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# George Mason University

## BYLAWS OF THE FACULTY SENATE

*(as revised – February 7, 2018)*

### **ARTICLE I Membership**

#### **Section 1.**

The membership of the George Mason Faculty Senate shall be as prescribed by the Charter. Eligibility to vote on matters before the Faculty Senate shall be limited to duly elected faculty members of the Faculty Senate.

#### **Section 2.**

- a. The manner by which academic units entitled to representation in the Faculty Senate elect their senators shall be determined by the faculty of those units.
- b. The presiding officer of each collegiate unit shall certify to the Chair of the Faculty Senate names of the Senators chosen. Terms of Senators shall begin at the opening of the first Senate meeting of the academic year.
- c. Current records of the membership of the Senate shall be maintained by the Secretary for use by the Chair of the Senate and the Parliamentarian.

### **ARTICLE II Officers**

#### **Section 1.**

- a. The Chair of the Faculty Senate shall be elected from among the elected membership of the Senate at the final regularly scheduled meeting of the academic year. Nominations shall be made from the floor. Except when a motion to cast a unanimous ballot is passed, voting for the Chair shall be by secret ballot. In the event that no candidate for this office receives a majority of the votes cast, a run-off vote will be held between the two candidates who received the most votes.
- b. The term of the chair shall commence the day after Spring Commencement. In the event the Chair cannot serve for the remainder of his or her term, an election of a new Chair will be held at the next regularly scheduled meeting, following the procedures in Article II Sec. 1a. The term of office commences upon election and ends the day after Spring Commencement.
- c. The Senate shall elect from its own members a Secretary at the first meeting of the academic year. Nominations for this position shall be presented by the Committee on Nominations; however, additional nominations may be made from the floor. Except when

a motion to cast a unanimous ballot is passed, voting for this office shall be by secret ballot. In the event that no candidate for this office receives a majority of the votes cast, a run-off vote will be held between the two candidates who received the most votes.

d. The Chair shall appoint a member of the Senate to serve when needed as Chair pro tem and other members to be Parliamentarian and Sergeant(s)-at-Arms, to serve for terms of one year commencing with the first meeting of the academic year.

e. No elected officer shall serve in the same office for more than three consecutive terms.

## **Section 2.**

a. The Chair of the Senate shall be the presiding officer. The Chair pro tempore shall be the presiding officer in the absence of the Chair.

b. The Secretary of the Senate shall maintain the records of the Senate, and shall give appropriate notification to officers of the University, Committee Chairs, and other individuals concerning Senate actions. In consultation with the Chair of the Senate, the Secretary shall prepare at least annually an appendix to the bylaws, which shall include lists of officers and standing committees of the Faculty Senate and of University Faculty Standing Committees, which report to the Senate, a summary of actions of the Faculty Senate pertaining to the organization and operation of the Faculty Senate, and summaries of the role of standing committees of the Senate. The appendix may include other information of continuing importance in the discretion of the Secretary and the Chair of the Senate.

c. The Sergeant(s)-at-Arms shall supervise balloting and assist the Chair in expediting the meetings of the Senate.

d. The Parliamentarian shall assist the Chair in the interpretation of the rules of order.

## **ARTICLE III Responsibilities of the Senate**

The responsibilities of the George Mason Faculty Senate shall be as prescribed by the Charter adopted by the General Faculty.

## **ARTICLE IV Meetings of the Senate**

### **Section 1.**

a. Meetings of the Senate shall be conducted according to the current edition of "Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised" except as the rules and procedures prescribed therein have been or shall be modified by adoption of these or of future bylaws or standing rules.

b. The quorum for Senate meetings shall consist of a majority of the elected membership.

c. Members of the Faculty Senate may participate in Faculty Senate meetings electronically, provided the technology used allows all members to hear each other simultaneously. Members of Faculty Senate Committees and University Committees may likewise participate electronically in meetings of the committees. Each entity may develop its own rules for how members meeting electronically may seek recognition, vote, and exercise other rights.

## **Section 2.**

- a. Meetings shall be open to all members of the University community.
- b. All persons in attendance in a non-voting capacity shall be seated in a clearly delineated area so that they may not inadvertently influence a voice vote.

## **Section 3.**

Any person recognized by the Chair may participate in the discussion of any item of business brought forth upon the floor, but only members of the Senate may make and second motions, and vote.

## **Section 4.**

To the extent permitted by law, the Senate may go into closed session by majority vote of those present and eligible to vote. Only members of the Senate may be present during a closed session.

## **Section 5.**

- a. The Chair and the Secretary of the Senate shall jointly prepare the agenda for each meeting and distribute it seven days before the meeting to all members of the Senate.
- b. Any member of the General Faculty may submit items of business for inclusion on the agenda. All items submitted which are consistent with the responsibilities of the Senate as defined in Article III are to be placed on the agenda. Members of the General Faculty who are not Senators may submit items for discussion only, but motions on those subjects may be made by Senators.
- c. Explanatory or background information on all agenda items shall be prepared by the sponsor of the item and shall be attached to the agenda.

## **Section 6.**

Meetings of the Senate shall be convened on at least four Wednesday afternoons during each semester of the academic year.

## **Section 7.**

- a. On his or her own initiative the Chair may call a special meeting of the Senate. In response to any petition signed by 20 percent of the elected members of the Senate, the Chair must call a special meeting to be convened within six instructional days.
- b. The written call to the special meeting shall include a statement of the purpose of the meeting and shall be distributed at least four instructional days before the meeting to all members of the Senate.
- c. Only that business stipulated in the call to the special meeting may be transacted.

## **Section 8.**

- a. Voting shall be by voice vote upon a call by the presiding officer for the "ayes" and "nays," or by division of the house upon a call from the floor, except that any member may request that a secret ballot be taken. When such a ballot is requested, the Secretary of the Senate shall be responsible for preparing, distributing, and counting the ballots with the assistance of the Sergeant(s)-at-Arms.
- b. Absentee and proxy ballots shall not be allowed.
- c. All motions to recommend alterations to existing University-wide graduation requirements shall be read and debated at two successive regular meetings of the Senate held in the same academic year. A meeting of the Senate called solely to complete the agenda of a previous meeting shall not count as a "successive" meeting within the meaning of this bylaw.

## **Section 9.**

Items of new business not appearing on the agenda may be introduced from the floor by any member of the Senate after consideration of all agenda items has been completed, but disposition of any item introduced without prior notice and information may be carried over to the next regular meeting of the Senate if five members support a motion to carry it over. A motion carried over under this provision shall appear on the agenda of the next regular meeting as an item of old business and shall be supported by background information as provided in Section 5 of this Article.

## **Section 10.**

- a. The Secretary of the Senate shall prepare the minutes of all meetings of the Senate. The minutes shall be made publicly available via the Faculty Senate website.
- b. A copy of the agenda and the minutes of every meeting shall be archived in the permanent University archives. These documents shall also be archived on the Faculty Senate website and shall be available for viewing by any member of the University community.

## **ARTICLE V Committees of The Senate**

### **Section 1.**

- a. "Standing Committees" shall be those permanent committees whose respective charges shall be established by the Senate and whose members, except for designated ex-officio members, are elected by the Senate.
- b. Except as may be otherwise specified, the usual term of election to any standing committee shall be for two years.
- c. "Ad Hoc Committees" shall be those established by the Senate for consideration of special or transient issues. If no time limit is specified, the committee is deemed to serve until it issues a final report or until the Senate acts to dissolve it.
- d. Unless otherwise authorized by a majority vote of the Senate, standing or ad hoc committees shall issue formal reports only to the Senate.
- e. It shall be a duty of the Secretary of the Senate to prepare and maintain an accurate list of all committees of the Senate together with their charges and composition, which shall be open for inspection to all members of the University community. Annual reports will be filed with the Secretary of the Senate during the month prior to the end of the academic year.

### **Section 2.**

- a. Nominations for elected Senate positions to all standing committees except to the Committee on Nominations shall be prepared by the Committee on Nominations. The Committee on Nominations shall nominate one person for each available position. It shall take into account factors such as willingness to serve, previous senate and committee experience, and the need to develop future senate leadership. The Committee on Nominations shall circulate its nominations to the Senate in written form with the agenda for the first meeting of the academic year. Members of the Senate with the permission of prospective nominees may make further nominations from the floor at the meeting when the elections are held.
- b. Committee vacancies with unexpired terms shall be filled for the remainder of the term by special elections at the first scheduled meeting of the Senate after such vacancies occur. The Committee on Nominations shall make one nomination for each available position except for vacancies in its own membership, but in all instances nominations may be made from the floor.
- c. All elections shall be by a majority of those Senators present and voting. In the event that no candidate for an office or for the last positions on an elected committee receives a majority of the votes, a run-off vote will be held between the two candidates who receive the most votes.

### **Section 3.**

a. Whenever the Senate shall determine by its vote that the creation of an ad hoc committee or of a new standing committee is a matter of urgent necessity, nominations shall be made from the floor following that determination. Election procedures shall be as in Section 2c of this Article.

b. In the absence of an urgent necessity determined under Paragraph (a) of this section, the Committee on Nominations shall prepare a slate for distribution with the agenda of the next meeting of the Senate. At that meeting nominations may be made from the floor and the election shall be held according to the procedures prescribed in Section 2c of this Article.

### **Section 4.**

Except as otherwise specifically provided, each Senate Committee shall elect its Chair according to the committee charge from among its own membership. Each committee shall have a majority of members present for a quorum. Each committee shall maintain written records of its activities. At the conclusion of each academic year these records shall become part of the permanent archives of the University and the Faculty Senate website as stipulated in Article IV, Section 10, paragraph b.

### **Section 5.**

Any Senate committee may be required by majority vote of the Senate to report to it at a specified later meeting any matter referred by action of the Senate to the charge of that committee. Upon receipt of its report, the committee may be discharged of further responsibility for the matter by majority vote of the Senate.

## **ARTICLE VI Effective Date and Amendment**

### **Section 1.**

All motions to amend these bylaws shall be read and debated at two successive regular meetings of the George Mason Faculty Senate held in the same academic year. Following the second debate, a vote on the motion to amend shall be taken. A two thirds majority of the voting members of the Senate present and voting shall be required for passage of such an amendment. A meeting of the Senate called solely to complete the agenda of a previous meeting shall not count as "successive" meeting within the meaning of this bylaw.

### **Section 2.**

Amendments to these bylaws shall take effect on the date contained therein, if such a date is provided; Otherwise they shall take effect immediately upon their passage.

*Revised 10/6/10, Revised 2/7/18.*