

Fresno State Academic Senate

A guide to general principles and procedures

Welcome to the formal system for shared governance on our campus.

The Academic Senate represents the Fresno State faculty.

- Under the university's constitution ([APM 127](#)), the Academic Senate is empowered to formulate, review, revise, and adopt all policies regarding the university's educational mission, including matters related to curriculum, academic personnel, and the institution's budget. These collectively form the [Academic Policy Manual \(APM\)](#).
- The Senate provides the means for the faculty to participate in a collegial form of governance, which is based on historic academic traditions and recognized by California law, Title 5 of the Education Code, as well as HEERA (Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act).
- *Senate Website:* <http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/senate/>

How is the Senate organized?

- New senators start their three-year term at the last meeting in April after their election. The Senate meets during academic terms.
- Our Academic Senate includes an elected senator (or two, depending on size) from each department, three university-wide senators, and two statewide senators, as well as two student representatives from ASI, a staff representative, and the chair and vice-chair of the Council of Chairs. Several administrators either serve as non-voting ex-officio members or attend Senate meetings regularly to hear the voice of the faculty.
- The Senate elects a chair and vice-chair from the body of elected senators, both of whom serve two-year terms.
- The Senate also elects the members of an Executive Committee, which meets regularly with the university administration, serving as the primary liaison between faculty and administration. They are sometimes empowered to act on behalf of the entire Senate, especially in the summer when senators are off-contract.
- In addition, the Senate oversees the election of faculty members (who do not need to be senators) to serve on standing senate committees and subcommittees (Academic Policy, Curriculum, Personnel, etc.) that specialize in certain aspects of policy. Several of these committees have subcommittees as well.
<https://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/senate/committees/>
- *Senate Bylaws:* <http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/facultyaffairs/documents/apm/129.pdf>

The Senate office is located on the third floor of the library.

- We have one full-time staff member (Venita Baker, venitab@csufresno.edu) who serves as the main point of contact for faculty and staff.

What do Senators do?

- Most senators are elected by their departments and are responsible for representing their department colleagues. They should solicit the opinions of their colleagues on issues before voting on their behalf. University-wide and state-wide senators represent the Academic Assembly (all faculty) or the university as a whole.
- Senators are expected to attend all Senate meetings (usually twice monthly on Mondays 4-5:15pm). The meeting schedule is provided on the Senate Website: <http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/senate/> If they cannot attend a particular meeting, they need to notify the Senate office. Senators are expected to review documents before each meeting in order to prepare. (<http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/senate/senate-documents/index.html>)
- Meetings of the Academic Senate consist primarily of consideration of 1) policy and 2) resolutions. Senators discuss, debate, and vote on proposed policies and resolutions. In addition, the meetings of the Senate provide a venue for important communications and announcements from administration to the faculty.
- After meetings, senators should make regular reports to their department colleagues about the business of the Senate, and pass on announcements made to the body.
- Any senator can bring business (either a policy proposal or a resolution) before the Senate at what is referred to as “New Business” on the Senate’s agenda.

What type of business does the Senate conduct?

- Policy is everything contained in the APM, the Academic Policy Manual. <http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/facultyaffairs/policies/apm/index.html> Everything in the APM has been recommended by the Academic Senate, and then approved by the campus President. This is the main document governing the operation of the educational mission of the campus.
- Resolutions are position statements and serve as a way to formally express an opinion about something other than a campus policy. Previous resolutions are cataloged on the Senate website: <http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/senate/resolutions/index.html>

How does business get onto the Senate agenda?

- Most business comes to the Senate through senate committees, who review policies and make proposals when changes are deemed necessary.

- In addition, any senator may ask for something to be added to the bottom of the agenda without going through committees first. This is unusual, and is typically done to request consideration of a resolution.
- Policy proposals must include a redline version of the existing policy, as well as a memo explaining why the change is requested. The Executive Committee reviews all potential business, and the Senate Chair constructs the agenda.

How do meetings of the Senate operate?

Meetings of the Senate are open meetings; anyone can attend. The meetings are run strictly according to Robert's Rules of Order. The formality of this is designed to verify that all voices are heard, but none dominate. A few things you need to know:

- Agendas often include a consent calendar. This is for items deemed by the Executive Committee to be non-controversial. Any single senator can ask that an item be removed from the consent calendar and placed on the agenda. Otherwise, it will be considered "approved" without discussion or a formal vote.
- Communications and Announcements precede other senate business. This is when the President, Provost, or other administrators make announcements to the faculty and are available to answer questions from the faculty. Occasionally, the Senate Chair will invite other members of the campus community to report on a special issue at this time.
- Only Senators may speak on the floor of the Senate. Guests can listen, but they cannot vote, and they cannot speak. A senator may request that the body allow a guest to speak on the floor of the Senate, and the body will vote on that request.
- When speaking to the Senate, the senator must begin by identifying themselves by name and the unit they represent.
- Every item of business gets two "readings" on the floor of the Senate. The first time is a chance for the proposal to have an initial hearing. Usually, the chair of the committee that proposed the policy will be on hand to explain and answer initial questions that arose when senators read the proposal before the meeting. Then Senators are expected to do any additional background research necessary and/or consult with their departmental colleagues before the second reading at the next meeting. At the second reading, the group may vote on the policy issue. For the vote to happen, one senator must make a motion to do so (e.g., "I move to approve the proposed changes to APM xxx"), and a second senator must second that motion (e.g., "I second."). At that point, discussion is allowed specifically about the motion. Discussion typically takes the form of statements such as "I speak in favor of this proposal because..." or "I speak against this proposal because..." The Academic Chair identifies the order of speakers. When discussion is complete, the chair calls for the vote, and the proposal is approved or rejected. If accepted, the revision is forwarded to the President, and only becomes policy if it receives the approval of the President.
- Sometimes during discussion of a proposal, a senator makes a suggestion to clarify or improve the policy proposal, usually by changing a word or inserting a clause. If the person representing the proposal (usually the chair of the committee that made the proposal) agrees and the proposed change is minor, it is considered a "friendly amendment" and the document can be

revised on the floor of the Senate. If the representative does not agree, then the proposed amendment must be moved and seconded, then discussed, and voted upon. While this is in progress, only the amendment is open for discussion. No new issues may be raised until after the vote on the amendment has been conducted.

- When a policy is on the floor of the Senate, senators may raise any issue relevant to the policy, not just the aspects of the policy relevant to the proposed changes. If a senator wishes to make an additional revision, that suggestion must be made in writing with specific proposed language. This is typically introduced formally at the beginning of the second reading, but the specific language of the proposal should be sent to the chair and vice-chair before the meeting, if at all possible, to keep things running smoothly. It requires a motion and a second before discussion may begin.
- A few additional motions that are likely to arise:
 - Call the Question/Move the Previous Question: This ends discussion, even if others are waiting to speak, and requires a vote on the motion. Calling the question must be voted on, and requires two-thirds of senators to pass.
 - Waive Second Reading: This allows a vote to occur after a first reading. Only used for items that are time-sensitive. Must be voted on.
 - Extend the Meeting: When an issue is close to being resolved, but the meeting time is close, a senator may ask for a 15-minute extension. Must be voted on.
- The following is a brief overview of Parliamentary Procedures: Robert's Rules "Cheat Sheet"