

## A Guide to Senate Bylaws Revision

Over the past two years, the Bylaws Subcommittee of the Governance Committee has been working on a revision of the Senate bylaws with the intent to add clarity to the structure and functions of the Senate. The revision proposes changes to the current bylaws that range from big changes in the structure of the bylaws document to small changes in language. This document is a guide through many of the significant revisions, starting with the structural changes to the bylaws, then surveying the changes in Senate structures and processes.

In the October 2018 “By-Laws and Procedures” document and in the proposed “Bylaws” and “Standing Rules” documents, the following coding is used:

All text is either (1) uncommented and black (in the proposed documents, only **Headings** and *text from the BoT Policies in bold italics*), (2) commented with the corresponding source, and/or (3) red or orange to indicate a change or addition.

Minor changes in wording that do NOT imply a change in meaning are not highlighted.

Orange text indicates minor changes, which DO change the meaning, but in a way that reflects current practice.

Red text indicates major wording differences, which change the meaning to deviate from current practice.

In the proposed documents, text that is colored and uncommented indicates an addition. In the October 2018 “By-Laws and Procedures” document, text that is colored and uncommented indicates a deletion.

### Structure of Bylaws

Each part of the old and new governance documents has comments linking them to the corresponding parts of the other documents.

1. Currently, the Senate has By-Laws and Procedures, which are published in one publication known as the “yellow book,” with parts titled Introduction, Guidelines, and UFS Bylaws. The proposed revision has been broken into three documents: Bylaws, Standing Rules, and Guidelines. Bylaws are the rules that define Senate structure and parliamentary procedures; bylaws are of highest importance and cannot be changed without significant thought and time. Standing Rules are rules that are related to the details of the administration of the Senate rather than to parliamentary procedure. They can be adopted or changed more easily by the Senate. The standing rules are numbered the same way as the bylaws in order to maintain the linkage to specific sections/topics. Guidelines are informational, based on current practice, and can be changed as needed by the Executive Committee.
2. The current bylaws contain language from the *Policies* of SUNY’s Board of Trustees (BoT) that establish the Senate and define basic structures and processes. The Senate can

request changes, but only the BoT can put changes in place. Any BoT *Policies* that appear as part of the proposed bylaws are in ***bold italics*** and include a reference to the location in the BoT policies.

3. Changes in the structure of the bylaws are reflected in the titles of the articles in the current vs. proposed bylaws (see table below). The proposed bylaws define all the “moving pieces” that constitute the Senate, then describe the functions and responsibilities of each constituent, and finally describe the processes that enable the Senate to accomplish these various duties and responsibilities.

Current Bylaws	Proposed Bylaws
ARTICLE I: ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSES	ARTICLE I. ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSES (BoT Policies Article VII Title A)
ARTICLE II: SENATE MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTIONS	ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP
ARTICLE III: OFFICERS AND ELECTIONS	ARTICLE III. OFFICERS
ARTICLE IV: REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE SENATE	ARTICLE IV. ORGANIZATION
ARTICLE V: SPECIAL MEETINGS OF THE SENATE	ARTICLE V. SCOPE AND FUNCTIONS
ARTICLE VI: DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SENATORS	ARTICLE VI. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
ARTICLE VII: DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SENATE OFFICERS	ARTICLE VII. MEETINGS
ARTICLE VIII: MEMBERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND DUTIES OF SENATE STANDING COMMITTEES	ARTICLE VIII. REPORTS AND RESOLUTIONS
ARTICLE IX: AD HOC COMMITTEES	ARTICLE IX. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS
ARTICLE X: REPORTS AND RESOLUTIONS	ARTICLE X. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES
ARTICLE XI: QUORUMS AND ACTIONS	ARTICLE XI. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY
ARTICLE XII: RULES OF PROCEDURE	ARTICLE XII. ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT
ARTICLE XIII: AMENDMENTS	

### **Senate Structures and Processes**

The proposed governance documents introduce many changes to structures and processes. The following are those that the Bylaws Subcommittee believes to be most significant. In the Google document, all changes reflecting more than a minor change in language are indicated by colored text.

1. The proposed bylaws add a process (IX.5) for the Senate to elect an alternate sector representative (IV.1) and an alternate campus governance leader convener (IV.3). An elected alternate sector rep will be able to prepare if needed to attend and vote in meetings of the Executive Committee, run sector meetings, and present questions to the Chancellor.

*Rationale:* This will ensure that sectors continue to have representation.

2. The proposed bylaws add standing committee chairs to the Executive Committee as non-voting members (IV.2[a]). Committee chairs are currently not members of the Executive Committee. The Convener of the CGLs continues to be a non-voting member, as in the current bylaws.

*Rationale:* For the past decade, committee chairs have attended most, if not all, meetings of the Executive Committee as guests, in order to better facilitate Senate business, including the presentation of reports and resolutions that are coming from the committees. Often there is overlap in projects and concerns between the committees and sectors, and the input of committee chairs at meetings of the Executive Committee is of great benefit. Given that committee chairs are appointed and not elected, they would be non-voting members of the Executive Committee.

3. The proposed bylaws establish standing committees and include their basic charges. (IV.2[b]). Detailed charges for the standing committees are in the Guidelines.

*Rationale:* The existence of standing committees is established in the policies of the BoT: ***The Senate may establish such standing committees as it deems advisable and shall prescribe the functions of such committees.*** Therefore, the establishment of committees and any changes to their basic charges should require consideration by the entire Senate. Committees may recommend to the Executive Committee changes to the detailed committee charges in the Guidelines.

4. The proposed bylaws add a new article on the “Scope and Functions” of the University Faculty Senate (V).

*Rationale:* This section provides a broad overview of the Senate, its components, and their functions.

5. The proposed bylaws provide more careful consideration of the process and timing for inclusion of resolutions and reports on the proposed agenda of a plenary (VIII). The process for resolutions to be considered by the Senate that are not on the agenda has been more clearly identified (VII.1[b], VIII.2[d]).

*Rationale:* The intent is to allow ample time for the Executive Committee to review proposed resolutions and work with the individual/committee/sector/campus to “maximize quality and relevancy” of the resolutions (V.3).

6. The proposed bylaws provide more specific delineation of the timing of calling and holding special meetings of the Senate (VII.2). If Senators petition for a special meeting, it must be held within a specific time frame. Special meetings of the Senate which are held electronically formerly required a subsequent asynchronous electronic vote by the full Senate; they now can approve resolutions directly. Similarly, the proposed bylaws add a section on special meetings of the Executive Committee (VII.3).

*Rationale:* Both proposed changes assure that urgent matters are addressed in a timely way.

7. The proposed bylaws modify the appointment of the Nominations and Elections Committee, in the case when a sector does not have any senators serving in the final year of their term (IX.1). The sector (instead of the President) shall name a member to serve on the committee.

*Rationale:* The proposed change eliminates any conflict of interest.

8. The proposed bylaws add an article on “Disciplinary Procedures” (X).

*Rationale:* Without these new procedures, if an issue arises that may require disciplinary action, the Senate would have to use the procedures set forth in *Robert's Rules*, which may not be ideal because the Senate meets infrequently. Adding the new procedures to the Bylaws would allow the Executive Committee to handle any complaint within a timeframe better suited to the complaint.

9. The proposed bylaws rename the old “Rules of Procedure” article to “Parliamentary Authority” (XI). It also explains the role of the parliamentarian (XI.3) and sets a two year term with no term limits (XI.2).

*Rationale:* The proposed change clarifies the role/term of the parliamentarian.