**D R A F T**

**MINUTES**

**Thursday, March 2, 2023**

**3:00 – 5:00 p.m.**

A meeting of the University Council was held on Thursday, March 2, 2023 at 3 p.m. via Zoom.

The following members and alternates were present:

**Officers:** President Michael Rao, Meredith Weiss, and Scott Street

**Administration:** Scott Breuninger, Cathleen Burke, Matt Conrad, Karol Gray, Aaron Hart, Grant Heston, Catherine Ingrassia, and Gary Tepper

**Faculty:** Brian Brown,Lisa Brown, Sarah Jane Brubaker, Paul Bukaveckas, Beth Bukoski, Everett Carpenter, Amita Chin, Kim Compton, Carrie Connolly, Alexis Crawford, Carla-Mae Crookendale, Katherine Dabney, Marjolein Dewit, Rodney Dyer, Lindsay Evans, Sarah Golding, Kanako Iwanaga, Susan Kornstein, Joyce Lloyd, Lathika Mohanraj, Shillpa Naavaal, Bettina Peacemaker, Peter Pidcoe, ViCora Rainey, Maria Rivera, Valerie Robholt, Oliver Speck, John Sztraicher, Christy Tyndall, Yi Wen Wei, Jeff Wilson, Erin Zacholski, and Kim Zicafoose.

**Classified Staff**: Delores Armstrong, Peyton Burgess, Melissa Burton, Teresa Dulaney-Dewald, Brogan King, Amie Knapp, Amanda Simmons, Chris Straus, Jennifer Tennison, and Katina Velentzas

**Students**: Mary Barazanchi, Yunis Bidav, Pratyush Narayen, Chineme Onukwughara, and Anne Skelton

**Ex-Officio and Guests**: David Allen, Andrew Arroyo, Chelyen Davis, Karen Helderman, Irene Herold, Magnus Johnsson, Alison Jones, Marlon Levy, Aashir Nasim, Reuban Rodriguez, Mangala Subramaniam, Tara Thomas, Deborah Noble-Tripplett, and John Venuti.

1. **President’s Report**

President Rao welcomed Council members to the sixth UC meeting of the academic year.

Dr. Rao announced that a VCU Massey Cancer researcher, Vanessa Sheppard, has been named the American Cancer Society’s researcher of the year for her work on breast cancer disparities.

Black women are 40 percent more likely to die of breast cancer than white women.

* Dr. Sheppard is researching ways to improve Black patients’ uptake of chemotherapy and hormone therapy, in part by pairing newly-diagnosed Black breast cancer patients with Black breast cancer survivor-coaches who underwent the same therapies.
* She received a $1.5 million grant from the American Cancer Society for her research, one of the largest investigator grants they have given in Virginia.

Dr. Rao congratulated Dr. Sheppard, noting that this is exactly the kind of work that we want to be doing as a public research university and health system – addressing disparities and helping the communities we serve.

Last month, Dr. Rao outlined our renewed focus on student success under Quest 2028. He talked about how, if we are going to get our graduation rate to 78 percent by 2028, we need to work harder and move faster.  He also discussed exploring how we can remove administrative burdens on students that impact retention and graduation. After discussing this with University Council, Dr. Rao talked about those priorities with the faculty Senate and the Council of Deans.

Feedback has been positive. The Faculty Senate offered several good ideas for engagement, and we are following up. Last week Dr. Rao had the opportunity to meet with academic advising directors and leaders of the University Academic Advising Board. They discussed the challenges our students have and that they have. Advisors are really one of the best resources for our students, and we want to make sure we support them. We will continue to engage with faculty, staff and students because this is really our top priority. Our mission is to help students succeed, period.

He also updated council members on some highlights of our other main focus, VCU’s research enterprise, that have happened since the last meeting.

Last week, Vice President Srirama Rao held the State of the Research presentation.

It truly highlighted how fast and how far we have come:

* Top 50 public research universities
* $405 million in sponsored research funding
* a 22 percent increase in undergraduate participation in research

In 2022 we filed 144 patent applications, had 18 patents issued and launched 10 startups – an all-time high for VCU. The national average is only four.

NSF Director Panchanathan spent a day with us here last month.

* He said we should be applying for more NSF grants – something we will be making a priority.
* The director came here because his vision and VCU’s mission are aligned in a critical way – in what Director Panchanathan calls “finding the missing millions.” These are people who have the
* potential to excel in STEM fields and the arts, but do not have access to the pathways to reach those careers, and we agree that we need them.

The director called VCU one of the “institutions that matter for the future.” That is a badge of honor, and it is a mandate to keep up our work doing research that has an impact.

Finally, on Monday we had a moving series of events to remember Adam Oakes, and to honor his life and his memory by joining Adam's family in raising awareness about hazing among our students.

* Our goal is simple yet profound. What happened to Adam was a terrible thing – hazing should not happen to another student.
* We want VCU to be a national model for safe fraternity and sorority culture.
* Dr. Rao hopes that everyone will visit the plaque and bench honoring Adam outside the Office of Fraternity and Sorority life in the Commons.

1. **Minutes**

The minutes of the February 2, 2023 were approved.

1. **Committee Reports**

The Academic Affairs and University Policy Committee presented the following

programmatic changes, and new and revised policy proposals:

**Revised Continuity of Operations Management**—Ms. Tara Thomas, Director, Emergency Preparedness, VCU Police, and Mr. John Venuti, Associate Vice President for Public Safety, VCU & VCU Health, discussed the revised policy and responded to questions. With 93% “yes” votes and 7% abstentions, a motion was made and seconded to accept and move the revised policy forward for review and approval by the VCU Board of Visitors.

1. **Constituent Reports**

Mary Barazanji provided an SGA Report. A general discussion followed.

Valerie Robnholt provided a Faculty Senate Report. She discussed faculty senate highlights and a general discussion followed.

Brogan King provided a Staff Senate Report. She discussed staff senate highlights and a general discussion followed.

1. **Cabinet Report**.

Karol Gray, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, and David Allen, AVP for Budget, Analysis and Financial Planning provided a 2024 Budget Overview.

A general discussion followed and Ms. Gray and Mr. Allen responded to questions.

1. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:59 p.m.