

# CHARTER OF THE FACULTY SENATE

Adopted by the General Faculty of George Mason University on April 3, 1974  
amended September 28, 2000, May 6, 2021  
and as it may be subsequently amended by the General Faculty.

## I. Membership of the Faculty Senate

### A. Members

Non-voting ex officio members:

President of the University

Provost of the University

The Deans of the Colleges and Schools

Dean of the University Libraries

Chair of the Faculty at any Non-U.S. Mason Campus

Voting members:

Faculty Members Elected from the Collegiate and Independent Academic Units

### B. Apportionment of Elected Senators

The number of elected Senators will be specified in the bylaws of the Faculty Senate. Until and unless the Faculty Senate bylaws are amended, the number of elected Senators will be 51. Elected Senator seats shall be apportioned according to the principle of proportionality, based on the full-time equivalent size of the instructional faculty of each collegiate and independent academic unit. Instructional faculty refers to full time and part time faculty with support from appropriated funds.

1. The threshold size for any unit to be allocated a Senate seat according to proportionality is set at the total University instructional FTE divided by the maximum number of elected Senators as stated in the Faculty Senate bylaws. In the instance that this ratio is not an integer it will be rounded up to obtain the threshold size. If all units meet or exceed the threshold size, then Senate seats are apportioned based on the total University instructional FTE. If any unit does not equal or exceed the threshold size, it will be allocated one Senate seat. The remaining Senate seats will be allocated based on the total instructional FTE of those units that equal or exceed the threshold size.

2. No collegiate or independent academic unit will hold more than half of the elected Senate seats. In the event that one unit exceeds 50% of the total University instructional FTE, then Senate seats will be allocated to that unit so as not to exceed one half of the total seats. The threshold size will be calculated using the total FTE of the other units divided by the number of remaining unallocated seats.

3. Should the number of allocated seats exceed the number of elected seats by 1 because of rounding in the calculations, then the number of elected Senate seats shall increase by one for that year's allocation.

By March 1st of each academic year, the Senate Committee on Organization and Operations shall establish the representation from each unit on the basis of data provided by the Administration. The data should be the latest and most complete available at that time. Elections shall follow within each unit as soon as possible, to conclude before the end of the academic year.

#### C. Qualifications of Elected Senators

Elected Senators shall be members of the constituent Faculties they represent. A faculty member is eligible to serve on the Faculty Senate if the faculty member holds

1. A full-time instructional tenured, tenure-track, or term appointment with at least one year's full-time service at George Mason University; or

2. A part-time instructional appointment with at least one academic year of continuous service, and completion of at least two Full Time Equivalents in appointments at George Mason University.

#### D. Election of Senators

Each collegiate or independent academic unit shall decide upon the method of electing its representatives, with the stipulation that they be elected for staggered terms, the maximum to be three years.

### II. Responsibilities of the Faculty Senate

#### A. As Representative of the General Faculty

1. The Senate shall have the fundamental general responsibility to speak and act for the General Faculty on matters affecting the University as a whole.

2. The Senate, on behalf of the General Faculty, shall have the particular responsibility to formulate proposals on those matters affecting the welfare of the University as a whole. In the best traditions of American universities, these recommendations constitute the primary advice to the administration.

3. Regular and special meetings of the General Faculty may be called by the President, who serves as the presiding officer. All members of the General Faculty have voting rights on matters that pertain to the General Faculty. All members of the University community may attend meetings of the General Faculty and participate in the debate of matters that come before it. General Faculty meetings shall be conducted according to the current edition of "Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised" except as the rules and procedures prescribed therein have been modified by adoption of bylaws or standing rules. The General Faculty may meet electronically, provided the technology used allows all members to hear each other simultaneously, seek recognition, vote, and exercise other rights.

3. In extraordinary circumstances, the General Faculty may, by the following procedure, reverse specific decisions of the Senate:

a. The President shall call a special meeting of the General Faculty to consider reversal of a specific decision of the Senate within ten working days of receiving a petition to do so signed by at least 10% of the voting members of the General Faculty, as specified in the Faculty Handbook. To be valid, a petition to reverse a specific decision must be submitted no later than two weeks after the public posting of minutes reporting the Senate action.

b. No vote on the issue shall occur at the meeting. Rather, the meeting shall determine whether or not the General Faculty should subsequently vote on the issue by mail ballot (which may be electronic).

c. If the meeting approves a mail ballot, it shall be distributed within five instructional days of the meeting.

d. The ballots shall be tallied and the results shared with the General Faculty within five instructional days after their distribution. To pass, the motion to reverse a decision of the Senate must be approved by a majority of those eligible to vote.

4. The General Faculty may amend the Senate Charter during either a General Faculty meeting or a special meeting of the General Faculty convened for the purpose of amending the Senate Charter.

a. The President shall call a special meeting of the General Faculty to consider amendments to the Senate Charter within ten instructional days of receiving a petition to do so signed by at least 10% of the voting members of the faculty or after receiving proposals approved by the Senate or the Provost.

i. Notice of the special meeting shall be accompanied by a copy of the proposed changes. Both should be received at least 5 instructional days before the called meeting.

ii. A quorum for the called meeting shall be 10% of the voting faculty. Debate at the meeting shall be on the proposed changes. To pass, the proposed changes must be approved by a majority of the voting faculty who are present and voting.

b. Amendments to the Senate Charter that have been approved by the General Faculty must be presented by the President to the Board of Visitors for their approval.

c. Amendments to the Senate Charter shall take effect upon approval by the Board of Visitors

unless a later effective date is contained therein.

5. The authority of the Senate to make recommendations to the administration on behalf of the General Faculty shall not extend over the internal affairs of any single collegiate or independent academic unit except as they affect the interest of the University as a whole or the interest of other units.

a. If a disagreement arises between the Senate, acting for the General Faculty, and the faculty governance bodies of one or more collegiate units over the question of which body properly exercises authority on a specific issue, the President shall decide by assigning the contested issue to one or another body.

b. If the Senate, acting for the General Faculty, takes an action which a collegiate faculty governance body believes violates the legitimate interests of that collegiate unit, the President shall decide whether or not such a violation has occurred.

**B. As Advisor to the President**

On matters affecting the entire faculty and transcending collegiate unit boundaries, the Senate shall be the primary faculty representative in consultation with the central administration and the President. The Senate and the administration recognize that consultation in such matters implies an obligation on the part of each to engage in regular communication. After due consideration of the Senate's advice, the President will reach a final decision and communicate it to the Senate. If the decision differs from the Senate recommendation an explanation will be included in this communication.