

Voting recommendations—February 5, 2018

What to vote on. A question will be placed for a vote on the agenda of a general faculty meeting if and only if:

1. The stated rules require it; or
2. The EVP or EC puts it on the agenda; or
3. At least 4 members of the PPC vote to put it on the agenda; or
4. At least 40 members of the faculty petition to put it on the agenda, and the question is in the purview of the FAS, including hortatory resolutions. The Executive Vice President must receive this petition at least 7 days before the scheduled start of the meeting at which the matter is to be voted on (so for instance, for a meeting scheduled at noon on a Wednesday, the petition would be due at noon on the Wednesday before the meeting).

Faculty members may also make substantive motions from the floor. If a faculty member makes a substantive motion from the floor, the faculty should debate but postpone voting until it can be advertised. Members of the faculty may also offer amendments from the floor on matters on which a vote is to be taken, but Roberts Rules limits the type of amendments that are in order.

In exercising its prerogatives under 3, the PPC usually should put items on the agenda for voting whenever it thinks that the University needs faculty input to produce a better policy/decision.

How to vote. Robert's Rules of Order has a detailed discussion of voting methods, including open and secret ballots, and procedures for deciding which to use. Since the stated rules already say that faculty meetings "shall be governed by the rules of order commonly observed by deliberative assemblies in this country," and Robert's is the probably the most commonly used, the stated rules already permit Robert's to be used for this purpose.

Here is a link to the voting section of Robert's online: <http://www.rulesonline.com/rror-08.htm>

Robert's Rules, however, do not allow absentee voting unless a specific exception is made in the bylaws (or stated rules). (Cushing's and Jefferson's are similar on this point.) The current stated rules provide for absentee voting only in the case of stated rule changes (and PPC election). We recommend that the next time a stated rule revision is done, it include a provision for wider use of absentee electronic voting.

Specifically, absentee electronic voting should be allowed if and only if: the PPC asks for it, or a petition of 40 members of the faculty asks for it. The Executive Vice President or the chair of the PPC must receive this petition before the scheduled start of the meeting in which voting is scheduled to take place. In either case, the PPC sets the time and form of the absentee electronic vote. Absentee electronic voting cannot begin on a matter until it has been discussed at one or more faculty meetings. Absentee electronic voting is confidential. The motion passes if and only if the number of affirmative votes cast is greater than the number of negative votes cast.

The PPC should use absentee electronic voting for matters of the highest importance. It is recommended that absentee electronic voting be used for (a) major changes in the governance of A&S, (b) serious and long-lasting policies that affect a large number of faculty members, and (c) matters of similar gravity and importance.

How many times to vote. The PPC should generally plan to bring an item up for discussion at the meeting before the meeting in which it will be voted on. However, there may be exceptions to this practice. When the PPC wants to vote on an item at the same meeting in which it is introduced, it should advertise its intention in the notice of the meeting. At the meeting, when the discussion has concluded, a member of the PPC should move the “previous question.” Under Robert’s Rules, ‘previous question’ is a term of art. This motion is not debatable and requires a 2/3 vote. If it passes, the faculty votes on the main motion. If it fails, the debate continues, but then can be postponed to the next meeting by a majority vote. This procedure effectively allows an item to be voted on in one meeting, but allows one-third of the faculty to force the vote to the next meeting.