

Faculty Senate Committee Guidelines for Investigative Functions

Overview:

Investigative and inquiry functions of Faculty Senate committees are established within the Faculty Senate bylaws. According to Section One (1) of the bylaws, “The basic functions of the committees shall be to investigate and make recommendations on matters pertaining to the academic affairs of the University. They may do this on instruction from the Faculty Senate. These committees shall not operate in an administrative capacity. They shall report only to the Faculty Senate, and the report must be written”.

In executing the investigative functions of the committee, occasionally inquiries by the committee will need to be made of numerous entities within and outside of the University. These entities may include, but are not limited to, administration, university colleges, department heads, community stakeholders, legislative bodies, and other non-academic university departments. However, at times, the investigating committee may not be fully aware of previous inquiries by the faculty senate president, faculty senate executive committee, or other committees related to the subject. In an effort to avoid repetitive inquiries, general guidelines for investigative procedures need to be established.

At times, the topic of a committee investigation may be of a sensitive or confidential nature requiring a thoughtful approach to the inquiry. For example, the Faculty Senate President often has greater and scheduled access to many of the entities previously mentioned and previous knowledge of the subject of the investigation, including previous inquiries and responses. Therefore, in some cases, the inquiry may be best posed by the Faculty Senate President. The following guidelines have been established to assist committees in developing effective strategies needed to execute the investigative functions of the committee, but are in no way designed to limit the committee’s overall general function established within the Faculty Senate bylaws.

Committee Investigative Guidelines

1. In compliance with the Faculty Senate bylaws (Section 1), investigations should only proceed upon the instruction of the Faculty Senate. In the event that a committee discovers a need to investigate or seek information related to functions outlined in the bylaws for that committee, the committee chair should present the requested investigation before the full faculty senate. In an effort to maintain the efficiency of faculty senate meetings, the committee chair should request to be placed on the agenda prior to the full senate meeting when possible. Preferably, this agenda request should be made during the preceding Faculty Senate Executive Committee meeting. Should this agenda request process interfere with the timeliness of proceeding with an investigation, the committee

chair should contact the faculty senate president to explore ways to expedite senate approval.

2. While investigative inquiry related to the outlined purpose of the committee is vital to the functioning of that committee, the committee chair should notify the faculty senate executive committee of the planned investigative strategy prior to proceeding. The purpose of this notification will be to discover the president's or any executive committee member's prior knowledge of the subject and previous inquiries/responses, assist in developing effective investigative strategies, avoid duplicate inquiries from other faculty senate committees, and examine the need for the faculty senate president to serve as a liaison between the investigating committee and the entity from which information is being requested.
3. All faculty senate members should avoid the implication that they represent, speak for, or are acting on behalf of the senate in the commission of making requests prior to receiving approval or direction of the senate. Faculty Senate committees should also avoid such representations. As noted in the Faculty Senate bylaws, "The basic functions of the committees shall be to investigate and make recommendations on matters pertaining to the academic affairs of the University. They may do this on instruction from the Faculty Senate". While it is the right of any faculty member to make requests, voice opinions, or investigate any matter, there should be no implication that these actions represent (specifically written or expressed) the senate without prior approval or direction of the senate.
4. In an effort to assist the faculty senate president in responding to requests for clarification of any directed or otherwise approved committee inquiry, a copy of the written inquiry should be sent to the senate president. In the event that an investigative inquiry is made via email or other electronic communication, the president should be copied on the email/electronic communication. In the event that a faculty senate member chooses to make a request or inquiry from any entity, independent of their senate functions or without senate approval, the faculty senate president should not be copied on the electronic communication, as this may cause the request/action to be interpreted as a senate approved action.
5. While the above procedures are not a part of the faculty senate bylaws, they are intended to serve as a guide for committees in an effort to assist in the effective execution of the committee's outlined functions and the faculty senate's overall representation.