



Provost's Report to VCU Faculty Senate -- January 25, 2022

Response to VCU AAUP report

At the previous Faculty Senate meeting, held on Nov. 30, 2021, I was asked for a detailed response to the report that I had received from VCU AAUP on Nov. 19, 2021 regarding the university's administrative structure. To recap, the AAUP report highlighted a slow-paced growth in tenured and tenure-track faculty against an accelerated growth in management/administrators. In order to provide ample time for a detailed analysis of the AAUP report findings, the Faculty Senate agreed that I would report back to you at your January meeting.

The AAUP report was provided to the VCU Board of Visitors prior to the Dec. 10, 2021 meeting. My response to the Board included a red-lined version of the report ([available as part of the public materials of the meeting, beginning on page 101](#)). A meeting was also held prior to the BOV meeting with Faculty Senate leadership to review the response.

The essence of the detailed analysis was to clearly understand the definitions of the IPEDS Occupational categories and how VCU reports to IPEDS. It is important to note that IPEDS has standard definitions to which every institution adheres to; however, the data is sensitive to any modifications in institutional practices. For example:

- The management occupational category is defined by IPEDS to be top executives and managers in various administrative areas.
- Due to the HR Redesign in 2018, the number of Management staff changed largely due to academic advisors and finance/business professionals being coded into the Management classification. We are currently investigating the coding mechanisms to understand how best to report occupational categories.

A way to account for the HR Redesign impact is to look at the full-time staffing levels in aggregate (inclusive of management, finance/business, library & academic support) to accurately compare VCU's growth in non-instructional staff compared to VA peers. When doing this, VCU has only a modest growth whereas UVA and VT have a steep growth ([page 96 in the public materials linked above](#)).

As for the Instructional staff (Tenured, Tenure Track, Term Faculty, or instructional staff without faculty status), VCU has 38% of all employees in the Instructional staff categories ([page 99 in](#)

[the link above](#)). Although this percentage is higher than UVA and VT, we still can do better to increase the tenure stream faculty as mentioned in the AAUP report.

In conclusion, the Provost Office team is committed to continued transparency and working with the Faculty Senate as we together continue to excel.

Spring Semester Update

There have been several messages from the university over the past month regarding the spring semester. But VCU, with the guidance of our Public Health Response Team and in alignment with the majority of universities and colleges in Virginia, has successfully opened the spring semester with courses being taught in the modalities for which our students registered.

Resources

Of course, we are still living with variants of COVID-19. And faculty, in particular, are tired of the strain the pandemic has put on every part of our lives - work/life balance, of course, is at the top of the list. That's why people throughout the university have worked very hard over the past two years to provide faculty and students with resources and guidance for navigating frequent change. The [Faculty One-Stop](#) is the central location for finding these resources. The [FAQ covers many of the questions](#) we hear frequently. And as new information is available, we will get it to you as soon as possible. On Jan. 14 [you received an email](#) with easy instructions for recording or streaming your courses for students who are not able to attend class. As a reminder, you can find the resources to record/stream your course in VCU Learning Systems' "[Instructional Technology Toolkit](#)." I hope you will take advantage of the resources available and reach out to the units within the university who are there to support you.

Health and safety protocols

As you are aware, a recent executive order in Virginia has changed the protocols for employees. Employees are no longer required to be vaccinated or report their vaccination status. All other protocols remain in place. The [One VCU: Better Together webpage](#) remains the best resource for information regarding the university's response to COVID-19.

Celebrating VCU faculty

Here are news stories from Dec. 2021 and Jan. 2022 celebrating VCU faculty members:

- [Benjamin Darter, P.T., Ph.D.](#), an associate professor in the College of Health Professions' Department of Physical Therapy, received a \$1.97 million grant in 2021 from the U.S. Department of Defense for his four-year project titled "[Exploring the Impact of Microprocessor-Controlled Knees on Prosthesis Awareness and Overall Health](#)."
- [Bennett C. Ward, Ph.D.](#), an associate professor in the Department of Chemical and Life Science Engineering in the College of Engineering, has been elected as a fellow in the

[National Academy of Inventors](#), the highest professional distinction accorded solely to academic inventors.

- [Priscilla Hwang, Ph.D.](#), an assistant professor in the Department of Biomedical Engineering, in the College of Engineering has received a [Faculty Early Development \(CAREER\) Award from the National Science Foundation \(NSF\)](#) for 2022. This is the NSF's most prestigious award given to junior faculty who most effectively integrate research and education.
- The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has awarded a [major research grant](#) to [B. Ethan Coston, Ph.D.](#), an assistant professor in the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies in the College of Humanities and Sciences, to develop, test and implement a comprehensive assessment of sexual health.
- [Mignonne C. Guy, Ph.D.](#), an associate professor and chair of the Department of African American Studies in the College of Humanities and Sciences, has been appointed to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's [Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee](#), which reviews and evaluates safety, dependence and health issues relating to tobacco products and provides appropriate advice, information and recommendations to [the commissioner of food and drugs](#).
- [James Fritz, Ph.D.](#), an assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy in the College of Humanities and Sciences at Virginia Commonwealth University, has been named one of two recipients of the [2021 Routledge, Taylor & Francis Prize](#), which is awarded by the American Philosophical Association for the [two best published articles in philosophy written by contingent](#) faculty.
- [The VCU Commercialization Fund Awards](#) were announced by the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation in December. Receiving the awards were:
 - [Stephen Fong, Ph.D.](#), professor, Department of Chemical and Life Science Engineering, College of Engineering
 - [Barbara D. Boyan, Ph.D.](#), dean, College of Engineering and Alice T. and William H. Goodwin Jr. Professor of Biomedical Engineering
 - [Carlos Castano, Ph.D.](#), assistant professor, Department of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering, College of Engineering
 - [Youngman Oh, Ph.D.](#), professor, Department of Pathology, School of Medicine and director of the Cancer and Metabolic Disorder Lab
 - [Wei-Ning Wang, Ph.D.](#), associate professor, Department of Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering and [Ping Xu, Ph.D.](#), professor, Philips Institute for Oral Health Research, School of Dentistry
 - [Guizhi "Julian" Zhu, Ph.D.](#), assistant professor, Department of Pharmaceutics, School of Pharmacy

Important Initiatives in progress

- [Recalibration of Quest 2025: Together We Transform](#): The Executive Committee is analyzing feedback and preparing a draft that will go to senior leaders for review in February and to shared governance groups in March.
- [Online Strategy Task Force](#): The task force and workgroup members are on schedule to submit recommendations to the steering committee later this semester.
- [Graduate Student Health Insurance](#): The first year of the graduate student health insurance program is currently winding up its open enrollment period, which closes on Feb. 1. This program, created in partnership with United Health Care, provides affordable health care coverage for our full-time Ph.D., D.D.S., M.D., and Pharm. D. students. To date, around 450 students have enrolled in the health insurance plan.

New initiatives

Creating a Culture of Care. A culture of care is one that proactively provides resources and supports relationships that foster learning, development, belonging and connectedness. While there are many ways that we will build upon this initiative, I want to highlight two:

- **Provost's Student Advisory Council** - This council will be made up of students from a variety of disciplines, at various points in their academic studies, who will work with me and my team to help us develop and implement initiatives that will improve student experience and augment their career success.
- **Lunch with the Provost** - This is an opportunity to meet with a small group of three faculty members from different areas for casual conversations. I want to get to know as many faculty as I can. Building relationships is a cornerstone to effective team building.

Creating and strengthening opportunities for faculty growth. As I highlighted in my [end-of-the-semester message to faculty](#) last month, a series of new research and leadership training opportunities are, or will soon be, available.

- **Now Open** - **First-Generation Student Success Seed Grants** - VCU has received funding from the Jesse Ball duPont Fund to support scholarly activity focused on first-generation student success. These \$5,000 grants will support interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research. [Information about the grants, including the Request for Applications, is online.](#) An information session will be held on **Wednesday, Jan. 26 at 1 p.m.** via Zoom: <https://vcu.zoom.us/j/98112517425>.
- **Coming Soon:**
 - **Humanities, Social Sciences and Arts Seed Grants** - These grants will support both individual and interdisciplinary research projects with the expectation to advance excellent scholarship and creative works in the humanities, social sciences and the arts.

- **Student Success Seed Grants** - These grants will support scholarly activities focused on improving student success across diverse populations of students.
- **Faculty Fellows** - The opportunities for becoming a Faculty Fellow in the Office of the Provost is being expanded.

Policy Updates

- **Syllabus policy workgroup**
VCU's Course Syllabus Policy Work Group was convened and charged just before the fall semester ended in December. We expect to have recommendations for a draft course syllabus requirement policy for vetting before the end of the spring semester. The workgroup members include: Meredith Baines (Dentistry), Jason Bennett (Arts), Leslie Cohen-Gee (University College), Jane Marie Corker (Nursing), Denis Demchenko (Humanities & Sciences), Frank Franzak (Business), Christina Mancini (Wilder), Kitty Maynard (Faculty Affairs), Maria Rivera (Faculty Senate), Sylvia Rozario (Humanities & Sciences), Arif Sikder (Life Sciences), Pattie Sobczak (Libraries). Ex-officio members from Academic Affairs are Andrew Arroyo and Deborah Noble-Triplett.
- **Academic Analytics Data and Tool Use Guidelines**
The Office of the Provost has finalized a document outlining what Academic Analytics data and tools will be used for and will not be used for. This document has been reviewed by Faculty Senate leadership, their input for revisions/additions has been accepted and approved as a final document. VCU will be uploading this document onto a website. We are in the process of obtaining approval from IT Governance.

New Leadership

- [School of Dentistry](#)- Lyndon F. Cooper, D.D.S., Ph.D., has been named dean of the School of Dentistry, effective April 18. Cooper currently serves as associate dean for research and head of the Department of Oral Biology at University of Illinois Chicago College of Dentistry.
- [School of Medicine](#) - David P. Chelmow, M.D. has been appointed interim dean at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine and interim executive vice president for medical affairs at VCU Health.
- [Office of the Provost](#) - Jill Gordon, Ph.D. has been appointed interim senior vice provost for faculty affairs. She is a professor in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs.
- [School of Business](#) - Naomi E. Boyd, Ph.D., has been named dean of the School of Business, effective July 1. She currently serves as associate dean for innovation, outreach and engagement and as chair, professor and the Fred T. Tattersall Chair of Finance in the John Chambers College of Business and Economics Department of Finance at West Virginia University.

Leadership searches in progress

- [Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs](#)
- [Vice Provost for Strategy and Implementation](#)

In Memoriam

- [Dr. Hermes Kontos](#), former dean, School of Medicine, and former CEO, VCU Health System Authority
- [Dr. John Oehler](#), former dean, School of Education

February events

- **State of the University Address** - President Michael Rao
Feb. 15, 2022, 11 am at the Cabell Library, Room 303 or stream online.
[More information and RSVP.](#)
- **Save these Dates**
 - [Provost's Lecture Series at the ICA](#) - Frank Gupton, Ph.D.
Feb. 16, 2022, 6 p.m. at the ICA and online.
 - **State of Academic Affairs** - Provost Fotis Sotiropoulos
Feb. 28, 2022, 11 a.m. at the ICA and online.