

December 20, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: University Constitution and Regulations Committee

FROM: Subcommittee on Constitutional Revision Related to Special Meetings
(Merritt McAlister, chair; Ashley Ghiaseddin, Danaya Wright, & Katherine Vogel
Anderson)

RE: Proposals to Reform UF Constitution to Address Ambiguity
Related to Senate Special Meetings

Our Subcommittee has been tasked with revising and clarifying the procedures related to Special Meetings upon Senate Member petition.

Included with this memorandum, please find proposed Constitutional Amendments that clarify that, upon such special petition of 25 members, the petitioning members shall have agenda-setting authority. To ensure that no single Academic Unit (as defined in Article IV, Section 2 of the UF Constitution) can act alone to trigger the special petition clause, the proposal requires that the petitioning members be from at least two different Academic Units. The proposal further clarifies that materials related to the special meeting should be made available to the senators in advance where possible to ensure that they may vote on whether to hold a special meeting.

We have also reviewed the Senate Bylaws to conform with this proposed amendment. We suggest both a conforming amendment to Bylaw 4(G)(1)(b), as well as a new Bylaw 4(I), which would permit petitioning members to set Information Items and Action Items for special meetings. Only upon a vote of the full Senate may such items be declined, deferred, or referred to a Senate Council or Committee. We also propose the Bylaws specify some limited procedures to ensure that the petitioning Senators and other members of the UF community are heard on the agenda items for the special meeting.

University of Florida Constitution

Article IV

Section 1. FUNCTIONS— . . .

The Senate agenda prepared by the Senate Steering Committee shall consist of three parts: (a) reports of the President, Provost, and Faculty Senate Chair (b) information items, such as reports of general decisions or summaries from committees or others as appropriate; and (c) action items containing matters to be decided at current meetings and proposals for action at subsequent meetings.

. . .

Section 4. MEETINGS—The Faculty Senate shall normally meet at least once during each calendar month of the academic year or as specified by the Bylaws of the Senate. Special meetings of the Senate may be called upon due notice at such times as the Chair or President may designate. A special meeting also may be called upon petition of 25 members of the Senate, provided, however, that at least two (2) of the petitioning members are from different Academic Units as defined in Section 2 herein. Any item to be discussed or acted upon at a special meeting must be provided in advance to all Senators and the support of 25 members shall operate to place that item on the agenda.

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University of Florida Faculty Senate Bylaws

Bylaw 4

(B) Senate Organization and Procedure: Notice of Proposed Bylaws

The constitutional requirement that the proposal for a Bylaw shall be submitted to the Senate at least two weeks prior to action upon it, shall ordinarily be met by including the proposal on the agenda of two successive meetings of the Senate. In cases of emergency, however, the Secretary of the Senate may either issue the regular agenda two weeks, rather than the customary one week, in advance of a meeting of the Senate or may make a special advanced mailing of the proposed Bylaw to the members of the Senate.

(C) Senate Organization and Procedure: Senate Agenda

(1) The Senate Agenda, prepared by the Senate Steering Committee, shall consist of three parts:

- (a) Reports of the President, Provost, and Chair of the Senate;
- (b) An Information Agenda consisting of information items, such as reports of committees, and
- (c) An Action Agenda, consisting of action items, containing matters to be decided at the current meeting.

(2) Placing items on the Agenda:

(a) Items to be included on the Senate Agenda shall be submitted to the Secretary of the Senate.

1. Items to be included on the Agenda may be submitted by any member of the Senate, by the chairperson of any committee or council, by a member of the faculty, or by an administrative officer of the University.
2. Items to be included on the Agenda shall be submitted in writing, in the manner prescribed by the Senate Steering Committee.
3. The Senate Steering Committee shall post the process for submitting items to the agenda on its website.

(b) The Senate Steering Committee shall determine whether items should be:

1. Referred to a Senate Council or Committee,
2. Placed on the Information Agenda of the Senate
3. Placed on the Action Agenda of the Senate,
4. Deferred, or
5. Declined.

(c) Ordinarily, the Senate Steering Committee shall refer matters brought

to its attention to the appropriate Senate Council or Committee for consideration and report.

1. Upon receipt of the report or before, the Steering Committee normally places the item on the Information Agenda prior to its placement on the Action Agenda.
2. The Steering Committee may place an item immediately on the Information Agenda if it feels that no committee consideration or report is necessary, or on the Action Agenda in unusual, special or emergency circumstances.

(d) The Steering Committee shall within 48 hours inform the person who submitted the item as to its disposition.

(G) Senate Organization and Procedure: Senate Meeting Procedures

(1) Meetings

(a) The Faculty Senate shall normally meet at least once during each calendar month of the academic year or as specified elsewhere in the Bylaws of the Senate.

(b) Special meetings of the Senate may be called upon due notice at such times as the Chair or President may designate, or upon petition to the Chair of at least 25 voting members of the Senate, provided, however, that at least two (2) of the petitioning members are from different Academic Units as defined in Article IV, Section 2 of the Constitution. Any item to be discussed or acted upon at a special meeting must be provided in advance to all Senators and the support of 25 members shall operate to place that item on the agenda. To the greatest extent possible, all documentation about the issue to be discussed at a special meeting should be provided to Senators at the time they vote on calling a special meeting, although this does not preclude augmenting the agenda item with additional information as it becomes available.

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(H) Senate Organization and Procedure: Public Appearances Before the Senate or a Senate Committee.

Individuals or representatives of groups who desire to appear before the Senate or a Senate Committee regarding any item being considered on the meeting agenda of the Senate or of the Senate Committee must submit their requests to the Secretary of the Senate specifying the agenda item about which they wish to speak. Such a request,

along with the requestor's name and contact information, any group represented, and any supporting documentation, must be submitted at least two (2) days prior to the start of the meeting. Consistent with the law, the Faculty Senate Chair or the Chair of the Senate Committee will determine whether the item will be heard and when (at what meeting and when on the agenda) it will be heard, and may require a representative for a group if many members request to be heard on the same topic. The Faculty Senate Chair or the Chair of the Senate Committee may set time limits on requestors' presentations. The time limit on any presentation shall not exceed 5 minutes. The Faculty Senate Chair or the Chair of the Senate Committee may limit the aggregate time for public comments at a meeting to 15 minutes.

(I) Procedures for a Special Meeting Upon Petition of Senators.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this bylaw, in the event that a special meeting has been called upon petition of at least 25 of the voting members of the Senate pursuant to Bylaw 4(G)(1)(b), those petitioning senators shall submit in writing any Information Items or Action Items to the Secretary of the Senate. Those items must be placed on the Agenda of the Senate and may only be declined, deferred, or referred to a Senate Council or Committee upon a majority vote of the full Senate. A meeting on those Items shall be called within 10 business days of receipt of the Items by the Secretary of the Senate. The petitioning senators shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to present each item placed on the Agenda, and any other interested parties shall be permitted a similar amount of time to respond to the petitioning senators. The Faculty Senate Chair may require the petitioning senators to designate a representative to speak on their behalf at the special meeting, and the Faculty Senate Chair may also require any other group to identify a representative if many members also wish to speak on the same topic.

