Final Report of the Working Group on Senate Governance

May, 2011

Thomas Killian
The following charge for a Working Group on Senate Governance was approved at the Rice Faculty Senate meeting on April 21, 2010:

"After five years of existence and striving to provide Rice the best possible governance, the Rice University Faculty Senate would like to reflect on its past experience, future directions, and what changes in form and function would help us to better serve the faculty we represent. The Speaker of the Senate should charge a Working Group on Senate Governance to consider both the achievements and the challenges we have faced as the Senate over the past five years, and to provide to the larger Senate, at the conclusion of its deliberations, recommendations it might have for future changes."

The working group consisted of Thomas Killian (chair), John Casbarian, Deborah Harter, Melissa Kean, Matteo Pasquali, and Randy Stevenson, with consulting members Carl Caldwell and Rebekah Drezek. The interim report, submitted in the fall of 2010 and attached to this document describes the deliberations and recommendations of the working group.

Many of the recommendations were adopted during the 2010-2011 session of the faculty Senate, including orientation for new Senators, assignment of constituencies to Senators, and regular contact between Senators and their constituencies. Changes to the Senate By-laws and Constitution that resulted from this process include, reduction in the number of Senators required on a working group, increase in the number of Senators allowed from a single department from one to two, conversion of the Senate seats reserved for assistant professors into regular Senate seats open to all faculty, increase in the number of Senators by two, and prescription of a rotation plan for the Senate seat shared between the professional schools.

Amendments to the makeup of the executive committee and the timing of executive committee elections were introduced in the executive committee, but they were not put on the Senate agenda due to lack of time.

The motions that were passed are not part of the Senate record. The draft motions on the makeup of the executive committee and the timing of executive committee elections are included in this document after the fall interim report.
Interim Report of the Working Group on Senate Governance

September 8, 2010
Executive Summary

The Working Group on Senate Governance has identified the following changes in custom and policy that it feels will improve the quality of faculty governance at Rice. The working group plans to continue working on topics described as “other issues” in order to produce concrete proposals. It welcomes feedback from the Senate and the entire faculty on this report, after which time it will modify its recommendations where appropriate and make formal motions to the Senate as required.

Proposals indicated as “custom” may be implemented by the Speaker of the Senate at any time. Proposals indicated as “constitution,” “bylaws,” or “meeting rules” can only be adopted by changing the appropriate document.

1. Connections between the Senate and the faculty at large

Proposal 1.1: Connect each Senator to a small, defined constituency. (custom)
Proposal 1.2: Use the Senate website more effectively as a portal for communication. (custom)
Proposal 1.3: Publish monthly agenda and minutes in paper form and deliver to every faculty mailbox. (custom)

2. Connections with Deans

Proposal 2.1: Add Deans as ex-officio, non-voting members of the Senate. (constitution)
Proposal 2.2: The Speaker and Deputy Speaker should attend one or more Deans’ Council Meetings each semester. (custom)
Proposal 2.3: Establish a Senate Liaison to each Dean. (custom)

3. Connections between the Senate and its Senators

Proposal 3.1: Ensure that new Senators receive an effective introduction to the Senate and to their responsibilities. (custom)
Proposal 3.2: Establish additional leadership roles within the Senate. (bylaws)
Proposal 3.3: Invite all Senators to attend at least one Executive Committee meeting during the course of the year. (custom)
Proposal 3.4: Use the Senate website as a portal for communication. (custom)
Proposal 3.5: Institute Speaker recognition and awards each May. (custom)

4. Streamlining the introduction of new business by Senators and faculty

Proposal 4.1: Items of business that have been proposed to the Executive Committee by a Senator and not put on the agenda for the next Senate meeting may be raised as an item during new business at that Senate meeting or anytime thereafter. (meeting rules)
Proposal 4.2: Items of business that have the support of 25 faculty and have been proposed to the Executive Committee and not put on the agenda for the next Senate meeting, may be raised as an item during new business at that Senate meeting or anytime thereafter. (meeting rules)
Proposal 4.3: Create a mechanism by which any faculty member or Senator can have a 5 minute discussion of any topic. Such request would need to be made to the Speaker in advance, and the Speaker...
is obligated to make up to 10 minutes of such discussion time available at any single meeting, on a first-come, first-serve, basis. (meeting rules)

Proposal 4.4: Create an “open agenda season” during which faculty are encouraged to submit topics to the Senate for consideration during the coming year. (custom)

5. Plenary Sessions Rules and Procedures
Proposal 5.1: Clarify the Plenary Session meeting rules and define a role for a lead petitioner. (meeting rules)
Proposal 5.2: Create a document containing guidelines for petitioners. (custom)
Other plenary session issues: Simplify the meeting rules for Plenary Sessions

6. Refining the Senate’s Ability to Achieve Effective, Balanced Representation
Proposal 6.1: Remove limits on the number of Senators allowed from a single department. (constitution)
Proposal 6.2: Reassign our current Senate seats for Assistant Professors. (constitution)
Proposal 6.3: Redistribute seats that were reserved for assistant professors and increase the total number of Senators. (constitution)
Other representation issues: Redistribute our two current seats for NTT faculty. (constitution)

7. Election of the Senate Leadership (Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Executive Committee)
Proposal 7.1: Move the election of the Senate leadership so that they are in place for the summer and so the new Senate elects its own leadership. This requires seating the newly elected Senate for at least part of the last meeting of the academic year, during which time their first, and only, action is to elect leadership. (bylaws)
Proposal 7.2. Simplify the makeup of the Executive Committee and elect positions individually, not as a slate. (bylaws)
Proposal 7.3: The Parliamentarian shall oversee Senate Leadership elections. (bylaws)

8. Best Practices (working groups, parliamentarian’s privileges)
Proposal 8.1: Reduce the number of Senators required on working groups. (bylaws)
Proposal 8.2: Clarify the role of the parliamentarian in debate and voting during Senate meetings. (bylaws)
Preamble
The following charge for a Working Group on Senate Governance was approved at the Rice Faculty Senate meeting on April 21, 2010:

"After five years of existence and striving to provide Rice the best possible governance, the Rice University Faculty Senate would like to reflect on its past experience, future directions, and what changes in form and function would help us to better serve the faculty we represent. The Speaker of the Senate should charge a Working Group on Senate Governance to consider both the achievements and the challenges we have faced as the Senate over the past five years, and to provide to the larger Senate, at the conclusion of its deliberations, recommendations it might have for future changes."

In the early summer, a working group was formed, consisting of Thomas Killian (chair), John Casbarian, Deborah Harter, Melissa Kean, Matteo Pasquali, and Randy Stevenson, with consulting members Carl Caldwell and Rebekah Drezek.

The group met several times during the summer of 2010 in full membership, and also several times in smaller subgroups to make progress on specific issues. We discussed the history of the Senate’s activities and identified areas in which the Committee believed that changes in Senate customs or rules would improve the ability of the Senate to provide the best possible governance and better serve the faculty. All topics and proposals were vetted by the entire group, and this report reflects the views of the entire membership. In areas on which full consensus was not reached, the differing opinions or options are presented for consideration by the full Senate.

This report is an interim report for two reasons. There are some topics on which the Committee is still working. But the Committee also feels that feedback from the Senate and, in many cases, from the entire faculty on these proposals will be beneficial before making final recommendations. We will make this document available to the faculty and create mechanisms for faculty to provide feedback. After obtaining such feedback, the Committee will modify its recommendations where appropriate and make formal motions to the Senate as required.

Our goal was to deliver a report to the Senate by the start of the new academic year so that many of the proposals could be adopted in time for this upcoming Senate session.

Several issues were identified that are of critical importance but are too large to address in this time frame and in the format of our working group. They are issues that have been raised before in various settings, and some of them address our underlying assumptions about the scope of faculty governance at Rice. We state them as a way of initiating conversations with our partners in University Administration and so that the Senate may, if it so chooses, consider these topics. These topics include:

1. An evaluation of the incentives for faculty service at Rice University.
2. Consideration of whether the faculty should have a larger and formal role in setting priorities and vision in areas such as:
   a. Curricular strategy above the programmatic level
b. New initiatives and development

c. Allocation of financial resources to support the academic mission

**Background**

It is sound practice for any institution to periodically review its performance and recommend ways to improve the execution of its mission. This is especially true of an institution such as the Rice Faculty Senate, which is representative of a broader constituency. The Working Group on Senate Governance represents the first broad review of the Senate’s function since its inception.

The Rice Faculty Senate was created by faculty vote five years ago in an attempt to improve faculty governance. (A brief commentary on this history may be found on the Senate website at [http://www.professor.rice.edu/professor/Archives1.asp?SnID=1255668123](http://www.professor.rice.edu/professor/Archives1.asp?SnID=1255668123).) The framers of the original governance documents for the Senate aspired to establish an effective representative body, and the basic structure of the Senate has proven sound. It has been more productive than the previous form of faculty governance and has made many improvements in policy that affect the faculty and the broader University. But through the experience of the past five years, it is also possible to identify many changes in customs or rules that would improve the quality of governance provided by the Senate and help it to better represent the faculty. Recent events, greatly influence by discussions last year regarding the potential Rice-BCM merger, have also created an environment in which many faculty will be keenly receptive to changes and improvements in the Faculty Senate, so this is also a time of great opportunity.

This report covers such a broad spectrum of topics that it is difficult to provide a single narrative that motivates them all, so the format of the report is a series of recommendations, organized under broad categories. Each recommendation will contain an explanation of the problem it seeks to address and a description of the prescribed course of action. The recommendations can be divided into two broad categories. The first includes recommendations for changes in Senate activities and customs - typically not requiring changes of governance documents- that seek to improve the connection between the Senate and the full faculty, the Deans, and the faculty who serve as Senators. The second category contains changes in the Senate’s governing documents in order to facilitate the introduction of Senate agenda items by Senators and other faculty, clarify the format of Plenary Sessions, modify the formulas for Senate representation, increase transparency and simplicity of Senate leadership elections, and improve assorted best practices.
1. CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE SENATE AND THE FACULTY AT LARGE

One concern for the Senate as it works to become more effective is the strength of its connection with the faculty at large. Some faculty are well aware of Senate activities and have good opinions of it, but others express the sentiment that they do not know who their Senator is, or that the Senate does not represent the faculty’s views. Many are unaware of how to bring their concerns or issues to the Senate floor or, for a variety of reasons, choose not to do so. Some Senators and constituencies have created regular communication mechanisms, such as a standing report at faculty meetings of the Shepherd School concerning Senate activities, but this is the exception, rather than the norm.

We recommend that concerted efforts be made to strengthen Senate/faculty connections. Communication could be improved, for example, if there were more clarity for Senators on their precise roles and responsibilities as faculty representatives and for faculty on how to communicate their concerns and issues to the Senate.

Success in this endeavor will take energy and effort sustained over time, and this can only happen if any new initiatives are broadly supported by the Senate. It will require, moreover, not just a more effective flow of information from Senate to faculty but also from faculty to Senate. Changes to rules governing the introduction of new Senate business by faculty, discussed in another part of this document, will also address this issue.

Below are a few specific proposals.

Proposal 1.1: Connect each Senator to a small, defined constituency

There are several steps that can be taken to ensure that each faculty member has at least one point of direct contact with the Senate. This will improve communication and give a “face” to the Senate that will help faculty identify with the Senate as its representative body. Simultaneously, this will clarify and simplify how Senators might more effectively canvas and consult with faculty.

- Designate each Senator as a liaison to a couple of departments, or a specific university subgroup (such as NTT faculty), so that that Senators will feel a more tangible responsibility to a more clearly defined constituency and so that each constituency knows precisely who to contact when they have issues to bring forward.

- Make email list serves for these smaller constituencies available to the each Senator.

- Provide support and direction to senators on connecting with their constituency. (They should, for example, connect with the department chair and attend an initial faculty meeting to introduce themselves to their constituents, inform them of the expected agenda for the Senate, and ask for feedback.)

- Encourage senators not just to inform their constituencies of on-going issues of importance but also to relay their constituents’ reactions and concerns back to the Senate.
- Find ways in which the Speaker can help ensure that such individual efforts on the part of Senators are actually taking place and are appreciated. When appropriate, the Speaker should ask for the Senators to share on the Senate floor the feedback they are receiving.

- The liaison assignments should be listed on the Senate website in the table of current Senators.

**Proposal 1.2: Use the Senate website more effectively as a portal for communication**

This will make it possible for faculty to view on the Senate webpage those documents that are under discussion and to attach their own comments. Such a portal might resemble the ones that were used for the Call to Conversation and for invited feedback to the President during the Rice-Baylor merger discussions. This Working Group will use a version of this system to distribute this document for faculty feedback, and we hope it becomes a useful tool.

**Goals:**

- To provide a simple way for faculty to stay up to date on what the Senate is doing
- To make it possible for faculty to offer comments on issues they care about
- To make the Senate more responsive to faculty concerns.
- To stimulate greater discussion of Senate issues ahead of time than is currently the case, which might shorten required discussion time on the Senate floor.

**Proposal 1.3:** Publish monthly agenda and minutes in paper form and deliver to every faculty mailbox.

Ensure that faculty are informed of Senate activities by providing a 1-page paper summary of the previous month’s activities and upcoming agenda. This will give people a tangible record of what the Senate is doing. It will improve communication with those who do not pay attention to widely disseminated emails. It is true that this will burn a fair amount of paper and will require effort on someone’s part to take care of distribution, but it is also true that this initiative will probably increase the number of faculty who will follow Senate news and visit the Senate website for more information or to provide comments. The Working Group was divided on this proposal, but felt it was valuable to get faculty and Senate feedback on the possibility.
2. Connections with Deans

The Senate has worked hard to build connections with all members of the Rice Community who are critical to faculty interests, but in one area we have not done nearly enough. A strong connection between the Senate and the Divisional and School Deans has so far been almost entirely absent, with only one dean currently attending Senate meetings regularly. It may be that the remainder of Rice’s deans feel there are no structures in place to help define what role they might productively play, that they are not welcome given their placement precisely between the faculty and the administration, or that the potential impact their presence would have does not warrant the investment of time.

In fact, however, it is our sense that the voices of our Deans would significantly add to the depth and breadth of discussion on the Senate floor and that we need to find ways to better welcome them into the Senate’s deliberations and activities. There have also been several instances when new curricular programs came to the Senate for approval and there were significant issues that would have been better addressed earlier in the process. Better communication between the Deans and the Senate would help address this issue. We recommend that efforts be made to formalize such connections with an eye toward facilitating the flow of information and cooperation both outward to the Deans from the Senate and inward to the Senate from the deans.

We suggest discussing these proposals with the President and Provost. Their support for these proposals would be important for their successful implementation.

Following are several proposals:

Proposal 2.1: Add Deans as ex-officio, non-voting members of the Senate.

Getting Deans to attend Senate meetings more regularly is an essential first step to improving the connection with the Deans. It will require convincing them that they are welcome and that their attendance is important. We suggest making all deans (including those of Undergraduate, Graduate, and Continuing Studies) ex-officio, non-voting members of the Senate so that, like the President and Provost, they become a regular part of our deliberations. This change will clarify for the Deans the role they might play and their importance to effective faculty governance.

The following were important aspects of our discussions.

A. We considered whether the title “ex officio” should be reserved for President and Provost. We would not wish to dilute the importance of the President and Provost to the Senate’s current functioning, but we also would not wish to imply that our Deans were “second-class” ex-officio members. There is room for discussion on this issue, but the general consensus is that the connection to the President and Provost is robust and that avoiding the proliferation of different classes of Senators is a good strategy.

B. There is a concern that the regular presence of the Deans would stifle debate, since some Senators may not be comfortable speaking in front of their deans. On the other hand, our meetings are almost always open to all who might wish to attend, and the presence of Deans has not in the past posed any difficulty. We note that there are mechanisms available
to the Senate for holding discussions that are limited to voting members when this is needed.

C. Many of our peer schools have more *ex officio* members on their Senate than we do. Deans are often included, but not always. No other category besides "*ex officio*" was found.
   a. Stanford includes all deans and several vice provosts as *ex officio* members.
   b. Emory has close to 20 vice presidents as *ex officio* members
      http://www.emory.edu/SENATE/UniversitySenate/SenateRoster2009_2010.pdf
   c. Duke Academic Council only has the President and Provost as *ex officio*
   d. Rochester Senate has the President, Provost, and Dean of Graduate Studies as *ex officio*
      http://www.rochester.edu/faculty/senate/members.html
   e. Virginia’s Faculty Senate has the President, Provost, all deans and the librarian as *ex officio* members
      http://www.virginia.edu/facultysenate/c_blaws.html

This would require a constitutional amendment. We propose that the first paragraph of section 2 be changed to read “The Faculty Senate will be a representative body of the University faculty. It will consist of forty members: twenty-six elected members, two members appointed by the President and approved by the Senate, and the President, Provost and all Deans, who are *ex officio*, non-voting members. No person shall concurrently hold more than one Senate seat. Administrators at the level of dean or above may not stand for election to the Senate.”

Proposal 2.2: The Speaker and Deputy Speaker should attend one or more Deans’ Council Meetings each semester

We feel strongly that an ideal way to bring the Senate and the Deans together is through the sort of communication that could take place if the Speaker and Deputy Speaker attended one or more Deans’ Council meetings during the course of the year, particularly at the beginning of each semester. This would allow the Senate leadership to report to the deans the Senate’s agenda and to garner from the Deans important early feedback. It would also allow the deans to express in a very direct and high-level way any concerns they might wish to see discussed in the Senate.

The following were important aspects of our discussions.

A. A further question might be whether the Speaker should actually be a member of the Dean’s Council. Our thinking is to take this process one step at a time. This is a question that could be addressed later, with the advantage of a little experience in how this effort has worked.

B. A related question is whether the Speaker might appropriately be included in the Administrator’s Retreat that takes place early each year.

Proposal 2.3: Establish a Senate Liaison to each Dean.

We recommend that the Speaker designate a Senator liaison for each Dean. Each liaison should meet with his or her assigned Dean at least once a semester to discuss issues of mutual interest. This would establish regular communication, help the Senate stay apprised of issues in the schools that may come
before the Senate, and serve as yet another vehicle through which Deans could bring issues of importance to the Senate floor.

An underlying rationale for such an arrangement is to prevent issues, such as the approval of new academic programs, from coming to the Senate too late for the Senate to constructively raise concerns if any exist. Earlier communication of significant plans could prevent such problems.
3. Connections between the Senate and its Senators

The Senate could become even stronger by improving the incentives for Senators to get more involved in the work of the Senate and by offering more guidance to help them to do so. In the past, some new Senators have expressed uncertainty as to what their positions entail. This affects their readiness to get involved in working groups and to run for Senate leadership positions, and it impacts their ability to represent their constituencies as well as they might. More effort should go into new-Senator orientation. Senators should be given more leadership opportunities to create a larger pool of people prepared to run for positions such Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

We recommend that concerted efforts be made to strengthen and facilitate communication between the Senate itself and its individual Senators. Below are a few possible strategies.

Proposal 3.1: Ensure that new Senators receive an effective introduction to the Senate and to their responsibilities.

a. Schedule a special lunch for the Senate leadership and all new Senators at the start of the year, prior to the first meeting. The goal would be to help new Senators to feel more firmly welcomed and to introduce them to the rewards and challenges ahead.

b. Create and distribute to all Senators an introductory hard-copy document that in addition to listing membership, meetings, constitution, and bylaws of the Senate, would also:
   i. include the Senate’s expectations of its Senators, and the responsibilities of Senators vis-à-vis their constituencies.
   ii. express clearly, for example, that every Senator is normally expected to participate on at least one working group at some time during the academic year.
   iii. outline possibilities for participation and leadership in the Senate

c. We suggest that the Parliamentarian take responsibility for new-Senator orientation with regard to Senate procedures and rules.

Proposal 3.2: Establish additional leadership roles within the Senate.

a. Additional leadership positions would give more Senators an opportunity to get involved, provide a greater feeling of satisfaction for individual Senators, and more evenly distribute the Senate’s often daunting workload. It might also increase the number of Senators willing to run for the top leadership roles.

b. We currently have a parliamentarian and a Convener for Appeals and Grievances. We suggest adding an official liaison to the Curriculum Committee, a Chair for a separate standing Senate Committee on University Committees, and a Chair of a standing Senate Committee on Policies and the Faculty Handbook.
c. Currently it is job of the Nominations and Elections Committee, chaired by the Deputy Speaker, to nominate faculty for University Committee membership. Creating a separate committee for this task and assigning the chair of this committee to another Senator would provide an additional leadership position and also allow the Deputy Speaker to focus on nominations and election for the Promotions and Tenure Committee, Senate, and Senate leadership within the Nominations and Elections Committee.

d. Under the faculty governance system that was in place before the establishment of the Faculty Senate, much more attention was paid by faculty to maintaining the Faculty Handbook and addressing changes in University policies. A standing committee dedicated to this issue would reinstate this important practice.

e. In the case of the Committee on Committees and Committee on Policies and the Faculty Handbook, this would require changes in our bylaws.

**Proposal 3.3:** *Invite all Senators to attend at least one Executive Committee meeting during the course of the year.*

a. The Senate is strongly powered by the energies and ideas of the Executive Committee. This initiative would help all Senators to feel more closely linked to this committee’s activities, and perhaps more motivated to be a member within it at some point, if asked.

b. We suggest inviting one or two Senators each month, on a rotating basis, to join this committee in its monthly deliberations.

c. We recommend that this be accomplished either by invitation or through a process of voluntary sign-up. In either case, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker should write a note to all Senators at the outset of the year, enthusiastically inviting their participation in this new tradition and explaining how the process will work.

**Proposal 3.4:** *Use the Senate website as a portal for communication.*

a. Make it possible for Senators to view documents under consideration on the Senate webpage, and to attach their comments, as in the kind of discussion portal that was used for the Call to Conversation and the President’s website for the Rice-Baylor merger discussions. This would provide fuller and time-saving possibilities for exchange of ideas prior to discussion on the Senate floor, and would help the Executive Committee and working groups keep track of comments. Certain issues could be resolved almost to completion in this way, freeing up critical time for the Senate to focus on other things during normal meetings.

**Proposal 3.5:** *Institute Speaker recognition and awards each May.*

a. Establish a tradition whereby the Speaker, at his or discretion, may recognize a few individual Senators at the end of the year.

b. The number recognized will vary, but such recognition should be extremely selective, and should involve those who have added to the Senate in genuinely important ways.
c. This recognition could be done publicly—taking place at the end-of-year Senate reception and/or at the final plenary meeting of the faculty—or more privately, in the form of a letter to the President and Provost.
4. Streamlining the Introduction of New Business by Senators and Faculty

The problem:

When the framers of the original Senate Bylaws and Meeting Rules considered the extent to which the agenda of the Senate should be set by individual Senators and the faculty at large, they made a decision to err on the side of a slower process that would guarantee time for Senators to educate themselves on a particular issue. They provided a mechanism for each Senator and each faculty member to put an agenda item before the Senate no matter the issue, but only after it had gone through a process of screening that could represent a fairly long delay.

In the years since these rules were made, we have learned that we can trust our Senators and faculty, more than our current rules reflect, to exercise good judgment in bringing items to the Senate for consideration. In addition, the delays associated with using the current process for putting an item on the agenda of the Senate have (fairly or not) caused some faculty to lose confidence in the Senate’s commitment to serving their interests.

Our committee recommends reconfiguring the current process for introducing new business in a way that makes for a more open agenda. Below are several proposals to change the Bylaws and Meeting rules.

First, we provide a reminder of the basic structure of the current meeting rules. (http://www.professor.rice.edu/professor/Meeting_Rules.asp?SnID=1046853755).

Items of business, defined as either a well-defined topic for discussion or a motion, are submitted to the Speaker of the Senate for consideration by the Senate Executive Committee for inclusion in the Senate agenda. If the Executive Committee decides not to include the item as a regular agenda item, after 40 days, the item becomes in order to be brought up for consideration as a proposal from the floor under New Business. Items may be proposed to the Executive committee by a single Senator or by a faculty member who is not a Senator who has obtained 25 faculty signatures supporting the item. Proposals from the floor must be seconded, and then a Senate vote is taken on whether to consider the item. If a majority vote to consider it, the proposed item is then discussed or debated and voted on.

The following proposals do not change the basic structure of this process, but they greatly reduce the period of time that must pass before an item may be brought up as a proposal from the floor. We also propose adding a new standing item on the agenda giving any faculty member the ability to briefly address the Senate without going through this procedure.

Proposal 4.1: Items of business that have been proposed by a Senator to the Executive Committee and not put on the agenda for the next Senate meeting, may be raised as an item during new business at that Senate meeting or anytime thereafter.
Currently, the Senate Meeting Rules state that a Senator must wait 40 days after submitting a proposal to the Executive Committee before being allowed to bring the item up as New Business during a Senate meeting. This proposed change would allow any Senator to raise new business at the Senate meeting immediately after the first executive meeting after the item has been proposed and denied. Executive Committee meetings are typically held one week before each Senate meeting. The dates of all meetings are posted on the Senate Website. Specific language of the proposed discussion topic or motion must be provided at the time of submission and only this specific business is in order.

**Proposal 4.2:** *Items of business that have the support of 25 faculty and have been proposed to the Executive Committee and not put on the agenda for the next Senate meeting, may be raised as an item during new business at that Senate meeting or anytime thereafter.*

This gives faculty an ability to quickly place an item on to the Senate agenda. As with plenary petitions, signatures should be obtained only after the specific language of the proposed discussion topic or motion is shown to potential signatories. Only this specific business is in order.

**Proposal 4.3:** *The Speaker will reserve up to 10 minutes of each Senate meeting for discussion of items brought forward by faculty members. These discussions will last no more than 5 minutes each, and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served, basis. No motions will be in order at this time.*

Currently, anyone can ask the speaker (with no warning) to provide time for a general discussion of any topic. Whether to do so is up to the Speaker. The idea is to replace this process with a specified place on the agenda in which time (say 10 minutes) can be allocated for such discussions. Anyone who wants to use the time could simply sign up, on a first come, first served basis, by notifying the Speaker in advance. No motions would be in order during these discussions.

**Proposal 4.4:** *Create an “open agenda season” during which faculty are encourage to submit topics to the Senate for consideration during the coming year.*

The working group recommends that at the start of every academic year the Speaker of the Senate communicate to the faculty that they are encouraged to submit to the Speaker or any Senator items of business for consideration or topics for further investigation.
5. Plenary Sessions Rules and Procedures

The purpose of Plenary Sessions called by a faculty petition under the Rice University faculty governance structure is to ensure that faculty can always discuss concerns and vote on formal motions when enough faculty members (at least 50) desire to do so. The current governance documents provide little guidance, however, on the petition process and the plenary session itself, which increases the likelihood that faculty on one or both sides of an issue will not be satisfied with the proceedings. This situation is made more serious by the fact that petitions for plenary sessions are most expected during times of great stress for the university and on contentious issues.

The Working Group on Senate Governance spent extensive time discussing this issue, and identified several modifications to the current description of the Plenary Session that do not change the purpose or scope of this mechanism, but that ensure such proceedings take place with maximum effectiveness and with due consideration for the concerns of faculty on every side of an issue. They reflect our feeling that the faculty’s confidence in the petition and plenary structure is essential, and that specific language on how such meetings should be run will go a long way to supporting such confidence.

The proposals (and/or options for proposals) below include clarifying the meeting rules to include a role for a lead petitioner, creating a document of guidelines for filing a petition, and amending the constitution to clarify voting rules for plenary sessions. Significant faculty input on this issue will be very important for guiding any changes made.

Proposal 5.1: Clarify the Plenary Session meeting rules and define a role for a lead petitioner

Currently, section 4.4 of the Bylaws reads: "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"

We propose removing the last sentence of this paragraph and replacing that language with one of two options:

Option 1.

"Plenary Sessions of the University faculty shall be conducted according to Robert’s Rules of Order with the following provisions. Immediately after the meeting is called to order, the Speaker of the Senate shall yield the floor to the lead petitioner for the first 15 minutes of the session. During this time, the lead petitioner may speak or present material, call on faculty to speak, or describe motions that he or she may plan to put forward later in the meeting. (No motions or votes are in order during this time.) After 15 minutes have elapsed, or earlier if the lead petitioner wishes, the Speaker of the Senate shall resume chairing the meeting. The lead petitioner shall be given first prerogative to make a motion." The parliamentarian shall be chosen by the Speaker, and following normal custom the parliamentarian shall refrain from engaging in debate, making motions, and voting, except when voting is by ballot.
"Plenary Sessions of the University faculty shall be conducted according to Robert’s Rules of Order. They shall be chaired by an individual whose selection is mutually acceptable to the Speaker of the Senate and the lead petitioner. The parliamentarian shall be chosen by the session chair, and following normal custom the parliamentarian shall refrain from engaging in debate, making motions, and voting, except when voting is by ballot.

RATIONALE FOR THE TWO OPTIONS ABOVE:

The plenary is meant to provide the faculty with an unequivocal expression of faculty sentiment, and confidence in the process is essential. Our committee agreed that in recent moments of crisis, Plenary Sessions have been marred by misunderstanding and disagreement over details of process. We felt that the best way to address this issue was to add more specific language on how the meeting should be run, which reduces the need for Senate leadership to articulate this in what can be perceived as an ad hoc fashion. Additionally, a more prominent role for a lead petitioner (option 1) or a third-party chair of the session (option 2) would significantly reduce the likelihood that those supporting a petition would feel their concerns were not heard.

Those arguing for option 1 felt that providing time for petition supporters to frame the issue gives them significant privilege to ensure petition efforts are given careful and full consideration. This is an option that reflects the view, moreover, that the Speaker of the Senate is responsible for representing the views of all faculty members (both the petitioners and the non-petitioners alike), and is likely to respond appropriately to pressures from all sides and represent all sides fairly. And since only 50 signatures are required to call a plenary, it is not a sufficient metric of the will of the faculty to warrant a change in faculty leadership.

Those arguing for Option 2 express the concern that the Speaker of the Senate will not be viewed as an unbiased leader of plenary sessions because the Plenary has most likely been called as a result of a perceived lack of responsiveness of the Senate Leadership to the concerns of the petitioners. Those arguing for option 2 felt that designating a third party to chair the Plenary Session would be the best way to diffuse any potential conflict and create the most confidence in the process. It was suggested that a chair might be chosen from current University Professors, senior professors in the faculty, or even outside professional meeting chairs if needed, according to the mutual agreement of Speaker and lead petitioner.

Proposal 5.2: Create a document containing guidelines for petitioners

We propose a Plenary Session Petition Guidelines document be created and placed on the Senate website that contains the following statements and information.

1. Faculty are urged to attempt to raise issues for discussions and propose motions through the Faculty Senate before initiating a petition for a plenary session.
2. Description of a properly formed petition, including how to specify the topic to be addressed, and how this affects the scope of discussion in the plenary session.
3. A petition must indicate a lead petitioner in the text of the petition.
4. The lead petitioner will work with the Speaker of the Senate to organize the plenary session.
5. Space on the Senate webpage will be made available to the lead petitioner to post appropriate material framing the issue of concern.

RATIONALE:

While it is not practical to require petitioners to bring issues to the Senate before filing a petition, the general sentiment was that it would be good to remind petitioners of the powers they have to bring issues to the Senate floor in hopes that issues can be resolved in a more efficient manner. The faculty have clear mechanisms for bringing issues to the Senate floor, and when the Senate agrees that an issue or action must be taken up, it can often work towards resolution far more efficiently than is possible with the petition process.

Since the Senate leadership will be put in a position of deciding if a petition is in the correct format, and then deciding what discussion topics are in order at the Plenary Session, some elaboration on these topics would reduce the appearance that such judgments reflect some bias. This should increase confidence in the process.

In recent experience, it was necessary to identify a lead petitioner to work out details of the Plenary Meeting. But this proved awkward at times because such a person had no official standing under the current process. Naming a lead petitioner would codify what happens in practice. It is also essential for proposed changes to the Plenary Meeting rules.

The Senate's approach in the past has been to support an open flow of information to all parties involved in a Senate Plenary, and this is a good policy. There was discussion about making the Sen-Fac email list-serve available to petitioners, but it was felt that many faculty do not want to be bothered by extra emails. Providing space on the Senate website makes information available to those who seek it.

**Issue 5.3: Clarify voting thresholds in Plenary Sessions and the prerogative to change senate governing documents.**

Our committee clarified for ourselves that the Constitution places no limits on matters that can be addressed in a plenary session, and indicates that the outcome takes precedence over Senate votes. This implies that the plenary can undertake any business that the Senate can, which includes changing its governing documents. Such motion, if passed, would go to the full faculty by ballot for a second vote. If it passes, the motion would be binding on the Senate.

Another issue is that there is no indication of what outcome (majority, super-majority, etc.) is required to pass a motion to change the constitution.

The question was also raised of whether it was appropriate for the Senate to be able to change the Constitution without further input or approval from the faculty, but did not come to an answer on this topic.
The implications of changes in these policies have not been fully investigated yet.

Currently, the Senate’s governance documents are ambiguous when it comes to specifying how those represented can change the Constitution. While it may never become an issue, this is a situation that should be addressed and fixed.

**Issue 5.4: Simplify the meeting rules for Plenary Sessions**

There was strong support for creating a simplified meeting rules for Plenary Sessions, but at this time the Working Group does not have a framework for such a document.
6. Refining the Senate’s Ability to Achieve Effective, Balanced Representation

The Issue at Hand

The Senate Review Committee addressed whether our current distribution of seats on the Senate is working as well as it might, and we concluded that there are refinements the Senate should consider. We offer several concrete proposals.

In every case, the refinements above would need to be enacted by the Senate as a body in the form of changes to the Constitution. We welcome input from Senate and the larger faculty at this time on all of these issues. The underlying motivation for most of these proposals is to introduce more flexibility in the system to ensure that the most interested and qualified faculty are able to run for Senate seats.

Proposal 6.1: Remove limits on the number of Senators allowed from a single department.

Currently, only one Senator from a given department may be elected to the Senate. This has prevented interested and motivated faculty from running for seats in the past. Senate issues are principally university issues: divisional representation is normally fully sufficient in giving these the broad consideration they deserve. In the past, there have often been Senate seats for which no one stands for election, and there are seldom contested elections. Therefore our current challenge is in getting more people to run, not worrying about a particular department being over represented. Removing the limitation on Senators from a given department would increase significantly the number of individuals who might consider running for the Senate at a given moment. There has also been some complaint from larger departments that they suffer disproportionately from the “one-person-per-department” rule. The original motivation for the restriction was to avoid a single large department from being overrepresented, but given the experience of the past five years, the arguments against limitations are more persuasive. This proposal had strong support within the Working Group.

Proposal 6.2: Reassign our current Senate seats for Assistant Professors.

Our group agreed that dedicating seats in the Senate to Assistant Professors was not ideal. Most who take these seats are quickly promoted soon after. Those who are farther from promotion are not always in the best position to speak their minds freely. In the past 6 years, there has not been evidence that these seats have been a special conduit to issues particular to assistant professors. We recommend removing the restriction on these seats and making them normal seats open to any tenure or tenure-track faculty member. As under the current rules, Assistant Professors remain eligible to run for any of the normal seats. This change involves three seats, one in Natural Sciences and Engineering, one in Humanities and Social Science, and one in the professional schools.

Proposal 6.3: Redistribute seats that were reserved for assistant professors and increase the total number of Senators.

In general, our committee felt that the Senate could stand to grow by a few seats. The two current Assistant-Professor seats for the four largest schools are each drawn from two schools. The current Assistant-Professor seat for the professional schools is drawn from three schools. The committee felt that this structure of drawing seats from multiple schools introduces unnecessary complications and creates problems relating to how different sized schools can dominate the election of a seat. We propose different solutions for these situations. This discussion is framed as if we are talking about
redistributing the seats that are currently reserved for assistant professors, and we assume the restrictions on eligibility for the seats have been removed, but the recommendations are still appropriate if the seats remain restricted to assistant professors.

The current distribution of seats is shown below. It is not straightforward to calculate a number of faculty per Senate seat because of the seats drawn from multiple schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School</th>
<th>Tenure-Track and Tenured or NTT*</th>
<th>Assistant Professors (within B)*</th>
<th>School Senators by Constitution</th>
<th>Other Elected Senators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones School</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepherd School</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTT</td>
<td>147</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pres appointees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ex officio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>688</strong></td>
<td><strong>128</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*Numbers from 2010)

An underlying goal of the current design was to have roughly equal numbers of faculty per Senator. NTT seats were considered separately. Motivated by a feeling that a couple of more Senators would be good and balancing representation is a god goal. We recommend the following change to the two floating seats in the four larger schools.

Proposal 6.3.1: The two seats reserved, one each for the Natural Sciences and Engineering and for the Humanities and Social Sciences, should be reconfigured as four seats, one each for Natural Sciences, Engineering, Humanities, and Social Sciences.

This would increase the number of Senators by two and result in a good balance of approximately 20 faculty per Senator.

Proposal 6.3.2: The single seat reserved for the professional schools should remain, but it should follow a
fixed calendar of rotating sequentially through the three schools and be elected for a two year term. For example, the seat would be occupied by someone from the Shepherd School for two years, Architecture for the next two years, and then the Jones School for the next two years. The cycle will then repeat.

For the professional schools, there are currently four seats assigned to particular schools and the Assistant-Professor seat that floats. Five senators for the roughly 100 faculty results in the goal of 20 faculty per Senators, so this amount seems correct. However, the original intention was that it would be possible for this to move between the schools. In practice, this seat always goes to the Jones School, in large part because they have the most faculty. This results in the Jones School having significantly more Senators per faculty and the Shepherd school being underrepresented. We recommend that the manner in which this seat floats between the professional schools be prescribed more than other seats because of this complication.

The proposed distribution is indicated below. The concerns of the constituencies affected should be weighed heavily before enacting change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School</th>
<th>Tenure-Track and Tenured, or NTT*</th>
<th>Senators by Constitution</th>
<th>Ratio: Faculty/Senators</th>
<th>Additional Senator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones School</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepherd School</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTT</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pres appointees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ex officio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*Numbers from 2010)

**Issue 6.4: Redistribute our two current seats for NTT faculty.**
Currently the Senate has two seats dedicated to NTT faculty. One of these must be occupied by an NTT
lecturer and one by an NTT research faculty member. We wondered whether it might be better simply to allow these two seats to be occupied by NTT faculty of either sort (without distinguishing between the two).

Some might argue that research faculty have special interests that would go unrepresented if we combine the two groups. Others feel, however, that the sheer number of lecturers makes this conflation of the two seats a very good idea (currently there are 130 lecturers at Rice but only 19 Researchers, with 11 of these attached to a single department). Some feel, moreover, that such a combining would positively resolve the difficulty of finding willing candidates from the smaller group. This year, it took extensive effort on the part of many Senators to find an NTT Research Senator, which indicates that interest is low for this position. This topic deserves further consideration and consultation with stakeholders.
7. Election of the Senate Leadership (Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Executive Committee)

The procedures and timing of elections for Senate leadership positions have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the Rice Faculty Senate. The Working Group on Senate Governance identified several features of our election system that could be improved to make elections more transparent, encourage more Senators to run for leadership positions, and create a smoother transition from one year to the next.

Proposal 7.1: Move the election of the Senate leadership so that officers and executive committee are in place for the summer and so the new Senate elects its own leadership. This requires seating the newly elected Senate for at least part of the last meeting of the academic year, during which time their first and only action is to elect leadership.

Currently, the outgoing Senate elects the Speaker and Deputy Speaker for the next year in the spring. The new Senate is seated in the fall and the executive committee is elected at that time. A tremendous amount of activity takes place during the summer. Under the current system, the Executive Committee is empowered to act for the Senate, but it is a lame duck Executive Committee during the summer. Several members are typically no longer on the Senate. The leadership has already switched to a new Speaker and Deputy Speaker. This leads to ambiguity, awkwardness, and inefficiency during the summer. The first Executive Committee meeting of the fall sets the agenda for the first Senate meeting, and the weaknesses pointed out compromise the effectiveness of the Executive Committee at this time. The election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker by the outgoing Senate addresses the need for leadership in during the summer, but it implies that the selection may not reflect sentiment expressed by the faculty in the most recent general Senate election. In general, the working group felt it was an improvement for the new Senate to elect its own leadership in its entirety.

We recommend that the election of the new leadership occur at the last Senate meeting of the spring. Typically, we expect there will be some remaining business for the outgoing Senate, so the new Senate would be seated partway through the meeting, which incidentally creates a nice transition of power from old Senate to new Senate. The first and only action of the new Senate at this meeting is to elect its leadership. The results of the recent Senate election will be known for quite some time, so candidates for the Executive Committee may be drawn from newly elected Senators, as is the custom now. Candidates for Speaker and Deputy Speaker must have been on the Senate the previous year, according to the current rules.

The outgoing Speaker shall chair the meeting until all elections are completed, at which time the new Speaker shall assume the chair. Elections are run by the parliamentarian as described in Proposal 7.3.

Proposal 7.2. Simplify the makeup of the Executive Committee and elect positions individually, rather than as a slate.

The current formula that determines the Executive Committee membership is cumbersome. Different membership specifications address different aspects of representation, such as school and tenured or non-tenured status. The election of the Executive committee must now also be done as a full slate, rather than as a series individuals, which is partly a response to the analysis that must be done to ensure that a slate satisfies the current requirements. The nomination and election process as slate makes it much less likely for senators to put forward their individual names, and has not produced a single contested election. Moreover, because the slate (or slates) are not formed in a
public discussion, the process is not transparent and may give the impression that the election is largely pre-determined by the subset of senators who assembled the senate slate. An open process of nomination and election of individual Executive Committee members would add more transparency and vibrancy to the Senate leadership.

We recommend the following simplifications.

**Proposal 7.2.1:** The Executive Committee shall consist of one member each from Natural Sciences, Engineering, Humanities, and Social Sciences, one member from the professional schools, one non-tenure-track representative, and two at-large representatives. These positions shall be selected by election. The Speaker and Deputy Speaker shall automatically be members of the Executive Committee.

**Proposal 7.2.2:** Individual elections shall be held for the elected members, rather than voting on entire slates.

**Proposal 7.3:** The parliamentarian shall oversee Senate Leadership elections.

Currently, both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker are involved in requesting in advance the nomination of candidates for new leadership positions, and this can be awkward, or even represent a conflict of interest. The existing Speaker of the Senate chairs the meeting at which election of a new speaker takes place. Neither situation is ideal because the Speaker and Deputy Speaker will often be standing for one or both leadership positions.

We recommend that the parliamentarian preside over the election of the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and - for simplicity – the Executive Committee. The parliamentarian will:

1. serve as a *de facto* nominations and elections committee for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker positions
2. inform newly elected Senators, shortly after Senate elections in the spring, of the procedure of upcoming leadership elections and the opportunity available to them to stand
3. be given the floor at the two Senate meetings preceding the last meeting of the year to announce upcoming elections and encourage all Senators to consider standing for election.
4. be given the floor at the last meeting of the academic year, after the outgoing Senate is replaced by the new, to run the elections.

The Nominations and Elections Committee as prescribed in the bylaws and chaired by the Deputy Speaker shall still be responsible for ensuring that at least one candidate will be nominated and agree to stand for each election to the Executive Committee, Senate Seats, and Promotion and Tenure Committee. The charge to the parliamentarian is to ensure that at least one person will be nominated and agree to stand for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker positions. If the parliamentarian intends to stand for election to any position of Senate Leadership, he or she should step down from the position of parliamentarian with enough notice for a new parliamentarian to be chosen and carry out these responsibilities.

We make the following recommendations for the elections procedure. The outgoing Speaker will give the floor to the parliamentarian. Nominations will be taken from the floor and the election shall take place for each of the positions in the following order: Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Executive Committee Seats other than at-large members, and then at-large Executive Committee seats.
Candidates for Speaker shall be encouraged to make brief remarks before the voting for that position takes place. When the elections are completed, the outgoing Speaker shall pass the gavel to the new Speaker, who may make brief remarks and adjourn the meeting.
8. Best Practices (working groups and parliamentarian’s privileges)

Our working group identified several areas in which clarification and adoption of best practices would be beneficial for Senate function.

Proposal 8.1: Reduce the number of Senators required on working groups.

The Bylaws currently state that a majority of members of any Senate working group shall be Senators and one member must also be a member of the Executive Committee. This is overly restrictive and has several negative implications. It reduces the amount of work the Senate can undertake at any one time because of limitations in the amount of time Senators can dedicate to Senate activities. It reduces the flexibility to draw upon the full resources of the faculty. We also feel that involving more faculty in Senate activities through working groups will increase interest among the faculty in Senate activities and improve the connection between the Senate and the faculty at large.

The Speaker, with the approval of the Executive Committee, should have more freedom to choose the appropriate composition of a working group. We recommend that the Senate change the Bylaws (Section 7) to simply specify that at least one member of each working group shall be a Senator.

Proposal 8.2: Clarify the role of the parliamentarian in debate and voting during Senate meetings.

The role of the parliamentarian in Senate meetings is not clearly defined in the Senate’s governing documents. In Robert’s Rules of Order (RROO), there is a directive that in assemblies, parliamentarians should refrain from taking part in debate, making motions, and voting, except when voting is by ballot. This convention is not the custom in Senate meetings. Parliamentarians who are Senators have historically retained full rights and privileges of a Senator. Since our documents indicate that RROO govern our Senate meetings on matters on which our rules are silent, this places the parliamentarian in a delicate position and has left the person occupying this position open for criticism.

When the Parliamentarian is not a member of the Senate, this is not an issue. The working group notes that this arrangement is ideal and should be encouraged. However, it is not always possible to find a non-Senator who can commit to attending Senate meetings. Asking a Senator-parliamentarian to give up rights creates some problems. It disenfranchises the constituency represented by that Senator. In addition, the Senate is a relatively small body and the Parliamentarian must be someone who is motivated and educated on the workings of the Senate. Losing the voice of such person in debate would often be a significant loss. We recommend that the Senate adopt language in its Bylaws indicating that a parliamentarian who is also a Senator retain all rights and privileges, including voting, participating in debate, and making motions.

It is not uncommon for bodies to adapt or modify RROO for their particular situation. In essence, our bylaws are an example of this. There is precedent for bodies to define more clearly the role of the parliamentarian and explicitly state that such person has all the right of membership, including voting, debating, and making motions.

Proposal to simplify the makeup of the Executive Committee and elect positions individually, rather than as a slate. (Introduced in spring of 2011, but not placed on the Senate agenda.)

Change the Bylaws as follows:

6.1 Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will consist of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, at least six but no more than eight additional members: 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, one Senator whose appointment is non-tenure track, and two at large representatives. All members must be voting members of the Senate. The chair of the Executive Committee shall be the Speaker. These positions shall be selected by election. The Speaker and Deputy Speaker shall automatically be members of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee members shall be elected, as a slate in sequential elections in the order stated above, 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, one Senator whose primary appointment is non-tenure track, and one Senator whose appointment is as a tenure-track assistant professor at the time of his or her election.

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.

Nominations from the Nominations and Elections Committee and other nominees made known to the Nominations and Elections Committee at least two days before the election shall be announced to the newly elected Senate and included in the agenda. Nominations for each position will also be taken from the Senate floor immediately preceding each election.

For each position other than at-large positions, 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 candidate in each round. After the votes in a given round are counted, the slate candidate that received the fewest votes will be eliminated, with all other slate candidates advancing to the next round of voting. Ties will be broken by the vote of the Speaker. Voting will continue until some slate candidate obtains the votes of a majority of Senators present. For at-large positions, the same procedure applies except voting members may cast votes for at most two candidates in each round, and voting will continue until two slate candidates obtain the votes of a majority of Senators present.

6.2 Nominations and Elections Committee. The Nominations and Elections Committee will conduct elections for Senate and the University Promotion and Tenure Committee, work to improve the quality of nominations and participation in elections for Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Executive Committee, Senate, and the University Promotion and Tenure Committee, 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 members of the University Council, 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.

Rationale

The procedures of elections for Senate leadership positions have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the Rice Faculty Senate. The Working Group on Senate Governance identified several features of our election system that could be improved to make elections more transparent, encourage more Senators to run for leadership positions, and create a smoother transition from one year to the next.

The current formula that determines the Executive Committee membership is cumbersome. Different membership specifications address different, overlapping aspects of representation, such as school and tenured or non-tenured status. The election of the Executive committee must now also be done as a full slate, rather than as a series of individuals, which is partly a response to the analysis that must be done to ensure that a slate satisfies the current requirements. Nominating and electing as a slate makes it much less likely for senators to put forward their individual names, and has not produced a single contested election. Moreover, because the slate is produced by the Nominations and Election Committee and not in a public forum, the process is not transparent and
may give the impression that the election is largely pre-determined by the subset of senators who assembled the senate slate. Some have argued that having a slate chosen by Senate leadership is beneficial because it allows more planning of the Executive Committee makeup. But the spirit of this proposal is that an open process of nomination and election of individual Executive Committee members would add more transparency and vibrancy to the Senate leadership.
Proposal to change the timing of the election of the Senate leadership so that Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and Executive Committee are in place for the summer and so the new Senate elects its own leadership. This requires seating the newly elected Senate for at least part of the last meeting of the academic year, during which time their first and only action is to elect leadership. (Introduced in spring 2011, but not placed on the Senate agenda.)

Change the Bylaws as follows:

3.3 Seating of New Senators. After completion of all business in the last Senate meeting of the academic year other than Senate leadership elections, the Senate terms of outgoing Senators shall end, and newly elected Senators shall begin their terms.

5.3 Election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker. The Speaker and Deputy Speaker shall be elected in sequential elections by majority vote of the Senators present after seating of newly elected Senators at the last meeting of the academic year, for service in the year following beginning at the close of the meeting. Nominations for both Speaker and Deputy Speaker each position will be taken during that meeting will be taken from the floor immediately prior to each election, 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 outgoing Speaker is not a member of the new Senate, he or she shall conduct the elections but not vote.

6.1 Executive Committee... The Executive Committee members shall be elected, ..., at the first regular meeting of the Senate each academic year, by majority vote of the Senators present after seating of newly elected Senators at the last meeting of the academic year, for service in the year following beginning at the close of the meeting.

Rationale:

The timing of elections for Senate leadership positions have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the Rice Faculty Senate. The Working Group on Senate Governance identified several features of our election system that could be improved to make elections more transparent, encourage more Senators to run for leadership positions, and create a smoother transition from one year to the next.

Currently, the outgoing Senate elects the Speaker and Deputy Speaker for the next year in the spring. The new Senate is seated in the fall and the executive committee is elected at that time. A tremendous amount of activity takes place during the summer. Under the current system, the Executive Committee is empowered to act for the Senate, but it is a lame duck Executive Committee during the summer. Several members are typically no longer on the Senate. The leadership has already switched to a new Speaker and Deputy Speaker. This leads to ambiguity, awkwardness, and inefficiency during the summer. The first Executive Committee meeting of the fall sets the agenda for the first Senate meeting, and the weaknesses pointed out compromise the effectiveness of the Executive Committee at this time. The election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker by the outgoing Senate addresses the need for leadership in during the summer, but it implies that the selection may not reflect sentiment expressed by the faculty in the most recent general Senate election.
drawback to this proposed approach is that new Senators will vote on Speaker and Deputy Speaker without having the benefit of interacting with the candidates in Senate meetings.

In general, however, the working group felt it was an improvement for the new Senate to elect its own leadership in its entirety.

Typically, there will be some remaining business for the outgoing Senate, so the new Senate would be seated partway through the meeting, which incidentally creates a nice transition of power from old Senate to new Senate. The first and only action of the new Senate at this meeting is to elect its leadership. The results of the recent Senate election will be known for quite some time, so candidates for the Executive Committee may be drawn from newly elected Senators, as is the custom now. Candidates for Speaker and Deputy Speaker must have been on the Senate the previous year, according to the current rules.