program, a field of study that currently just exists as a concentration within the Ph.D. in Engineering program. Proposed to start in fall 2018, Dr. Pellegrini noted this program would meet growing student interest in the area and enhance marketability of graduates, given growing private sector demand for training in chemical and life science engineering and its related fields. **This proposal was approved.**
2. *Proposal to create a new Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Engineering (presented by Joan Pellegrini) –* A partnership between the School of Engineering and the School of Pharmacy, this program would train students in engineering processes related to the design, development, manufacturing and regulation of pharmaceutical products. Also proposed to start in fall 2018, Dr. Pellegrini noted that this program would be the first standalone program of its kind in the nation. **This proposal was approved.**

***Policy proposals:***

1. *Computer and network use policy (presented by June Nicholson) –* Currently an interim policy and discussed at the University Council meeting in April, this proposal sought to move forward with making that policy permanent. **This proposal was approved.**
2. *Annual assessment of faculty performance (presented by June Nicholson) –* This proposal seeks to update VCU’s policy on faculty assessment, which Nicholson noted had not been revised since 1984. This updated policy would provide an appeals process for anyone who wants to comment on the assessment they receive. There was also language added, advising department chairs on how best to take course evaluations into account when assessing faculty members. **This proposal was approved.**

There was a motion made to adjust the language of the policy, to add more emphasis to student evaluations in assessments. **This motion was approved.**There was also a motion to amend the policy in situations where a committee is called to review an appeal, and the dean is the direct supervisor of the appealing faculty member. The motion asks that, in such circumstances, the committee be formed by peer faculty vote, rather than appointed by the dean. **This motion was approved.**There was also a motion to have any faculty response to a file become part of the official record. **This motion was approved.**

1. *Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation for Individuals with Disabilities policy (presented by June Nicholson) –* This proposal seeks to make permanent an interim revision of VCU’s Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation for Individuals with Disabilities policy. The revision, made effective on an interim basis in March 2017, sets out a timeline and procedure for student grievances as well as sets out accessibility guidelines for digital materials. **This policy was approved.**
2. *University Human Resources System policy (presented by June Nicholson) –* This proposed policy, to be called Working @ VCU: “Great Place” HR Policies, provides a major revision and restructuring of the VCU personnel system. Nicholson acknowledged the role public feedback played in shaping the revisions of this policy, calling it one of the most discussed and vetted policies in VCU’s recent history.

Nicholson noted that major provisions of this policy include the formation of a new employee group – university and academic professionals – that would integrate much of the current classified staff and A&P faculty personnel, and removing annual contracts for all but senior level administration.

A University Council representative voiced concerns that there was no plan for how to finance these changes, and that there would be no funding for this initiative. Susan Carkeek, Senior Advisor to VCU President Michael Rao, responded that this is all designed to be done within existing resources, and that this policy makes the process for personnel advancement that is already happening more transparent.

Members also asked if classified staff who do not choose to enter the new classification would still be eligible for any merit salary increases outlined in the plan. Carkeek responded that these increases for employees who chose to remain as classified staff would mostly hinge on what the state system follows.

An University Council representative also expressed concerns that questions directed to VCU Human Resources about the policy had been acknowledged, but not answered. Carkeek answered that all concerns received by HR received had been responded to, either publically or privately.

The same representative again brought up the financial impact of the policy change, citing data that showed the new policy would result in savings for the university and asking why this savings was not going to be moved to departments for a merit pool. Carkeek responded that this data was not accurate and that there was not going to be savings. She stated that the policy change was originally going to cost the university money, which led to a cut in leave payout to make the plan cost neutral.

Dr. Rao emphasized that this policy change is a vision to make all employees a strategic member of a team, and that while he cannot state exactly where the funding will come from in July 2018, this policy represents a commitment to making sure those funds are available.

After the discussion, the question was called. **This policy was approved.**

**4. Information items**

**University Council Philosophy on Shared Governance –** VCU’s shared governance policy is now titled the University Council Philosophy on Shared Governance, and has been posted on the Office of the President’s website.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:43 p.m.