EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: PROPOSED ACADEMIC SENATE CONSTITUTION

Key points of difference between University Senate and its Constitution and the proposed Academic Senate and its Constitution

1. The current University Senate is out of compliance with USM policy, as it is neither a Faculty Senate nor a more equally representative university senate.

The current body includes as voting members: 21 T/TT faculty members (one of whom is the AAUP president), one contingent faculty representative (a lecturer), six student members (5 undergrad and one grad) and one staff/TUSC representative. The Academic Senate would be a faculty senate; all voting members would be from the academic division of the university. The proposed Academic Senate would have 30 voting members: 29 voting faculty and one voting Dean. Unlike the current Senate structure, those eligible to vote upon Senate reps and run for the office includes all full-time faculty (T/TT and lecturers, clinical, etc.).

- In the current University Senate, neither the TUSC representative or the contingent faculty rep are actually written into the constitution, because the vote required to amend the current constitution is at this point impossible to achieve.
- The draft proposes that the faculty electorate shall be all full-time faculty.
- Each college consisting of academic departments shall elect three senators. The senators elected by colleges shall be drawn from the college faculty electorate, which shall be interpreted as being full-time faculty members on a regular teaching appointment in an academic program or department represented by the college. The senators elected by colleges must be members of different programs within the college.
- The professional librarians shall elect one Senator from among the full-time Faculty of the Library.
- Six senators shall be elected at large by and from the faculty electorate, which shall be interpreted as including the professional librarians.
- Two adjunct representatives shall be elected to three-year terms by a vote open only to adjunct faculty. Adjuncts must be currently employed in order to run for election or serve on the Academic Senate. In the event that the employment status of an adjunct representative on the Academic Senate changes, that representative shall be replaced by the adjunct who received the next highest number of votes in the relevant election. Elections for these positions shall be facilitated by the Provost’s office and overseen by the TU-AAUP. The adjunct representatives shall receive compensation for this service, per USM policy.
- A representative or alternate representative elected annually by members of TURFA (Towson University Retired Faculty Association) shall serve as a senator in a voting capacity.
- The President of the TU-AAUP shall serve as a senator in an ex officio voting capacity.
- One College Dean representative (chosen by the Provost’s and Dean’s Council) shall serve as a senator in an ex officio voting capacity.
- The voting members of the Senate, as listed above, will thus total 30 members.
- The Provost and Vice Provost shall be ex-officio and non-voting members of the Academic Senate and should regularly attend meetings of the Academic Senate and its Executive Committee.
• The President of the University, the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Honors College Faculty Director (or a designee), the chair of TUSC (or a designee), the SGA president and vice president (or their designees), and the GSA president (or a designated representative of GSA) shall be exofficio and non-voting members of the Academic Senate, and are encouraged but not required to attend.

2. By forming an Academic Senate whose voting members are only faculty (i.e., by creating a faculty senate), the draft constitution aims to strengthen the faculty voice in university decision-making and to focalize the responsibilities of faculty in the process of shared governance at TU.

3. The Academic Senate constitution proposes regular meetings between the Academic Senate executive committee and the executive committees of TUSC and the SGA. The intent of this change is to foster communication and collaboration between these three bodies of shared governance and the communities they represent. This should improve the function and strength of shared governance in all divisions of the university.

4. In the proposed Academic Senate, officers serve two-year terms and are restricted to three consecutive two-year terms in any one office of the Senate. In the current University Senate, officers of the Senate serve one-year terms and there is no limit on terms of officers of the Senate.

5. The Academic Senate constitution charts out clear lines of communication between Senate and Councils, sketching out the basic purviews of each. The current University Senate constitution does not clearly delineate the relation between the Senate and College Councils or other bodies of shared governance at TU.

6. In general, the proposed constitution cleans up and/or updates numerous outdated and inaccurate elements in the old constitution, including some rules related to the membership, election of officers, and voting processes for changing the constitution or by-laws.

• This is because the process to amend the current University Senate constitution requires the two thirds of the faculty [including all T/TT, lecturers, clinical, and adjunct faculty] must vote in order for the election to be valid. In the Academic Senate constitution, the process to amend the constitution requires a majority vote of all faculty (regular and contingent) who vote, provided a majority of all full-time faculty have voted. This would make the constitution easier, while still requiring the engagement of a significant number of faculty.

• Most University Senate committees remain substantially unchanged, although a few have been slightly revised in response to a Senate committee review process that directly preceded the creation of this proposal. The responsibilities of the Academic Standards Committee and Student Affairs Committee have been revised slightly to increase coherence and effectiveness. The Faculty Salary Committee description has
been revised slightly to encourage better collaboration with and support from the Provost’s Budget Office.