

The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

Proposal 17-23

Senate Meeting Times

(Voting Units: All)

Submitted by: The Senate Ad-hoc Committee to Evaluate the Timing of Senate Meetings and The Professional Staff Policy Committee

I. Introduction

The Senate currently meets on alternating Wednesdays beginning at 5:30pm with no set ending time. This has created distinct participation barriers for some constituents and creates work-life balance concerns.

The [senate constitution](#) (Article IX - Meetings) does not specify a time, only that the senate should meet a minimum of once per term. The currently selected meeting schedule is thus tradition.

II. Rationale

Reasoning for the proposed change falls under several categories of concern as outlined below. Broadly speaking, these stem from a concern for equity and representation across constituents, including widening the pool of those willing and able to serve as senators.

Work-Life Balance

Many senators, constituents, and members of the public have commitments in the evening. Some of these commitments may have to do with their professional life (e.g. meetings of the Undergraduate Student Government); others may have to do with the desire to, for instance, have dinner with their families. In a 2019 survey, over 57% of respondents (n=255) reported that they would consider serving on the Senate if the meetings were held at a different time. When asked to select a time preference, only 35% (n=231) wanted to keep the current time and all other respondents selected an earlier start time.

A [2018 climate survey](#) identified work-life balance as a challenge for the MTU community as a whole: “Faculty respondents elaborated on statements regarding their perceptions of work-life balance at Michigan Technological University. Various themes emerged, including poor faculty-administration relations and overburdened by service expectations.” Staff also identified related problems: “One hundred fifty-six Staff respondents elaborated on their perceptions of the work-place climate at Michigan Technological University. Two themes emerged from the responses: lack of available/affordable child care and excessive

workloads.” Clearly the Senate meeting time impinges on both the issue of child care and of workload.

The time poses particular challenges for staff involvement. Serving on the Senate should be regarded as an important part of a senator’s job. Holding Senate meetings in the evening makes it more likely that the meetings might be regarded as supplementary to a staff member’s job (although some staff already need to work in the evenings). For faculty, service on the Senate is part of their record and counts for promotion and tenure (if applicable). Laying the groundwork for a similar recognition of Senate service for staff is an important goal. This might contribute to greater participation in the Senate from professional staff [14 empty seats, 13 filled].

Civic Engagement

The current schedule limits the ability of constituents to participate in civic engagement activities as it conflicts with local city council and some school board meetings. Additionally, other local organizations meet in the evenings after normal business hours to facilitate engagement.

Ending Times and Robert’s Rules

Robert’s Rules require a motion to adjourn. Having an ending time to the Senate meeting will mean that it will be commonly understood that a motion to adjourn will be entertained at the stated ending time of the meeting.

Comparison to Peer Institutions

Our committee reviewed the current practices at our peer institutions (see table). Out of 37 institutions, only 2 held their meetings outside the standard 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday. Nearly all met in the afternoon (defined as between 2-5 p.m.). The most popular day of the week to meet was Thursday (13 institutions) followed by Tuesday (9 institutions). The most popular frequency to meet was monthly (26 institutions).

Several institutions have a meeting time that is set aside for the express purpose of university meetings. This is especially common at institutions that have direct rather than representative government. We asked a subset of 15 of the institutions in the table if they have a set time for senate or other staff or faculty meetings where there are no courses or other business. Three of those surveyed did, and one more was trying to set one up.

The primary focus of this proposal is moving our meeting to during the standard workday (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). After consulting with faculty, staff and the registrar’s office, we suggest the noon hour. As we move to a timeframe that has a more specific end-time, we believe that meeting with more frequency to ensure time for all business required is ideally the place to start.

III. Proposal

Beginning Fall 2024, Senate meetings will be scheduled weekly on Thursday from 12:30 to 1:30pm.

We would encourage a rhythm in which every other meeting would consist of presentations and committee reports and the other meeting would consist of old and new business.

To support engagement with a wider campus population, remote participation will be supported. [Senate bylaws](#) already in place articulate electronic meeting (section 5.2) and voting (4.1) procedures.

Schools	Responses
Colorado School of Mines	2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month from 2:00-4:00 pm.
CUNY City College	third Thursday of each month 2- 4pm
Eastern Michigan University	first and third Wednesday 3:15-5:15
Ferris State University	first Tuesday 10 am - 12:15
Grand Valley State University	Weekly on Fridays 3-5 pm
Indiana University	First and Third Thursday 2:30 - 4:30 pm
Louisiana Tech University	Monthly Monday 4-5 pm
Michigan State University	Third Thursday 3:15-5:00 pm
Missouri University of Science and Technology	Third Thursday 2:00 pm
Montana State University	2nd and 4th Wednesday 3:15pm – 4:30pm
New Jersey Institute of Technology	2nd and 4th Tuesday 2:30-4 pm
Northeastern University	1st and 3rd Thurs 11:45 a.m.-1:25 p.m.
Northern Michigan University	3:05 pm Tues
Northwestern University	2nd Wed 5-7 pm
Oakland University	Third Thursday at 3 pm
Ohio State University	4th Thurs at 3:30 pm
Pennsylvania State University	3rd Tues at 1:30 pm
Purdue University	3rd Mon at 2:30 pm
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	2nd Wed at 1-2:30 pm
Rutgers University	3rd Fri at 1:00 pm
Texas A & M University-Kingsville	1st Tues at 3:30 pm

University of Akron (Main Campus)	1st Thurs not sure of time
University of Alabama in Huntsville	3rd Thurs at 12:50 - 2:20 pm
University of Illinois	2nd Monday at 3:10 pm
University of Iowa	Once a month on Tuesday at 3:30-5:15 P.M.
University of Maryland	Once a month from 3:15PM-5:00PM rotating Tues/Wed
University of Maryland-Baltimore County	3rd Wed from 12:00pm-1:00pm
University of Massachusetts-Lowell	1st Mon from 3:30 p.m
University of Michigan	Mondays at 3:15 pm
University of Michigan-Dearborn	Once a month 3:30 pm - 5:00 pm on Mondays for faculty and 4th Thursday at 9 am - 11 am for staff
University of Michigan-Flint	once a month from 1:00-3:00 pm
University of Minnesota	One Thurs a month 2:30-5 p.m.
University of Nebraska	First Tuesday at 2:30 pm
University of Wisconsin	first Monday at 3:30 pm
Wayne State University	One Wed a month at 1:30 pm
Worcester Polytechnic Institute	One Thurs a month at 3:15pm
Western Michigan University	Thursdays at 5 p.m.

Table 1: Peer Institutions and their meeting times. Evening meeting times appear in yellow highlighting.