**D R A F T**

**MINUTES**

**Thursday, February 3, 2022**

3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

A meeting of the University Council was held on Thursday, February 3, 2022 at 3 p.m. in the VCU Cabell Library, conference room 303 and via Zoom.

The following members and alternates were present:

**Officers:** Michael Rao, Fotis Sotiropoulos, and Meredith Weiss

**Administration:** Cathleen Burke, Jay Davenport, Joseph DiPiro, Jill Gordon, Karol Gray, Irene Herold, Grant Heston, Art Kellerman, Charles Klink, Pam Lepley, Mary Pettiette, and Constance Relihan, and Srirama Rao.

**Faculty:** Sompop Bencharit,Brian Brown, Beth Bukoski, Denise Burnette, Josh Callahan, Kelsey Cheshire, Ross Collin, Kimberly Compton, Mariah Crilley, Carla-Mae Crookendale, Christina Davis, Rodney Dyer, Sarah Faris, James Ferri, Josh Galligan, Eric Hazelrigg, Catherine Ingrassia, Nancy Jallo, Peter Kirkpatrick, Joyce Lloyd, Edward Millner, Lathika Mohanraj, Nicole Omecene, Singth Perera, Veronica Powell, Maria Rivera, Valerie Robholt, Scott Street, Katharine Tibbetts, Christy Tyndall, StaceyWahl,David Webber,Yi Wen Wei, Jeff Wilson, Wenli Yan, Marjolein de Wit, Christine Wynd, and Erin Hickey Zacholski

**Postdoctoral Scholar:** Chelsea Sawyers

**Classified staff**: Sandra Mazzoli, Chris McDonald, Saher Randhawa, Amanda Simmons, Hannah Steighner, Jennifer Tennison, Katina Velentzas, and Wren Wyatt

**Students**: Kamal Alhassan, Natalie Barr, Sydney Biondi, Chidera Ntiwunka-Ifeanyi, Jordan James, Fatima Malik, Reena Pidaparti, and Singth Nawagamuwage Perera

**Ex-Officio and Guests**: Delores Armstrong, J. Paul Brooks, Nathan Carroll, Teresa Delaney-Dewald, Karen Helderman, Alex Henson, Irene Herold, Alison Jones, Javeria Kazi, Susan Kornstein, Camilo Medina, Cleo Magwaro, Christopher McDonald, Jessica Mittler, Aashir Nasim, Patricia Perkins, Reuban Rodriguez, Jared Schultz, Jeff Shockley, Jeffery Smith, and Deborah Noble-Triplett

1. **President’s Report**

President Rao welcomed Council members to the first UC meeting of the spring semester. He noted that he continues to be grateful for and impressed by the compassion for each other and commitment to the success of our students and patients. This was particularly evident at a meeting earlier this week at an all-faculty meeting hosted by the Faculty Senate

* Respectful and productive discussion on a variety of topics and issues
* We are clearly aligned in our mission as faculty and staff to meet students where they are to ensure their academic, career and personal success
* Appreciate being able to consult with faculty, staff and students on academic and professional matters
  + University Council provides a good opportunity for this, so thank you for your participation

VCU’s stature as one of only three major research universities designated by the state is at the top of my mind right now, having met just yesterday with the director of the NSF

* Productive meeting – Provost Sotiropoulos and Research VP Srirama Rao were able to discuss the tremendous trajectory of VCU research – record #363 million in FY 21
* Our goals are aligned and we will be working with the NSF moving forward
* Earlier this month the NSF announced that VCU ranks #58 of 415 public research universities…up from #65 last year
* This has come across disciplines – not just biomedical and basic sciences – but also social sciences, humanities, arts, education and engineering
* Importantly, it has involved undergraduates – a critical part of our mission
* You’ll hear a lot more from Dr. Srirama Rao later in this meeting about the state of VCU research – I’m excited about what the future holds and happy to set the stage

Faculty and staff should be proud of the work you have done to put our students and patients first and promote a culture of caring and inclusion

* Graduation rates continue to improve – 6-year rate now well above the national average of 62.4%.
* We’re headed into the 70% range making good progress toward our Quest 2025 goal of 78%

Busy time at the General Assembly session – working hard for support of our mission. Key priorities:

* Student financial aid
* Recognition of VCU’s mission and structural underfunding. Specifically asking for $60 million over three years to bring our undergraduate FTE funding to a sustainable level for operations and faculty salaries
* Massey Cancer Center
* Social Equity - funding to support the work of the RISE program – Research Institute for Social Equity in the Wilder School
* Top capital request… Arts & Innovation Building

We also have been addressing changes in our COVID response as an institution of higher education in Virginia

* Understandably there have been some concerns about requiring or not requiring COVID vaccines and boosters
* VCU faculty, staff and students have very high rates of vaccination – 97% for faculty and staff and more than 95% for students
* This is a very effective vaccine and I am a firm believer in it. I appreciate the tremendous support of staff, faculty and students to be vaccinated and follow safety protocols
* Our high vaccination rates and masking compliance – mask requirements remain in effect – combined with the recent legal opinion from the AG’s Office and governor’s executive directive – have led VCU to end requiring vaccinations and boosters for the spring semester
* There are exceptions for VCU students and employees who work in health care settings – they must still be vaccinated and boosted
* We continue to urge all members of the VCU community to be vaccinated and boosted against COVID19… in the best interest of each other to do this.

This semester we are offering a wide range of course modality options – balancing students’ needs online and in-person

* 50% of classes are in-person, up from one-third last semester.
* About 21% are hybrid – a mix of in-person and online – and 28% are fully remote.

He noted that he knows we can count on faculty, staff and students to be responsible and continue to build a culture of care and respect for each other

* Very optimistic about our future as an innovative public research university and medical center
* He invited everyone to hear more about that at the upcoming State of the University address scheduled for February 15 (livestream off the VCU homepage or Facebook page). We will be announcing some of the most impactful news in VCU history

Dr. Rao noted that he is grateful to Council members, as faculty, staff and students, for our contributions to making this a successful semester. He commented that: 1) You continue to show great resilience, dedication and hard work, and most importantly, great attitudes; and 2) Working together, all of you have paved the way for a spring semester where we will be together even more with in-person classes and other events. Dr. Rao especially appreciates our continued participation in the Quest recalibration process and the work we are doing together to lift VCU to the next level and to truly transform the institution in innovative ways that distinguish VCU as a model for higher education.

1. **Minutes**

The minutes of the December 2, 2021 were approved.

1. **Committee Reports**

The Academic Affairs and University Policy Committee presented the following programmatic changes, and new and revised policy proposals**:**

**Proposal to create a Graduate Certificate in Business Analytics –** Dr. J. Paul Brooks, Department of Supply Chain Management, School of Business,discussed the proposal and responded to questions. With 59 “yes” votes and 1 abstention, a motion was made and seconded to accept and move the proposal forward for review and approval by the VCU Board of Visitors.

**Proposal to create a Graduate Certificate in Data Science for Management –** Dr. J. Paul Brooks, Department of Supply Information Systems, School of Business, discussed the proposal and responded to questions. With 64 “yes” votes and 2 abstentions, a motion was made and seconded to accept and move the proposal forward for review and approval by the VCU Board of Visitors.

**Proposal to create a Graduate Certificate in Decision Analytics –** Dr. J. Paul Brooks, Department of Supply Chain Management, School of Business,discussed the proposal and responded to questions. With 64 “yes” votes and 1 abstention, a motion was made and seconded to accept and move the proposal forward for review and approval by the VCU Board of Visitors.

**Proposal to create a Graduate Certificate in Health Care Financial Management –** Dr.

Nathan Carroll, Department of Health Administration, College of Health Professions, discussed the proposal and responded to questions. With 63 “yes” votes and 1 abstention, a motion was made and seconded to accept and move the proposal forward for review and approval by the VCU Board of Visitors.

**Proposal to create a Graduate Certificate in Information Risk, Security, and Assurance –**

Dr. J. Paul Brooks, Department of Supply Information Systems, School of Business, discussed the proposal and responded to questions. With 65 “yes” votes, a motion was made and seconded to unanimously accept and move the proposal forward for review and approval by the VCU Board of Visitors.

**Proposal to create a Graduate Certificate in Supply Chain Management** – Dr. Jeffery Smith, Department of Supply Chain Management, School of Business, discussed the proposal and responded to questions. With 65 “yes” votes, a motion was made and seconded to unanimously accept and move the proposal forward for review and approval by the VCU Board of Visitors.

**Proposal to change the name of the Department of Rehabilitation Counseling to the**

**Department of Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling** – Dr. Jared Schultz,

Department of Rehabilitation Counseling, College of Health Professions,discussed the proposal and responded to questions. With 65 “yes” votes and 1 abstention, a motion was made and seconded to accept and move the proposal forward for review and approval by the VCU Board of Visitors.

**Revised Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation for Individuals with Disabilities**

**(Administrative)—**Ms. Cleo Magwaro, Associate Vice President of Institutional Equity and

Interim ADA Coordinator),discussed the proposal and responded to questions. With 58 “yes” votes, 1 “no” vote, and 7 abstentions, a motion was made and seconded to accept and move the proposal forward for review and approval by the VCU Board of Visitors.

**New Effort Reporting Policy (Administrative)—**Ms. Patricia Perkins, Associate Vice

President for Finance, Ms. Javeria Kazi, Director of Grants &amp; Contracts Accounting and Effort Reporting, and Mr. Camilo Medina, Effort Report**,** discussed the new policy and responded to questions. With 56 “yes” votes, 2 “no” votes, and 7 abstentions, a motion was made and seconded to accept and move the new policy forward for review and approval by the VCU Board of Visitors.

**Revised Violence Prevention and Threat Assessment and Management Policy—Dr.**

**Charles Klink, Senior Vice Provost for Student Affairs,** discussed the revised policy and responded to questions. With 61 “yes” votes and 6 “no” votes, a motion was made and seconded to accept and move the revised policy forward for review and approval by the VCU Board of Visitors.

1. **Constituent Reports**

Natalie Barr provided an SGA Report. She thanked President Rao, members of faculty senate and staff senate for the continued support and openness to hearing our progress and work, to support the student body each month we come together here. As always, thank you to our advisors Dr. Rodriguez and Fred Tugas. Now for the updates.

The Undergraduate Senate is getting back to work. Over the break, both the IFB chairs for undergraduate and GPSS SGA worked with their committees to review all the student organization funding requests. All student funding requests have now been finalized. Secretary of State Biondi worked on finalizing plans for Lobby Day and worked with senators and members from the leadership team on legislation to lobby for. Lobby Day will be held on February 21 and we have over 10 pieces of legislation we will be lobbying for, ranging from harm reduction to reallocation of police funds and more. Secretary Biondi has been working hard on finalizing plans for The Big Event. We will have more updates to come as the event gets closer. Next week, we will be holding information sessions for joining undergraduate SGA for the 2022-2023 school year and for the upcoming elections starting February 19. The undergraduate SGA continues to strive to be a support system for the student body, as many students are feeling the stress of a new semester and the on-going pandemic. We continue to encourage students to utilize campus resources, when needed, and confide in us with anything they need. This is all for now, and we look forward to a successful semester and meeting with you all next month. GPSS as representatives of the graduate body within SGA would like to highlight the issues related to student attendance protocols that are set for the spring 2022 semester. We also want to acknowledge the public protest held by students last week and the petition that has been circulated to gather support requesting changes to the current policy. With new relaxed mandate on COVID response, GPSS empathize with the students’ grievance on this matter. Especially with students and their family members

who have a high health risk to COVID exposure. Based on this it is our stance that the University should consider a flexible mode of delivery for such students. As part of the joint leadership structure, we would like to have a discussion with the rest of the joint leadership to understand the rationale behind the current policy and what possible solutions can be evaluated. During the fall, current GPSS membership has worked towards unifying the GPSS from a fragmented position with a vision of addressing graduate student needs, listening to grievances, and creating a healthy student experience. These efforts will come to action with our Gradual mixer social

meetup, first of many events in our pipeline for the remainder of the academic year. We are also looking into working with relevant departments and undergraduate senate in revamping the SGA website and rolling out a targeted recruitment drive in mid to late Spring 2022. A general discussion followed.

Valerie Robnholt provided a Faculty Senate Report. She discussed faculty senate highlights and a general discussion followed.

Saher Randhawa provided a Staff Senate Report. She thanked Cathleen Burke, Alison Miller and David Allen for taking time to present at the last full-Staff Senate meeting in January to discuss budget, compensation, raises and other concerns from staff that were shared at the last University Council meeting. She also thanked Meredith Weiss and Pam Lepley for helping to navigate these conversations. She discussed staff senate highlights to include: 1) The Staff Senate Awards of Excellence nominations are open, they are awards for staff by staff. Any VCU or VCU Health staff member may nominate a fellow staff member who meets the specific criteria for each of the awards. The nomination period is from February 1st, 2022 to March 15th, 2022. More information can be found at:  [staffsenate.vcu.edu/awards](http://staffsenate.vcu.edu/awards).;

2) The 6th Annual Staff Senate Employee Appreciation Celebration will take place during VCU's Spring Break from March 7th, 2022 to March 11th, 2022. From free donuts & refreshments on both campuses that Monday and Tuesday, to a virtual wellness Wednesday filled with programs and a food truck fair that Friday, please join us as we celebrate VCU Staff and all the hard work you all do.

More information can be found at: <https://staffsenate.vcu.edu/employee-appreciation/>.

3) Lastly, VCU Human Resources and VCU Staff Senate are excited to present the week-long "Together Everyone Achieves More (T.E.A.M)” career development conference. Each session will offer opportunities for staff to explore a variety of topics, network with peers, and gain invaluable insights from VCU and regional leaders. This year's event is scheduled during spring break from March 7th through 11th and is fully virtual and free to all VCU and VCU Health System employees.

More information can be found at: <https://staffsenateconference.vcu.edu/>.

A mass mail about employee appreciation week and the career development conference is scheduled for next week. We are really looking forward to providing these celebratory and learning opportunities for staff.  A general discussion followed.

1. **Cabinet Report**

Srirama Rao, Vice President for Research & Innovation, provided a presentation on “The State of VCU Research”. A general discussion followed and Dr. Rao responded to questions.

1. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.