Background regarding the creation of the Academic Senate at Towson University

In response to concerns about the balance of shared governance here at TU, the University Senate moved in Spring 2018 to form a taskforce to examine the shape of shared governance at Towson and to make recommendations for improving its balance. This resolution emerged from a general concern about the effectiveness and balance of shared governance at Towson, dissatisfaction coming from faculty, students, and staff. On the part of the students and staff, many felt that the University Senate (which is what we currently have at Towson) had an unequal proportion of faculty representatives to staff or student representatives—a proportion not really reflective of a true “university” senate. Many faculty, for their part, were accustomed to view the University Senate as, for practical purposes, a faculty senate—which technically it wasn’t. As the administration supported and put into practice with increasing frequency a view of the senate as a university-wide and university-representative governing body, this left the faculty without a dedicated voice in shared governance comparable to TUSC (Towson University Staff Council) or the SGA or SGA Senate. (The TU-Faculty Association/AAUP is an advocacy body for faculty, and as such must do its good work from the margins of TU’s regular system of shared governance.) So from faculty, student, and staff perspectives, though perhaps for different reasons, there was agreement that some changes needed to happen to the structure of shared governance at TU. That taskforce, which was comprised of faculty, students, and staff, examined the problem and shared its report and recommendations with the University Senate at its March 6, 2017 meeting. The Senate voted overwhelmingly in favor of accepting those recommendations, which suggested exploring the creation of a faculty senate and creating a smaller University Steering Committee that would include a more balanced number of faculty, staff, and students—in lieu of the current University Senate structure.

The University Senate then formed a small subcommittee that met several times over the summer of 2017 to create a draft of a constitution for a faculty senate; this was followed by a larger subcommittee, with representatives from each of the colleges and the library, that met several times to review, edit, and produce multiple revisions of that draft. This careful process culminated in a draft constitution for a faculty senate (called the Academic Senate to reflect the central role of the academic enterprise in the university) that was distributed, in paper and electronic form, to the University Senate at its December 18, 2017, meeting and to the rest of the TU full-time faculty just after that meeting. Integrating feedback from across the campus community, and after more review and editing, the subcommittee ultimately produced a final draft of a Constitution for the Academic Senate. At its November 5, 2018 meeting, the University Senate voted to approve the final draft of the Academic Senate Constitution (by a vote of 18-1-0) and, in doing so, to support the reorganization of shared governance by creating the Academic Senate in the place of the University Senate. The ultimate step in this process was a vote by the faculty electorate. The vote, completed on 3/8/2019, was overwhelmingly in support of this change. The Academic Senate was thereby created to take the place of the University Senate, beginning with the Fall semester of 2019.