Northern Virginia Community College Senate
Meeting Minutes – Meeting called by Senate Chair Donna Minnich to consider letter re: presidential search process
1/30/2020

Attending or on phone: Teba Aljumali, Kristin Balbuena, Alexander Case, Julie Combs, Kerry Cotter, Patrick Dawes, Kathleen Deal, Stephanie Dupal, Ellen Fancher-Ruiz, Judith Gomez, Robert Johnson, Elizabeth Lanthier, Jack Lechelt, Beatrice McKeithen, Donna Minnich, Mary Moseley, Tykesha Myrick, Leslie Nyborg (Woodbridge alternate), Marilyn Odaka, Regina Sanders, Beth Shewmaker, Christiane Silva, Maureen Townsend, Ashlie Warnick, Christina Wells, Jack Zegeer, Ed Zuniga

Senate Chair Donna Minnich called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM.

Topic of meeting is limited to the content and distribution of letter re: presidential search process. The Senate had previously charged Senator Kerry Cotter with drafting the letter. A copy of that draft follows these minutes.

Senate Chair Donna Minnich advised Senators that VCCS policies and a memo from Senator Ed Zuniga were distributed to Senator’s along with the draft letter. Some changes in wording of the letter were asked for. For example, the panels were not interview panels but set up as discussion panels.

Discussion about the letter, generally:

- At the last Senate meeting, the Senate voted to add addressees to the letter. Senator Zuniga asked if, in light of VCCS policies, the Senate would need to vote to remove addressees. Senate Parliamentarian Patrick Dawes said yes; the Senate would have to vote on distribution. Senate Parliamentarian Patrick Dawes advised that the Senate should address the content of the letter and then distribution.

Content of the letter:

Senate Parliamentarian Patrick Dawes made a motion to approve the content of the letter as distributed on 1/28. Motion was seconded. Discussion of 1/28 draft:

- Senator Regina Sanders brought forth a concern of Senator Kelly L. DeSenti that the letter asks Dr. Kress to share with the Chancellor and the Board. Motion to amend letter to ask Dr. Kress to share letter with Chancellor and the Board. Seconded.
  - Is this motion moot if we are also distributing to the Chancellor and Board? Motion to set aside DeSenti/Sanders motion until distribution decided later in the meeting. Seconded. Motion passes by voice vote with no objections and four abstentions.
- Senator Kristin Balbuena asked to whom the Academic Deans sent their letter to (letter sent before process). Senator Ed Zuniga asked if the reference to the Academic Deans’
letter needs to be in our letter. Motion to change language in sentence to eliminate reference to Academic Deans letter. Remaining language: “Presidential and other search processes which require input of the college community should, where possible, not conflict with religious holidays.” Seconded. Senator Kristin Balbuena pointed out that Dr. Kress may not be familiar with the process since she was a candidate and that she should be made aware of the issues.

- Senator Julie Combs made a motion to remove “where possible.” Discussion:
  - Senator Ellen Fancher-Ruiz said that there are a lot of religious holidays. Senator Ashlie Warnick suggested moving the phrase to the end of the sentence.
- Academic Deans letter was set in-house to the NOVA Board, Human Resources, Administrative Council, and the Council of Provosts.
- Motion by Senator Beth Shewmaker to add “when possible” to the end of the sentence and remove “where possible” from the middle. Motion passed without objections or abstentions.

- Second paragraph:
  - Senator Ed Zuniga said that the second line of the second paragraph implies information. Do we know that people did not have sufficient time to prepare? Senator Kerry Cotter said that that was established at previous Senate meetings.
  - Senator Ed Zuniga raised the phrase “those organizing event.” Senator Beatrice McKeithen suggested changing “organizing” to “participating in.” Motion to change to “those participating in the process lacked sufficient time to…” Changing “event” to “process” and being more clear on the “who.” New language proposed: “Those participating in the process lacked sufficient time to evaluate the candidates and to provide feedback.”
    - Senate Chair Donna Minnich asked if it wasn’t mostly faculty that were affected. Senator Rob Johnson asked if we should eliminate the second sentence altogether. Senate Vice Chair Mary Moseley said that the faculty were negatively affected but Senate Parliamentarian Patrick Dawes reminded the Senate that the letter is from the entire Senate. Senator Jack Lechelt said that the Senate can say that one group was particularly inconvenienced. Senate Chair Donna Minnich said that there are no individual names on the letter so we need to take that into consideration when we are considering the wording of the letter. Senator Jack Lechelt said that it doesn’t take away from the letter if it notes the effects felt by one group.
    - Senator Kristin Balbuena made a motion to change language to: “those desiring to participate in the process lacked sufficient time to clear their calendars to attend the events.” Seconded.
• Senator Julie Combs pointed out that the letter references “processes” and then “events.” Senator Ellen Fancher-Ruiz said there were different events: forums, panels, etc. Motion passes by voice vote with no abstentions or objections.
  o Senator Rob Johnson suggested moving the second sentence of the second paragraph into the third paragraph. No transition and immediately goes into recommendations.
• Motion to swap paragraphs 3 and 4. Senator Stephanie Dupal asked if “challenges” should be in paragraph 2 or 3? Solutions are in paragraph 2 not 3. We want to make sure language still works if the paragraphs are flipped. Motion passes with no objections and no abstentions.
• Motion to add transitional phrase for new paragraph 4 (was paragraph 3). Add “in addition” to beginning of that paragraph. No second.
• Senator Rob Johnson made a motion to bullet the recommendations by combining sentences 3 and 4. “… challenges in the future:
  ▪ Sufficient planning time will eliminate …
  ▪ Live streaming of smaller panel discussions
  ▪ Avoid holidays, when possible.”
  o Seconded. Discussion of bullet points:
    ▪ Senator Stephine Dupal addressed the first bullet point. “sufficient planning time will enable participants…”
    ▪ Senator Beatrice McKeithen suggested prefacing the list with “Realizing NOVA Board was delegated authority to run the process by the state board...” Senate Parliamentarian Patrick Dawes said that the VCCS set the requirements. Senator McKeithen said the NOVA Board came up with our process of meeting those requirements; process lacked input from college community. We’d like to have those conversations about the process before it is decided upon so we can give better input. Live streaming doesn’t get at what we are concerned about.
    ▪ Senate Chair Donna Minnich said that it was a 13 month process.
    ▪ Senator Beth Shewmaker said we should simplify our letter as much as possible; better to be general than getting into minutia. Point is that we didn’t have enough time. Senate Chair Donna Minnich said that a short and sweet and to-the-point letter is better.
    ▪ Senator Beatrice McKeithen said that the live streaming portion is too detailed.
• Motion to approve Paragraphs 1 and 2 as they stand. Seconded.
  o Senator Rob Johnson: Paragraph 1, line 1: “college” rather than “campus”
  o Senator Beatrice McKeithen: Paragraph 1, line 4: “search process” rather than “interview”
• Motion to make these changes and approve paragraphs 1 & 2. Passes by voice vote with no objections or abstentions.

• Motion to transition paragraphs 3 and 4 to bullet points with intro sentence if needed. Seconded.
  - Senator Stephanie Dupal asked that the current language be projected for the room.
  - Motion passes by voice vote with no objections or abstentions.

• Senator Kristin Balbuena made a motion that the first bullet should be: “allow sufficient planning time to create active participation and minimal disruption to the college’s mission of educating students.”
  - Senate Chair Donna Minnich said that the portion after “active participation” is redundant. Senator Beth Shewmaker agreed with Senate Chair Donna Minnich. First bullet should focus on participation. Motion to amend: “Allow sufficient planning time to promote active participation.” Seconded. Senator Maureen Townsend likes the change as it addresses those beyond teaching faculty. Motion passes by voice vote with no objections and one abstention.
  - Continued Discussion about first bullet. Senator Beatrice McKeithen made a motion to add “by the College community” at the end of the bullet. No discussion. Motion passes by voice vote with no objections or abstentions.

• Second bullet discussion (live streaming):
  - Senator Kristin Balbuena suggested removing passive voice. “streaming” to “stream” and strike “is recommended”
  - Senator Beth Shewmaker suggested removing all after “sessions.” Senator Rob Johnson suggested keeping the rest of the sentence.
  - Senator Beatrice McKeithen asked if “all panels” was appropriate.
  - Senator Ed Zuniga suggested eliminating the whole bullet. An intimate discussion is harder with cameras. Motion to strike the entire bullet. Senator Marilyn Odaka said that streaming is still important. Senator Kerry Cotter said that the purpose of the bullet/sentence was to allow live streaming to panel members who couldn’t be at a panel. Motion to strike bullet passes by voice vote with no objections or abstentions.
  - Senator Kathleen Deal made a motion to make the second bullet: “Provide a mechanism for panel members to participate remotely.” Discussion:
    - Senate Chair Donna Minnich said this needs to be defined more. Is it fair if someone remotely does one but not the others? Not consistent with policy and that could lead to a lot of other issues. Senator Ed Zuniga said that the interview process is about candidates interviewing the college, too, and that is harder to do through a live stream. Motion to add second bullet: “provide mechanism for panel members to participate remotely” fails by voice vote.
3rd bullet (now 2nd): Religious holidays.
  - Motion to adopt language: “Presidential and other search processes that require the input of the College community should not conflict with religious holidays, when possible.” Seconded.
    - Senator Rob Johnson made a motion to add the following to the end of this bullet: “Such conflict effectively eliminates the unique insights and perspectives these colleagues bring to what should otherwise be an inclusive selection process and does not properly communicate the VCCS’s shared commitment to diversity and inclusion”
      - Senator Mary Moseley said this provides a rationale but it isn’t really a bullet point.
      - Motion to add sentence to the end of the bullet fails by voice vote.
    - Senator Kristin Balbuena said that Richmond may not see “religious holidays” as inclusively as we intend. Senator Kerry Cotter said there are many religious holidays. Senator Ed Zuniga said that the broad language could cover all religions.
    - Motion to adopt language: “Presidential and other search processes that require the input of the College community should not conflict with religious holidays, when possible.” Passes by voice vote with no abstentions and no objections.
  - Senator Rob Johnson suggested adding a third paragraph to add concerns about diversity and inclusion in the process. Senate Parliamentarian Patrick Dawes advised finishing consideration of the bullets first.
  - No suggestions for additional bullets.

Recommendations for introductory statement before the bullets.
  - Motion to add “College Senate proposes the following recommendations to mitigate potential challenges in the future.” No discussion. Motion passed by voice vote with no objections or abstentions.

Concerns about how process was rushed.
  - Senator Rob Johnson made a motion to add a third paragraph before the intro-to-bullets: “Additionally, the accelerated timeline overlapped with religious holidays. This potentially minimized the unique insights and perspectives some colleagues bring to what should otherwise be an inclusive selection process and does not properly communicate the VCCS’s shared commitment to diversity and inclusion.” Seconded. Discussion:
    - Senate Chair Donna Minnich made a Motion to Amend:
      - Change “overlapped with religious holidays” to “overlapped with a religious holiday”
      - Change “minimize” to “minimized”
• New language for second sentence: “This minimized the unique insights our colleagues could have brought to what should have been an inclusive process and did not communicate the VCCS’s shared commitment to diversity and inclusion.”
• Senator Beatrice McKeithen made a motion to change the second sentence to “This minimized the opportunity for our colleagues to participate in the process.” Motion passed by voice vote with no abstentions or objections.
• Motion to add third sentence: “We believe this does not communicate the VCCS’s shared commitment to diversity and inclusion.” Senator Stephanie Dupal made a motion to amend to: “We believe this omission does not reflect the VCCS’s shared commitment to diversity and inclusion.” Senator Ellen Fancher-Ruiz suggested adding “sends the wrong message to the college community.” These sentiments are part of earlier parts of the letter. Motion to add “We believe this omission does not communicate the VCCS’s shared commitment to diversity and inclusion” to end of 3rd paragraph passes by voice vote with no objections and abstentions.
  o Motion to change first paragraph. Current language: “In no way does this letter reflect concerns with the finalists selected” to “the selection of Dr. Kress.” Senator Beatrice McKeithen suggested changing it to “concerns with our President.” Senator Ed Zuniga made a motion to change language to: “This letter serves only to highlight challenges experienced with the Presidential search process, not its outcome.” Motion passes by voice vote with one objection and no abstentions.
  o Senator Marilyn Odaka asked that the letter be read in its entirety as amended. Motion to read passes by voice vote with one objection. Senator Kerry Cotter read the letter.
  o Senate Parliamentarian Patrick Dawes asked if there were other proposed changes. Senate approved the letter as written by voice vote with no objections or abstentions.
• Distribution of the letter
  o Per information distributed before meeting, the Senate can only distribute the letter to the President’s office but the Senate previously voted to send to others. Senate Parliamentarian Patrick Dawes made a Motion from the Chair that the letter only be distributed to the Office of the President. Senator Jack Lechelt said that we could send to others through the President. Discussion of controlling language and its interpretation.
Senator Rob Johnson said that the address on the letter should be changed to the President’s office (4001 Wakefield Chapel Road).

Senate Parliamentarian Patrick Dawes said that the Senate could ask Dr. Kress to send to others.

Vote to distribute letter only to the President passes by voice vote with no objections or abstentions.

Motion to ask President to send to NOVA Board and Chancellor’s office. Senator Rob Johnson suggested language: “We respectfully request for you to share this with the Administrative Council and the NOVA Board.”

Senator Kristin Balbuena said that this letter is about the timeline and the Chancellor decided the timeline. Senator Jack Lechelt said we are sending a polite letter. Discussion about adding Chancellor. Senator Beatrice McKeithen said that the Chancellor chooses his direct report. Senator Rob Johnson said that if the Chancellor sets the timeline, letter should be sent to him since that is what the letter is about. Senate Chair Donna Minnich said we should keep it in house. Motion failed by voice vote with no abstentions.

Senator Kristin Balbuena made a motion to add: “Share this with whom you deem appropriate.” Motion failed by voice vote with no abstentions.

Senator Rob Johnson made a motion to amend to read: “We kindly request you share this letter with the Administrative Council, the NOVA Board, and others whom you deem appropriate.” Motion passed by voice vote with no abstentions.

- Change address and salutation to Dr. Kress.

Meeting adjourned.
1/27/2020 version of the letter (as revised since 1/16/2020 Senate meeting):

Your Name
8333 Little River Turnpike
Annandale, Virginia 22003
Date

Recipient Name
Northern Virginia Community College
8333 Little River Turnpike
Annandale, Virginia 22003

Recipient Name:
Your Company Name

In no way does this letter reflect concerns with the finalists selected. It serves only to highlight challenges experienced with the interview process.

The accelerated timeline allotted to the recent presidential search resulted in the manifestation of significant challenges. Those organizing the event lacked sufficient time to formalize the process. This led to inconsistencies on individual panels regarding college role and personnel representation, as well as portions of groups lacking any representation at all. In turn, this resulted in a lack of personnel consistency serving on the panels for each of the three candidates. It also resulted in inconsistent time allotted for each group to coordinate before their respective panel events. As such, various groups and individuals felt their input would not be given equal weight and consideration during the process.

As already addressed by the Academic Deans Council, presidential and other search processes which require the input of the college community, where possible, should not conflict with religious holidays. Such conflict effectively eliminates the unique insights and perspectives these colleagues bring to what should otherwise be an inclusive selection process and does not properly communicate the Virginia Community College System’s shared commitment to diversity and inclusion.

The College Senate wishes to recommend potential solutions which may help mitigate some of these challenges in the future. Sufficient planning time will eliminate many of the challenges mentioned above. Additionally, live streaming of the smaller panel question and answer sessions combined with a mechanism for remote interaction from panel members is recommended to allow those unable to physically attend the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Your Name
Northern Virginia Community College