Proposal to relax limits on the number of regular, tenure and tenure-track Senators allowed from a single department to a maximum of two.

In section 2 of the Constitution, change “The members elected from each School, under the provisions of this paragraph, shall all be from different departments. “ to “No more than two Senators elected under the provisions of this paragraph shall have primary appointments in the same department.”

The full paragraph would read. "Seventeen members are to be, and elected by, faculty holding tenured or tenure-track appointments in the Schools of Humanities, the Social Sciences, the Natural Sciences, or Engineering, voting in their respective schools. No more than two Senators elected under the provisions of this paragraph shall have primary appointments in the same department. The number of representatives elected by each School shall be based on the proportionate number of tenure-track faculty appointments in each School as determined by the Senate every three years."

Rationale: Currently, only one Senator from a given department may be elected to the normal tenured or tenure-track Senate seats. The original motivation for the restriction was to avoid a single large department from being overrepresented. The experience of the past five years of the Senate has shown us that there is little need to be concerned about this possibility. Instead, there is a greater need to allow the most interested and qualified people to run for the Senate irrespective of department. The Working Group on Senate Governance recommends removing the current limitation.

The current restriction has prevented interested and motivated faculty from running for seats and made it difficult to find candidates for open seats. 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. Relaxing 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.

An important piece of data is the number of Senate seats that have had to be filled by appointment. It has been steadily increasing each year, which is a troubling trend. This will become an even greater issue in the next year or two when term limits disallow about half a dozen senators from seeking reelection. Increasing the pool of people eligible to run is one way to address this problem. Other ways to address it, such as providing better incentives to run or improving recruitment of candidates should be and are being pursued.
Proposal adopted by the Faculty Senate, December 8, 2010

In addition, constitutionally mandating a maximally uniform representation at the department level does not significantly improve the ability of the Senate to provide good governance. Senate issues are principally university issues. Balanced divisional representation is sufficient to give issues the broad consideration they deserve.