

Governance System Overview University of Minnesota Updated August 2015

The University of Minnesota has one of the strongest and most active shared governance systems among large research universities, with faculty governance playing a particularly prominent role and, in recent years, having a successful collaborative working relationship with both the administration and the Board of Regents. The shared governance system is established in the Senate Constitution, which is approved by the Board of Regents. The University's governance system has been studied by academic researchers as far back as the 1950s and as recently as the last decade because of its reputation for effectiveness. One of the defining characteristics of the shared governance system at Minnesota is that the most distinguished scholars and teachers participate (e.g., two faculty who later became Regents Professors chaired the Faculty Senate executive committee, two Regents Professors have served as vice chair, and Regents Professors, McKnight Professors, and members of the Academy of Distinguished Teachers routinely serve on and chair Senate committees). Department chairs/heads also participate frequently as committee members and chairs.

This overview discusses the University-wide governance system, responsible for all- University matters. [Note: Because of restrictions imposed by federal and state labor law, unionized staff and the faculties that have voted for collective bargaining (those at Crookston and those at Duluth outside the Medical/Pharmacy schools) do not participate in the governance system.]

Senates

The umbrella body is the University Senate, which was established in 1912 and consisted only of faculty members until 1969, when students were given representation. In 2004, the University Senate was expanded again, when professional and academic staff and civil service staff were granted representation. The University Senate now has representatives from faculty (168, including the president), students (60), professional and administrative staff (25), and civil service staff (25), for a total of 278 members when all seats are filled.

The University Senate contains within it four senates: the Faculty Senate, the Student Senate, the Academic Professionals and Administrators (P&A) Senate, and the Civil Service Senate.

The president of the University serves as the chair of the University Senate and Faculty Senate and presides at meetings of both bodies; the vice chair of the Faculty Senate, who presides in the president's absence in both the Faculty and University Senate, is elected by the Faculty Senate and must be a faculty member eligible to serve in the Faculty Senate. The president is a voting member of both bodies but the Senate Rules indicate that he or she is entitled to vote only when the vote is necessary for a decision (and the president has not cast a vote in decades). There have been a number of times in recent years when the president has agreed to relinquish the chair to the vice chair at the request of the leadership of the Faculty Consultative Committee (see below) so that debate could proceed without putting the president "on the spot."

The University and Faculty Senates typically meet four to five times per year; the two bodies meet consecutively. One of the spring meetings has been devoted primarily to the President's State of the University Address.

The scope of authority of the Senates is specified in the University Senate Constitution:

Article I provides that "[c]onsistent with actions and policies by the regents of the University of Minnesota, all matters relating to the educational and administrative affairs of the University are herein committed to the president, the Faculty Senate, the

University Senate, and the several faculties."

Article III(1)(a) provides that "[t]he University Senate shall have general legislative authority over administrative matters concerning more than one campus or the University as a whole, but not over the internal affairs of a single campus, institute, college, or school, except where these materially affect the interests of the University as a whole or the interests of other campuses, institutes, colleges, or schools. It may also offer advice to the president on budget, educational policy, and research issues."

Article IV provides that "[t]he Faculty Senate shall have general legislative authority over faculty welfare, educational, and research matters concerning more than one campus or the University as a whole, but not over the internal affairs of a single campus, institute, college, or school, except where such affairs materially affect the interests of the University as a whole or the interests of other campuses, institutes, colleges, or schools. It shall also have general advisory responsibilities for matters related to the University budget. The authority of the Faculty Senate shall include but not be limited to primary responsibility for educational and research policies, providing advice to the president concerning the University's budget, accreditation, designation and granting of University honors, policies concerning faculty appointment and tenure, and matters within the jurisdiction of the Faculty Affairs and Judicial Committees."

Article V provides that "[i]n general, the responsibility of the Student Senate shall include but not be limited to matters in the area of student government, student organizations, and student publications. The Student Senate shall also exercise an advisory role on matters of student behavior and student academic integrity."

Article VI provides that "[t]he responsibility of the P&A Senate shall include but not be limited to matters relating to the work of the academic professional and administrative staff."

Article VII provides that "[t]he responsibility of the Civil Service Senate shall include but not be limited to matters relating to the employment conditions of the civil service staff; including duties as assigned within the Office of Human Resources Civil Service Employment Rules."

As noted in the Constitution itself, all the consultative bodies are free to speak about issues whether or not they are committed to a Senate for decision. The various bodies to which these provisions refer have historically had no reservations about expressing their views on a variety of matters. Article III(1)(d) and (f) specify that: "d. Nothing in this constitution bars the Senate Consultative Committee, the Faculty Consultative Committee, the Student Consultative Committee, the P&A Consultative Committee, or the Civil Service Consultative Committee from discussing and expressing views on any matter they deem appropriate, without regard to any view expressed by any of the other bodies"; "f. Nothing in this constitution bars the University Senate, the Faculty Senate, the Student Senate, the P&A Consultative Committee, or the Civil Service Consultative Committee from discussing and expressing views on any matter it deems appropriate, without regard to any view expressed by any of the other bodies."

The Student Senate, with 60 members, represents students on all five campuses. It holds its meetings earlier in the same day as the University and Faculty Senate meetings. The P&A Senate is composed of 48 elected P&A members from each of the campuses, colleges, and administrative units at the University. The body holds 7 meetings per year from August to May. The Civil Service Senate is composed of 50 elected members from all five campuses. It meets once in the fall and once in the spring.

Senate Committees

Much of the work of the Senates is conducted through its committees. Each Senate has an executive committee: the Senate Consultative Committee (SCC), the Faculty Consultative Committee, (FCC), the Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC), the P&A Consultative Committee (PACC), and the Civil Service Consultative Committee (CSCC). Because so much of the core University function is within the authority of the Faculty Senate, of the five executive committees, FCC has had an especially active role. The FCC has ten elected members (9 from the Twin Cities and 1 from Morris) and ten ex officio members, including the faculty chairs of the four Senate committees having jurisdiction over educational policy, faculty affairs, finance and planning, and research. The SCC is composed of 23 voting members (12 faculty members from the FCC, 7 students, 2 academic professionals, and 2 civil service staff) as well as several ex officio members. The chair and vice-chair of the FCC are elected by the voting members of the FCC and serve also as the chair and vice-chair of the SCC.

The SCC meets three times per year and considers matters that affect all employee groups (rather than only or primarily faculty) or students and staff. Most governance matters, however, are considered by the FCC, which meets more frequently. The FCC considers matters related to education, research, and faculty welfare, which encompasses much of the business of the University. The president and provost meet regularly with the FCC. The FCC also meets as necessary with other central administrators to review University policies and their implementation.

Among the University, Faculty, Student, P&A, and Civil Service Senates, there are 23 standing committees (apart from the 5 consultative committees) and 14 standing subcommittees, and much of the governance work is done through those groups. Most committees have faculty, P&A, student, civil service, and, where appropriate, alumni members; committee members may but need not be senators, and most committee members are selected by the broadly-representative Committee on Committees. There are typically several ad hoc subcommittees appointed each year, as well. Ten of the standing committees report to the Faculty Senate, three report to the Student Senate, and eleven report to the University Senate. Four subcommittees report to the P&A Senate, six report to the Civil Service Senate, three subcommittees report to Faculty Senate committees, and one reports to the Student Senate. One standing committee (Finance and Planning) reports to both the Faculty Senate and the University Senate.

The appropriate senior academic officers serve as ex officio non-voting members of relevant committees and attend meetings, which ensures regular communication between the administration and governance. The vice president for finance and the vice president for university services serve on the Finance and Planning Committee. The vice president for research and two associate vice presidents serve on the Research Committee. The vice provosts and deans for graduate and undergraduate education both serve on the Educational Policy Committee. The vice provost for faculty and academic affairs serves on the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee as well as the Faculty Affairs Committee and the Research Committee. The vice president for information technology serves on the Senate Committee on Information Technologies.

There is one standing committee related to the Senate which is not a regular Senate committee, the Benefits Advisory Committee (BAC), composed of four representatives from each employee class (faculty, P&A, civil service) and two retirees. The BAC advises the University administration on "benefit offerings common to non-represented employee groups (specifically excluding the Faculty Retirement Plan, the Optional Retirement Plan, MSRS, faculty group disability, and faculty group life insurance)." (The five bargaining agents with members who receive benefits through University group plans are permitted to send one non-voting representative each to the BAC.)

Scheduled Meetings for the President

In recent years, the president has had several regular meetings with governance leaders as part of ongoing consultation and preparation for Senate and FCC meetings. There is a pre-FCC meeting with the FCC chair and vice chair to preview what will be discussed when he/she joins the FCC meeting that month, and to discuss any other issues raised by those attending. There is a docket-review meeting with a small group to review University and Faculty Senate dockets prior to the Senate meetings. There normally are regular private meetings of the president with the FCC chair and vice chair, who also meet regularly with the president's chief of staff and with the provost. The president meets with SCC each semester and with SSCC, PACC, and CSCC once per year.

There are also what have been deemed the "3-by-3-by-3" meetings two times per year: the Board of Regents chair, vice chair, and executive director (3); the president, the provost, and the (president's) chief of staff (3); and the FCC chair and vice chair, and FCC staff (3). These meetings were established following the mid-1990s tendentious "tenure debate" to ensure that the faculty, administration, and Board were in regular communication about the major issues of the day.

The FCC chair reports to the Board of Regents each semester at its regular public meetings and the appropriate Senate chairs are invited to attend the meetings of Regents committees (e.g., the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning chair attends the meetings of the Finance and Operations Committee of the Board).

University Senate Office

The governance system is supported by the University Senate office, which has six staff members.