University of South Alabama Faculty Senate Bylaws

As Amended November 2013, May 2014, November 2014, September 2020, and February 2022, August 2023, September 2024, October 2024

BYLAW 1. GENERAL SENATE BODY

Section 1. Formula for Determining Faculty Senate Representation

1.1.1. Each academic unit shall elect one Faculty Senator at large. In addition, each academic unit with fifteen members or less shall elect one Faculty Senator for the first fifteen or less eligible faculty members as defined by the Faculty Senate Constitution Article 2 Section 1. Those academic units with more than fifteen eligible faculty members shall elect one Faculty Senator for every fifteen members. In cases of fractions of 8/15 or greater the academic unit shall elect one additional Faculty Senator. For example, an academic unit with 38 eligible faculty members shall elect three Faculty Senators (38/15 = 2 + 8/15 = 3 FS) in addition to one Faculty Senator at large for a total of four Faculty Senators to represent them.

1.1.2. The Faculty Senate Secretary shall determine the number of eligible faculty in each academic unit by January 31 for establishing the appropriate Faculty Senate representation for the Following Academic Year.

Section 2. Electoral Procedure

1.2.1. Regular Faculty Senate elections to fill Faculty Senate openings shall be held by secret ballot during the last two weeks of February or first two weeks of March. Elections shall be conducted by the Caucus Leader of each academic unit represented in the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate Secretary shall notify the Caucus Leader in each academic unit of the number of openings that need to be filled for the following year by February 1.

1.2.2. Faculty Senators shall be elected for a term of three years commencing at the April full Senate meeting.

Section 3. Orientation

1.3.1. A new senator orientation session will be held each year prior to the new senators' first April senate meeting.

1.3.2. The new senator orientation session will be led by the Vice President and attended by the executive committee and Caucus Leaders. All new senators that have not previously served on the Faculty Senate are required to attend the orientation session. New senators that have previously served on the Senate are invited to attend the orientation session but are not required to attend.

1.3.3. The new senator orientation session will introduce new senators to the structure, functions, duties, and procedures of the faculty senate and its committees. Copies of the senate constitution and by-laws will be made available to new senators at this session.

Section 4. Duties of Senators

1.4.1. To attend and participate in Faculty Senate meetings on a regular basis.

1.4.2. To represent the Senator's academic unit and the broader interests of the faculty at large.

1.4.3. To notify the Faculty Senate Secretary prior to a Faculty Senate meeting if the Senator is unable to attend.

1.4.4. To participate actively in their academic unit caucus.

1.4.5. To participate actively in at least one Faculty Senate standing committee.

1.4.6. To participate actively as appointed representatives of the Faculty Senate on university committees.

1.4.7. To coordinate with their academic unit to avoid scheduling conflicts with Faculty Senate meetings.

1.4.8. To serve on *ad hoc* committees, and participate in other Faculty Senate activities as needed.

Section 5. Vacancies

1.5.1. Openings for a Faculty Senate seat resulting from a Faculty Senator resigning from the Senate, leaving the University, or being recalled, shall be filled as quickly as possible by a special election within the appropriate academic unit. The Faculty Senator elected by special election shall complete the remainder of the departing Faculty Senator's term.

1.5.2. Faculty Senators can be recalled by a petition signed by a majority of the eligible faculty members of the academic unit they represent or by a vote approved by a simple majority of the Faculty Senate.

Section 6. Electoral Terms

1.6.1. A Faculty Senator may be elected for up to two consecutive terms.

1.6.2. Faculty Senators serving two consecutive terms must wait a period of one year before serving additional term(s) on the Senate.

1.6.3. A Faculty Senator who has by special election filled a vacated seat for not more than one year shall at that the end of that term be eligible to serve two further three-year consecutive terms.

BYLAW 2. OFFICERS

Section 1. Election and Terms

2.1.1. Nomination of candidates for senate offices can be submitted to Senate officers prior to the first general senate meeting of the year and can also be made from the floor during the first general senate meeting for that electoral year. The current Vice President shall automatically be nominated for President at the end of their term in office. Candidates for officer positions will be elected by ballot with winners being decided on the basis of a simple plurality of Faculty Senators voting. The ballot will be secret in the event of multiple candidates for an office.

2.1.2. Officers will serve a one-year term and can be reelected.

2.1.3. A vacancy in the office of President shall be filled by the Vice President. In the event the Past President position becomes vacant, the latest active Past President available and willing to serve shall assume the position. Other vacancies shall be filled for the unexpired term by appointment by the Executive Committee.

Section 2. Officer Duties

2.2.1. President: The President shall be responsible for the operation of the Faculty Senate and other duties, including: (1) preside at all meetings; (2) plan the agenda for General Senate meetings; (3) when warranted, call special meetings of the Senate; (4) when invited, attend other meetings related to the work of the Faculty Senate; (5) oversee the preparation and Senate adoption of a statement reviewing the academic program of the University and other concerns of the faculty and making appropriate recommendations (Constitution Article II. Section 2.4). The President or designated representative will serve as a voting member of all major academic councils and committees with an impact university-wide, including, but not limited to, committees whose work involves planning, budgetary matters, curriculum, policy and development.

2.2.2. Vice President: The Vice President shall act for the President in the President's absence and assist the President in carrying out the business of the Senate. The Vice President is also responsible for: (1) New Senator Orientation (Bylaw 1. Section 3.2), and (2) arranging a special meeting between the Executive Committee and Administrators in May The Vice-President will also ensure that there is a current Faculty Senate representative on all major academic councils and committees, and *ad hoc* search or screening committees appointed to assist the University President and other officers or administrators of the University in the selection of

administrators whose authority and responsibility have an impact on academic programs university-wide.

2.2.3. Secretary: The Secretary shall assist the President in the operation and reporting of the Faculty Senate and other duties, including: (1) assist the President in the construction and distribution of an agenda; (2) issue calls for all meetings; (3) receive reports, motions, or resolutions to be presented at General Senate meetings; (4) record and maintain accurate minutes of all meetings including attendance; (5) conduct necessary correspondence; (6) keep and distribute an accurate list of the membership of the Senate; (7) provide updates and current documents (i.e. agenda, minutes, etc.) for posting on the Faculty Senate website; (8) determine membership of Standing Committees; (9) determine the number of eligible faculty for establishing the appropriate Faculty Senate representation (Bylaw 1. Section 1.2) and notify the Caucus Leader in each academic unit of the number of openings that need to be filled for the upcoming year (Bylaw 1. Section 2.1); (10) perform other duties as may be appropriate, including maintaining the archives of the Senate.

2.2.4. Immediate Past-President: At the end of her/his term(s), a President will serve for one year as Past-President. The Past-President will serve as senior advisor to the current president. If the senate term of the Past President expires, they will serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Senate.

BYLAW 3. COMMITTEES AND CAUCUSES

Section 1. Committee Structure

3.1.1. The Faculty Senate shall establish Standing, *ad hoc*, and Advisory committees that represent faculty interests. Standing Committees will consist of, to the extent possible, Faculty Senators from all Colleges, Schools and Libraries. Standing committees will include, but are not limited to: (1) University Policies and Handbook Committee; (2) Faculty Salaries and Benefits Committee; (3) University Planning and Development Committee; (4) Teaching, Learning, and Technology Committee; (5) Sustainability and Environmental Quality Committee; (6) Faculty Development and Mentoring Committee; (7) Evaluation Committee; and (8) Research and Creative Activities Committee.

3.1.2. Chairs of Standing Committees will be appointed as voting members of the complementary University Committees. For example:

- The Chair of the University Policies and Handbook Committee will serve on the University Academic Policies Committee.
- The Chair of the Faculty Salaries and Benefits Committee will serve on the University Fringe Benefits Committee.
- The Chair of the University Planning and Development Committee will serve on the Institutional Planning and Assessment Committee.

- The Chair of the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Committee will serve on the University Teaching and Learning Committee and the University Academic Computing Committee.
- The Chair of the Sustainability and Environmental Quality Committee will serve on the University Safety Committee and the University Sustainability Committee
- The Chair of the Faculty Development and Mentoring Committee will serve on the Faculty Development Council.

Section 2. Standing Committee Charges

3.2.1. **University Policies and Handbook Committee:** This Committee represents the faculty concerning all academic policies of a general nature. The Committee shall also assist University Administrators in constructing the *Faculty Handbook* and on behalf of the Faculty Senate, be responsible for reviewing all proposed changes in the *Faculty Handbook*. The Committee Chair, or a representative of the committee designated by the committee chair, may be called upon to attend Council of Academic Deans meetings to address proposed policy.

3.2.2. **Faculty Salaries and Benefits Committee**: This Committee represents and advocates for the faculty in all matters related to salaries, equitable compensation, and fringe benefits.

3.2.3. **University Planning and Development Committee**: This Committee represents the faculty in matters related to university priorities and strategic planning. Its activities include, but are not limited to, participation and development in the planning for academic programs, facilities and infrastructure.

3.2.4. **Teaching, Learning, and Technology Committee:** This Committee represents the faculty in matters related to teaching, learning, academic affairs, and the use of computing and other technological facilities. Its activities include advising on all teaching and learning modalities, technology, and digital infrastructure. Representatives of this committee will be appointed to all university-level committees that create policy around teaching and learning

3.2.5. **Sustainability and Environmental Quality Committee:** This Committee represents the faculty involvement in developing projects, policies, and events to improve the working and physical environment of the university. Its activities focus on the quality and sustainability of our natural environment, and the advancement and sustainability of the faculty's work life, career trajectory, and general living conditions. The Committee will also work collaboratively with University Administrators in making recommendations for renovations, repairs, and campus space allocation.

3.2.6. **Faculty Development and Mentoring Committee:** This Committee represents the faculty in matters related to academic development, tenure, promotion processes, and faculty mentoring. Its activities include providing collaborative planning and consultation on matters as they relate to teaching, research, scholarly service, and creative activities of the faculty; to provide input into University policy concerning

faculty development and mentoring; and assess policy approaches to, and delivery of, faculty mentoring.

3.2.7. **Evaluation Committee**: The Committee shall oversee the development, implementation, and periodic review of all university-level evaluation processes, including promotion and tenure. It will represent the faculty in advising on policies regarding teaching evaluation, workload, and administrative assessments. Additionally, the Committee will recommend improvements to evaluation methods, ensuring alignment with university policies and best practices in higher education. The Committee shall also solicit faculty feedback on evaluation processes to enhance transparency and fairness.

3.2.8. **Research and Creative Activities Committee**: This Committee serves as the representative voice of the faculty in all matters related to research, creative, and scholarly activities. The committee seeks to improve and promote professional scholarly productivity of faculty members, assist in the development and implementation of procedures and policies governing research and/or creative activities, and reviews proposed changes in existing policies affecting research and creative activities of faculty members of the University.

Section 3. Committee Membership

3.3.1 Prior to the May meeting, senators will electronically submit their preference for committee service. The Vice President in consultation with the Senate officers will assign Senators to a specific committee working to balance Senator choice with unit representation. Committee memberships will be made available by the beginning of the Fall semester

Section 4. Executive Committee

3.4.1. The Executive Committee shall consist of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, immediate Past-President, and the Chair of each Standing Senate Committee. The Past-President will be a non-voting member of the Executive Committee.

3.4.2. In addition to Senator duties (Bylaw 1. Section 4) Executive Committee members will attend and participate on a regular basis in Executive Committee meetings and meetings with the University President, as well as demonstrate a willingness to serve on University committees as needed.

Section 5. *Ad hoc* Committees

3.5.1 *Ad hoc* Committees may from time to time be established to deal with issues not addressed by Standing Committees. Members of the Faculty Senate as well as other qualified persons from within the University community may be requested to serve on these committees. Motions to establish committees shall include the name of the committee, its charge, and its size and composition. The President shall appoint members and establish with the committee a schedule by which the committee is

expected to present progress and/or final reports. An *Ad hoc* committee will be considered dissolved after a final report.

Section 6. Establishment of New Faculty Senate Standing Committees

3.6.1. In addition to the Faculty Senate Standing Committees listed (Bylaw 3. Section 1.1), the Faculty Senate may establish Standing Committees to address issues of interest to the faculty of the University. An *ad hoc* committee in place for one year is eligible to become a standing committee. An *ad hoc* committee's status can be elevated to standing committee status by any senator during a general or special meeting of the Senate. Following discussion by the Senate Body, a vote will be taken and the Faculty Senate Standing Committee will be established super majority of two thirds of the senators present is reached.

3.6.2. Faculty Senators wishing to serve on the new committee in addition to their current committee duties will submit their names to the Secretary of the Faculty Senate, who will then assign membership so as to have representation from each academic unit, as possible. Nominations for Chair of the new Standing Committee will be presented at the next general meeting of the Faculty Senate at which time the Senate will vote on the nominees with the winner obtaining a simple majority of votes cast. The newly elected Chair will then call a meeting of the Standing Committee at the earliest convenience of its membership.

Section 7. Dissolution of a Faculty Senate Standing or Advisory Committee

3.7.1 If a Faculty Senate Standing or Advisory Committee is no longer considered to be necessary it may be dissolved following presentation, discussion, and a simple majority vote of members at a general or special meeting of the Faculty Senate.

Section 8. Faculty Caucuses

3.8.1. The body of elected Senators from each academic unit shall constitute the respective Caucus for that academic unit.

3.8.2. Following the first meeting but prior to the second meeting of each new Faculty Senate session, Senators from each Caucus will elect amongst themselves a Caucus Leader.

3.8.3. If at any time a Senator serving as a Caucus Leader resigns, or has their position as a Senator terminated, the remaining Caucus members will elect amongst themselves a new Caucus Leader prior to the next Faculty Senate meeting.

3.8.4. The Caucus Leader from each academic unit shall act as the principal liaison between the Faculty Senate and their academic unit. As the principal liaison, the Caucus Leader shall coordinate with the Senators in their caucus to: 1) determine the opinions, interests, and preferences of the faculty within their academic unit; 2) serve as a conduit for bringing concerns of faculty within their unit to the attention of the Senate; and, 3) distribute a report to the faculty within their academic unit after

each Faculty Senate Meeting concerning the nature of opinions, deliberations, and actions of the Faculty Senate.

3.8.5. The Caucus Leader will make regular reports to the Faculty Senate regarding: 1) the opinions, interests, and preferences of the faculty within their academic unit, and/or 2) the operations and activities of their academic unit.

3.8.6. The Caucus Leader from each academic unit shall supply the sitting Faculty Senate Secretary a list of faculty members in their academic unit by January 31 of each year for use in determining the appropriate Faculty Senate representation.

3.8.7. The Caucus Leader from each academic unit shall conduct elections for all new Senators within their academic unit as directed by the Faculty Senate Secretary or as such elections become necessary due to vacancies. In the event that the Caucus Leader is also a candidate for reelection, they shall appoint a member of their Caucus who is not a candidate for reelection to conduct the election.

Section 9. Advisory Committee Establishment and Structure

3.9.1 The Faculty Senate may establish Advisory Committees to deal with issues that are not addressed by Standing Committees or *ad hoc* Committees. Members of the Faculty Senate as well as other qualified persons from within the University community may be requested to serve on these committees. Motions to establish Advisory Committees shall include the name of the committee, its charge, the term of service of committee members, and its size and composition. Following discussion by the Senate Body at a regular or special meeting of the Faculty Senate, a vote will be taken and the Faculty Senate Advisory Committee will be established if a two-thirds majority of a quorum at the meeting is reached. Members of Advisory Committees shall be nominated from the Faculty Senate at large, who shall submit nominations to the Secretary of the Faculty Senate. The President of the Faculty Senate, in consultation with the Executive Committee, shall appoint Advisory Committee members from the pool of nominees.

BYLAW 4. MEETINGS

Section 1. Regular and Special Meetings

4.1.1. Regular meetings for the Senate are normally held in April, May, August, September, October, November, January, February, and March. The outgoing Secretary will announce dates for the year's regular meetings at the April meeting.

4.1.2. Special meetings of the Senate are initiated by a request of the President of the University or of the Board of Trustees directed to the President of the Senate; by a majority vote of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee; or by a written request directed to the Senate President from ten or more Senate members. The written request shall state explicitly the matter proposed for Senate consideration, which

shall then become the first order of business at a special meeting of the Senate. The Senate President will schedule the special meeting at the earliest convenience of the Faculty Senate.

4.1.3. Under normal circumstances, general and special meetings of the Faculty Senate shall be open to observation by all faculty, staff, students, alumni, media representatives and general public. The Faculty Senate may make a majority vote to enter a closed Executive Session consisting of only elected Senators.

4.1.4. Non-Senators not on the agenda may address the Senate only on invitation by vote of the Senate or on invitation by the President of the Senate after an opportunity for the Senate to object and, in case there is objection, after approval of the invitation by the Senate.

4.1.5. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the total Faculty Senate seats filled at the time of the meeting. While quorum is maintained, the Senate may vote on motions in accordance with Roberts Rules of Order or as defined in these Bylaws.

Section 2. Absences

4.2.1. Unexcused Absences: In the event that a conflict arises with the Faculty Senate meeting time, the Senator is to contact the Faculty Senate Secretary prior to the scheduled meeting. Failure to contact the Secretary will result in an unexcused absence. If a Senator has more than two unexcused absences during the electoral year the Senator may be dismissed by the Faculty Senate President after consulting with the appropriate Caucus Leader. Written notice of dismissal will be sent by the Senate President to the Senator and to the appropriate Chair/Dean of the academic unit. The academic unit will then select a replacement. Any member liable for dismissal may appeal in writing to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee whose decision will be final.

4.2.2. Excused Absences: If a Senator is regularly and repeatedly missing Faculty Senate meetings, whether excused or unexcused, the Faculty Senate President will consult the appropriate Caucus Leader to determine whether the Senator is either unwilling or unable to fulfill the duties of a Senator. If the Senate President concludes that the Senator is either unable or unwilling to fulfill his/her Senate duties, the academic unit will be advised to select a replacement.

BYLAW 5. PARLIAMENTARIAN

5.1. The Executive Committee shall appoint, with the advice and consent of a super majority of 2/3rds of the senators present, a Parliamentarian whose duty shall be to demonstrate familiarity with the Bylaws of the Senate, with *Robert's Rules of Order,* and with the Senate Constitution.

The Parliamentarian shall attend all plenary and special Senate meetings, and shall give an opinion on the manner of conduct of proceedings when requested by the President.

The term of the Parliamentarian, who may be selected from outside the Senate membership, shall run for one Senate year but shall expire automatically with the tenure of the Senate President in whose term the appointment was made.

The Parliamentarian may be reappointed. If selected from outside the Senate membership, the Parliamentarian shall be an ex officio, non-voting member of the Senate.

BYLAW 6. ORDER OF BUSINESS AND AGENDA ITEMS

6.1. With the exception of the order of business stated below, meetings of the Senate shall be conducted according to the latest edition of *Roberts Rules of Order*, Revised.

- Call to Order by the President
- Determination of quorum by the Secretary
- President's Report (submitted in writing)
- Old Business
- Reports from University Committees (submitted in writing)
- Reports from Senate Committees
- Reports from Caucus Leaders
- New Business
- Adjournment

6.2. Agenda items and new business for Senate consideration are to be submitted in writing to the Secretary of the Senate at least seven (7) days prior to their presentation to the Faculty Senate Body. Additional and new agenda items may be introduced from the floor during the New Business portion of the agenda with the consent of the Faculty Senate.

6.3. Agenda and new business items that are proposed from the floor during General Senate meetings, which require Faculty Senate attention will, at the direction of the President, be passed on to the appropriate Committee for further investigation. In the event that the issue is not under the purview of an existing committee, the President will seek or assign senators to form an *Ad hoc* committee to study the issue.

BYLAW 7. VOTING PROTOCOL

7.1. Except in elections, voting in the Senate shall follow a period of discussion. Voting ordinarily shall be by show of hand, voice, or roll call, with the Secretary recording the yeas, nays, and abstentions by the Senators present. At the request of a simple majority of those present, however, a vote shall be taken by secret ballot.

7.2. Absentee votes on stated agenda items may be submitted in writing to the Secretary prior to the meeting.

BYLAW 8. REPORTING AND COMMUNICATION PATHWAYS

8.1. Upon completion of any assigned tasks, or in the case of ongoing progress reports concerning issues of interest, Chairs of Committees shall provide a report to the Senate. At the request of the President, a written copy(s) of their findings, conclusions, and recommendations will be provided to the Executive Committee. A copy of the report will be deposited into the Senate archives and an electronic copy of the report will be added to the Faculty Senate website.

8.2. Chairs of Standing Committees shall provide written final reports at the end of the electoral year on their areas of responsibility. These reports will be orally summarized during the final General Senate meeting of the term. A copy of the report will be deposited into the Senate archives and an electronic copy of the report will be added to the Faculty Senate website.

8.3. At the request of the President, principal Senate representatives appointed to University Committees shall also provide written year-end reports.

8.4. The President will oversee the preparation and Senate adoption of a statement reviewing the academic program of the University and other concerns of the faculty and making appropriate recommendations (Constitution Article II. Section 2.4). This is intended as an assessment of the current state of the University from the special vantage point of the President. This statement will be presented at the January meeting with discussion and vote at the February meeting. Should the Senate fail to adopt this statement at the February meeting, a revised statement will be presented, discussed, and voted upon at the March meeting. Upon approval, this statement will be distributed to the general faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees, as well as posted to the Faculty Senate website.

8.5. The Caucus Leader shall make regular reports to the Faculty Senate and their constituents (Bylaw 3. Section 8.4).

8.6. Senators serving on University Committees shall submit a written report after each committee meeting to the President for inclusion in the President's report at the monthly meeting.

8.7. The Faculty Senate shall maintain a website and endeavor to ensure that information it contains is both current and comprehensive.

BYLAW 9. AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

9.1. The Faculty Senate shall have the power to make, amend, and repeal the Bylaws by a vote of two-thirds majority of a quorum at regular or special meetings of the Senate, provided that any proposed changes shall have been submitted in writing to the members of the Faculty Senate at least twenty-eight (28) days before the meeting at which the vote shall be taken.