

**Bylaws**  
**of the**  
**Rice University Faculty Senate**

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**Section 1: Introduction**

The Faculty Senate is a representative body of the University Faculty formed to investigate, discuss, and decide on matters concerning the academic affairs of the University. The powers and duties of the Senate, the membership of the Senate, Senate elections, and required plenary faculty meetings are specified in the Constitution of the Faculty Senate, adopted by the Senate on September 21, 2005. These Bylaws, adopted subsequent to the Constitution, are to specify its organization, procedures, and rules of operation. In the case of any conflict between the provisions of these Bylaws and the Constitution, the Constitution shall prevail.

**Section 2: Communication and Information**

**2.1 Web Site.** A staff person assigned to the Senate will arrange for the creation and maintenance of a Faculty Senate web site accessible to all of the Rice community. The Senate membership, the Constitution, the Bylaws, Resolutions of the Faculty Senate, the membership and contact information of the current committees and working groups of the Faculty Senate, the additional documents indicated below, and any other information determined by the Speaker will be posted on the web site and kept up to date. The Senate web site shall be the primary record of Senate activity and the archive of its documents.

**2.2 Access to Information.** In order to carry out its functions, the Senate requires from the various administrative departments of the university full access to pertinent information (financial, budgetary, personnel, admissions, etc.) If the Senate and the President should disagree about the pertinence of information, it is understood that the President is legally empowered to override the judgment of the Senate and may choose to do so. When such information is of a sensitive nature, the Senate will take appropriate precautions to limit its distribution.

**2.3 Report on the Disposition of Senate Resolutions.** At least once each year, the Speaker will present to the Senate, and post on the Senate web site, a report on the current disposition of all resolutions passed by the Senate, including whether and to what extent each resolution has been formally incorporated into university policy.

### **Section 3: Election and Duties of Senators**

**3.1 Elections.** Elections for Senate members will occur before the second Monday in April of each Academic Year. Approximately one third of the Senate will be elected each year. The Nominations and Elections Committee will organize and conduct the elections in a manner approved by the Senate.

**3.2 Duties.** Senators are expected to attend Senate meetings, inform themselves about all business on which they must vote, serve on Senate working groups, and if selected serve as an officer or member of the Executive Committee. Senators may be represented at a meeting by a proxy who is a voting member of the same constituency; a proxy will have the right to speak but not to vote and will count toward a quorum. If a Senator is absent for more than two regular meetings in a year the Speaker may declare the member's position vacant.

### **Section 4: Meetings of the Faculty Senate**

**4.1 Regular Meetings.** Regular meetings of the Senate are those meetings of the full Senate designated as such by the Executive Committee and announced (posted to the Senate's web site) at least 21 days in advance of the meeting. The Senate shall meet in regular session no fewer than four times per academic year. The first regular meeting of the Senate for each academic year shall be held no later than October 1 of that year. No regular meetings will be scheduled between May 15 and August 15.

**4.2 Special Meetings.** The Speaker or University President may call a special meeting of the Senate to consider specific business. These meetings will normally be open to all members of the university community, but may be closed at the discretion of the Senate.

**4.3 Schedule.** The Executive Committee will set the schedule of regular Senate meetings for each academic year. Normally, the full schedule of regular Senate meetings will be posted on the Senate's web site before the start of the academic year, but additional regular meetings may be added to the posted schedule if necessary. The posted schedule should also include the two constitutionally required plenary meetings of the University Faculty and should be updated to reflect any special meetings, additional regular Senate meetings, or plenary meetings, as they are determined.

**4.4 Meeting Rules.** The Senate shall adopt its own Meeting Rules as a separate document, incorporated herein by reference. All Senate meetings, regular and special, shall be run according to the Meeting Rules. The Meeting Rules shall be posted on the Senate's web site. Plenary Sessions of the University Faculty shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.

**4.5 Minutes.** When possible a verbatim recording of Senate meetings should be made and instructions for accessing this material posted on the Senate web site. In addition, a

staff person assigned to the Senate will record the minutes of the Senate and transmit them electronically and in a timely manner to the Speaker. Upon receiving the draft of the Senate minutes, the Speaker will transmit them electronically to the members of the Senate. Any Senator may propose an amendment to the minutes by emailing the Speaker within seven days. After the time limit for amendments has passed, if the Speaker has received no proposed amendments, the minutes are approved. If, within the time limit, the Speaker has received one or more proposed amendments to the minutes, he or she will add the minutes, including the proposed amendments, to the agenda of next meeting and seek approval under the provisions for main motions in the Rice Faculty Senate Meeting Rules. If any of these amendments should substantively conflict, the Speaker will submit his or her preferred version of the minutes. Once approved, the minutes will be posted on the Senate's web site.

## **Section 5: Officers of the Senate**

**5.1 Speaker.** The presiding officer of the Senate shall be the Speaker. The Speaker will chair Senate meetings, Executive Committee meetings, and plenary meetings of the faculty. At least once per year, the Speaker will report to the Senate the current disposition of all resolutions of the Senate. The term of the Speaker shall end upon the election of a new Speaker according to the rules in section 5.3.

**5.2 Deputy Speaker.** The Deputy Speaker will assist the Speaker in his or her duties, will serve in place of the Speaker in the event of the Speaker's absence, and will become Speaker if a vacancy occurs for any reason. The term of the Deputy Speaker shall end upon the election of a new Deputy Speaker according to the rules in section 5.3.

**5.3 Election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker.** The Speaker and Deputy Speaker shall be elected by majority vote of the Senators present at the last meeting of the academic year for service in the year following. Nominations for both Speaker and Deputy Speaker will be taken during that meeting and all Senators eligible to vote who are present may vote in these elections. Only those Senators who have served already for one full year and who will be a Senator in the year in which they will serve may be put forth as nominees.

If the position of Speaker becomes vacant at any time, the sitting Deputy Speaker will become Speaker for the remainder of the term.

If the position of Deputy Speaker becomes vacant during the academic year, a new Deputy Speaker shall be elected by majority vote of the Senators present at the first convenient meeting of the Senate, and will serve the remainder of the term. Nominations shall be made from the floor, and nominees shall have the same qualifications given above.

If the positions of both Speaker and Deputy Speaker become vacant simultaneously, both shall be elected by a majority vote of the Senators present at the next regular meeting of the Senate or at a special session called by the President for this purpose. Nominations shall be made from the floor, and nominees shall have the same qualifications required for regular election.

**5.4 Parliamentarian.** The Parliamentarian of the Faculty Senate shall be responsible for enforcing the Constitution and the Bylaws, and ensuring that Senate meetings proceed according to the Meeting Rules of the Faculty Senate. In the case of written ballots on Senate motions, the Parliamentarian shall act as teller. If the Parliamentarian is absent for all or part of a meeting, the Speaker will appoint a Senator to serve temporarily. The Parliamentarian may be any member of the University Faculty and serves at the pleasure of the Speaker. If the position of Parliamentarian shall become vacant, the Nominations and Elections Committee will recommend, and the Speaker will appoint, a new Parliamentarian. A Parliamentarian who is also a Senator retains all the rights and privileges of membership in the Senate, including voting, participating in debate, and making motions during Senate meetings.

**5.5 Convenor of Appeal and Grievance Panels.** The Convenor is a member of the Senate appointed annually by the Speaker, with the approval of the Executive Committee, and may serve multiple consecutive terms. On the recommendation of the Convenor of Appeals and Grievances, the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate may constitute panels to investigate Appeals of Decisions on Promotion and Tenure, to investigate Grievances about other matters; the Convenor may also recommend that a Hearings Panel be constituted to consider severe sanctions, as described in Section 2c of the Procedures for Investigating Accusations Warranting Severe Sanctions, Including Dismissal, Against Faculty Members, established by Faculty Senate as stipulated in Policy 201, Section 8.a.3. The Senate will adopt rules for the appropriate conduct of these panels. If the Convenor or the Speaker of the Faculty Senate feels that the Convenor has a conflict of interest with respect to the execution of any of his or her specific duties, the Speaker of the Faculty Senate, with the approval of the Executive Committee, will appoint an alternative Convenor to handle those specific duties.

## **Section 6: Executive Committee and the Nominations and Elections Committee**

**6.1 Executive Committee.** The Executive Committee will consist of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and at least six but no more than eight additional members. The chair of the Executive Committee shall be the Speaker.

The Executive Committee members shall be elected, as a slate, at the first regular meeting of the Senate each academic year. A slate is a group of nominees (one for each of the available positions) that will be voted on as a group.

A slate of candidates is *eligible* if it meets the following requirements: (1) it includes between six and eight members; (2) all nominees are voting members of the Senate who are willing to serve; (3) it includes at least one Senator whose primary appointment is in Engineering, one Senator whose primary appointment is in Humanities, one Senator whose primary appointment is in Social Sciences, one Senator whose primary appointment is in Natural Science, one Senator whose primary appointment is in one of the professional schools, and one Senator whose appointment is non-tenure track.

In the Spring semester of each year, the Nominations and Elections Committee will submit to the Speaker one or more slates of candidates, chosen from among the voting members of the new Senate. These submissions must be made at least one week before Commencement and will normally be made after the President appoints any new Senate

members. However, in the event that Presidential appointments are delayed, the Nominations and Standing Committee may make their submissions previous to these appointments. In addition to submission by the Nominations and Elections Committee, any Senator may submit a slate of candidates to the Speaker at least one week prior to Commencement. The membership of slates may overlap.

Upon receipt of a slate of candidates, the Speaker will confirm that the slate is eligible. If a submitted slate is not considered eligible, the Speaker will inform the submitter and the slate will not be considered further. At the Senate meeting immediately prior to Commencement the Speaker will announce all the eligible slates, thus placing them in nomination. These nominations will be included in the minutes of the meeting and must also be communicated directly to all members of the newly elected Senate.

At the first meeting of the new Senate, the new Speaker will reconfirm the eligibility of previously nominated slates, call for the submission of additional slates of candidates, and call for general discussion of the nominees, including remarks from the nominees themselves. The Speaker will confirm that any newly submitted slates are eligible. Any new slate or previously nominated slate that is not, in the opinion of the Speaker, eligible will not be considered further.

Voting for slates will occur in rounds with all voting members of the Senate in attendance, other than the Speaker, casting a vote for at most one slate in each round. After the votes in a given round are counted, the slate that received the fewest votes will be eliminated, with all other slates advancing to the next round of voting. Ties will be broken by the vote of the Speaker. Voting will continue until some slate obtains the votes of a majority of Senators present.

The Executive Committee will set the agenda for each meeting of the Senate in accordance with the procedures detailed in Section 8 below and in the *Meeting Rules of the Faulty Senate*. The agenda of the Senate meetings will be posted on the Senate web site at least one week prior to the meeting of the Senate. The Executive Committee may act on behalf of the Senate between May 15 and August 15 on matters of urgency by formally adopting an *Action of the Executive Committee*. For each *Action of the Executive Committee* adopted, a motion of ratification must be presented to the full Senate at the first meeting of the academic year. Such motions may not be amended and, if approved, the associated *Action of the Executive Committee* will become a *Resolution of the Senate*.

**6.2 Nominations and Elections Committee.** The Nominations and Elections Committee will conduct elections, work to improve the quality of nominations and participation in elections, recommend to the Executive Committee University Standing Committee membership for submission to the President, monitor the staggering of terms and propose remedies as necessary, nominate slates of candidates for the Executive Committee of the subsequent Senate (as outlined in Section 6.1), and work on any other matters germane to elections and nominations delegated to it by the Speaker.

The Nominations and Elections Committee will consist of three Senators appointed by the Speaker and five Senators nominated and elected by the Senate. In addition, the Deputy Speaker will chair the Nominations and Elections Committee. No members of the

Executive Committee, other than the Deputy Speaker, shall serve on the Nominations and Elections Committee. Vacancies, other than for the Deputy Speaker, will be filled by appointment by the Speaker, with approval of the Senate.

### **Section 7: Working Groups**

Working groups will be formed and dissolved by the Speaker as required for the efficient conduct of Senate business. All working groups and the names and contact information of their Chairpersons will be posted on the Senate website for the duration of their existence. Senators wishing to establish or dissolve a working group must in the first instance make a request to the Speaker, but may at their discretion subsequently pursue such action according to the usual procedures for bringing a motion before the Senate as outlined in the *Meeting Rules of the Faculty Senate*.

The Speaker, with the approval of the Executive Committee, will appoint the Chair and the members of all working groups. At least one member of each working group must be a Senator. Vacancies will be filled by appointment by the Speaker, in consultation with the Executive Committee.

Before a motion is brought to the full Senate, it may be assigned to a working group for investigation. The Chair of the working group should be prepared to report on a motion at the Senate meeting in which the motion is to be debated.

### **Section 8: The Senate Meeting Agenda**

The agenda of regular meetings of the Faculty Senate will be set by the Executive Committee but may be modified during Senate meetings as described in the *Meeting Rules of the Faculty Senate*. Any Senator may submit a request (in writing or electronically) to the Speaker to add an item to the regular Senate meeting agenda. Such requests must be specific and each must fall into one and only one of the following categories: the consideration of a motion, the reception of a report, or the general discussion of a specific topic. The Executive Committee will decide if and when requested items will be placed on the regular Senate meeting agenda. However, the Senate will adopt a procedure in the *Meeting Rules of the Faculty Senate* that guarantees the right of Senators to place an item on the agenda of regular Senate meetings without approval of the Speaker or the Executive Committee and without undue inconvenience or delay.

The agenda of Special meetings of the Senate will be set by the person responsible for calling the meeting and shall be limited to the Specific business of the meeting, as described in Section 4 of these Bylaws.

### **Section 9: Organization and Election of Promotion and Tenure Committee**

1. The Promotion and Tenure (P&T) Committee is a University Committee. The Chair of the P&T Committee shall be the Provost. The specific duties of the Committee and its

rules of operation are determined by various University policies, including Policy 201, "Faculty Appointments, Promotions, and Tenure," and the "Guidelines for Faculty Appointments, Promotion, Tenure, and Renewal of Contracts," and the Provost.

2. All members of the Promotion and Tenure Committee shall be tenured full professors. The P&T Committee will consist of up to 8 members, chosen as follows: The School of Natural Sciences, the School of Humanities, the School of Social Sciences, the School of Engineering, and the School of Management will each elect one representative to P&T. The School of Music and the School of Architecture will together vote to elect one representative to P&T. The Provost may appoint up to two additional tenured full professors to a one-year term on the P&T Committee. Elected members will be elected to a single three-year term, and may not be reelected to a consecutive term. Appointed members are limited to three consecutive years of service.

3. The Speaker of the Senate shall also appoint one alternate member of the Committee from each school, who shall be a tenured full professor. This member should preferably be someone who has recently served on the Committee. He or she will only serve in cases where the Committee member from his or her school has been recused from the case. The alternate members appointed by the Speaker shall be approved by the Executive Committee at the first meeting of the academic year.

4. The Faculty Senate shall administer the nomination and election of P&T members each Spring semester to fill positions becoming vacant. Eligible voters in each election are tenure-track and tenured faculty with primary appointments in the relevant School or Schools. Candidates for election must be tenured full professors with primary appointments in the School or Schools they will represent, and be nominated by a petition with at least ten signatures of eligible voters in their constituency. In the event that a position on the P&T Committee is unfilled or an elected member is unable or unwilling to serve, the Speaker of the Senate, in consultation with the Provost and the Dean or Deans of the relevant School or Schools, will appoint a tenured full professor with a primary appointment in the relevant School or Schools as a one-year replacement.