

## MINUTES

Thursday, September 5, 2024

4:30-6 p.m.

A meeting of the University Council was held on Thursday, September 5, 2024 at 4:30 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, Scott Street, and Meredith Weiss

**Administration:** Scott Breuninger, Jay Davenport, Grant Heston, Catherine Ingrassia, Alison Miller, and KC Ogbonna

**Faculty:** Stephen Alcorn, Julie Arendt, Tamara Buck, Beth Bukoski, Yana Cen, Jacquelin Daniel, Jose Eltit, Ugochukwu Etudo, Hope Ginsberg, Braden Goddard, Jacob Goffnett, Sarah Golding, Frank Gulla, Carolyn Hawley, Nancy Husson, Kanako Iwanaga, Anne Masich, Jeff Johnson, Michel McClure, Shillpa Naavaal, Naomi Reddish, Maria Rivera, Valerie Robnolt, Michael Rosenberg, Dan Salandro, Oliver Speck, Roxanne Spindle, Talicia Tarver, Taryn Traylor, Christy Tyndall, Jeff Wilson, Chernoh Wurie, Cesar Zamudio, Lei Xi, and Cesar Zamudio

**Classified Staff:** Thomas Bryan, Melissa Burton, Tivoli Dabney, Houston Griffith, Romina Gutierrez, Stephanie Hart, Christina Montgomery, Evandro Moreno, Louise Putnam, Maya Rogers, and Asia Shaw

**Students:** Johanna Jo Adams, Patrick Agoeyevu, Emerson Hernandez, Samantha Mendoza-Hernandez, Doryan Slack, Janeth Llamas-Soto, Viet Nguyen

**Ex-Officio and Guests:** Andrew Arroyo, Faye Belgrave, Chelyen Davis, Danielle Fife, James Gahagan, Alex Henson, Irene Herold, Karen Helderman, Jamie Stillman, and Mangala Subramaniam

### 1. President's Report

President Rao welcomed Council members to the first UC meeting of the academic year. He noted that great things are ahead this year. VCU continues to be one of the nation's best models of a truly public research university – bridging gaps between problems and solutions, diseases and cures, the educational world and the professional world. He said truly public because VCU attracts and welcomes so many different people.

We are proud that VCU looks like what America is – embracing people from all backgrounds and communities, and all of the ways that human beings bring enriching

and valuable differences, both visible and invisible. VCU was chartered as a major research university, and we are fulfilling that mission, to include:

- Top 50 NSF ranked public university
- Breaking our own records each year for research funding
- Strategically planning research that crosses our wide range of disciplines and addresses vexing problems, disparities and needs.

We will continue to make investments in students, faculty, and research. Working with Vice President Rao will bring greater clarity to how our faculty, staff and students can get investment of our research resources as they pursue their ideas. Our core commitment is to learning and the success of our students – they are the next generation of society builders.

This academic year, we will work together to bring a greater focus and definition to student success. Last year, we asked the National Institute for Student Success to do a detailed analysis for us. The NISS recommended we address stronger timely graduation outcomes and really focus on our DFW rates through strengthening financial support options and academic advising. We all want our students to succeed. Our faculty really care about academic rigor, and they also care about their students – nobody wants a student to fail or withdraw from a class. Reducing DFW rates is something that Dr. Rao would like us to work together to achieve, because it will have such a positive impact on our students. It will boost our enrollment, because more of our students will stay with us, graduate faster, and reduce their costs.

Our academic leaders will look to hear from faculty on how we can do that, because there are great ideas from the experts on campus. Student success means graduating in a timely manner – and getting a great first job, or advancing to another level of education.

We will keep focusing on ways to get students more internships and professional experiences during their time with us. Professional experiences bridge the gap between education and work and prepare our students for the world after they graduate.

He noted that we enter this semester at a complicated time in the U.S. and the world. It is important to approach each other and our interactions with civility, professionalism, respect and empathy. President Rao thanked Council members for their contributions and dedication they have for our students, our research mission, our clinical mission and for VCU.

## **2. Minutes**

The minutes of the May 2, 2024 were approved.

### **3. Temporary bylaws update**

- **Proposal to suspend the “at least one (1) shall be tenured” requirement for Nursing for the 2024-25 academic year** — Dr. Scott Street, Parliamentarian, discussed the proposal and responded to questions. With 87% “yes” votes, 3% “no” votes, and 10% abstentions, a motion was made and seconded to accept and move the proposal forward for review and approval by the VCU Board of Visitors.

### **4. Constituent Reports**

Ms. Johanna Adams and Mr. Emerson Hernandez provided an SGA Report, and a general discussion followed.

Dr. Maria Rivera provided a Faculty Senate Report, and a general discussion followed.

Ms. Maya Rogers provided a Staff Senate Report, and a general discussion followed.

### **5. University Council Overview**

**Bylaws and Committees**-Dr. Scott Street, Parliamentarian, and Ms. Jamie Stillman, Executive Director of Academic Operations in the Office of the Provost, discussed the committee structure of the University Council as described in the bylaws. A form will be sent to all members early next week to indicate both their willingness to serve on a committee in 24-25 and their order of service preference among the five committees.

**Monthly Meetings**-Ms. Louise Putnam discussed the 2024-25 meeting schedule.

### **6. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:08 p.m.