

The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

Proposal 16-26

Enhancing Shared Governance: Clarifying Staff Voting Eligibility in the Senate

(Voting Units: All)

Submitted by: Professional Staff Policy Committee and Elections, Bylaws, and Constitution Committee

I. Introduction

There are many Senate proposals—both academic and university-wide—that directly affect professional staff as well as faculty. Staff members bring expertise from their respective roles and departments that can provide valuable perspectives on proposals that have historically been limited to faculty voting.

This proposal seeks to amend the Senate Constitution to allow professional staff to vote on Senate business, with the exception of restricted by the Board of Trustees, state policy, or federal regulations.

II. Rationale

Faculty and professional staff each bring distinct expertise and perspectives that are valuable to the university. However, staff contributions to Senate decision-making are currently limited due to the classification of many Senate proposals. While professional staff currently make up approximately 36% of the Senate membership, they were permitted to vote on fewer than 25% of proposals over the past two years.

A review of past Senate proposals also found that many items were classified as “Faculty Only” even though the subject matter affected both faculty and professional staff and could reasonably have been considered by the full Senate. Additionally, a review of the Faculty Handbook identified numerous policies and topics that explicitly address both faculty and staff responsibilities and roles within the university.

Across the university, staff possess expertise in areas such as financial operations, curriculum support, academic program implementation, and research administration. Staff members are also closely connected to student experiences through the many student-facing roles they hold.

Allowing professional staff to vote on a broader range of Senate matters would strengthen staff engagement within the Senate and support a more inclusive model of shared governance across the university.

III. Proposal

To better clarify the voting eligibility, as well as the process for how matters are classified, we propose the following changes to article III of the Senate Constitution:

7. Voting on the various matters shall be limited to subsets of senators and their constituents. (Reference is made to Section F of this article).

i. Only Senators shall vote on matters before the Senate, or their Alternates may vote if the Senator is not present.

~~ii. Only Faculty Senators or their Alternates, including at-large Faculty Senators, may vote on academic matters.~~

ii. Only Faculty Senators or their Alternate, including at large Faculty Senators, may vote on degree programs and their associated curricula.

~~iii. Only Faculty Senators or their Alternates, including at-large Faculty Senators and Professional Staff Senators representing independent research units or their Alternates may vote on research matters.~~

iv. Only Professional Staff Senators or their Alternates, including at-large Professional Staff Senators, may vote on matters affecting the professional staff.

v. All Senators or their Alternates may vote on Senate matters affecting the entire university, unless specified otherwise by Board of Trustee, state or federal Policies.

vi. All Senators and their Alternates may vote in Senate committee deliberations. vii. The Bylaws shall include procedures for classifying the academic, research, staff, and other matters brought before the Senate.

viii. All Senators or their Alternates may recuse their vote if they feel unqualified, unprepared, or uncomfortable voting on any matter.

8. As part of its functioning, the Senate should coordinate its activities and cooperate with appropriate representative groups of faculty, staff, and students on campus.