

# The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

## Proposal 24-14

(Voting Units: Full Senate)

### “Avoiding Conflicts of Interest on Senate Committees”

#### Background

According to the Constitution of the University Senate, “The Senate is the representative body for its constituents and speaks on their behalf on matters under the Senate’s jurisdiction” (Article III.A). Although the interests of Senate constituents and the interests of the University administration are often consonant with one another, in some instances, this may not be the case.

Hence, Section I.L “Special Constituency Issues” of the University Senate Bylaws recognizes and tries to control for potential conflict of interest:

3. Department Chairs, Associate Deans, and Assistant Deans, despite their additional status as Academic Faculty members, shall not serve as senators or alternates. They are considered constituents of the Senate.
4. The following individuals may be constituents of the Senate, but may not serve as senators or alternates:
  - a. Any Staff having significant influence (as determined by the Executive Committee) with any of the following: President; Provost, any Vice Provost; any Vice President; Board of Control.

Free and open discussion on Senate committees is essential to the healthy functioning of the committees, to the vitality of the University, and to meaningful shared governance. Hence, when making committee assignments, the President of the Senate must consider potential conflicts of interest; and individuals must do the same when requesting and accepting or rejecting committee assignments. Potential conflicts of interest should especially be considered when selecting committee chairs.

Conflicts of interest might arise, for example, with respect to what information committee members do and do not share with other members of the committee and with respect to whether and how committee members share the substance of committee deliberations with their supervisors and/or with others in their academic or administrative units.

Having accepted an assignment, committee members must recognize that their role on Senate committees is to represent—to the best of their ability—Senate constituents. Hence, committee members must be vigilant in recognizing and acknowledging potential conflicts of interest and in deciding—along with the other members of the committee—if and when to recuse themselves from meetings or discussions that might create such conflicts.

#### Proposed Amendment to the Bylaws of the University Senate

The Bylaws of the University Senate shall be amended by the addition of the following items to Section L.4:

b. Free and open discussion on Senate committees is essential to the healthy functioning of the committees, to the vitality of the University, and to meaningful shared governance. Hence, when making committee assignments, the President of the Senate must consider potential conflicts of interest; and individuals must do the same when requesting and accepting or rejecting committee assignments. Potential conflicts of interest should especially be considered when selecting committee chairs.

c. Conflicts of interest might arise, for example, with respect to what information committee members do and do not share with other members of the committee and with respect to whether and how committee members share the substance of committee deliberations with their supervisors and/or with others in their academic or administrative units.

d. Having accepted an assignment, committee members must recognize that their role on Senate committees is to represent—to the best of their ability—Senate constituents. Hence, committee members must be vigilant in recognizing and acknowledging potential conflicts of interest and in deciding—along with the other members of the committee—if and when to recuse themselves from meetings or discussions that might create such conflicts.

**Introduced to Senate: 05 March 2014**

**Approved by Senate: 26 March 2014**