



Virginia Commission on Higher Education Board Appointments

Official Government Business

4/30/24 (Patrick Henry Building)

Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Chairman Ed Feulner formally called the meeting to order to begin Commission business at approximately 11:33 AM.

Roll Call

Board Members			
Name	Present (P)	Absent (A)	Virtual (V)
Edwin J. Feulner	P		
Elizabeth Ann Cline	P		
Berkley C. Ramsey	P		
Deborah L. Petrine	P		
Douglas N. Smith	P		
Lisa Hicks – Thomas	P		

Staff	
Name	Present (P) or Absent (A) or Virtual (V)
Brook Tribble	P
Kate Stockhausen	P
Gariel Wilkerson	P
Mike Melis	P

Secretary Gee	P
Secretary Guidera	P

Quorum Met

Reading and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Elizabeth Cline stated that she was marked as virtual on the minutes from the March 18, 2024 meeting. The correction was made. Meeting Minutes along with attached letters were approved for March 18, 2024, with a motion from Chairman Feulner moved by Douglas Smith, Carlyle Ramsey seconded the motion. Motion carries unanimously.

Motion moved to adopt the meeting minutes.

Other Business

Chairman Feulner made board members aware that the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Secretary of Education would be joining later on for an update regarding possible candidates. Mr. Feulner also stated that Carmen Rodriguez, President of the Faculty Senate of Virginia, and Russ Wood, Assistant Professor of English of the Mellon Teacher Scholar for Civic Engagement and Editor of Clinch Mountain Review, would join for the public comment portion of the meeting.

Chairman Feulner motioned to move to closed session, second by Carlyle Ramsey. Voting was done through a roll call vote. The motion carried unanimously. The Commission proceeded with close session discussion.

Closed Session

Chairman Feulner moved that the Commission convene in closed session under Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711 (A)(1) to discuss the appointment of specific appointees to public bodies, namely higher education board appointments, and under section 2.2-3711 (A)(8), for consultation with legal counsel regarding specific legal matters, namely advice relating to the consideration of higher education board appointments. The motion was seconded by Elizabeth Cline and agreed to by all present Commission members.

The Commission proceeded with closed session discussion. Zach Jacobs staff member of the Secretary of Education, followed by the Secretary of the Commonwealth joined at approximately 1:50. Secretary of Education joined shortly after at approximately 2:11.

Both Secretaries left shortly after.

Return to Open Session

Following the closed session, the Commission reconvened in an open session meeting. On a motion duly made by Chairman Feulner and second by Carlyle Ramsey. Chairman Feulner calls roll call. The Commission approved the following resolution of certification:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Higher Education Board Appointments certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Freedom of Information Act were discussed and (ii) only such public business matters identified in the motion by which the closed session was convened were heard, discussed, or considered by the Commission.

Public Comment

Chairman Feulner welcomes guests to public comment.

Carmen Rodriguez reads two letters, one on behalf of Michael Carhart, who attended the previous meeting, and the second on behalf of Faculty Senate of Virginia. Chairman Feulner thanks Ms. Rodriguez for reading both letters and for joining them.

Russ Wood introduces herself and addresses the board. He states that there should be an emphasis on more student-centered focus engagement. He asks the board how they can get to a point where students are celebrated and would like to see more of a cultural shift among Colleges and Universities.

Chairman Feulner thanked Mr. Woods coming to join the Commission and for sharing his concerns with the board.

Carmen Rodriguez asked if members of the Commission could introduce themselves. Members of the Commission each stated their name and job title.

Chairman Feulner thanks everyone for their attendance.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the Commission, Chairman Feulner adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:32 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

Gariel Wilkerson, Special Assistant for the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

FACULTY SENATE of VIRGINIA



Dear Members of The Commission,

The Virginia Commission on Higher Education Board Appointments was established to ensure that board members were selected based on multiple criteria, including qualifications, expertise, experience, and a commitment to the institution's mission and values. However, it is clear that, in the current national environment, the selection process for BOV appointees in Virginia has become politicized.

- The Commission has contributed to the selection of BOV members with specific political ideologies.
- The Commission has contributed to the selection of BOV members who have expressed contempt for our institutions of higher education, faculty, staff, and students.
- The Commission has contributed to the selection of Board members who have become sidetracked by personal agendas and are therefore unable to adequately tackle the current challenges affecting Virginia's institutions of higher education. Inadequate responses to these challenges is a detriment to the progress and competitiveness of Virginia's higher education system.
- The Commission has contributed to the selection of BOV members who have also shown a disregard for fundamental principles of higher education, including shared governance, academic freedom, and freedom of speech.

Allowing the selection of University Board members to be influenced by political ideologies is detrimental to the best interests of our universities, our students and the public. We urge the members of The Commission to set their political ideologies aside. Our universities make significant contributions to our society and they must continue to be venues free of political interference. Direct your endeavors toward selecting BOV members who will prioritize the advancement of our institutions of higher education. The citizens of Virginia deserve this.

Respectfully,
Carmen Rodriguez, PhD
President of The Faculty Senate of Virginia

Public comment

Commission on Higher Education

Tuesday, April 30, 2024, 11:30am-3:00pm

Time limit: 3 minutes

My name is Michael Carhart. I am Professor of History and chair of the Faculty Senate of Old Dominion University in Norfolk. I spoke with you at the March 19 meeting about

- the fiduciary responsibility of Visitors to the long-term sustainability of the state agencies they oversee;
- that it takes a century to build a university;
- the centrality of the faculty as the most enduring feature of the university (aside from endowment and knowledge base); and
- the centrality of the faculty in establishing and maintaining the reputation of the university.

I wish I could be here again today to meet you in person, but I have shared governance obligations on campus – happening right now.

I came back to discuss a long-term disinvestment in faculty at ODU that is damaging the university – both its reputation and its long-term stability. This disinvestment is not the fault of any single president's administration, rather a feature endemic to ODU. This is why I think it rises to the level of the Board of Visitors and the state Commission on Higher Education.

This past fiscal & academic year, the predominant narrative from the Office of the President has been enrollment decline. The decline is not due to some "enrollment cliff." As the default institution for first-generation students in a metropolitan area of 1.8 million people from the Beach to Williamsburg, there is no shortage of graduating high schoolers.

Additionally, enrollments in the I-81 corridor are growing: Virginia Tech, JMU, UVa, GMU – all with increasing enrollments while ODU declines. Why?

A significant factor is disinvestment in faculty:

- JMU – about the size of ODU – has more than 1,300 full-time faculty;
- ODU – 880.

In ODU's largest college, 52% of student credit hours are served by part-time adjuncts. Everybody in town knows this – which is why so many Hampton Roads students leave the region – its vibrancy, diversity, and opportunity – for more remote destinations.

Recently an external peer review of ODU's gen.ed. program pointed out that "by populating gen.ed. courses so extensively with adjunct faculty, the university is inadvertently signaling that those courses don't matter, which then reinforces student skepticism about the value of gen.ed." And other downstream consequences were pointed out.

There is plenty of money.

- In the past three years, the quantity of ODU vice presidents has increased from 6 to 15;
- The state has passed legislation and appropriation to fold EVMS into ODU.

But none of this is coming to the core mission of the university, which is academics.

We know that the state has confidence in ODU as an institution. The integration of EVMS demonstrates that. But we urge the Commission and the Visitors to consider:

- The long-term stability of the institution requires a Strategic Investment in Faculty.