

**[DRAFT]**

**UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY**

**SENATE HANDBOOK**

**PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK**

This handbook was developed by the Governance Council to provide an overview of the responsibilities and operation of the Senate for the benefit of Senators and Faculty who might wish to run for a senate seat. Further details are available in the *University at Albany Faculty Bylaws* and *Charter of the University Senate*, which can be accessed via [www.albany.edu/senate](http://www.albany.edu/senate).

This handbook also contains some guidelines which are not explicitly part of the Senate Charter.

Senators and those considering ~~to~~[running](#) for the Senate should familiarize themselves with these documents. (An index to the *Charter* and *Bylaws* is provided at <http://www.albany.edu/senate/2967.htm>.)

**INTRODUCTION TO THE UNIVERSITY SENATE OF THE UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY**

The voice of the "Voting Faculty" at the University at Albany is called the *University* Senate, since in addition to full-time Teaching Faculty and Professional Faculty, the Senate and its councils provide for membership of administrators, undergraduate and graduate students, part-time Faculty, Emeriti, and others. As with any representative body, the Senate and its bodies work best when its constituents familiarize themselves with how the governance processes work and, to the degree they are able, become involved in those processes.

The University Senate is the principal policy-forming body of the University (Bylaws, Article II, 1.1) It is advisory to the President of the University. The Senate's effectiveness derives from [its capacity to represent the right of the Faculty to be consulted](#) on matters of major importance to the educational, research, and service mission of the University and to provide advice on such matters as spelled out more in detail in the Faculty Bylaws and Senate Charter. To carry out its role, the Senate critically relies on Faculty committed to the goals of the University and willing to participate in the governance of the University.

As noted in the *Charter*, Section III, "the Senate shall interpret the extent of the powers and responsibilities specified to itself in Article I Section 2.3 of the *Faculty Bylaws*," which state:

“To discharge these responsibilities, the Faculty shall create a University Senate and shall delegate its power to that Senate, reserving to itself the powers specified in Article I, Section 5, Article IV and Article V” of the *Faculty Bylaws*.

Any policy, practice, or condition within the University which in its judgment significantly affects the quality of the institution's legitimate functioning is a proper concern of the Faculty, and, hence, of the Senate. The Senate's rights and responsibilities are described in the *Bylaws*, Article I, 2.1-2.6, and in the *Charter*, Section III.

### **Officers**

[The officers of the Senate are....They serve for ...](#) The functions of Senate Officers are listed in Section IV of the *Charter*. The Officers and the Chairs of Councils and Standing Committees of the Senate serve on the Executive Committee of the Senate (described in Article II, Section 4 of the *Faculty Bylaws* and in Section VII of the *Charter*) and on the Committee on Council Nominations of the Governance Council.

### **Councils and Committees**

Much of the business of the Senate occurs within its Councils and Committees. [Councils are comprised of both Senators and ....](#) Councils may gather and disseminate information, act on matters for which authority has been delegated from the Senate, and recommend action in the form of bills and resolutions brought to the Senate. Section X of the *Charter* describes the charges of Senate standing committees and councils and the subcommittees within each council.

### **Senate Meetings**

Senate Meetings are typically held once a month. They are open to anyone [to attend and to speak](#), but only Senators may vote. [The agenda is set by .... and is posted to the Senate web site \(www.albany.edu/senate\) Minutes are also posted to the Senate web site...](#)

## **I. SENATORS**

### **A. Duties of Senators**

Each Senator holds membership on at least one Council. Senators may be assigned to committees within a Council or to one Council plus a Standing Committee outside that Council, such as the Committee on Ethics in Research and Scholarship (CERS) or the Committee on Academic Freedom, Freedom of Expression and Community Responsibility (CAFFECOR).

Senators are expected to attend all Senate meetings as well as those of any Council; and Committee of which they are a member. Missing four Senate meetings in one academic year may cause a Senator to be removed. (*Bylaws*, Article II, Section 8) Missing four consecutive Council, Standing Committee or subcommittee meetings can result in removal from the given body (*Charter*, X.1.5.3, VIII.5.1).

Senators are expected to report Senate business back to their constituents.

The Senate's meeting schedule shall be posted as early as possible in the previous academic year. Normally, the Senate meets once per month on Mondays from 3:30-5:00. If the business of the meeting extends beyond 5:00 pm, a motion for extension must be made.

## B. Elections of Senators

The *Faculty Bylaws*, Article II, Section 2 describes the election process. Most Senators are elected by their [respective](#) schools and colleges from the eligible Voting Faculty, the seats allotted in proportion to the numbers of Voting Faculty members within each school or college. In addition, according to the *Charter X.1.4.3.1.4*, the Committee on Liaisons and Elections, a subcommittee of the Governance Council (GOV), shall "nominate a slate for the election of Senators-at-large according to *Bylaws* Article II, Sections 2.2 and 5.3 and conduct the election, to be decided by plurality vote, by mail or email ballot." Four full-time Teaching Faculty, four full-time Professional Faculty, and two Part-time faculty are elected Senators-at-large by the Voting Faculty as a whole.

[Why?](#) The Executive Committee may nominate up to two Senators for one-year terms, subject to approval of the Senate.

In cases where a Council is unable to elect a Senator as its Chair, and has elected one of its members as Chair who is not a Senator, the Executive Committee may nominate the chair-elect to serve as Senator, again subject to approval by the Senate. (*Bylaws*, Article II, Section 2.4)

All Senate terms run for two years, and *elected* Senators may not serve for more than three consecutive terms or more than seven consecutive years.

The Governance Council oversees the election procedures.

According to the *Faculty Bylaws*, Article II, Section 8.1, "Election of Senators shall be presided over by the Governance Council of the Senate and completed no later than four full class weeks before the end of classes during the spring semester." ~~All academic units must adjust their bylaws to conform to the *Faculty Bylaws* as approved on December 8, 2003.~~ In other words, [schools and colleges](#) ~~units must should~~ elect their Senators during the spring semester, typically by the beginning of April.

**Senators begin their terms on 1 September and end them on 31 August.** ~~However,~~ [a](#) Assignments of Senators to Councils and/or Standing Committees are made by the Committee on Council Nominations as soon as possible after the spring elections, and organisational meetings of the councils- are typically held before September 1.

Senators who are on leave may be replaced, but only during the period of that leave. The process for replacing Senators is described in the *Bylaws*, Article II, Section 8.2. Senators may send a substitute to a Senate meeting. The substitute may speak and observe but not vote.

Fifteen Student Senators shall be elected according to the procedures in the *Bylaws*, Article II, Section 2.6. Those elections are governed by their constituent bodies, the Student Association and the Graduate Student Organization.

Like Senators-at-large, representatives to the SUNY Faculty Senate are elected by the faculty as a whole. –SUNY Faculty Senators serve three-year terms. [\(Do we need a little more description here on the roles and responsibilities of SUNY Senators?\)](#)

## II. COUNCILS

### A. Roles and Responsibilities~~Duties~~ of Councils

As noted above, most of the business of the Senate takes place as the result of Council and Standing Committee deliberations. Bills and resolutions ~~are~~must be brought to the Senate Executive Committee, which sets the agenda for the subsequent Senate meeting. Executive Committee meetings take place two weeks before the Senate meeting, usually during the same 3:30-5:00 time slot reserved for Senate meetings. Council proposals should be carefully considered before bringing them to the Executive Committee.

#### 1. Bills

Council Chairs, in consultation with their Councils, may bring bills and resolutions before the Senate via the Executive Committee. Bills should be written in a way consistent with Senate procedures (see attached example), ~~with a clear format, beginning with a space in the upper right side listing a Bill number. The number is left blank until the Senate staff support person supplies it. Bills should begin with headings indicating that the bill comes from the University Senate of the University at Albany, State University of New York. The Bill should name the Council(s) and/or Standing Committee(s) from which it comes and the date. After these headings, the bill should state a proposal. This is followed by "IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT THE FOLLOWING BE ADOPTED:" and then the proposal's contents can be listed. At the end, "That this proposal be forwarded to the President [or Interim President or Officer-in-Charge as appropriate] for Approval" and should be followed by the actual content of the bill. After the particulars have been listed, a RATIONALE should follow, which states the reasons the bill is being proposed. The RATIONALE at times is followed by appendices, support letters, and other documentation. A fictitious example of a bill's cover page is provided in the Appendix.~~

The process includes the following steps: submit, consider, vote, send for signature, options if not signed, any exceptions to the process.

The role of the University Senate is an advisory one. Consequently, the President may refuse to sign any legislation that passes the Senate. Any individual who disagrees with the actions of the Senate remains free to express that opinion at any time.(Consider incorporating into process paragraph.)

Proponents of bills and resolutions are expected to research the appropriateness of the bill or resolution and to ascertain that information contained therein is accurate. It is especially important for curricular proposals to be carefully researched, particularly since many of them must be submitted outside the University for final approval. The following guidelines are suggested:

#### **Guidelines for Submission of Curricular Proposals**

In order to facilitate and expedite curricular proposals through the governance process, individuals submitting such proposals should adhere to the following criteria. **All such proposals should be in the governance pipeline by the end of the Fall Semester**; otherwise, governance cannot guarantee that the proposals will be acted upon during the current academic

year. Proponents should keep in mind that new initiatives may have to be submitted to SUNY Central Administration and the Department of Education of the State of New York [because...](#)

- Actions on new individual courses and deactivation or bulletin language changes regarding existing individual courses need not proceed through the governance process to the Senate if the change could ~~not~~ reasonably be construed as [not](#) creating, eliminating or significantly changing the requirements of an academic program. [\(Would an example be helpful here?\)](#)
- Actions on programs or pilots of programs [are must-to](#) go through the governance process ~~and-to~~ be approved by the Senate and then submitted to the President. Since the Senate retains the right to take up for its consideration any action taken by one of its councils or committees, if there is a question whether a proposal constitutes a “program.”; it should be assumed to be so and [should](#) passed on to the Senate Executive Committee for possible submission to the Senate. [\(Would it be helpful to suggest who to contact if you have a question here?\)](#)
- Proposals that originate from a school or college [should be must](#) first ~~be~~ submitted to the appropriate curriculum committee of that unit, unless there is no such committee. *[This may be superseded by the IRCUAP amendment that will be introduced to the Senate at the next meeting. Appropriate language to be formulated later.* In that case, the proposal may be brought directly to the Undergraduate Academic Council (UAC) or Graduate Academic Council (GAC) as appropriate. Curricular proposals that involve both undergraduate and graduate study must be submitted to both UAC and GAC [and can but may](#) be submitted simultaneously. †
- Proposals that originate from more than one academic [department/school/collegeunit](#) must be submitted to the appropriate committee within each unit. The appropriate administrators must sign off on each proposal.
- *[As above, pending: IRCUAP amendment]* Undergraduate proposals that do not originate from a School or College must be submitted to the Interdisciplinary Studies Committee of UAC for eventual consideration by the UAC and the University Senate.
- The Dean (or Vice President in the case of CNSE) of the unit must ultimately sign off on the proposal.
- It is expected that the proponents of new programs research the following **before the initial submission of the proposal:**
  1. whether comparable programs or precedents for such programs exist within the University at Albany;
  2. whether comparable programs or precedents for such programs exist within the four University Centers of SUNY;
  3. whether comparable programs or precedents for such programs exist within the SUNY system;

4. whether comparable programs or precedents for such programs exist within higher education in the United States, particularly among our peers or aspirational peer institutions;

[\(Who can help with this? Let's throw a lifeline here.\)](#)

- Any proposal approved by a School, College, or IRCUAP (*Note: Pending approval of IRCUAP*) which may require new or additional resources must [also](#) be submitted to the University Planning and Policy Council (UPC). Proponents may and should submit such proposals to the appropriate Undergraduate and/or Graduate Academic Council(s) and the UPC simultaneously.
- Proposals must not violate legislation of the State of New York including regulations by the New York State Department of Education, or contradict policies established by the Board of Trustees and/or SUNY Central Administration, or the Bylaws of the Faculty of the University at Albany, State University of New York, or the Charter of the University Senate of the University at Albany. [\(How does someone check this? Again, I think we need to helpful here.\)](#)
- It is the responsibility of the UAC and/or GAC, as appropriate, to ensure that curricular proposals that are recommended for approval are consistent with all these guidelines. Any proposal that is deficient shall be returned to the proponents with a pertinent explanation and request to conform to the guidelines.

## 2. Resolutions

In the case of a resolution, the beginning of the document is the same up to the point where the bill would state the proposal. At that point, the resolution begins to list the customary “Whereas” clauses followed by the usual “Be it Resolved” clauses. [\(see attached example\).](#)

## 3. Amendments to the *Senate Charter* and the *Faculty Bylaws*

Proposed amendments to the Senate Charter shall be submitted to the SEC [by whom? Do they have to go through GOV?](#). If approved by a majority of the SEC, the proposal will then be brought to the Senate. Alternatively, any proposed amendment may be brought directly to the Senate for a vote by a petition of 10% of the senators. These procedures are described in Section IX of the Charter. The Senate Secretary is charged with circulating a Charter amendment to all Senators three weeks before the vote on the amendment is taken. This means that amendments are [ordinarily-ordinarily \(what does this mean?\)](#) put before the Senate [but?](#) not voted on until the next Senate meeting.

The process for amending the *Faculty Bylaws* requires a vote by the Voting Faculty, as described in Article IV of the *Bylaws*. The proposal shall be submitted in writing to the Governance Council of the Senate.

### III. COUNCIL CHAIRS

#### A. Duties of Council Chairs

Council Chairs shall provide council schedules and, if possible, agendas to the Senate Secretary to be posted at least one week in advance. Minutes shall be recorded and drafted by the appropriate support staff, and edited by the Council Chair. Minutes shall be presented to the council at its next meeting and posted [to the Senate web site](#) once approved by the council.

Council Chairs are expected to supply in advance of each meeting of the Senate Executive Committee and of the Senate a brief written summary report to the Secretary for inclusion in a summary of council activity to be available at the meeting. - Council Chairs or a designee shall be available at those meetings to answer any questions about the written report or any other matter before the Council. The report shall distinguish between informational sections, reports of actions, and recommendations for action.

Council Chairs are responsible for ensuring that: councils meet on a regular basis, councils fulfill their charges in a timely manner, councils effectively balance their attention to routine business and broader policy issues, and council work engages council members to contribute fully and develop governance leadership. Council Chairs are encouraged to have a concise [outline? \(what does this mean? Written?\)](#) of procedures for their councils, procedures that are agreed to by the Council and are consistent with those of the Senate.

#### B. Election of Council Chairs

Unless otherwise specified--such as for the University Planning and Policy Council (UPC) and GOV--each Senate council shall elect a chair from among its eligible members. The election shall occur at an organizational meeting. An organizational meeting of each council shall be convened by the Vice Chair of the Senate or designee before September 1 [\(before the start of the fall term?\)](#), but no sooner than 2 weeks after the completion of the election of Senators-at-large. As stated in Article II Section 6.3 of the *Faculty Bylaws*, if a council is unable to elect a chair from among its Senators, it may nominate its chair-elect to be appointed for a one-year term as a Senator by means of approval by the Senate. The nomination shall be sent to the Executive Committee, which presents the names to the Senate.



## IV. SENATE OFFICERS

### A. Duties of Senate Officers

Duties of individual Senate officers are specified in the *Faculty Bylaws*, Article II, Section 3. Officers of the Senate include the Chair, Vice Chair, Immediate Past Chair, and Secretary.

- The **Chair** of the Senate presides over meetings of the Executive Committee and the Senate and holds membership on the University Planning and Policy Council (UPC).
- The **Vice Chair** chairs the Governance Council and serves as the Faculty Representative on the University Council, the local oversight body of the University described in the Policies of the Board of Trustees of SUNY.
- The **Immediate Past Chair** chairs the UPC.
- The **Secretary** serves a two-year term and holds membership on the Governance Council.

The *Charter* clarifies these duties in Sections X.1.1.1 (Governance Council), X.2.1.5 and 2.1.6 (University Planning and Policy Council). The terms of senate officers begin on September 1 and go through August 31.

### B. Election of Senate Officers

The composition of the Senate is specified by the *Faculty Bylaws* Article II Section 2. Council Chairs are elected by the individual councils. The Vice Chair (Chair-elect) of the Senate and the Secretary of the Senate are elected by the Senate as a whole. After a year as Vice Chair, that individual serves as Chair for the following year and Past Chair of the Senate and Chair of the UPC for the year after that. The election of the Vice-Chair and Secretary (if an election is necessary) shall take place at or before the last Senate meeting of the academic year.

## V. PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

~~When rules of order are not otherwise specified,~~ The University Senate and its bodies are expected to follow Parliamentary Procedure in accordance with *Roberts Rules of Order* (<http://www.robertsrules.com/>) unless otherwise specified. The Senate has an official Parliamentarian ([how is this person selected? Why is this role not listed as an officer?](#)) who is present at Senate meetings, but councils, standing committees and subcommittees do not ([can they use the Parliamentarian to help with any question?](#)).

To participate in governance most effectively, and particularly to chair a council or committee, it ~~is will be~~ helpful to know the basic elements of parliamentary procedure. The Parliamentarian of the SUNY University Faculty Senate, Professor Ed Alfonsin of SUNY Potsdam, has provided a summary page and a list of common questions and answers to help campus governance bodies. These pages can be found here: <http://www.suny.edu/facultysenate/cgl.cfm>

## VI Conflict of Interest

It is expected that *all* participants in University governance have a common "vested interest" in the well-being and furtherance of the University, its scholarship and research, its integrity and reputation, its mission, goals, and aspirations, and its students, faculty and other members of the University community. In order to protect the credibility of the Senate, its deliberations, its recommendations and its actions, it is important that any member of the Senate or of a Council or Committee who may feel that he or she has--or could be perceived to have--a "special vested interest" or even just the appearance of such, in an item before the Senate or a Council, (in other words, a potential *conflict of interest*), should disclose this special interest and generally should recuse herself or himself from discussing and voting on the matter.

Any member of the Senate or Council/Committee may raise the issue of a real or apparent conflict of interest concerning any other member, including the chair or any ex-officio member. Unless the conflict of interest concerns the chair, the chair shall ensure that members with a real or apparent conflict of interest shall speak to that particular matter at the meeting only in answer to specific questions posed to them.

If it is the chair who is perceived to have a real or apparent conflict of interest, the vice chair or another member of the body elected for that purpose shall assume the responsibilities of chair for any matters related to the item that may involve that conflict of interest. -

If the governance body is made aware of the possible appearance of conflict of interest, the body may agree by a vote to the continued participation of the member in the deliberations, but record that member's vote as an abstention with cause.

Since the actions and recommendations of the Senate and its Councils and Committees are advisory to the President, and hence to the cognizant administrative unit, such advice should reflect as much as possible the voice of the Faculty and other members of the senate, separately from any administrative voice. - Consequently, ex officio members of the Senate and its Councils who are members of the administration should abstain from voting on bills or other recommendations, especially in matters that will be referred to their own administrative unit.

**APPENDIX**

- A. Important Links.**
- B. Example of a cover page for a bill.**

**APPENDIX A. Important Documents and Links**

<b><i>Document</i></b>	<b><i>Link</i></b>
The <b><i>Charter of the University Senate</i></b>	<a href="http://www.albany.edu/senate">www.albany.edu/senate</a> .
The <b><i>University at Albany Faculty Bylaws</i></b>	<a href="http://www.albany.edu/senate">www.albany.edu/senate</a> .
An index to the <b><i>Charter</i></b> and <b><i>Bylaws</i></b>	<a href="http://www.albany.edu/senate/2967.htm">http://www.albany.edu/senate/2967.htm</a> .)
University at Albany Senate Handbook	
Parliamentary Procedures	<a href="http://www.suny.edu/facultysenate/cgl.cfm">http://www.suny.edu/facultysenate/cgl.cfm</a>

**APPENDIX B. Example of a cover page for a bill.**

Senate Bill No. \_\_\_\_ - \_\_

**UNIVERSITY SENATE  
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

Introduced by: Undergraduate Academic Council

Date: 5 July 2009

**PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM IN BYZANTINE  
STUDIES**

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT THE FOLLOWING BE ADOPTED:

1. That the University Senate approves the attached Proposal as recommended by the Undergraduate Academic Council.
2. That the proposed program begin become effective with the Fall 2100 Semester.
3. That this proposal be forwarded to the President for approval.

The subsequent pages or "Rationale" should include the research and documentation mentioned in the "Guidelines for Submission of Curricular Proposals" in this case. The Rationale for a Bill should include a summary of of the discussion within the proposing Council or Standing Committee, any additional matters relevant to the Bill researched by the Council or Committee, and the results of the vote.