

A SHORT HANDBOOK FOR FACULTY SENATORS

The Basics of Serving in the Faculty Senate

1. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Congratulations on running for, being elected, and serving as a Faculty Senator!

Your constituents, that is, the faculty members in your college, have entrusted you with representing them in the [Faculty Senate](#) for the next three years. This important role comes with responsibilities and expectations (detailed below) to be approached with seriousness and due diligence.

Serving as a Faculty Senator is an essential function of two governance pillars at our institution: 1) *faculty governance*, in which Senators act to protect and advance specific faculty interests, policies and matters; and 2) *shared governance*, in which Senators interact, work, and collaborate with other governance groups – representing staff, students, and administration – to formulate and revise institutional policies of common interest to all these groups. For instance, none of the policies in the [NDSU Policy Manual](#) can be enacted and go into effect without the approval of the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, Student Government, and University Administration. Therefore, the role of a Faculty Senator has important and wide implications for the functioning of the university that go beyond the immediate interests of each individual member of the Faculty Senate.

This short handbook is intended to add some contextual explanation to the otherwise rather terse language of the [Faculty Senate Constitution](#) and, especially, the [Faculty Senate Bylaws](#). In that sense, it is meant to be a complementary resource to both foundational documents, elaborating in clear, but brief terms on the main rights, responsibilities, and expectations deriving from this university-level faculty service role.

2. REPRESENTATION

Exactly whom do you represent in the Faculty Senate?

Although you would not be wrong in assuming you are representing your academic department, your role extends beyond that level. In fact, per Article I, Section 1 of the [Faculty Senate Bylaws](#), individual Senators represent fifteen faculty members from their particular units. In the bylaws, a *unit* is the equivalent of a *college*; this is the meaning of *unit* that will be employed in the rest of this handbook.

Therefore, as a Senator, you are a representative of your entire college in the Faculty Senate. This elevates your faculty service role in representing, defending, and conveying the interests of *all faculty members* in your *unit* (college), not just your own or those of faculty members in your academic department.

3. MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES

What are your main responsibilities as a Faculty Senator?

Your core responsibilities as a Faculty Senator are stipulated in Article II, Section 8 of the bylaws. It is extremely important for you to be familiar with and fulfill these responsibilities in order to carry out your work in the Senate. In turn, the Senate relies on each Senator's commitment, active participation, and contribution to fulfill its mission and responsibilities (see Article II, Section 1 of the [Faculty Senate Constitution](#)). Moreover, the governance processes mentioned in section 1 of this handbook cannot function properly without each Senator's contribution.

Therefore, your presence at and engagement in Faculty Senate meetings are to be taken seriously. In addition to reviewing meeting agendas ahead of the scheduled meetings, attending meetings, or sending a proxy in the event you cannot attend a meeting, you should be active in soliciting feedback and input from your constituents. This way you can engage in debates informed not solely by your personal view of a particular issue, but also by a plurality of perspectives from the faculty members in your unit(s). By extension, you should cast your vote on any matter under debate only after careful consideration of the overall input received from your unit faculty, as well as of the views expressed during discussion of the said matter on the Senate floor.

To do so, closely reading the meeting agendas well in advance of the meetings is an essential duty (pursuant to the bylaws, the agendas are sent out and posted to the Faculty Senate website seven days before each meeting). This is where you will find the business items to be discussed at the meeting(s) and you should take the time to canvass your constituents to get a sense of their reactions to, concerns about and suggestions on various proposed new policies and revisions to existing policies or other action items to be deliberated on in the Senate (e.g., Senate resolutions, curriculum/course approvals, procedural documents, confirmation of standing committee members, formation of special committees, etc.).

You are also expected to inform your constituents of actions taken in the Senate after each meeting, given that the success of such actions is contingent upon Senators' support and advocacy for those actions in their units. You may provide a report to the units you represent via an email update, during departmental and college meetings, in conversations with individual faculty members, etc. While there is no prescribed format in which you should report to your units, it is crucial that you do so regularly, so your unit constituents are up-to-date on the matters of faculty and shared governance discussed in the Senate that are of wide interest to all faculty members. Although the minutes for each Senate meeting are

shared via email with the university faculty and also posted to the Senate website, your unit faculty may be more inclined to read the summaries submitted by their own representatives.

Hence, following-up on work and actions decided upon in the Senate is a *shared responsibility*, which requires that Senators do their part in accomplishing it. For instance, if a committee is formed during a Senate meeting that requires membership from faculty members across various units, Senators are expected to actively solicit nominations from their units, rather than expect that the existence of this committee will be immediately known to faculty members or that a call from Faculty Senate executive leadership will suffice in getting faculty members to volunteer right away. The same expectation applies to any action item requiring faculty feedback from your units, whether soliciting input on institutional policies, Senate resolutions, or other issues of faculty interest. Actively ask your constituents what their concerns and suggestions are regarding those matters!

4. FACULTY SENATE MEETING ATTENDANCE

As one of your core responsibilities, you are expected to attend all Faculty Senate regular and special meetings. The Faculty Senate bylaws are unambiguous about the timing of the regular meetings (see Article II, Section 10) and this cannot be modified to accommodate Senators' schedule conflicts. In fact, Senators are expected to ensure that in choosing to run for and be elected for a three-year term, they make arrangements in their schedule to attend Senate meetings.

When/if conflicts are unavoidable, a substitution procedure (also called *proxy voting*) is to be employed in order to find an eligible replacement to attend the meeting in your place. You may ask any faculty member in your unit, regardless of whether they have served in the Senate in the past (but not a current Senator!), to substitute for you at a meeting you have determined ahead of time you cannot attend. Both you and your substitute will need to formally agree to the substitution. To this end, fill out the *Proxy Vote Agreement for Substitute Representatives Form* (either the [PDF](#) or [Word](#) version) found on the [Faculty Senate](#) webpage and return it to the Senate's executive leadership members (i.e., Faculty Senate President, President-Elect, Past-President, and Parliamentarian) as early as possible ahead of the meeting, so they can make the appropriate arrangements for the substitute to attend the meeting (e.g., providing access to the voting procedure, etc.).

However, please keep in mind that the use of the proxy voting procedure should only be used after you have exhausted all avenues to ensure your presence at the Senate meeting(s). While, understandably, occasional conflicts do arise, it is imperative that you avoid long-term substitutions (e.g., for a whole semester), as these may be disruptive to the continuity of your responsibilities and contribution to the Senate. Some units elect alternates, but this is also a temporary and not a semester-long solution to a regularly elected Senator's absence.

Finally, please avoid simply not showing up without attempting to find a substitute or informing Faculty Senate executive leadership. The Senate requires a quorum of at least

55% of the total voting membership at each meeting to conduct its business (see Article II, Section 15 of the Faculty Senate Bylaws), so your absence may impede or prevent decision-making and voting on action items. It goes without saying that this is detrimental to the faculty and shared governance processes, as institutional priorities and objectives (including academic matters relevant to faculty members!) rely on the approval of policies in the Faculty Senate. It also means that action on various policies may need to be unnecessarily postponed, further delaying decision-making on those issues and overburdening subsequent meeting agendas as these are added to other action items that need to be addressed.

5. FACULTY SENATE MEETING PROCEDURE

What to expect at a Faculty Senate meeting?

Faculty Senate meetings are conducted according to *Robert's Rules of Order* (RRoO), meaning that all action items follow a determined sequence, and discussion is held observing clearly specified parameters. Your familiarity with RRoO will serve you and the Senate well, allowing you to follow the flow of action items, discussion, and voting procedures. Therefore, you are strongly encouraged to read these brief tutorials on [parliamentary procedure](#) and [meeting rules](#).

The meeting's presiding officer or chair (i.e., the Faculty Senate President or, if unavailable, their substitute), in consultation with the Parliamentarian, will ensure that RRoO are observed, and Senators are expected to comply with the presiding officer's instructions. Senators may interrupt the speaker and raise a *Point of Order*, if they think a Senate rule has been violated or Bylaws have not been followed. After recognition by the presiding officer, they can state their *Point of Order*. In case of a question or clarification, a Senator may interrupt the speaker and raise a *Point of Information* or *Parliamentary Inquiry* after being recognized by the presiding officer.

To ensure proper decorum and a professional setting during Faculty Senate meetings, please address members of the Senate by their formal Senate titles and last names. Even if you personally know the executive leadership team members and/or fellow Senators, avoid addressing them in a casual manner by their first name. For instance, refer to the presiding officer as "President and Last Name" and or any Senators as "Senator and Last Name," whether you are addressing them directly or indirectly. The same expectation applies to any invited guests who are not members of the Senate (e.g., "Professor," "Dr.," "Registrar," etc.).

6. DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

As noted in preceding sections of this handbook, your active participation in and engagement with matters of faculty governance are crucial to the proper functioning of the Senate and to your effectiveness as a Faculty Senator. The most visible Senate activity occurs during its meetings, when action items are considered for adoption/approval and deliberated on by Faculty Senators.

The significance of your active engagement in the discussions related to action items on the Senate floor cannot be overstated (also see Section 3. Main Responsibilities above). As your unit representative, you embody and express a multitude of perspectives during Senate debates, which are essential for the vitality and health of the policy-making and decision-making processes in the Senate. It is important that you present your position informed by your prior consultation of your constituents' perspectives, in a clear, appropriate, professional, and respectful manner in the course of the debate. Please express your position clearly and succinctly, and avoid lengthy digressions.

Furthermore, you are strongly encouraged to express your point of view, as this is critical for the vibrancy of debate and exchange of opinions in the Senate. Do not let yourself be intimidated by other Senators' points of view and, just as importantly, do not let others speak for you, regardless of whether you agree or disagree with their positions! If you have a perspective on the matter, make it known.

At all times, you must comply with the presiding officer's instructions on the order, timing, length, and turns in speaking to the Senate. Remember to signal your intention to speak to the presiding officer by raising your hand and waiting to be recognized by them before you present your position. Generally, you are allowed two turns to speak to the same question, unless you are the initiator of the motion, in which case your turns are not limited by this rule. Except for limited circumstances involving privileged motions, such as, for instance, rising for a *Point of Order* or requesting a *Point of Information* you should not interrupt a speaker (e.g., the presiding officer, a fellow Senator, an invited speaker, etc.) or otherwise interfere with a Senate member's right to speak. Even when making a privileged motion, this should be performed with due courtesy to the presiding officer and/or the active speaker on the Senate floor.

Note that discussion on any agenda item requires a motion from a Senator, seconded by another Senator. You do not have to agree with the content or issue presented in the agenda item in order to make and/or second any motions. For example, standard procedures for motions require you to state that you *Move to... [Approve], [Postpone], [Defer]* or take other actions on an item. These signal neither your agreement nor your disagreement with that agenda item. The procedure simply signals your intent to place that item under discussion and debate, and you are entitled to approve it or reject it once the motion is put to a vote.

It is important to keep in mind that your presence at the meeting is a prerequisite of your role, but, in order to advance policy and advocate for faculty interests, you have to be actively engaged in discussions and debates, then vote accordingly. Therefore, you are discouraged from engaging in any other disruptive tasks that diminish your ability to offer your undivided attention to the matters being discussed. Senate meetings should not be construed as listening or information sessions or open forums. Your contribution to discussion and your votes can only be meaningful if you have actively listened to and participated in the debate on the Senate floor preceding the voting procedure, having prepared by reading the meeting agenda and talking to your constituents ahead of the scheduled meeting(s).

7. VOTING ON ACTION ITEMS

After debate and discussion, most action on the Senate floor involves a voting procedure, via which business items, such as new or revised policies, are approved, rejected, postponed, or subject to other outcomes depending on the motion made on each specific item. As noted in the preceding section, it is important that your vote be informed by your careful consideration of your unit faculty interests and the perspectives exchanged on the Senate floor on each particular motion. Once the presiding officer considers that debate and discussion on a motion has been exhausted, they will “call the question” and put the matter to a vote.

To vote on motions on action items, the Senate uses the Turning Technologies platform called **PointSolutions**. You must ensure before the meeting that your account is created and confirmed. To do this, log into <https://account.turningtechnologies.com/account/> with your NDSU credentials (the usual duo-authentication process will be launched) and check under the “Courses” tab if you are already enrolled in the Faculty Senate’s module. If not, contact the presiding officer for details. During the meeting, once a motion is put to a vote, at the instruction of the presiding officer, you can respond to the ballot in two ways:

1. *Via the **PointSolutions** application on your smartphones.* This is the easiest and most convenient option. Go to your smartphone’s application store (see [Mac App Store](#), [Google Play](#), etc.) and search for “PointSolutions,” then download the app. Login with your NDSU credentials, go through the duo authentication prompts, and the app will retain your login information for that session, so you will not have to re-enter it every time you use the app to vote. When you are prompted, enter the Session ID provided by the presiding officer, then cast your vote as indicated on the screen. The results will be displayed in real time on your phones once that particular voting session is concluded. This will be repeated for any motion requiring an electronic vote.
2. *Via a web browser on your computers.* Go to <https://tppoll.com/> and log in (if not already logged in – see above). Wait for the session to start, then vote accordingly (there may be a period of time in which a message will notify you that “the specified session does not exist”; in that case, simply wait for the presiding officer to start the session). As in #1 above, the results will be displayed on your individual browsers once the voting session is closed. In both cases, this gives you an instantaneous vote count on your devices.

8. SERVING ON COMMITTEES

Apart from the action taken during meetings, the Faculty Senate relies on **fifteen standing and five joint standing committees** to carry out its work. The mission and charge of these committees are detailed in the Faculty Senate Bylaws, and they report to the Faculty Senate on any proposed outcomes. Work involved in these committees is wide-ranging, including but not limited to reviewing proposals for new or revised policies; updates and additions to

university curriculum; diversity, equity, and inclusion matters; faculty grievances; and assessment of academic programs. The Faculty Senate and its executive leadership may charge the standing committees with additional tasks in the purview of these committees. However, when specific, narrow issues fall outside the standing committees' jurisdiction or purview, the Senate may create special ad-hoc committees to address these issues.

Although serving on any Senate committee does not require membership in the Senate, your role as a Senator makes it more likely that you will be involved in committee work at some point in your Senator term. Given the consequential and often time-sensitive nature of these committees' work, please do your best to attend all committee meetings, so that the matters addressed can be completed on time for the Senate to deliberate on their outcome. If you are elected chair of a Senate committee, it is your responsibility to convene the meetings, record/archive meeting minutes, delegate tasks to committee members, and generally, keep the work of the committee on track. Also, per Article III, Section 3 of the bylaws, committee chairs are required to submit a report to the Senate at the end of the academic year; please send it directly to the Faculty Senate President.

9. RECOMMENDED READING/USEFUL RESOURCES

The list below contains supplementary resources to assist you in getting more familiarized with the structure and organization of the Senate, and prepare you for the work your Senator role entails. The list highlights some of the more important resources found on the [Faculty Senate](#) website, which you are encouraged to explore in its entirety. Take some time to read them and feel free to direct any clarification questions to the executive leadership team members.

Thank you for your service to the Faculty Senate!

[Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws](#)

[Guiding Principles for Shared Governance at NDSU](#)

[AAUP Statement on Shared Governance](#)

[Faculty Senate Executive Committee](#)

[Faculty Senate Members](#)

[Faculty Senate Standing and Joint Committees](#)

[Parliamentary Procedure Tutorial](#)

[Policy Workflow and Meeting Rules](#)

[Proxy Vote Agreement for Substitute Representatives](#)

[PointSolutions Voting Platform](#)

Updated: September 3, 2022