

# Minutes for Vanderbilt University Faculty Senate

## April 4, 2024, Meeting

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### Attendees

Voting members in attendance: Alissa Hare, Allison Walker, Amanda Rose, André Christie-Mizell, Andrea Capizzi, Brian Heuser, Buddy Creech, Clifford Garrard, Catherine McTamane, Celina Callahan-Kapoor, Chrisitan Ketel, David Hyde, Dawn Iacobucci, Elise Boos, Florence Sanchez, Ingrid Messily, James Booth, Ji Hye Jung, Joerg Rieger, John Ayers, Jonathan Sprinkle, Kate Clouse, Katherine Carroll, Kelly Goldsmith, Kelly Sopko, Krishnendu Roy, Melissa Rose, Pamela Jefferies, Pengfei Li, Piran Kidambi, Queen Henry Okafor, Rebecca Ihrie, Ryan Belcher, Sara Horst, Tamarya Hoyt, Timothy McNamara, Tyler Barrett, and Yolanda Pierce

Voting members absent: Aimi Hamraie, Alexandra Shingina, Amanda Satterthwaite, Amanda Shakal, Anna Richmond, Bruce Morrill, Camilla Benbow, Chris Guthrie, Christos Constandtinidis, Cindy Reinhart-King, Claudine Taaffe, Dan Levin, Debra Friedman, Elliott McCarter, Emanuelle Oliveira-Monte, Jeff Balsler, Joe Fishman, John Koch, John Yang, Jonathan Waters, Joyce Johnson, Julie Vernon, Julio Ayala, Kevin Schey, Kristen Scarpato, Lea Acosta, Lisa Fazio, Marcy Singer-Gabella, Mariano Sana, ML Sandoz, Nicole Cobb, Peter Kolkay, Ralf Habermann, Ritu Banerjee, Sara Martin, Susan Andrews, Thomas Steenburgh, and Tim Hanusa

Ex-officio members in attendance: Alan Wiseman, Alex Sevilla, Daniel Diermeier, Cybele Raver, Don Brady, Elizabeth Catania, Jon Shaw, Padma Raghavan, Rebecca Swan, Ruza Shellaway, Tracey George, and Tracey Sharpley-Whiting

Ex-officio members absent: Anders Hall, Brett Sweet, Candice Storey Lee, Cleo Rucker, Doug Christiansen, Eric Kopstain, G.L. Black, Jennifer Pietenpol, John Lutz, Nathan Green, Paul Liebman, Steve Ertel, and Sydney Savion

Guests in attendance: Talia Kolikant, Cedric Edwards, Ron Martinez, Christin Essin, Lily Claiborne, Mark Schoenfield, Tara Todd, Carwil Bjork-James, Ken Catauia, Richard Willis, Mulubrhan Mogus, Hasina Mohyuddin, Sharon Shields, Laurence Zwiebel, Claire King, Carmine Grimaldi, Victoria Morgan, Bruce Barry, Steven Wernke, Lars Plate, Ajay Batra, Ken MacLeigh, Jess Watkins, Erika Grundstrom, Anita Wager, Dan Margalit, Tang Li, Rebecca Keck, Jennifer Fay, Will Doyle, Douglas Perkins, Sydney Jones-Wright, Beth Shinn, Gilman Whiting, Sara Safransky, Julie Gramble, Allison Schachter, Dan Cornfield, Samira Sheikh, Julie Barroso, Melissa Gresalfi, Ruth Kleinpell, Jyoti Gupta, James Byrd, Matt Congdon, Andrew Nalani, Calynn Dowler, and Karen Ng.

### Call to Order

A meeting of Vanderbilt Faculty Senate was held on April 4, 2024 at 1101 19<sup>th</sup> Ave. South in the Faculty Commons large event space. It began at 4:10pm and was presided over by Chair Andrea Capizzi, with Vice Chair Tamarya Hoyt as secretary.

- Chair Capizzi motioned to suspend the traditional order of business. A motion was seconded by 32 voting members.

A quorum as specified in the Faculty Senate Constitution (revised 4/5/2019) Article II.B.1. was not met with the recorded attendance of 32 voting members of the Faculty Senate.

- Motion to suspend traditional order of business did not pass.

## Approval of Minutes

Chair Capizzi motioned for approval of the minutes as circulated of the Feb 1, 2024 meeting. Chair Capizzi asked whether there were any corrections to the proposed minutes. Corrections were not made.

Chair Capizzi proceeded to the next item of business.

## Report of the Executive Committee

Chair Capizzi:

- Meeting opened with a look back at women's sporting history at Vanderbilt, dating back to the 1890's, with special mention of Vanderbilt's new Women's Volleyball team and Women's Basketball team in honor of March Madness.
- Sydney Savion was introduced as the New Vice Chancellor for People, Culture and Belonging.
- All senate year-end reports are due April 24<sup>th</sup> ahead of the next Senate meeting on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- As of March 26, over 60 comments related to student protests were sent to the Senate Suggestion box.
  - The range of responses indicate faculty do not speak with a singular voice. The need to considerately express opinions is essential.

Chair Capizzi proceeded to the next item of business.

## Chancellor Remarks

Chair Capizzi turned the floor over to Chancellor Diermeier.

Chancellor Diermeier:

- Background regarding the Israel/Hamas conflict and subsequent student protests was provided:
  - In December, two opposing letters from alumni groups were received by the Chancellor demanding support of their respective stances in the Israel/Hamas conflict. Neither of these demands will be granted due to Vanderbilt's commitment to institutional neutrality.
- An account of the Pro-Palestinian/Anti-Israel student protest was provided:
  - 27 students arrived at the closed-for-construction Kirkland Hall and forcefully gained access into the building, resulting in a security officer being sent to the hospital for medical attention.
  - Once inside, the students attempted to gain additional access to the Chancellor's office, pushing his chief of staff. Students were ultimately prevented from entering the office.
- Response to the general comment that restricting access to Kirkland amounts to restriction on free speech:
  - The Chancellor contested the statement, citing the many recent protests at Vanderbilt conducted according to Student Handbook guidelines. Gaining forceful access to a closed building is not consistent with the rules in the student handbook. A gradual escalation strategy was communicated to the students regarding their continued failure to act according to the guidelines. The students chose to accept intermediate sanctions as consequence of their actions. This same process has been used for all students violating such rules.
- An account of the detainment of the National Scene reporter was provided:
  - The reporter tried to enter the locked building three times. He was notified by Vanderbilt Public Safety that his actions were not allowed. He was then detained, after which his charges were lifted.
  - Though Vanderbilt's principle allowing restriction of journalists on campus was accurately implemented, the Chancellor's office is employing a third party to conduct an independent assessment to review the appropriateness of Vanderbilt's actions in this instance.
- The Chancellor addressed the student protestors' access to food and bathrooms:

- Vanderbilt has no obligation to provide food for students who clearly violate its rules.
- Bathrooms in Kirkland were restricted based on a previous protest experience where students locked themselves in the bathrooms.
- Students were informed that they could leave Kirkland at any time to get food and use the bathroom.
- Voting on BDS resolution:
  - Vanderbilt has traditionally refrained from interference with decisions of the student council as the Student Government speaks for themselves, not Vanderbilt as a whole.
  - This issue is different as it involves using Vanderbilt student funds to participate in BDS activity, which is illegal according to Tennessee law. Vanderbilt's failure to certify that funding has not gone to BDS activity would make Vanderbilt ineligible for government funding. Having a vote in favor of BDS would put Vanderbilt at risk of losing such funding.

Chair Capizzi proceeded to the next item of business.

Open floor to questions and comments:

- Question: It's inexcusable to arrest a reporter. Who approved such an action?
  - Answer: We will know the answer once the independent investigation has been completed. We will not engage with officers and other members of the incident until the conclusion of the investigation, which will be made public.
- Question: What is the board of trust thinking or saying about this? What are their concerns and expectations?
  - Answer: There are no concerns from the Board of Trust. They were supportive of Vanderbilt's actions and believe our team acted in accordance with the clear rules of engagement.
- Question: Was the video that was released to media altered in any way? The journalist had accused Vanderbilt of misrepresenting the situation. Are any Vanderbilt funds used to influence media coverage of this story?
  - Answer: No. The student video was altered to obfuscate the view of the students' faces to protect their identity. No other alteration was done.
  - Response to answer: The video looked slowed down.
  - Answer: The video has not been altered in any way other than previously mentioned.
- Question: Why not let the students use the bathrooms even if they lock themselves in?
  - Answer: The Chancellor stood by his previous statements. Chancellor commented that the actions of this small group of students are not representative of the student body. These protesters made it clear they were playing by a different rule book.
- Question: Have student accusations around violation of free speech facilitated discussion on the definition of free speech?
  - There were accusations, but no argument has been presented that demonstrates the actions regarding the Student Government have any impact on free speech.

## Standing Committee Reports

Chair Capizzi called for reports from the standing committees.

Vicki Morgan was invited to present the findings from the Vanderbilt University/Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VU/VUMC) ad hoc committee:

- The 2016 split between VU and VUMC has caused unintended consequences, of which this committee was charged to analyze the effect of.
- A Red Cap survey was launched in 2023 to analyze the results of the split and offered recommendations:

- Five key improvement points were created:
  - Streamline VU and VUMC student access across entities.
  - Simplify grant management between VU and VUMC.
  - Provide financial compensation and incentives to teach across entities.
  - Increase compatibility with IT infrastructure and communication tools.
  - Facilitate access to shared resources.
- Two recommendations were created:
  - Develop a strategic plan addressing the five key improvement points.
  - Hire administrative officers who report to both VU and VUMC.
- The full report will be sent to all senators.
- Comment: Some VUMC employees don't use their VU email address.
  - Response from Past Chair Swan: That aligns with key point 4. Thank you to Vicky Morgan who worked hard to help VUMC employees address this issue.
- Question: How do VUMC employees find their VU email?
  - Answer: Submit a ticket through Pegasus. The ticket must go through VU not VUMC.
  - Comment: An email informing VUMC employees of their VU email and how to gain access to it would be helpful.
- Question: How does the administration look at this? Organizationally, this has caused so much pain. The impact on finances were considered more than the impact on people.
  - The Chancellor answered: This was such a monumental decision that resulted in a very positive impact on both entities. Had we kept the old structure, it's not clear we would have survived Covid. There will always be unintended consequences, but we must work to address them.

Chair Capizzi proceeded to the next item of business.

## Old Business

*There was no old business.*

Chair Capizzi proceeded to the next item of business.

## New Business

*There was no new business.*

Chair Capizzi proceeded to the next item of business.

## Scheduled Remarks

Chair Capizzi introduced Provost C. Cybele Raver.

Provost Cybele Raver:

- The Provost thanked Vicki Morgan for the amazing VU/VUMC report and its comprehensiveness. The Provost reiterated the importance of removing such obstacles and expressed gratitude to faculty members who supervise students across VU and VUMC.
- Regarding the Pro-Palestinian student protest, the Provost emphasized our educative mission to the different groups of students and faculty:
  - Vanderbilt deeply supports its students' capacity to peacefully protest and has done so throughout several protests in the past few weeks. When place, time, and manner of protests

are limited, it is carefully mapped out to allow students to express their views while allowing other students and faculty to continue meeting their needs, undisrupted.

Open floor to questions and comments:

- Question: Which of the many forms and rules should students rely on? What can they participate in without fear of expulsion? What forms of expression can students be confident will be permitted? What will be done to communicate this to students?
  - Answer: *Provost Raver provided answers within her knowledge and encouraged faculty to direct unanswered questions to GL Black.*
    - Students are given clear conduct warnings if they are putting up flyers or engaging in activities in areas that are reserved or off limits. Student Affairs is doing their best to provide space while being fair to other groups for equitable use of these spaces.
      - Student Affairs worked with SGP to maintain approved use of space for their apartheid wall, while also meeting the needs of other students who required access to the same space.
      - Kirkland Hall: No limitations are known, as evidenced by students sleeping outside the building.
    - Regarding the student discipline process, the student protestors are currently on interim suspension. The process limits the students to avoid participating in activity that puts them at risk. The terms of the findings determine what can be done next. Students can appeal the finding, during which they can remain on campus while the sanction is on hold.
- Question: Interim suspension should be a short-term response to an immediate risk. What is the imminent risk to keep these students from my classroom?
  - Answer: Accommodations are made for those 27 students so that they aren't missing out on academic trajectories while also facing the consequences for their actions, for which they were given ample opportunity and information to correct. We are moving as fast as we can while maintaining our standards of fairness and consistency.
- Question: Why didn't the Chancellor and Provost create meetings with the Student Government to give clarity why the BDS vote could not proceed?
  - Answer: The Student Government was given many opportunities to meet with us but has declined all of them.
- Question: Has there been any thought to ending the student interim suspensions?
  - Answer: We are committed to following the process for these students in the manner all other students have been subjected to for disciplinary action.

Chair Capizzi proceeded to the next item of business.

## Good of the Senate

Chair Capizzi opened the floor to comments.

A senator shared the news that 23 Vanderbilt students have received a national science fellowship.

Chair Capizzi proceeded to the next item of business.

- Chair Capizzi gave closing statements thanking those in attendance and emphasizing our hope for continued civil discourse in the Vanderbilt community.

## Adjournment

It was moved that the meeting should be adjourned. There was a second and the meeting adjourned at 5:34.

*Tamarya L. Hoyt*

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Tamarya Hoyt, Secretary  
Faculty Senate Vice Chair

May 2, 2024

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Date of Approval