

Meeting Rules of the Rice University Faculty Senate

Adopted April 12, 2006
Revised January 14, 2009
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Section 1: Introduction

These meeting rules shall govern the conduct of business in regular and special meetings of the Faculty Senate of Rice University. The Chair of the Senate meetings shall be the Speaker or Deputy Speaker or another Senator designated by the Speaker or Deputy Speaker.

Section 2: Order of Business

The following order of business shall be followed in all regular meetings of the Faculty Senate. The order of business for special meetings of the Senate will be the same as for regular meetings except that there will be no committee reports, old business, or proposals from the floor.

1. Call to Order

Promptly at the scheduled time, the Chair will ascertain whether a quorum of Senators is present. A quorum consists of half or more voting members of the Senate currently serving including the Chair. If a quorum is not present, the Chair will announce that no business may be conducted and adjourn the meeting. If a quorum is present, the Chair will call the meeting to order.

2. Announcements

The first order of business will be announcements. The Chair will call for announcements and may recognize any person present for the purpose of making an announcement. During announcements there can be no motions or discussion except under the rules for general discussion provided below. However, specific questions may be asked and answered in order to clarify the announcement.

3. Report of Officers and Standing Committees

The second order of business will be reports, if any, from the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and the Convenor of Appeal, Grievance, and Hearing Panels. These reports need not be written and are intended to inform the membership of the relevant activities of these individuals. The Speaker's report should indicate when and how often the Executive Committee has met since the last meeting and provide a succinct summary of the work the committee has done. The Deputy Speaker's report should include a summary of the activities of the Nominations and Elections Committee.

During these reports there can be no motions or discussion except under the rules for general discussion provided below. However, specific questions may be asked and answered in order to clarify the report.

4. Working Group Reports

The next order of business will be reports, if any, from working groups. Working group reports need not be written and are intended to inform the membership of what work the working groups are doing or are

planning to do. Working group chairpersons or their designated representatives should indicate when and how often the working group has met since the last meeting, succinctly state any proposed motions that have been delegated to the working group and what work the working group has done or intends to do to investigate them. The report should also indicate any other work the working group is planning on undertaking. The Chair should periodically call on each active working group to report to the Senate.

During working group reports there can be no motions or discussion except under the rules for general discussion provided below. However, specific questions may be asked and answered in order to clarify the report.

5. Unfinished Business

Unfinished business consists of any motion that has been previously considered but was tabled for consideration at the current meeting or that was on the agenda of the previous regularly scheduled meeting but was not disposed of before adjournment.

6. New Business

Items of new business may either appear on the Senate Agenda or be proposed from the floor.

Proposals from the floor: The Chair will call for proposals from the floor before considering any other new business. No such proposal will be in order unless it is eligible for consideration as described in Section 4 below. Proposals from the floor may not be made at any other time during the Senate meeting.

Senate Agenda Items: Items of new business that appear on the Senate Agenda will be considered in the order in which they appear on the agenda. The Chair may alter this order as necessary for the efficient conduct of business.

7. Adjournment

The meeting will be adjourned under the rules for adjournment described below.

Section 3: The Senate Agenda

The term “Senate Agenda” is defined as the agenda of all future regular Senate meetings taken together.

In accordance with the Bylaws of the Faculty Senate, the Executive Committee, acting upon proposals by Senators, the faculty, and its own initiative, will set the Senate Agenda.

Any Senator may submit to the Speaker of the Senate a proposal to include an item of business on the Senate Agenda. Any faculty member with the supporting signatures of at least twenty-four other faculty members may submit to the Speaker of the Senate a proposal to include an item of business on the Senate Agenda.

A proposal to include an item of business on the Senate Agenda should contain only one item of business and this item must be in the form of either a general discussion or a main motion as defined, respectively, in Sections 5 and 6 of these Meeting Rules. If a proposal is not received in the proper form but can be put into the proper form without changing the intent of the proposal, the Executive Committee may do so. If this is not possible, the proposal will be returned to the individual who submitted it without further action.

A proposal to include an item on the Senate Agenda must be submitted either in writing or by email to the Speaker. Upon receipt, the Speaker will put the proposal on the agenda of the next convenient Executive Committee meeting. At that time the Executive Committee may add the proposed item of business to the Senate Agenda, deny it a place on the Senate Agenda, or table it until the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

If within 40 calendar days of submission, a proposed item of business has neither been added to the Senate Agenda nor formally denied a place on the Senate Agenda, it will be considered denied.

If a proposed item of business is denied a place on the Senate Agenda (either outright or because of delay as described in the previous section), it is immediately in order as a proposal from the floor under the rules in Section 4 of these Meeting Rules.

Once a proposed item of business is added to the Senate Agenda, the Speaker may assign it to a working group for investigation, but this is not required.

The Speaker or the Speaker's designated representative will promptly communicate the decision of the Executive Committee regarding each proposal to the individual who submitted the proposal.

If a proposed item of business has been added to the Senate Agenda, but (for whatever reason) has not come before the full Senate within two consecutive regularly scheduled Senate meetings, the submitter of the proposal may, at his or her discretion, withdraw the proposal, at which time a proposal for the Senate to consider the item of business will be in order as a proposal from the floor under the rules in Section 4.

Section 4: Proposals from the Floor

A proposal from the floor is a formal request for the Senate to consider an item of business. No such proposal is in order unless (1) it has met the requirements for eligibility described in Section 3 of these Meeting Rules and (2) a written version of the proposed item of business is available in some form to all Senators present at the Senate meeting in which the proposal is made.

Once a proposal from the floor has been made, a Senator must second it or it may not be considered further. If it is seconded, the issue of whether the item of business should be considered may be debated under the rules for main motions in Sections 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 except that it may not be amended. If a majority of the voting Senators present approve the proposal, the Senate will immediately consider the proposed item of business.

Section 5: General Discussion

The Senate Agenda may include or the Chair may at anytime call for general discussion of any topic. In addition, a Senator may make a proposal from the floor calling for general discussion of any topic under the rules in Section 4 above.

Under no circumstances will a call for general discussion be in order unless it includes (1) a topic of discussion and (2) a maximum time limit for discussion.

Once general discussion has begun, the parliamentarian will keep the time and, when the specified time has elapsed, will announce to the Senate that the time for discussion of the topic has expired. Once this announcement is made the discussion must stop unless the Chair extends the time limit for a specified period.

No motions may be made during general discussion.

Section 6: Motions

The business of the Senate other than announcements, reports, and general discussion will be conducted by acting on the several types of motions described below.

6.1 Main Motions

A main motion is a written proposal for the Senate to take specific action on some subject. No main motion can be made when another motion is pending. A main motion may only be considered under new business or unfinished business.

A main motion that appears on the Senate Agenda is not in order unless it has been published verbatim in the agenda of the Senate meeting in which it is to be considered.

If a main motion is in order and is seconded by a Senator, it must be debated. No other business may be raised until it is amended, tabled, passed or defeated.

Debate on a main motion will continue until it has been tabled or amended, or a motion to end debate has been passed under the rules of Section 6.3. At that time the Chair will read the motion and call for a vote on the motion. If a majority of the voting Senators present vote in the affirmative the motion is passed; otherwise, it is defeated.

Any Senator when recognized during debate of a main motion may offer an amendment to the main motion. The amendment will be in order if it (1) proposes specific changes in the language of the main motion; (2) is, in the judgment of the Chair, germane to the main motion; and (3) is seconded by one other Senator.

An amendment that is in order must be debated until a motion to end debate has been passed under the rules of Section 6.3. At that time the Chair will call for a vote on the amendment. If a majority of the Senators present vote in the affirmative, the main motion is defeated and the amended version is in order for debate as a main motion.

Amendments may not be tabled. If the Senate adjourns before voting on an amendment, the amendment fails.

The Chair may vote on all main motions and amendments.

Any main motion that is passed shall be called a "Resolution of the Faculty Senate", given a unique resolution number, be included verbatim in the minutes, and be published on the Senate web site in a section dedicated to the specific purpose of publishing Faculty Senate resolutions.

6.2 Motion to Table

Any Senator when recognized during debate of a main motion may offer a motion to table the main motion. The motion to table will be in order if one other Senator seconds it. The motion to table may be debated until a motion to end debate has been passed under the rules of Section 6.3. At that time the chair will call for a vote to table the motion. If a majority of the Senators present vote in the affirmative, all action on the main motion stops and it is put on the agenda of the next regular Senate meeting under unfinished business. Motions to table may not themselves be tabled and may not be amended.

6.3 Motion to End Debate

A motion to end debate is in order at any time during debate of a main motion, an amendment to a main motion, or a proposal from the floor. A motion to end debate must be seconded and may not itself be debated, tabled, or amended. Any Senator who has been recognized by the Chair may make a motion to end debate. Once such a motion has been seconded, the Chair will read the motion, amendment, or proposal under consideration and ask if there is any objection to voting on it. If there is no objection, the motion to end debate passes. If there is an objection, the Chair will immediately call for a vote on whether to vote on the motion, amendment, or proposal under consideration. If a majority of the voting Senators present vote in the affirmative, the motion to end debate is passed; otherwise, it is defeated.

If a motion to end debate passes, the Chair will immediately call for a vote on the motion, amendment, or proposal to which it applied.

6.4 Motion of Ratification

As described in Section 6.1 of the Bylaws of the Faculty Senate, at the first regular Senate meeting of the academic year, the Executive Committee will submit to the full Senate a motion of ratification for each substantive action it has taken since the last regular Senate meeting of the previous year. Such motions must be considered before any other new business except motions from the floor. Motions of ratification will be considered under the same rules as main motions except that they may not be amended.

6.5 Motion for Adjournment

A motion for adjournment will be in order as described in Section 8 below.

6.6 Motions Made at the Request of the Chair

During new business the Chair may announce that he or she will entertain a motion from the Senate under specified conditions. These conditions may specify either the substance of the motion and/or which Senators may make it. A motion responding to the Chair's request must be made by a Senator but will not be in order if it does not meet the conditions in the Chair's announcement. Such a motion must be one of the types of motions described in Sections 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 or 6.4 and is thus governed by the rules in the appropriate section.

6.7 Motions for a Secret Ballot

After debate on any motion has ended and before a vote on that motion has begun, any Senator may call (without recognition from the chair) for the vote to be taken by secret ballot. Such a motion for a secret ballot will be in order if one other Senator seconds it. The motion for a secret ballot may be debated until a motion to end debate has been passed under the rules of Section 6.3. At that time the chair will call for an open vote on the motion for a secret ballot. If a 2/3's majority of the Senators present vote in the affirmative, the vote on the main motion will be taken by secret ballot. The parliamentarian and the deputy speaker will act as tellers and will announce whether the main motion gained a majority of votes or not and will reveal the vote count. If the motion fails, or no such motion is made before voting begins, the vote will be by show of hands.

Section 7: Requests of the Chair by Senators

Any Senator that is recognized may ask the Chair to initiate a general discussion or to entertain a motion at anytime when these actions would be in order, to end debate on a motion, to create or dissolve a working group (see Section 7 of the Bylaws), or to consider whether a quorum is present. The Chair must grant the request, deny it, or declare it out of order.

Section 8: Adjournment

The Senate may be adjourned either by the Chair or by a motion for adjournment as specified below.

The Chair may adjourn the Senate meeting at anytime after the published agenda of the meeting has been completed or when the published ending time of the meeting has passed or when he or she has determined that there is no longer a quorum of Senators present.

Senators may not make a motion for adjournment before the scheduled ending time for the Senate meeting. Once the scheduled ending time of the meeting has expired, the Parliamentarian will announce this fact to the Senate and any Senator may make a motion to adjourn at anytime thereafter. The motion requires a second and, if seconded, must be considered immediately. With no objection, the motion is voted on immediately with no debate. If there is an objection, the motion may be debated for no more than two minutes with no possibility of extension. If a majority of the voting Senators present vote to adjourn, the Senate is adjourned.

If the meeting is adjourned before the published agenda is completed, the remaining agenda items will be added to unfinished business of the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Senate.

Section 9: Other Rules of Procedure

If, in the opinion of the Chair and the Parliamentarian, a specific circumstance arises for which these Meeting Rules do not provide procedural guidance, Robert's Rules of Order are to be used. In case of conflict between Robert's Rules of Order and these Meeting Rules, the Meeting Rules will prevail.