Proposed Changes to the Faculty Senate Charter

March 2021

The proposed changes to the Faculty Senate Charter are summarized below in two ways: (1) a general overview of the changes, and (2) a summary of the changes by Charter section. Following this summary are two versions of the Charter. The first is the draft of the Charter should the proposed amendments be accepted. The second is the track-changes version of the current Charter, where new text is in RED and deletions are in RED STRIKETHROUGH (to include text moved from other locations in the document).

General Overview

1. Designated administrators as non-voting members, as previously approved by the Faculty Senate.

2. Included the Chair of the Faculty at any Non-U.S. Mason Campus as a new non-voting ex officio member in order to accommodate faculty at the Korea campus and any future non-U.S. campus.

3. Simplified the method of specifying the number of Senators by requiring only a change in Faculty Senate by-laws rather than a change in the Charter.

4. Refined the designation of units represented in the Senate as collegiate and “independent academic units”. The IAU will include instructional faculty who do not have a collegiate primary affiliation, but who otherwise are members of the General Faculty and should be represented in the Senate.

5. Redefined the method of calculating Senate seat apportionment now that there are no longer small institutes or other entities that were previously pooled and represented by one Senator.

6. Refined the language describing the conduct of General Faculty meetings, balloting, and resolution of disputes.

7. Several instances of outdated language were deleted.
Summary of Faculty Senate Charter Changes by Section

I. Membership of the Faculty Senate

A. Updating non-voting ex officio members to current titles held at the university and adding the Chair of the faculty at any non-U.S. Mason Campus. Redefines designation of units to include “independent academic units”. The IAU will include instructional faculty who do not have a collegiate primary affiliation but are members of the General Faculty and should be represented in the Senate.

B. Apportionment

Number of Senators elected will be specified in the bylaws of the Senate at 51 seats. The current charter states any changes made to apportionment must be approved by a meeting of 10% of the full faculty. The number of Senate seats (51) is modeled from our current seats plus the one seat added in Fall of 2021. Allocations are determined by full and part-time FTE divided by the number of seats.

C. Qualifications of Elected Senators

Listing eligible faculty in our current university language as full-time status as instructional tenured, tenure track or term appointment.

II. Responsibilities of the Faculty Senate

A.3. Specifics for the regular and special meetings of the faculty may be called by the President as the presiding officer. The use of Robert’s Rules of Order during General Faculty meetings has been added to the charter.

3. The Special meeting language has been clarified to include public posting of minutes as previously this had been mailing information.

4. Charter Changes: Notice of the special meeting shall be accompanied by a copy of the proposed changes 5 instructional (rather than working) days before the called meeting.

   c. Amendments to the Senate Charter shall take effect upon approval by the Board of Visitors unless a later effective date is contained therein.

III. This section has been deleted from the current document and the changes have been added to section II regarding when changes to the Charter will be implemented, and the deletion of reporting of Senate election results as changes will now be made through the Faculty Senate Bylaws, should all changes be approved at the General Faculty Meeting March 17, 2021.
CHARTER OF THE FACULTY SENATE

Adopted by the General Faculty of George Mason University on April 3, 1974,
amended September 28, 2000, XXX XX, 2021,
and as it may be subsequently amended by the General Faculty.

I. Membership of the Faculty Senate

A. Members

Non-voting ex officio members:
President of the University
Provost of the University
The Deans of the Colleges and Schools
Dean of the University Libraries
Chair of the Faculty at any Non-U.S. Mason Campus

Voting members:

Faculty Members Elected from the Collegiate and Independent Academic Units

B. Apportionment of Elected Senators

The number of elected Senators will be specified in the bylaws of the Faculty Senate. Until and
unless the Faculty Senate bylaws are amended, the number of elected Senators will be 51.
Elected Senator seats shall be apportioned according to the principle of proportionality, based on
the full-time equivalent size of the instructional faculty of each collegiate and independent
academic unit. Instructional faculty refers to full time and part time faculty with support from
appropriated funds.

I. The threshold size for any unit to be allocated a Senate seat according to proportionality is set
at the total University instructional FTE divided by the maximum number of elected Senators as
stated in the Faculty Senate bylaws. In the instance that this ratio is not an integer it will be
rounded up to obtain the threshold size. If all units meet or exceed the threshold size, then Senate
seats are apportioned based on the total University instructional FTE. If any unit does not equal
or exceed the threshold size, it will be allocated one Senate seat. The remaining Senate seats will
be allocated based on the total instructional FTE of those units that equal or exceed the threshold
size.
2. No collegiate or independent academic unit will hold more than half of the elected Senate seats. In the event that one unit exceeds 50% of the total University instructional FTE, then Senate seats will be allocated to that unit so as not to exceed one half of the total seats. The threshold size will be calculated using the total FTE of the other units divided by the number of remaining unallocated seats.

3. Should the number of allocated seats exceed the number of elected seats by 1 because of rounding in the calculations, then the number of elected Senate seats shall increase by one for that year’s allocation.

By March 1st of each academic year, the Senate Committee on Organization and Operations shall establish the representation from each unit on the basis of data provided by the Administration. The data should be the latest and most complete available at that time. Elections shall follow within each unit as soon as possible, to conclude before the end of the academic year.

C. Qualifications of Elected Senators

Elected Senators shall be members of the constituent Faculties they represent. A faculty member is eligible to serve on the Faculty Senate if the faculty member holds

1. A full-time instructional tenured, tenure-track, or term appointment with at least one year's full-time service at George Mason University; or

2. A part-time instructional appointment with at least one academic year of continuous service, and completion of at least two Full Time Equivalents in appointments at George Mason University.

D. Election of Senators

Each collegiate or independent academic unit shall decide upon the method of electing its representatives, with the stipulation that they be elected for staggered terms, the maximum to be three years.

II. Responsibilities of the Faculty Senate

A. As Representative of the General Faculty

1. The Senate shall have the fundamental general responsibility to speak and act for the General Faculty on matters affecting the University as a whole.

2. The Senate, on behalf of the General Faculty, shall have the particular responsibility to formulate proposals on those matters affecting the welfare of the University as a whole. In the best traditions of American universities, these recommendations constitute the primary advice to the administration.
3. Regular and special meetings of the General Faculty may be called by the President, who serves as the presiding officer. All members of the General Faculty have voting rights on matters that pertain to the General Faculty. All members of the University community may attend meetings of the General Faculty and participate in the debate of matters that come before it. General Faculty meetings shall be conducted according to the current edition of “Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised” except as the rules and procedures prescribed therein have been modified by adoption of bylaws or standing rules. The General Faculty may meet electronically, provided the technology used allows all members to hear each other simultaneously, seek recognition, vote, and exercise other rights.

3. In extraordinary circumstances, the General Faculty may, by the following procedure, reverse specific decisions of the Senate:

a. The President shall call a special meeting of the General Faculty to consider reversal of a specific decision of the Senate within ten working days of receiving a petition to do so signed by at least 10% of the voting members of the General Faculty, as specified in the Faculty Handbook. To be valid, a petition to reverse a specific decision must be submitted no later than two weeks after the public posting of minutes reporting the Senate action.

b. No vote on the issue shall occur at the meeting. Rather, the meeting shall determine whether or not the General Faculty should subsequently vote on the issue by mail ballot (which may be electronic).

c. If the meeting approves a mail ballot, it shall be distributed within five instructional days of the meeting.

d. The ballots shall be tallied and the results shared with the General Faculty within five instructional days after their distribution. To pass, the motion to reverse a decision of the Senate must be approved by a majority of those eligible to vote.

4. The General Faculty may amend the Senate Charter during either a General Faculty meeting or a special meeting of the General Faculty convened for the purpose of amending the Senate Charter.

a. The President shall call a special meeting of the General Faculty to consider amendments to the Senate Charter within ten instructional days of receiving a petition to do so signed by at least 10% of the voting members of the faculty or after receiving proposals approved by the Senate or the Provost.

i. Notice of the special meeting shall be accompanied by a copy of the proposed changes. Both should be received at least 5 instructional days before the called meeting.

ii. A quorum for the called meeting shall be 10% of the voting faculty. Debate at the meeting shall be on the proposed changes. To pass, the proposed changes must be approved by a majority of the voting faculty who are present and voting.
b. Amendments to the Senate Charter that have been approved by the General Faculty must be presented by the President to the Board of Visitors for their approval.

c. Amendments to the Senate Charter shall take effect upon approval by the Board of Visitors unless a later effective date is contained therein.

5. The authority of the Senate to make recommendations to the administration on behalf of the General Faculty shall not extend over the internal affairs of any single collegiate or independent academic unit except as they affect the interest of the University as a whole or the interest of other units.

a. If a disagreement arises between the Senate, acting for the General Faculty, and the faculty governance bodies of one or more collegiate units over the question of which body properly exercises authority on a specific issue, the President shall decide by assigning the contested issue to one or another body.

b. If the Senate, acting for the General Faculty, takes an action which a collegiate faculty governance body believes violates the legitimate interests of that collegiate unit, the President shall decide whether or not such a violation has occurred.

B. As Advisor to the President

On matters affecting the entire faculty and transcending collegiate unit boundaries, the Senate shall be the primary faculty representative in consultation with the central administration and the President. The Senate and the administration recognize that consultation in such matters implies an obligation on the part of each to engage in regular communication. After due consideration of the Senate's advice, the President will reach a final decision and communicate it to the Senate. If the decision differs from the Senate recommendation an explanation will be included in this communication.
CHARTER OF THE FACULTY SENATE

Adopted by the General Faculty of George Mason University on April 3, 1974
last amended on September 28, 2000, XXX XX, 2021
and as it may be subsequently amended by the General Faculty.

I. Membership of the Faculty Senate

A. Members

Non-voting ex officio members:
   President of the University
   Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
   of the University
   The Deans of the Colleges and Independent Schools
   One Independent Institute Director designated by the
   Directors of the Independent Institutes
   Director
   Dean of the University Libraries
   Fifty
   Chair of the Faculty at any Non-U.S. Mason Campus

Voting members:
   Faculty Members Elected from the Collegiate and Independent Academic
   Units

B. Apportionment of Elected Senators

The number of elected Senators representing each collegiate unit (College,
Independent Unit or Unit Pool)-will be specified in the bylaws of the Faculty Senate,
Until and unless the Faculty Senate bylaws are amended, the number of elected Senators
will be 51. Elected Senator seats shall be determined apportioned according to the
principle of proportionality, based on the full-time equivalent size of the instructional
faculty of each collegiate and independent academic unit. Instructional faculty refers to
full time and part time faculty with support from appropriated funds. Instructional
Faculty of each Collegiate Unit or Institute Pool on February 1st of each year,
with the following restrictions:
1. The threshold size for any collegiate unit to receive its own individual allocation of Senate seats is set at the total University instructional FTE divided by the maximum number of elected Senators as stated in the Faculty Senate bylaws. In the instance that this ratio is not an integer it will be rounded up to obtain the threshold size. If all units meet or exceed the threshold size, then Senate seats are apportioned based on the total University instructional FTE. If any unit does not meet the threshold, faculty refers to full-time and part-time faculty with support from appropriated funds. All independent Collegiate Units, Institutes, or Academic Units which do not individually meet or exceed the threshold size will be pooled into a single collegiate unit for the purposes of allocating Senate seats; it will be allocated one Senate seat. The remaining Senate seats will be allocated based on the total instructional FTE of those units that equal or exceed the threshold size.

2. No collegiate unit will have more than half of the elected Senate seats. In the event that one collegiate unit exceeds 50% of the total FTE, then the University instructional FTE, then Senate seats will be allocated to that unit so as not to exceed one half of the total seats. The threshold size will be calculated using the total FTE of the remaining collegiate units divided by the number of remaining unallocated seats.

3. Should the number of allocated seats exceed the number of elected seats by one because of rounding in the calculations, then the number of elected Senate seats shall increase by one for that year’s allocation.

By March 1st of each academic year, the Senate Committee on Organization and Operations shall establish the representation from each unit on the basis of the figures provided by the Administration. The data should be the latest and most complete available at that time. Elections shall follow by May 1st within each unit as soon as possible, to conclude before the end of the academic year.

The Directors of the Independent Institutes shall designate one of their number annually to serve on the Senate.

C. Qualifications of Elected Senators

Elected Senators shall be members of the constituent Faculties they represent. A faculty member is eligible to serve on the Faculty Senate if the faculty member holds

1. A full-time instructional tenured, tenure-track, or probationary term appointment in the rank of Instructor or above with at least one year’s full-time service at George Mason University; or
2. A restricted term full-time instructional appointment in the rank of Instructor or above with at least one academic year of continuous full-time service at George Mason University; or

2.2 A part-time instructional appointment in the rank of Adjunct Instructor or above, with at least one academic year of continuous service, and if the faculty member has completed as completion of at least two (2.0) Full Time Equivalents in appointments at George Mason University.

The minimal service qualifications may be waived for emerging collegiate units so that the full Faculty Senate membership quota may be met. Faculty members studying for a degree at the University are ineligible to serve on the Faculty Senate.

D. Election of Senators

Each collegiate or independent academic unit shall decide upon the method of electing its representatives, with the stipulation that they be elected for staggered terms, the maximum to be three years.

II. Responsibilities of the Faculty Senate

A. As Representative of the General Faculty

1. The Senate shall have the fundamental general responsibility to speak and act for the General Faculty on matters affecting the University as a whole.

2. The Senate, on behalf of the General Faculty, shall have the particular responsibility to formulate proposals on those matters affecting the welfare of the University as a whole. In the best traditions of American universities, these recommendations constitute the primary advice to the administration.

3. Regular and special meetings of the General Faculty may be called by the President, who serves as the presiding officer. All members of the General Faculty have voting rights on matters that pertain to the General Faculty. All members of the University community may attend meetings of the General Faculty and participate in the debate of matters that come before it. General Faculty meetings shall be conducted according to the current edition of “Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised” except as the rules and procedures prescribed therein have been modified by adoption of bylaws or standing rules. The General Faculty may meet electronically, provided the technology used allows all members to hear each other simultaneously, seek recognition, vote, and exercise other rights.
3. In extraordinary circumstances, the General Faculty may, by the following procedure, reverse specific decisions of the Senate:

   a. The President shall call a special meeting of the General Faculty to consider reversal of a specific decision of the Senate within ten working days of receiving a petition to do so signed by at least 10% of the voting members of the faculty. General Faculty, as specified in the Faculty Handbook. To be valid, a petition to reverse a specific decision must be submitted no later than two weeks after the distribution/public posting of minutes reporting the Senate action.

   b. No vote on the issue shall occur at the meeting. Rather, the meeting shall determine whether or not a mail ballot of all voting members of the General Faculty should subsequently vote on the issue. The meeting shall be subject to ordinary regulations governing quorum at meetings of the General Faculty, by mail ballot (which may be electronic).

   c. If the meeting approves a mail ballot, it shall be distributed within five working instructional days of the meeting.

   d. The ballots shall be counted and the results shared with the General Faculty within five working instructional days after their distribution. To pass, the motion to reverse a decision of the Senate must be approved by a majority of those eligible to vote.

4. The General Faculty may amend the Senate Charter by the following procedure:

   During either a General Faculty meeting or a special meeting of the General Faculty convened for the purpose of amending the Senate Charter,

   a. The President shall call a special meeting of the General Faculty to consider such amendments to the Senate Charter within ten working instructional days of receiving a petition to do so signed by at least 10% of the voting members of the faculty or after receiving proposals approved by the Senate or the Provost. Notice of the meeting shall be accompanied by copy of the proposed changes. Both should be received at least 5 working days before the called meeting.

   b. Notice of the special meeting shall be accompanied by a copy of the proposed changes. Both should be received at least 5 instructional days before the called meeting.
A quorum for the called meeting shall be 10% of the voting faculty. Debate at the meeting shall be on the proposed changes. To pass, the proposed changes must be approved by a majority of the voting faculty who are present and voting.

Amendments to the Senate Charter that have been passed approved by the General Faculty must be presented by the President to the Board of Visitors for their approval.

Amendments to the Senate Charter shall take effect upon approval by the Board of Visitors unless a later effective date is contained therein.

5. The authority of the Senate to make recommendations to the administration on behalf of the General Faculty shall not extend over the internal affairs of any single collegiate or independent academic unit except as they affect the interest of the University as a whole or the interest of other units.

a. If a disagreement arises between the Senate, acting for the General Faculty, and the governing faculty governance bodies of one or more single collegiate units over the question of which body properly exercises authority on a specific issue, the President shall decide by assigning the contested issue to one or another body.

b. If the Senate, acting for the General Faculty, takes an action which a Senator collegial faculty governance body believes violates the legitimate interests of the collegiate unit he represents, that Senator shall have the right to demand a second vote on the issue at the same meeting. The vote shall be taken immediately by secret ballot, except that means shall be used to discriminate among ballots cast by representatives of the various units. If two thirds of the total number of Senators elected to represent any collegiate unit oppose the action, the President shall be reversed, decide whether or not such a violation has occurred.

B. As Advisor to the President

On matters affecting the entire faculty and transcending collegiate unit boundaries, the Senate shall be the primary faculty representative in consultation with the central administration and the President. The Senate and the administration recognize that consultation in such matters implies an obligation on the part of each to engage in regular communication. After due consideration of the Senate's advice, the President will reach a final decision and communicate it to the Senate. If the decision differs from the Senate recommendation an explanation will be included in this communication.

III. Implementation
A. This Charter shall take effect and replace the previous charter on its approval by the General Faculty in a regular or special meeting following the guidelines in section II-A. 4.

B. Section I

1. This Charter shall be implemented according to the normal procedure described in Section I-B., using appropriate figures as of April 1, 1989.

2. Within ten working days after the Committee on Organization and Operations reports the representations from the several colleges, the colleges shall conduct elections in accordance with Sections I-C. and I-D.

3. When these elections have been completed, the newly elected Senators shall take office.

C. Section II

Section II shall take effect on the approval of this report by the General Faculty.