

UNIVERSITY SENATE

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

Introduced by: Governance Council

Date: March 9, 2022

UPDATES TO THE CHARTER TO SECTION VI. – Operation of the Senate

IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT THE FOLLOWING BE ADOPTED:

- That University Senate Charter be amended as detailed below
- That these amendments go into effect immediately

Current Charter with proposed changes in red

VI.2. Operation of the Senate

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VI.2. Conduct of Meetings

In addition to those procedures specified in the *Bylaws*, particularly Article II, Section 7, the following procedures shall govern operation of the Senate:

VI.2.1. A regular day and time for Senate meetings shall be publicized as early as possible in the previous year.

VI.2.2. As specified in *Bylaws* Article II Section 7.5, Senate meetings may be observed by any member of the University community.

VI.2.3. Ordinarily, speakers on a topic shall be alternated as to their pro or con positions, with the exception that no Senator shall be denied the right to speak at least once during the debate.

VI.2.4. If a Senate meeting is still in session at the end of its designated meeting time., the Chair shall call for an appropriate motion, typically one of the following: to adjourn (implies no topic on the floor); to postpone the current topic until the next regular meeting, to be followed by a motion to adjourn; to recess until (for example, the following Monday at 3:30 p.m.); to continue discussion until (specific time); to move the previous question, to be followed by a motion to adjourn, recess, or continue business until (specific time).

VI.2.5. When meetings are conducted in an electronic format, the following rules shall be observed:

VI.2.5.1. Technical requirements and malfunctions. Each member is responsible for mastering the interface of the technology required for participating in meetings and for their own audio and Internet connections. No action shall be invalidated on the grounds that the loss of, or poor quality of, a member's individual connection prevented participation in the meeting.

VI.2.5.2. Assignment of the floor. To seek recognition by the chair, a member or guest shall use the raise-hand “reaction” feature (or equivalent) of the Internet meeting service. A member who intends to make a motion or request that under the rules may interrupt a speaker (e.g. point of order) shall do so orally.

VI.2.5.3. Voting. Votes on main motions shall be taken by the voting/polling feature of the Internet meeting service, unless a different method is ordered by the Senate or required by the Charter or Bylaws. On amendments or other interim motions, or when otherwise required or ordered, other permissible methods of voting are by the *yes/no* “reaction” feature (or equivalent), electronic roll call or audible roll call. The chair’s announcement of the voting result shall include the number of members voting on each side of the question and the number, if any, who explicitly respond to signal their presence without casting a vote (i.e. the number of those who choose the *abstain* option in the vote/poll). Business may also be conducted by unanimous consent.

VI.2.5.4. The use of chat (or equivalent). A member intending to make a main motion, to offer an amendment, or to propose instructions to a committee, shall to the extent feasible, *after being recognized and stating the motion verbally*, post the motion language in writing to the chat feature (or equivalent), preceded by the member’s name and Senate designation. Debate on motions and/or the initiation of parliamentary actions shall be conducted orally on the floor, not via the chat feature (or equivalent).

Rationale:

Whether conducting its meetings in person or over an internet meeting service, the University Senate remains a deliberative body governed by *Robert’s Rules of Order*; this is set out in Bylaws I §5.3.2: “Unless otherwise specified, all meetings shall be conducted according to *Robert’s Rules of Order*” (cf. *Senate Handbook* 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 *Robert’s Rules of Order*” [9]). Given the additional functionalities made available by Internet meeting services and which are not explicitly covered by *Robert’s Rules of Order*, additional rules are needed to maintain procedural clarity and facilitate orderly conduct of Senate meetings.

The editors of *Robert’s* have proposed various suggested “Sample Rules for Electronic Meetings in the latest edition (*RONR* [12th ed.], 634–49). The Robert’s Rules Association has made this section of *RONR* (12th ed.) freely available here: <https://robertsrules.com/sample-rules-for-electronic-meetings/>.

Governance Council determined that for electronic meetings of our own Senate, the most promising of the various “scenarios” outlined by Robert’s Rules is “Scenario A,” which presumes the use of “full-featured Internet meeting services” (a generic characterization clearly applicable to Zoom). The proposed supplemental rules above are accordingly based on *RONR* (12th ed.) Scenario A.

The proposed amendment was approved by GOV on Jan-19-2022.