

Staff Senate

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

PREAMBLE

Southeastern Oklahoma State University depends on the efficiency and commitment of non-faculty employees. Commitment comes from meaningful involvement and participation in the policies of the University. The purpose of the Staff Senate is to enable non-faculty employees to participate effectively in the achievement of the goals of Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

ARTICLE 1: NAME

The name of this association shall be the Staff Senate.

ARTICLE 2: PURPOSE

The purpose of the Staff Senate is to strengthen the vision and goals of the University and to represent the interests of the staff of Southeastern Oklahoma State University. The functions of the Staff Senate include, but are not limited to:

- Enhancing and enriching a professional relationship between staff and other University personnel in order to achieve the mission and strategic goals of Southeastern Oklahoma State University
- Providing a forum for the expression of concerns and ideas among staff and serving as a conduit for bringing staff concerns to University administration
- Responding to changes in technology, policy, federal and state regulations, economics, and demographics by promoting staff training and development that will mutually benefit the individual member as well as the institution
- Interacting and working with other representative bodies and councils at the University
- Providing staff recognition services

ARTICLE 3: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Eligibility

Membership in the Staff Senate is limited to Exempt and Non-Exempt staff, who are employed part-time or more, and shall consist of voting and non-voting members as outlined below.

Section 2: Voting Members

Voting members of the Staff Senate shall consist of staff elected to serve as members from voting categories as defined in Article 4, Section 2.

Section 3: Non-Voting Members

Non-voting members of the Staff Senate shall consist of all eligible staff members (as defined in Section 1 and not excluded in Section 4) who do not hold voting member status, as well as ex-Officio members, or non-voting guests of the Staff Senate. This includes the Vice President for Business Affairs, who will serve as the administrative advisor for the Staff Senate. Their purpose is advisory only at the request of the Staff Senate Executive Committee.

Section 4: Exclusions

Individuals in the following positions are excluded from both voting and serving as members of the Staff Senate: University President, Vice President, Associate Vice President, Assistant Vice President, Dean, Associate Dean, Assistant Dean, and individuals in positions classified as student positions, and individuals who hold faculty rank including professional librarians or adjunct faculty (unless primary employment with the University is a staff position).

ARTICLE 4: VOTING MEMBERS AND DUTIES

Section 1: Composition

The officers of the Staff Senate shall be: **Chair, Past Chair, Chair-Elect, Treasurer, Secretary, Archivist, and Parliamentarian**. The officers will serve on the Staff Senate Executive Committee. Other voting members shall be **12 Senators** elected to represent the staff at large.

Section 2: Duties

- The **Chair** shall preside over the meetings of the Staff Senate and the Executive Committee. The Chair shall have the authority to appoint ad hoc committees and is responsible for submitting updates of the Senate's and individual committees' activities to the University President and Vice President for Business Affairs. The Chair shall prepare and distribute the agenda for each meeting in consultation with other officers and committee chairs and issue a notice of all meetings at least one business day prior to the meeting. The agenda shall consist of all items/updates to be discussed or voted on in the meeting. Executive Committee agendas will be distributed via email to the Executive Committee members, and Staff Senate meeting agendas will be distributed to the staff at large via email. The Chair shall also be responsible for managing the Staff Senate email and for keeping the University community informed of activities of the Staff Senate.
- The **Past Chair** shall serve as a mentor to the current Chair and shall also serve on the following committees: the Executive Committee and the Committee on Committees.
- The **Chair-Elect** shall preside over all Staff Senate meetings in the absence of the Chair and assist in preparing meeting agendas. The Chair-Elect shall also serve on the Executive Committee. If the Chair cannot continue in office, the Chair-Elect shall assume the responsibilities and duties of the office.
- The **Secretary** shall take and maintain accurate minutes of all Staff Senate and Executive Committee meetings and shall maintain all other current-year records pertinent to the business of the Staff Senate. The minutes shall contain detailed accounts of all items/updates discussed or voted on in the meeting and the outcome of each vote. The Secretary will distribute the minutes within five business days of each meeting and will send approved minutes to the Archivist to post on the Staff Senate website. Executive Committee meeting minutes will be sent to the Executive Committee members via email, and minutes from Staff Senate meetings will be distributed to the staff at large via email. The Secretary shall assist the Chair in distributing the agenda of each meeting and in managing the Staff Senate email account. The Secretary shall serve on the Executive Committee.
- The **Treasurer** shall be responsible for maintaining accurate financial records for the Staff Senate and for making deposits and paying invoices in a timely manner. All expenditures shall be voted on by the Executive Committee and signed by both the Treasurer and the Chair. The Treasurer shall also present monthly financial reports of all monetary collections and expenditures as well as an annual written report at the last Executive Committee meeting of the fiscal year. The Treasurer shall serve on the Executive Committee.
- The **Archivist** shall maintain a depository for all documents (e.g., minutes, notes, memos, agendas, resolutions, and responses) produced by the Staff Senate, Senate Committees, and all University committees under the oversight of the Staff Senate, as well as Staff Senate promotional materials and any news articles pertaining to the Staff Senate. The Archivist

shall serve as the webmaster for the Staff Senate homepage and shall also oversee publicity as well as manage social media pages, in consultation with the Chair and Chair-Elect. It is the responsibility of committee chairs to forward all written documents to the Archivist. The Archivist shall also serve on the Executive Committee.

- The **Parliamentarian** shall ensure proper procedures during meetings, adhering to Robert's Rules of Order. The Parliamentarian shall assist with any updates to the Staff Senate constitution and bylaws as deemed necessary by majority vote of the Senate. The Parliamentarian shall also serve on the Executive Committee.
- The **Senators** shall serve on at least one standing committee, serve on ad hoc committees as needed, and perform other duties as assigned by the Staff Senate.

Section 3: Elections

All officers shall be elected from the current senators, and individuals must serve a minimum of one year as a Senator before becoming an officer unless otherwise approved by the Executive Committee. Senators will be elected from the staff at large. The Nominating and Recognition Committee shall petition the staff in writing for suggestions/volunteers, contact each suggested candidate to verify if s/he is willing and able to serve, and provide a ballot for the slate of officers and Senator positions. The election will be held prior to the end of the fiscal year according to the timeline established by the Nominating and Recognition Committee and will be announced to the staff at large via email. Election of officers and Senators shall be by majority vote of the staff at large.

Section 4: Terms of Office

- All officers (Chair, Past Chair, Chair-Elect, Treasurer, Secretary, Archivist, and Parliamentarian) shall serve one-year terms.
- Senators shall serve two-year terms staggered so that six seats are elected each year.
- Elections will be held annually to fill expired terms of the Staff Senate. Officers and Senators can be elected for a maximum of two consecutive terms per elected office. The terms of office for each position shall begin on July 1st following their election and will end on June 30th at the end of their term. If an individual is named to serve an unexpired term vacated by another member, that individual will serve the unexpired term and be eligible for re-election, for a maximum of two consecutive full terms.
- If it is in the best interest of the Staff Senate, an officer or Senator can be elected for more than two consecutive terms with a majority vote of the Executive Committee.

Section 5: Vacancies

A vacancy shall be filled within a reasonable timeframe as determined by the Executive Committee. The eligible individual with the next highest number of votes from the most recent election, and from the category in which the vacancy occurred, shall fill the vacancy. If a vacancy in a work group occurs with no remaining eligible nominees, a nominee at-large may be chosen by a simple majority vote. If a vacancy is unable to be filled, the position will remain vacant until the next election.

If an elected Staff Senate member is promoted to a non-eligible position, they can no longer serve, and the vacancy will be filled as outlined above.

Section 6: Removal of Office

During an elected term, a member relinquishes their Staff Senate office upon leaving the employment of the University, moving to an ineligible position, or being removed from the office.

Any elected member can be removed from office for nonperformance of officer duties. Removal will be effective upon a 2/3 (two-thirds) vote conducted via secret ballot. Possible causes of

removal shall include, but not be limited to: failure to meet eligibility requirements or failure to adequately perform officer duties. (Non-attendance, failure to consistently report activities of the Staff Senate to the constituents, or unavailability of the member to constituents are examples of failure to perform office duties.)

ARTICLE 5: MEETINGS

The Staff Senate meeting schedule will be decided and approved by vote of the Staff Senate annually and distributed via email to the staff at large and posted on the Staff Senate webpage. Additional meetings will be held at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE 6: COMMITTEES

Section 1: Standing Committees

- **Executive Committee:** The Executive Committee consists of the Staff Senate Officers (Chair, Chair-Elect, Past Chair, Archivist, Treasurer, Secretary, and Parliamentarian) and shall direct Staff Senate discussions of all matters duly brought before it, assist in implementation of legislation adopted by the Staff Senate, and report any action taken in response to Staff Senate decisions. The Executive Committee will invite speakers to address the Staff Senate on issues relating to the staff. The Executive Committee shall oversee all budgetary matters for the Staff Senate. Periodically, this committee will communicate with the staff regarding the status of the budget and shall attempt to establish a consensus on funding needs and priorities of the staff. The Executive Committee shall also meet with the Vice President for Business Affairs and the University President on a regular basis.
- **University Affairs Committee:** The University Affairs Committee is responsible for matters which directly affect the well-being of staff at the institution including but not limited to salary, insurance, professional development, and travel for University-related business. The committee shall review current and proposed benefit changes and personnel policies and make recommendations for proposed changes as they affect staff employees. The University Affairs Committee shall serve as a conduit for staff to bring any concerns or complaints to the Staff Senate and have them addressed. The committee will also work to establish effective communication between staff and the student body, specifically through the Student Government Association, and between staff and faculty, specifically through the Faculty Senate. The University Affairs Committee will consist of at least seven members appointed by the Committee on Committees.
- **Committee on Committees:** The Committee on Committees shall solicit volunteers/identify members to appoint to Staff Senate committees and to University committees subject to approval of the Staff Senate. The Committee on Committees shall develop a transparent and inclusionary but efficient process for staff members to be selected to Staff Senate committees and University committees and councils and shall ensure diversity and equal representation of Exempt/Non-Exempt staff across the institution. The Committee on Committees will consist of seven members: the Past Chair and at least six other members appointed by volunteer or the Committee on Committees.
- **Nominating and Recognition Committee:** The Nominating and Recognition Committee will organize and administer all Staff Senate officer and Senator elections and will be responsible for ensuring the fairness of elections and representation from both Exempt and Non-Exempt categories of staff across the institution. The Nominating and Recognition Committee will also oversee the nomination and selection process for the annual Staff Senate Outstanding Service Awards, monthly staff awards, and any other staff recognition efforts

conducted by the Staff Senate. The Nominating and Recognition Committee will consist of at least seven members appointed by the Committee on Committees.

Section 2: Ad Hoc Committees

Ad hoc committees shall be appointed as needed by the Staff Senate Chair.

Section 3: Committee Membership Exceptions

Staff members not elected to the Staff Senate may volunteer to serve on Staff Senate committees with the approval of the Committee on Committees.

Section 4: Committee Chairs

Committee Chairs will be selected from members of each committee on a volunteer basis and will be selected from the currently elected Officers and Senators unless otherwise approved by the Committee on Committees.

ARTICLE 7: VOTING

Section 1: Quorum

Quorum for all Staff Senate and committee meetings shall require half of the voting membership plus one (1).

Section 2: Voting Methods

Votes on resolutions and similar items will be conducted by roll call. Votes regarding removal of office will be conducted by secret ballot. Procedural votes (e.g., adjournment) will be conducted by non-roll call voice vote. For all other actions, voting method will be at the discretion of the Staff Senate Chair or Committee Chair. The Chair shall abstain from voting or debating in favor or against a motion unless the vote would create or break a tie.

No votes on any actions, determinations, resolutions, or other motions shall be permitted unless the item has been placed on the agenda in a timely manner and communicated to the University Staff at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

ARTICLE 8: SHARED GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNICATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

Two primary forms of communication between the President and the staff will be utilized in order to further the issue of shared governance:

Executive Committee Meetings:

The Staff Senate Executive Committee shall meet periodically with the President and Vice President of Business Affairs to develop a line of communication between the Staff Senate and the administration. The Chair of the Staff Senate and President will establish a time and place for the meeting (approximately once a month) to discuss concerns of the Senate directly with the President. The Chair of the Staff Senate will provide the President and Vice President of Business Affairs an agenda of items to be discussed and delivered to the President one week in advance of the scheduled meeting to provide the President sufficient time to prepare for the meeting. The Executive Committee will provide a report to the Staff Senate at the next Senate meeting.

Shared Governance Forums:

The purpose of these meetings is to establish lines of communication among the administration, faculty, and staff of the University and to share information about specific areas of concern in order to resolve specific issues. While concrete solutions may not be possible in the forum, solutions to

the issues should be sought and action (where and when possible) be implemented at the earliest possible time.

Three forums will be held each fall and spring semester. The President, the Faculty Senate Chair, and the Staff Senate will each determine the topic of one forum each semester. For the staff-led forum, the Staff Senate Chair will arrange the meeting details (date, time, place) and agenda with the President and the Staff Senate, and all staff as well as faculty will be notified and invited to attend the meetings.

The goal of these forums is to ensure that all parties are:

1. Being informed on issues that confront higher education and the institution;
2. Acting within time constraints that are imposed by external agencies and influences, sometimes with little or no notice;
3. Sharing appropriate information and providing feedback in a reasonable amount of time;
4. Recognizing the specific goals and needs of the institution, and being accountable to the constituencies represented; and
5. Aware of the roles played by various units and individuals in decision making and administration.

Given the dynamic nature of institutional governance, it is understood

1. That there may be occasions when institutional leaders must act in the best interest of the institution on major issues affecting the institutional constituencies without full benefit of the shared governance process. In such cases the representative bodies shall be informed in a reasonable amount of time and have an opportunity to comment on the issues.
2. That administrators shall inform relevant constituencies in a reasonable amount of time if they choose to disregard, in whole or in part, the advice and recommendation of constituencies, and they should provide the reasons for their decision. In these cases, the shared governance body may, if it so chooses, present a written statement of its position and/or any objections to the decision as part of the institution's or unit's record on the issue.
3. Faculty and staff who do not hold administrative appointments, and all students may express their opinions freely on all shared governance matters without retaliation. Administrators, including faculty holding administrative appointments, may also express their opinions freely during policy discussions, without retaliation, but once a decision is determined, all stakeholders are expected to implement policy as determined by the institutional leadership.

Shared governance requires a commitment of resources and time from the University. The University shall provide a proper level of resources, as determined by the President, to faculty, staff, and students to allow them to carry out their shared governance responsibilities effectively.

While participation in governance by faculty, staff, and students is necessary and important for the wellbeing of the university, the final responsibility for decision-making rests with the institutional President, the Regional University System of Oklahoma Board of Regents, and/or the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education who are ultimately held accountable by the public and its elected leaders.

ARTICLE 9: BYLAWS, AMENDMENTS, RATIFICATION

- The Staff Senate shall be the sole judge of its own rules and bylaws.
- Ratification or amendment of the bylaws shall be accomplished by a 2/3 (two-thirds) vote of the Staff Senate.
- Robert's Rules of Order, the latest edition, shall govern the meetings of the Staff Senate.