



To: SACUA

From: Dinesh Pal, Chair, Rules, Practices and Policies Committee

Subject: Report on Activities of Rules, Practices and Policies Committee for 2023-2024

Members: Audrey Bennett, Jonathan Brennan, Howard Bromberg, Neil Marsh, Bruce Maxim, Dinesh Pal (Chair), David Potter, Michela Russo, Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott

SACUA Liaison: Heather O'Malley (SACUA Liaison)

Meeting Dates: Tues. 10/3 from 1-2pm; Fri. 11/3 from 11am-12pm; Tues. 1/9 from 1-2pm; Fri. 2/2 from 11am-12pm; Fri. 3/8 from 10-11am; Tues. 4/2 from 1-2:30pm

Committee Charge

1. In collaboration with the Faculty Senate Office, perform a complete review of the existing Senate rules to consider possible revisions.
2. Develop recommendations regarding whether to add more faculty groups as voting members in the Faculty Senate.
3. Perform a comparison of U-M's Senate with faculty senates at peer institutions to develop recommendations for the current and future organization and operation of U-M's Senate.

Committee Report

The RPP committee consists of a diverse group of long-serving UM faculty who have in-depth and extensive experience in faculty governance and have served and/or chaired various senate committees over the years, including SACUA. I am grateful to the committee members for being generous with their time and for engaging in thoughtful discussions during the meetings to revise the Senate Rules, which is the primary governance document at the University of Michigan for faculty governance. I would also like to thank Luke McCarthy, the Faculty Senate Director, for his expert guidance and Eric Vandenberghe for his support in conducting our meetings.

The committee held hour-long monthly meetings between October 2023 and April 2024 and was able to complete the review of the existing senate rules. The recommendations from the committee were extensive, with suggestions including the following non-exhaustive list:

- Adding a definitions section at the beginning of the Senate Rules to help clarify terms.
- Explicitly separating out the language that is copied from the Regents' Bylaws so that it is clear what language has been received from the Board of Regents and what has been added by the Senate. This clarity is important because the Senate's language can be changed by the Senate alone, but changes to the Regents' language requires the Regents' approval. Because the current Senate Rules are not clear on this distinction, numerous



changes have been made to the Senate Rules alone without also obtaining requisite changes to the Regents' bylaws.

- Recommending new language be added to the Senate Rules and the Regents' Bylaws in recognition of the addition of a Senate Parliamentarian as a Senate officer.
- Simplifying the membership language for research-track faculty to parallel the language used for Librarians, Archivists, and Curators (LAC), Clinical, and Lecturer faculty following the Senate expansion. The current language about research-track faculty is dated (refers to Research Scientists, but not Research Professors) and creates a small discrepancy between the appointment percentage required. Paralleling the language used for LAC, Clinical, and Lecturer faculty would have a minimal impact on overall Senate membership. According to the Faculty Senate Office, the change would add about 30 faculty members to the 7,355 current membership of the Senate (12 Medical School, 11 Engineering, 3 LSA, and 4 in other academic units).
- Adding additional language in support of virtual attendance and electronic voting, following various concerns raised by members regarding quorum and voting occurring after meetings.
- Resolving various internal inconsistencies created by prior limited revisions, such as when the pool of candidates eligible for SACUA was expanded without revising impacted language in the Senate Rules related to SACUA member voting in Senate Assembly meetings.
- Addressing a few impractical provisions in the current Rules, such as a requirement that all elections to the Senate Assembly have a pool of candidates that is at least twice the number of vacancies. Besides the difficulties involved in enforcing that rule within individual colleges or schools, small academic units routinely need to violate that rule each election due to an insufficient number of available and interested faculty. The Committee suggests recognizing how each academic unit needs flexibility, due to their individual circumstances, to govern their own elections of representatives to the Senate Assembly.

Implementation of the committee's recommendation in the form of a revised draft of the Senate Rules will require significant time. In particular, reformatting the Senate Rules to clearly demarcate language in the Regents' Bylaws from the Senate's own language will take time because the current rules splice both together, without carefully signaling what language comes from where. There are also new suggested provisions, such as a definitions section, that need to be drafted and then reviewed by the RPP. The rules changes will also need to be accompanied by a package of recommended updates to submit to the Board of Regents in order to reconcile differences between the current Senate Rules and the Regents' Bylaws.

The extent of the work involved in creating a new Senate Rules draft for SACUA and then Senate Assembly consideration is more than that can be completed this academic year. Over the summer, the Faculty Senate Office has kindly agreed to implement the RPP's feedback as a revised draft that will be circulated to the RPP for input at the start of 2024 Fall term, with an aim to then submit the approved changes to SACUA for consideration.

Recommendations

The Committee's current recommendations reflect the ongoing status of its current work:

- The Faculty Senate Office should consolidate the RPP's recommendations as a revised draft of the Senate Rules and a package of recommended Bylaw changes to be presented to the Regents for consideration.
- The RPP should be charged with reviewing, revising as needed, and approving for SACUA consideration the resulting Senate Rules draft and package of Regent Bylaw recommendations.
- After SACUA review and revision, accepted changes that fall under the purview of the Senate Assembly could be approved in the Senate Assembly, and Regents' Bylaw changes could be presented to the Regents for their approval.

We believe this process will streamline the documentation of rules, provide clarity where needed, and align the rules as written with their implementation in the course of Senate business.