

Proposed change to the Bylaws of the Faculty Senate – The University of South Carolina – Columbia (Appendix IV of the Faculty Manual)

To facilitate online meetings, Insert the following new section – Article IV – Meetings, Section 4 – Meetings Held Electronically

Article IV – MEETINGS

Section 4. - Meetings Held Electronically. Except as otherwise provided in these bylaws, meetings conducted through use of Internet meeting services designated by the Faculty Senate Steering Committee will support anonymous voting and support visible displays identifying those participating, identifying those seeking recognition to speak, showing (or permitting the retrieval of) the text of pending motions, and showing the results of votes. These electronic meetings of the Faculty Senate shall be subject to all rules adopted by the Faculty Senate, to govern them, which may include any reasonable limitations on, and requirements for, Faculty Senate members' participation. Any such rules adopted by the Faculty Senate shall supersede any conflicting rules in the parliamentary authority, but may not otherwise conflict with or alter any rule or decision of the Faculty Senate. An anonymous vote conducted through the designated Internet meeting service shall be deemed a ballot vote, fulfilling any requirement in the bylaws or rules that a vote be conducted by ballot.

Proposed Change to the Standing Rules of the Faculty Senate (Included as Appendix V of the Faculty Manual)

To facilitate conduct of online meetings establish a new rule, Rule III as follows, and re-number each subsequent rule (i.e., Rules III through IX become Rules IV through X).

Rule III – Conduct of Electronic Meetings

1. Login information. The Secretary shall send by e-mail to every member of the Faculty Senate, at least three days before each meeting, the time of the meeting, the URL and codes necessary to connect to the Internet meeting service, and, as an alternative and backup to the audio connection included within the Internet service, the phone number and access code(s) the member needs to participate aurally by telephone. The Secretary shall also include a copy of, or a link to, these rules.
2. Login time. The Secretary shall schedule Internet meeting service availability to begin at least 15 minutes before the start of each meeting.
3. Signing in and out. Members shall identify themselves as required to sign into the Internet meeting service, and shall maintain Internet and audio access throughout the meeting whenever present, but shall sign out upon any departure before adjournment.
4. Quorum calls. The presence of a quorum shall be determined by the Parliamentarian and communicated to the chair via the chat function at the beginning of the meeting. Thereafter, the continued presence of a quorum shall be determined by the online list of participating members, unless any member demands a quorum count by audible roll call. Such a demand may be made following any vote for which the announced totals add to less than a quorum.
5. Technical requirements and malfunctions. Each member is responsible for his or her audio and Internet connections; no action shall be invalidated on the grounds that the loss of, or poor quality of, a member's individual connection prevented participation in the meeting.
6. Forced disconnections. The chair may cause or direct the disconnection or muting of a member's connection if it is causing undue interference with the meeting. The chair's decision to do so, which is subject to an undebatable appeal that can be made by any member, shall be announced during the meeting and recorded in the minutes.
7. Assignment of the floor. To seek recognition by the chair, a member shall use the "raise hand function" or similar function provided by the Internet meeting service being used. Upon assigning the floor to a member, the chair shall clear the online queue of members who had been seeking recognition. To claim preference in recognition, another member who had been seeking recognition may promptly seek recognition again, and the chair shall recognize the member for the limited purpose of determining whether that member is entitled to preference in recognition.
8. Interrupting a member. A member who intends to make a motion or request that under the rules may interrupt a speaker shall use the chat feature for so indicating, and shall thereafter wait a reasonable time for the chair's instructions before attempting to interrupt the speaker by voice.
9. Motions submitted in writing. A member intending to make a main motion, to offer an amendment, or to propose instructions to a committee, shall, before or after being recognized, post the motion in writing to the online area designated by the Secretary for this purpose, preceded by the member's name and a number corresponding to how many written motions the member has so far posted during the meeting

(e.g., “SMITH 3:”; “FRANCES JONES 2:”). Use of the online area designated by the Secretary for this purpose shall be restricted to posting the text of intended motions.

10. Display of motions. The Secretary shall designate an online area exclusively for the display of the immediately pending question and other relevant pending questions (such as the main motion, or the pertinent part of the main motion, when an amendment to it is immediately pending); and, to the extent feasible, the Secretary, or any assistants appointed by him or her for this purpose, shall cause such questions, or any other documents that are currently before the meeting for action or information, to be displayed therein until disposed of.

11. Voting. Votes shall be taken by the anonymous voting feature of the Internet meeting service, unless a different method is ordered by the Faculty Senate or required by the rules. When required or ordered, other permissible methods of voting are by electronic roll call or by audible roll call. The chair’s announcement of the voting result shall include the number of members voting on each side of the question and the number, if any, who explicitly respond to acknowledge their presence without casting a vote. Business may also be conducted by unanimous consent.

12. Video display. The chair, the Secretary, or their assistants shall cause a video of the chair to be displayed throughout the meeting and shall also cause display of the video of the member currently recognized to speak or report.

Background information: Recent Changes to the Faculty Manual

The Faculty Manual – The University of South Carolina at Columbia – p. 12 (as of March 15, 2020)

Paragraph 5

"Senators should try to attend all meetings of the Faculty Senate. Minimally, Senators are expected to attend a majority of meetings. Because the Faculty Senate is a deliberative body, active participation requires physical presence at the site of the meeting. An exception to this requirement is extended to senators from USC campuses outside of the greater Columbia area to facilitate a greater degree of involvement than could be achieved were they required to travel to Columbia."

Inserted by vote of Faculty Senate Steering Committee--March 17, 2020

" In extraordinary circumstances when the physical gathering of the Senate might present a risk to public health or safety, as determined by the Faculty Senate Steering Committee, the Senate may convene a virtual meeting according to the rules set in its by-laws."

Faculty Manual change passed by Faculty Senate Steering Committee – March 17, 2020

Approved by President Caslen – March 18, 2020

Approved by Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee – April 20, 2020

Approved by Full Board of Trustees – April 30, 2020

Approved by General Faculty --

Background Information: Guidance from Roberts Rules of Order

Scenario A: Use of Full-Featured Internet Meeting Services

In this scenario, the board makes use of Internet meeting services with integrated audio (and optionally video), text, and voting capabilities as the usual meeting method, with in-person meetings when ordered by the board or all of its members.

Internet meeting services adapted to the needs of deliberative assemblies vary somewhat in the names given to their features and in how they are set up and arranged. Typically, a full-featured Internet meeting is set up as follows:

Each participant, using his or her own computer or other device, can view the current list of all participants—with an indication of which member has the floor or which members are seeking recognition by the chair—and can seek recognition, submit motions in writing, view the text of pending motions, vote, and view the results of a vote.

The sample rules given below require that anonymous voting be supported (in other words, that a member who is properly logged in to a meeting can cast an “electronic ballot” that does not identify that member’s vote as belonging to him or her), and they also assume that non-anonymous votes can be taken, as well.

Audio transmissions can be integrated directly via the Internet, so that participants listen and speak through microphones and speakers or headsets at their computers or other devices. Alternatively, there might be a conference call, with access codes for the participants, that is dialed into by ordinary telephone but is also linked to the Internet meeting interface, so that participants speak and listen by telephone, but use the Internet service (which remains aware of the identity of each caller) for all other features.

If the participants have webcams for transmitting live video, a portion of the screen might show their faces, or else (perhaps depending on the total number of participants) just those of the chair and/or the person speaking in debate or presenting a report.

The organizers of the meeting also have access to a control panel for use by the chair, the Secretary, and their assistants, which enables them to perform their duties during the meeting, such as ensuring that the text of the pending question is properly displayed, assigning the floor to a member, opening and closing the polls for taking a vote, controlling the camera view, etc.

Assuming an organization’s bylaws are patterned directly on the Sample Bylaws in Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, the organization can authorize the board to meet by use of an Internet meeting service with features like those described above by adding the following sections to Article VI [RONR (11th ed.), pp. 586–87]