

MINUTES

Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies
January 26th, 2025
3:00 PM
Via Zoom

Present – J. Tokuhisa (presiding); E. Austin; A. Ball; S. Clements; S. Dip; R. Gaines; K. Goyne; K. Heiderscheit (attending on behalf of J. Bedore); M. Kimbrell; S. Over; M. Pleimling; R. Poff; S. Rinehart; M. Seref; J. Sible; R. Sparks; S. Sumner; K. Thompson; D. Thorp

Absent with Notice: N. Akers; J. Bedore; M. Caddick

Absent: M. Acosta; Z. Altizer; K. Edgar; C. Middleton; L. Ricci; C. Ruktanonchai; J. Russell

Guests: J. Gallagher; J. Leech; E. Moon; V. Nguyen; R. Pitcher; L. Rose; N. Smith; K. Tran; Z. Tucker; K. Wells

J. Tokuhisa called the meeting to order at 3:01. A quorum was present.

1. Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda. Motion carried.

2. Approval or Announcement of approval and posting of minutes of November 10th, 2025.

J. Tokuhisa noted that the November 10th, 2025, minutes have been voted on electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Office of the University Registrar's website:

<http://www.registrar.vt.edu/governance.html>

3. Unfinished Business

CUSP 2025-2026C – Updating Policy 6815 (2nd Reading)

M. Pleimling provided feedback about the two primary concerns at Faculty Senate. First, there was concern about eliminating the Senior Residency requirement, noting it remains in place at other institutions. He responded that the rule is outdated and restricts student flexibility. There are times when the requirement must be waived, and as a result it likely no longer makes sense for current students. Next, Faculty Senate raised concerns about students receiving two degrees under a single degree program, indicating confusion between “degree” and “major,” and how multiple majors can exist under one degree. Based on this feedback, members requested that the Registrar attend the next meeting to clarify the distinction. R. Sparks has already spoken with Faculty Senate Cabinet in relation to this topic and no changes to the resolution were requested. He will attend the next meeting to provide this explanation.

Additional concerns were raised that some students may not take senior level courses at Virginia Tech if the residency rule was removed from Policy 6815. However, R. Sparks clarified that most senior level courses do not usually have transfer equivalencies from other institutions, so this would be rare.

There was a general discussion about the confusion between “degree” and “major” within Policy 6815. General support was raised to add definitions of “degree” and “major” to the “Definitions” section at the end of the policy. R. Sparks will provide these definitions as they are outlined in SCHEV Policy.

J Tokuhisa noted that no feedback was received about this resolution from the Staff Senate or Administrative & Professional Faculty Senate.

The motion to pass Resolution 2025-2026C Updating Policy 6815 and to amend the resolution by adding definitions for degree and major passed unanimously.

CUSP 2025-2026D – Revise PPM 107 Midterm Assessment of Undergraduate Students (2nd Reading)

J. Tokuhisa reported that the AP Faculty Senate asked whether the policy could replace the term “Freshman” with “first year students” throughout the policy. They also raised questions about admissions of first year and transfer students in the spring and how the policy applies to students who enter out of sequence. R. Sparks clarified that the policy only currently enforces the reporting of grades for students in the Fall semester, not the Spring semester.

The Faculty Senate Cabinet discussed varying approaches to grading and how differences in course setup and Canvas usage affect the ability to provide midterm grades. Some members suggested a broader academic progress report model like that used for student athletes.

R. Gaines raised concerns about large numbers of first year students in Math courses and the workload required for midterm grading. He questioned how the university can mandate reporting when there are currently no consequences for not entering grades. He emphasized that early identification of struggling students is important for student success, noting that other universities impose penalties for noncompliance.

M. Pleimling shared that he reviews fall midterm grade submissions each year and meets with instructors to discuss the value of submitting them, emphasizing its educational purpose.

J. Sible noted that achieving 100% enforcement for midterm grade submission is unlikely but encouraged focusing on what best supports students. TLOS is prepared to offer workshops to help faculty align Canvas gradebooks so grades transfer automatically to Banner.

S. Rinehart cautioned against equating letter grades with satisfactory/unsatisfactory assessments. She noted that students should receive ongoing feedback, but midterm grading is complicated by varying pedagogies and course structures. Some faculty default to satisfactory/unsatisfactory due to these challenges, indicating a need for student education as well.

R. Sparks emphasized that midterm grades are not the only mechanism to identify underperforming students. Faculty may also submit individual cases when a student has excessive absences, fails to attend class, misses assignments or exams, or shows poor performance. S. Rinehart noted that faculty in her college are often given guidance and recommended dates to schedule assignments to ensure that accurate midterm grades can be submitted.

R. Gaines reiterated that Faculty Senate may expect the reporting requirement to be mandatory. He expressed interest in seeing data on faculty participation in midterm grade submissions.

K. Heiderscheit asked how many faculty discuss midterm grades with their students, noting that in the APSC FYE course, two recitations are dedicated to reviewing them. She questioned how engaged students and faculty are in the process.

M. Pleimling and K. Goyne both shared for their colleges that when grades are sent to the Dean’s office, advisors reach out to underperforming students to provide assistance.

Members agreed that “Freshman” may be changed to “first year students” throughout the resolution. FTIC and transfer students can be referenced similarly, including in the final clause. Suggestions were made to consider specifying where reports will be sent to including Instructors of Record and the Student Support Community. This would align terms with existing language without altering the intent of the resolution.

The motion to pass Resolution 2025-2026D Revise PPM 107 Midterm Assessment of Undergraduate Students and to amend the resolution by changing “freshman” to read “first-year students” and specifying who receives midterm grade reports passed unanimously.

4. New Business

Discussion – UCCGE Memo and 2025-2026A UCCGE Draft

J. Tokuhisa explained that two documents were provided including a draft resolution and a memo. Both documents were provided by the UCCGE. He invited K. Tran and other UCCGE representatives to provide additional information about the documents.

K. Tran explained that additional “*Whereas*” clauses were added to the draft resolution. UCCGE’s general consensus was opposition to the suspension of Pathways Concept 7, as the original concept was created through shared governance, but the suspension did not fully involve faculty consultation. He also noted that the UCCGE and the Office of General Education are in the middle of a four-year assessment cycle. Next year is the third year and it will be critical for evaluation and feedback of all Pathways concepts, including Pathways Concept 7. The memo presented five options on how to proceed from the UCCGE.

1. Substantial revision of Pathways 7
2. Reinstatement without changes
3. Replace Concept 7 entirely
4. Delete the concept
5. Extend the suspension to explore options

R. Gaines shared that he and two faculty representatives visited the General Assembly the previous Thursday. With the governor and the House now Democratic, there is renewed focus on restoring DEI. He emphasized the need to remain in compliance while also supporting minority students and leaders. He proposed a Black History Month initiative, and Dr. Fricker expressed openness to future discussion.

J. Sible noted that many of the original Pathways Concept 7 outcomes were not being achieved at Virginia Tech but instead met through high school coursework. She encouraged reflection on whether the university was genuinely meeting its intended outcomes, including through AP credit satisfaction. Approximately 30% of students satisfy the requirement via AP courses or standard courses they would naturally take.

J. Gallagher agreed that many students’ prior credit (such as APUSH satisfying Pathways 7) may not align with intended learning goals. J. Gallagher also emphasized that the way the institution handles the removal, suspension, or revision of Pathways 7 will communicate institutional values and expectations to students.

D. Thorp stated that every faculty member he has spoken with in his college expressed interest in retaining something similar to Pathways Concept 7. He appreciated that the draft resolution provides more time and ties future decisions to assessment findings.

J. Tokuhisa asked whether UCCGE had relevant data on current student compliance and effectiveness of Concept 7. J. Sible said the group is well-informed and able to pull necessary data in the third year of the assessment cycle. This would be an ideal point for deeper analysis to inform next year's decision.

Members discussed whether the draft resolution was ready to come forward as a First Reading at the next meeting. No further comments were made. J. Tokuhisa said the next step is to contact the UCCGE Chair and invite them to present the resolution as a First Reading at the February 9th CUSP meeting.

5. Reports

- Academic Support Committee – Sherwood Clements: S. Clements reported that the first meeting would be held February 6th at 9:00am over zoom.
- Academic Policies Committee – Michel Pleimling: No report.
- Athletics Committee – Dan Thorp: No report
- Commencement Committee – Monica Kimbell: M. Kimbrell motioned for the acceptance of the meeting minutes from October 8th and November 5th. The motion passed unanimously.
- Honor Council – Zoe Altizer: No report.
- Library Committee – Sarah Over: No report.
- University Curriculum Committee for General Education – Khanh Ngoc Tran: K. Tran motioned for the acceptance of the meeting minutes from the September 3rd, October 1st, and November 5th. The motion passed unanimously.
- Constituent Reports – Administrative & Professional Faculty Senate – Nicole Akers: No report.
- Constituent Reports – Staff Senate – Misti Acosta: No report.
- Constituent Reports – Faculty Senate – R. Gaines: There was open discussion about numerous resolutions coming through for approvals in the senate.
- Constituent Reports – Undergraduate Student Senate – L. Ricci; C. Middleton: No report.
- Constituent Reports: Graduate and Professional Student Senate – S. Dip: No report.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:20pm.