

**FACULTY SENATE AND UNIVERSITY ASSEMBLY
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI – ST. LOUIS**

RESPONSE TO FIVE-YEAR REVIEW REPORT – SPRING 2022

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Process of Review:

In response to Academic Affairs' request to comment on the process of the review, the following feedback is provided regarding the review process:

The process of the Five-Year Review was sufficient. Due to concerns with the COVID pandemic, all review sessions were accomplished using Zoom. In the future, the Senate would prefer that the review be held with in-person sessions to allow for more open and productive exchanges. Procedurally, the Faculty Senate provided the following to Academic Affairs in preparation for the review:

- Names of faculty members who could possibly serve on both the campus review team and as the external reviewer were submitted.
- A draft itinerary with the names of the groups/participants and session times to be included in the review.
- A self-study report was created and submitted before the due date.
- The Senate Office initiated every Zoom link that was used for each of the sessions. A complete list of each of the Zoom links for each session was provided directly to the members of the review team.
- The Senate Office created every calendar invite and distributed the invitations.
- The Faculty Senate Chair announced the date of the upcoming review at many Senate and Assembly meetings prior to the review date and encouraged participation.

The process for the Five-Year Review involved constituents at all levels of the University which included sessions with faculty, staff, students, and administrators. There was also a session for the Senate Steering Committee and a session specifically for the Senate/Assembly committee chairs to meet with the review team. One change that should be noted this year was that in previous years, the session that was dedicated to input from staff and students consisted of students and staff who had participated in the University Assembly or its committees and had direct knowledge of it. For example, all of the students that participated in the University Assembly, the staff that served on Assembly committees, as well as the chair of the Staff Association and the President of the Student Government Association were invited to previous five-year reviews. Their input provided good feedback because they were directly involved with the Assembly. However, this year the invitation for the student/staff session was distributed to "all staff" in the hopes of providing transparency and allowing for a better understanding of the Senate/Assembly. At this review, the number of attendees increased significantly for the staff/student session, but because many of the attendees were not familiar with the mission or workings of the Senate and Assembly, some may not have been able to offer relevant feedback or suggestions on improving the Assembly. A recommendation for the next review would be to examine which groups of invitees could provide the most useful feedback.

As stated in the Campus Review Team Report: *"This review was conducted during a worldwide pandemic. At the time of the review, the university community had undergone nearly two years of interrupted work, shortages, workload/pay adjustments, and overall uncertainty. We acknowledge that pandemic frustrations may have colored constituent groups' responses to this review"*. This may have had a major impact on this five-year review and should be kept in the forefront while responding to the findings.

Positive Overall Comments:

Both the Campus Review Team and the External Reviewer appreciated the work of the Senate as described below. The External Reviewer wrote:

“Overall, the UMSL faculty senate seems to operate effectively and according to national practice for representative faculty bodies of its type. The senate has developed a good working relationship with the campus administration, and it responded appropriately to the recommendations made in the last five-year review. The creation of the university assembly with staff and student representation is a particularly noteworthy step forward in inclusivity that could serve as a model for other universities. In my opinion, no major structural or operational changes are recommended at this time”.

The Campus Review Team stated the following:

We wish to acknowledge the hardworking, motivated, and well-intentioned members of the senate and, in particular, senate leaders. We greatly appreciate the Senate’s critical role at UMSL and applaud the substantial service commitment these individuals have made.

Response to Areas Common to Both Reports – Issues on which there is agreement:

Committees:

The External Reviewer Report suggested the follow recommendations:

- Monitor committee structure to ensure that existing committees are functional, useful, and active in shared governance:

Senate response: During the past five years, the Senate did a very thorough review of all of its committees. The discussions began at the end of the 2017-2018 academic year when the committee chairs were asked for feedback on the possibility of merging or deleting their specific committees or how they could be improved. In 2018-2019, the Senate continued to have discussions during Senate meetings, round-table discussions with faculty, staff, and students which provided valuable feedback on how the committees could be improved. These discussions led to proposed changes that were approved by the Bylaws and Rules Committee, as well as approved by the Senate, the full faculty, and final approval by the Board of Curators. As mentioned in the self-study report, six of the committees were reduced to three. It should be noted that making changes to committees is a very long process and may take up to a couple years for it to reach the final step of approval by the Board of Curators. Another reduction in committees may signal a change in the importance of shared governance at UMSL.

Action: The Senate will continue to review each committee’s annual reports to ensure the committees are functional and useful. If/when the committees are not accomplishing their missions, the Senate can revisit this topic for further discussion. (Timeline: Ongoing review)

- Create a more transparent process for the election of committee members. Consider term limits for committee chairs.

Senate response: For faculty members who have not served on the Committee on Committees, the process of making the recommendations for committee vacancies may seem unclear. However, the members of the Committee on Committees put much thought

into ensuring the committees are well-balanced and meet the committee membership requirements of the Senate Operating Rules. For example, the Senate may find that 10 faculty members have volunteered to serve on the Student Affairs Committee, but there may only be two vacancies. In that case, it is simply a matter of a very limited amount of committee vacancies and too many faculty members interested in one particular committee. When filling other committee vacancies, there may not be nearly enough faculty volunteers to fill the slots, yet the members of the Committee on Committees makes recommendations on those vacancies to ensure the work of the Senate can be accomplished.

Action: The Senate Chair will explain the process of how committee members are chosen during the Senate Orientation at the Senate’s First Organizational Meeting that takes place in April. Another possibility to increase transparency is to list more nominees on the ballots which will allow for more faculty input. The Senate can also consider the possibility of creating term limits for committee chairs to provide “a healthy balance between continuity and fresh eyes” as suggested in the Campus Review Team report. However, it should be noted that institutional knowledge is valuable in such committees as Curriculum and Instruction or Budget and Planning. Term limits for those committees in particular may actually be a detriment to the Senate. (Timeline: Steering Committee discussion in Fall 2022)

- Identify suitable and unsuitable roles on the senate and committees for faculty members with substantial administrative workloads.

Senate response: The Faculty Senate Operating Rules clearly state: For the purposes of Senate membership, the term “eligible faculty” includes all those with full-time tenured/tenure-track faculty appointments as well as those with full-time non-tenure track academic appointments who have at least 50% teaching or research responsibilities per year.” This statement addresses the issue of faculty members who have substantial administrative workloads. Also, identifying suitable roles for faculty members on committees is the benefit of having a Committee on Committees. When making their recommendations, the members of the Committee on Committees take into account the faculty members’ busy workloads and administrative responsibilities and make the appropriate recommendations to balance the needs of the faculty members and the Senate.

No Action needed: Senate Operating Rules already address Senate membership and administrative workloads.

Communication/Dissemination of Information:

This Communication topic will be addressed in both the areas of agreement and disagreement.

The External Reviewer and Campus Review Report recommends the following:

- Send Outlook invitations to senators and assembly representatives for meeting dates.

Senate Response: Outlook invitations have been sent all year to senators and assembly representatives. (Accomplished)

- Find ways for senate meetings to include more active discussion and debate.

Senate Response: We agree that active discussions are important in the Senate. After every topic or presenter, the Senate Chair asks if there are any questions or discussion. At a recent Senate meeting, the Senate had a lively discussion regarding proposed changes to ATP promotion guidelines. Many senators expressed their views.

Action: The Senate Chair will continue to encourage feedback at all Senate meetings. (Ongoing)

- The Campus Review Report suggested that the Senate Snapshot could include a link to the Senate suggestion box and remind Senators to bring faculty concerns to the Senate.

Senate Response: The Senate has included a link to the Senate suggestion box in the Senate Snapshot. The Senate Chair has also encouraged senators to bring feedback or concerns to the Senate many times. (Accomplished)

Staff Representation on the Assembly:

- Increase staff representation on the University Assembly.

Senate response: The Senate reiterates the 2016 five-year review response as stated below: Changes to the structure of the University Assembly or to Senate/Assembly committees would require a change in Bylaws. The typical process is for these changes to be reviewed by the Bylaws and Rules Committee, which recommends them to the Assembly for a vote. If passed by the Assembly, they go to the faculty for a vote and then have to be approved by the Board of Curators. This is a lengthy process. However, steps have already been taken to encourage the initiation of this process. In September of 2016, the current Chair of Senate/Assembly invited both the Student Government Association (SGA) President and the Staff Association President to develop proposals for any changes in representation that they thought appropriate, and promised to support both consideration of the proposals by the Bylaws and Rules Committee and bringing any initiative put forward by Bylaws to a vote of the Assembly. However, these proposals must come from the SGA and the Staff Association, as it is inappropriate for the Senate/Assembly to impose additional participation requirements on the staff and students.

The Senate Chair is open to discussing a proposal from the Staff Association to increase their participation. In addition, the Senate Chair and Chair of the Staff Association have recently been discussing a new suggestion for the Senate Steering Committee and the executive committee of the Staff Association to meet each semester to address any issues or concerns. This would open a new line of communication.

Action: The Senate Chair will continue to communicate with the Chair of the Staff Association to enhance the relationship between faculty and staff. (Ongoing)

- Ensure that staff are not penalized for taking time to serve on committees and the Assembly.

Senate response: The Senate will encourage input from the staff and will support supervisors giving them time to attend Senate/Assembly committee meetings. However, the Senate is not responsible for the conduct of supervisors in their individual units.

- The importance of staff opinions on committees and amplifying staff voices.

Senate response: The Senate agrees that it is important to hear the viewpoint of faculty, staff, and students. **Action:** The Senate will remind its committee chairs at the start of the year to acknowledge, encourage, and include the voices of the staff representatives during discussions at meetings. (Ongoing)

Response to Areas Common to Both Reports – Issues on which there is disagreement:

- Send the Senate Snapshot to all faculty and staff.

Senate response: The Senate Snapshot was created as an informal way for the senators to share Senate information about the monthly meetings and increase communication between the senators and faculty colleagues. The intent was to provide faculty senators with a brief, written summary of the meeting that they could forward to colleagues or share at a departmental faculty meeting. The hope was that faculty members could go to their senators with questions and this would make it easier for the senators to get a clear idea of the needs and perspective of their unit that would allow them to be better representatives. The distribution plan was also based on feedback that faculty receive a substantial number of emails each day, and that they are more likely to open and read something from a department colleague than from a large mailing list. After about a year, the Senate increased the Snapshot distribution beyond the Senators to include department chairs, and deans, as we received feedback that information was sometimes not making it back up the chain to these unit leaders.

We agree that the lines of communication between the Senate/Assembly and faculty could be strengthened. We also think that a middle-ground approach that uses the Snapshot better to facilitate communication between senators and their constituents would be more effective than sending the Snapshot to a distribution list of over 1,000 on a monthly basis. We would like to preserve and foster the relationship between the faculty and their senators. Sending it directly to faculty members and bypassing the senators runs the risk of having it get lost in faculty inboxes and also makes faculty governance feel more like something regular faculty members spectate, rather than become actively involved in.

Additionally, we would like to improve communication between the Senate/Assembly and the staff. We also think that the needs of the staff might be better served by working with the Staff Association, if it is interested and willing, to create a consistent monthly newsletter tailored to the needs of staff. The Snapshot is intentionally focused on the needs and interests of the faculty and much of the content focuses on things like changes in the

faculty bylaws rather than things that impact the staff more directly like changes in HR policies.

Action with Faculty Distribution: We will pursue two actions that will help the Snapshot better fulfill its purpose. One is to reinforce to senators that they have an important role to play in distributing information to their faculty and gathering information from the faculty in return. The second is to inform the faculty better about where they can get information about the Senate and how to communicate with their representatives and the Senate office. We will send out an email to full-time faculty at the start of each academic year welcoming them back to campus and providing basic information about the Faculty Senate including:

- A list of faculty Senators for the upcoming year so they can easily determine who their representatives are and a reminder to reach out to their representative with issues, suggestions, and concerns.
- A link to the Senate Suggestion Box
- A link to information about Senate meeting dates and agendas
- A reminder that the Senate meetings are open and that anyone is welcome to come and listen, with instructions about how to get the Zoom link if they are interested.

(Timeline: Work on a solution over Summer 2022 and prepare for Fall 2022)

Action with Staff Distribution: The Senate can increase the Snapshot distribution to include the Staff Association Chair, if desired. The Senate Office will offer to assist the Staff Association in creating a monthly newsletter by providing technical support as well as information that could be incorporated into the Staff Snapshot, such as updates from the Chancellor and Provost and information about the topics that are being discussed in Assembly meetings and in Assembly Committees. Doing so would increase transparency about the actions of the Senate/Assembly, as well as provide an avenue for the staff to get additional information directly pertinent to them.

If such a Staff Snapshot were developed and distributed, we believe the staff would feel recognized and valued. (Timeline: Meet with Staff Association Chair and staff executive team over the summer to get feedback on creating a monthly newsletter especially created for staff.)

- Seek technological solutions that would allow for the wider campus community to listen in on Senate/Assembly meetings if they cannot attend in person.
- Announce the meeting and agenda – preferably with an invitation and a Zoom link using the campus-wide e-mail distribution list.

Senate response: When UMSL pivoted to working remotely due to the pandemic, the Senate responded quickly to meeting the technological needs for Senate meetings. Zoom links were created and distributed to the Senate, Assembly, administrators, as well as faculty, staff and students who were interested in attending. On a regular basis, the Senate Chair announces that the Senate meetings are open.

We are still uncertain about what combination of online and in-person formats meetings will take as the pandemic eases. Despite the advances that have been made with teleconferencing software and technology, the challenges to hosting a synchronous, online meeting that is secure, that the entire University Community could listen in on, and that allow all of the Assembly/Senate meetings to take part in the discussion are more challenging than might initially appear and requires more than a technological solution. Because the Senate follows Roberts Rules of Order, only the members of the Senate and Assembly are allowed to speak (unless recognized by the Senate Chair). This is typically manageable in an in-person setting and online meeting with spectators who have requested to attend. It, however, is not practical or prudent to distribute a “regular” Zoom link to the entire community. Furthermore, Zoom licenses limit the number of participants. Previous efforts with Budget and Planning meetings at the start of the pandemic, where links were distributed to the entire University Community, indicate that we would essentially need to convert from a Zoom meeting to a webinar format, which creates challenges in terms of ensuring that all the Senate and Assembly members can take part in the discussion. Note that the Assembly includes around 75 voting and non-voting members.

In regard to the Senate meeting dates, the Senate/Assembly meeting dates have always been listed on the Senate website. The complete list of the meeting schedule is distributed to the Senate and Assembly in June and again in August to ensure the members are aware of the dates for the entire academic year. Calendar invites are already distributed to the Senate and Assembly. Meeting agendas are also available on the Senate website.

Action: While the Senate/Assembly is having virtual synchronous meetings, we propose to continue to distribute the Zoom link to Senate and Assembly meetings to the Senate and Assembly members and any member of the University Community that requests it. We will, however, distribute the information about how to access the meetings more widely. As noted above, the Senate will also be sending a welcome email to all full-time faculty with information about how to find the information about the meeting dates, agendas, and minutes and how to request links to any virtual meetings. We also list the upcoming Senate/Assembly meeting, links to the Senate website, and a reminder about how to get access along with the email distributing the Snapshot which, as noted above, we will be working with Senators to distribute more broadly. (Fall 2022)

Date of Senate/Assembly meetings will also be listed on the campus calendar in addition to the Senate website, along with information about how to contact the Senate office for access. (Fall 2022)

As the meeting modes settle into a more stable format, we will look into additional ways to make the meetings more accessible to the University Community.

- Recommend the Committee on Committees use a five-year look back to see if there is a faculty colleague who should be given the chance to serve. Technology (e.g. Qualtrics) could aid with the laborious task of asking for and organizing these preferences each year.

Senate Response: The Committee on Committees does keep in mind who has served in the past year when they set up the ballots for the upcoming year. Systematically checking the list of current volunteers for committees against previous lists of faculty who have completed a preference poll without being elected to a committee in order give those who haven't yet served additional consideration actually, however, would be quite difficult and time intensive, even with online survey software.

The challenges faced by the Committee on Committees is that interest in the committee is not evenly distributed, the sizes of the “parallel units” that are represented on many committees vary, and the qualifications for the committees vary. This means that in some areas the challenge is to find enough volunteers, whereas in others the challenge is to choose among volunteers. In some of the smaller parallel units, essentially each faculty member has to serve on a Senate/Assemble Committee for the committees to be fully staffed. In other, larger, units, there are more interested faculty than there are committee seats. Some committees garner more faculty interest than others. For example, there is often a page-long list of faculty who are interested in the Student Affairs Committee, which typically only has one or two open seats a year. However, the Committee on Committee often struggles to recruit faculty to serve on the Tenure Removal Committee (which is required by the bylaws and most consist of full tenure faculty). Faculty are often frustrated by not being elected to committees dealing with issues they are interested in, while the Committee on Committees has to work to recruit volunteers for other committees. A “lookback” would not address these issues and the benefits it might provide would not outweigh the costs in time and effort.

- Recommend the Senate/Assembly continue to seek opportunities to include adjunct faculty in meaningful ways appropriate to their role in the university. As adjunct faculty are often are not included on departmental websites, it is difficult for adjunct representatives to identify and contact their constituents.

Senate Response: Since the last five-year review, the Senate/Assembly made changes to the bylaws and rules to include two adjunct representatives on the University Assembly. There are also campus initiatives to acknowledge the contributions of part-time faculty. This year at the State of the University Address, the adjunct faculty with milestone years were also recognized for their service to the university. Furthermore, the Provost has requested that departments include adjunct faculty on departmental websites, which we hope will communicate more clearly the important role part-time faculty play in their departments.

We will continue to seek ways to include the perspectives of part-time faculty in decision-making, while being sensitive to the fact that asking part-time faculty to participate in the Senate and its related committees feels as if we are implicitly demanding additional, unpaid work by widening their workload to include service without additional compensation. Part-time faculty are not paid for Senate service and there is currently no mechanism or budget to do so.

Action: The Senate Chair will continue to listen to the concerns of the part-time faculty. We will also work with IT to set up an “organization” on the Canvas site where part-time faculty could communicate with each other more effectively. (Fall 2022)

➤ **Shared Governance:**

An Intercampus Faculty Cabinet task force is currently engaged in a project examining the nature of Shared Governance within the UM System. Any action or discussion by the Senate would be premature until that taskforce completes its work and makes available its findings.

➤ **Faculty Concerns:**

If faculty have concerns, they are welcome to submit them to the Senate Suggestion box. As noted above, we are working on publicizing that to the faculty more broadly.

Based on the current faculty bylaws, a committee on faculty concerns would be outside the scope of the Senate’s authority.