

Basic Faculty Senate Information

FACULTY SENATOR DUTIES

1. **Department communication:** As a faculty senator you serve as a representative of your academic unit. As such, you are expected to do the following:
 - a. Keep your colleagues informed of senate actions and decisions and of relevant information provided at senate meetings. *This is especially important when a motion is brought forward for discussion and possible adoption.* You will be expected to share the motion with your colleagues and gather their feedback, views, and reactions. Most academic units prefer that their faculty senators vote in accordance with the will of the academic unit as a whole, and this is only possible if there is sufficient communication.
 - b. Maintain an awareness of the interests and concerns of your colleagues, and submit relevant issues to the appropriate senate committee or officer (see the opposite side of this handout for more information on committees and officers).
2. **Committee assignment:** Each senator serves on at least one committee. Please refer to the roster to see your committee assignment, and feel free to reach out to the committee chair for more information about meeting times, etc.
3. **Dues collection:** One of your first tasks will be to collect dues from your full-time colleagues. Dues are \$5 per full-time instructional faculty member. Please put the collected money in an envelope with your academic unit's name on it, and give it to the Treasurer at the October or November Faculty Senate meeting. Faculty Senate treasury funds are used for two broad purposes: (1) Paying for memorials for JMU faculty members or loved ones who have passed away, and (2) Funding projects and initiatives adopted by the Faculty Senate.
4. **Sending an alternate when necessary:** If you cannot attend a meeting, please make sure to send a proxy in your place so your academic unit will be represented.
5. **Keeping track of your tenure and electing a successor.** Each senator's term is for two years. Senators can serve for a maximum of 5 terms of 2 years (10 years total) in succession. You are responsible for keeping track of how long you have been in the senate. When your time in the senate is finished, it is your responsibility to make sure that your department elects a new senator so that your academic unit will continue to be represented.
6. **Publicize the Faculty Senate mini-grants:** The mini-grant program has been a great success, and it is in our collective interest to ensure that it remains viable. Several dozen faculty members have received mini-grants in recent years, and the total amount of money that has been distributed since the initiative began is over \$100,000. As long as the interest is there, the funding will likely continue, so it is in our interest that a sufficient number of faculty members apply for these grants each year. *Please help to remind your colleagues about this program.*

FACULTY SENATE COMMITTEES AND THEIR TASKS

1. The **Faculty Senate Steering Committee** comprises the leadership of the Faculty Senate. Its members include the officers and the chairs of the various standing senate committees. It sets the agenda for the faculty senate meetings and performs a variety of other duties associated with senate governance.
2. The **Faculty Concerns Committee** deals with issues related to:
 - a. How new faculty are selected and appointed;
 - b. Tenure, promotions, salaries, academic leaves, consulting practices, research and publication of instructional faculty members;
 - c. Fringe benefits and working conditions of instructional faculty members;
 - d. Issues concerning academic freedom and responsibilities;
 - e. Development and utilization of university resources and services as they affect instructional faculty members.
3. The **Academic Policies Committee** deals with issues related to new or existing academic policies of the university, including but not limited to degree requirements, credit/no-credit courses, special studies, and the like.
4. The **Budget and Compensation Committee** deals with issues related to the fiscal operation of the university as it is relevant to the university's academic mission.
5. The **Student Relations Committee** deals with issues related to matters of mutual responsibility and concern among faculty and students. This Committee often works with the SGA, and assists the SGA when necessary with the SGA-run Madison Vision Teaching Award.
6. The **Faculty Appeals Committee** receives appeals from faculty members whose contracts are being terminated or who are not receiving tenure or promotion. *Senators are advised to ensure that their colleagues are aware of the existence of this committee.*
7. The **Nominations and Elections Committee** gathers information on the election of senators, oversees the election of senate officers, oversees the removal of officers and members of the senate for nonperformance of duties or misconduct, and oversees the Faculty Senate Engagement mini-grant competition.

FACULTY SENATE OFFICERS AND THEIR TASKS:

1. **Speaker:** presides over senate meetings, helps to set the senate agenda, serves as faculty liaison with the administration and the Board of Visitors.
2. **Speaker Pro Tempore:** assumes the Speaker's duty in cases of absence; serves as the liaison with the Faculty Senate of Virginia; chairs the Faculty Concerns Committee.
3. **Secretary:** takes attendance and keeps minutes of all meetings; distributes the minutes and any further documents to the faculty senators.
4. **Treasurer:** maintains the Faculty Senate treasury; collects dues; arranges memorials upon request for JMU faculty or loved ones who have passed away; conducts the annual computer lottery.
5. **Marshal:** serves as parliamentarian during meetings (Robert's Rules); chairs the Nominations and Elections committee; serves as the mace-wielding marshal at university Commencement ceremonies.
6. **Adjunct representative to the Steering Committee:** represents the views and concerns of adjunct faculty to the Steering Committee.

Basic Faculty Senate Information

PUTTING FORWARD MOTIONS

According to the Faculty Senate Constitution, the purpose of the Faculty Senate is to “represent the instructional faculty of James Madison University, and to exercise the delegated authority of the instructional faculty in the consideration of all policies and issues that affect the academic climate and direction of James Madison University.”

According to our Bylaws, “The Faculty Senate shall seek to create, maintain, and protect a university environment conducive to the growth of scholarship, learning, teaching, research, service, and respect for human dignity and rights.”

The primary way we go about these tasks is through putting forward motions. What follows are basic guidelines for advancing formal ideas, decisions, or actions through the Faculty Senate.

A **motion** is a proposed piece of business for the Faculty Senate. In some cases, motions will only affect the Faculty Senate (e.g., changing our Bylaws). In some cases, motions will affect or seek to affect the university more broadly (e.g., suggesting that the university take or refrain from some course of action). Some motions will have impacts that are both internal and external to the Faculty Senate (e.g., proposing that we spend internal Faculty Senate Treasury funds in a way that has positive impacts on the external student body).

Who can make a motion?

Motions may be brought forward by any member of the Faculty Senate. In some cases, these motions might be written by others (e.g., a departmental colleague may ask her senator to put forward a motion).

How do you write motions?

Motions have two basic parts: (1) a “whereas” portion containing the reasons for adopting a particular resolution, and (2) a “be it therefore resolved” portion that contains the resolution itself. The exact format of the motion is not important as long as these two parts are present and clear.

How do you put motions forward?

A motion should be directed to the Speaker of the Faculty Senate, who, in consultation with the Steering Committee, will either put it on the agenda for a future meeting (as New Business), or will refer it to a particular Faculty Senate committee for further study or investigation.

What happens when your motion is put forward as New Business?

The senator putting the motion forward will typically be called upon to say a few words about the motion and its justification. *Typically* (see below for the exceptional case), this will be considered a “first reading,” after which senators will then be asked to discuss the proposed motion with their colleagues prior to the *next* Faculty Senate meeting (almost always one month later). At that next Faculty Senate meeting, the motion must be moved and seconded before discussion on it can take place. Amendments may be suggested, and voting on the amendments may take place. In addition, other procedural avenues may be explored (e.g., tabling the motion for a later date). Most procedural avenues are based in Robert’s Rules of Order, so senators are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the basics of these rules. If not tabled or otherwise delayed, the motion will eventually come to a vote. Whether a passing vote requires a simple majority or 2/3 of those present or voting (or some other threshold) is determined by the type of motion under consideration.

The exception to the standard *first reading – month delay – discussion and voting* procedure takes place when the Faculty Senate votes to suspend the rules and proceed with discussion and voting immediately. This will sometimes be warranted or helpful in cases requiring prompt action.

What happens if the motion passes?

That depends entirely on the type of motion. In some cases, it might require a bit of bookkeeping (e.g., updating the Bylaws); in some cases it might require writing a check (usage of Faculty Senate Treasury funds); in some cases, it might require communication with the administration or some other organ of the university (e.g., a motion advising that the university move in a particular direction). It is the responsibility of the Faculty Senate Steering Committee to follow up on motions that have been passed in order to see that they are brought to fruition (or, in matters outside of our direct control, attempted to be brought to fruition).



As mentioned above, this account of motions is rough and incomplete. For instance, many specifics from Robert’s Rules of Order are missing. But hopefully this will give senators, especially new senators, a better sense of how the Faculty Senate conducts business.

Any questions regarding the procedure for putting forward motions should be directed to the current Faculty Senate Marshal (who also serves as the chief parliamentarian).