

**Faculty Senate Fundamentals**  
James Madison University Faculty Senate

**FACULTY SENATOR DUTIES**

1. **Department communication:** As a faculty senator, you serve as a representative of your academic unit. As such, you are expected to do the following:
  - a. Keep your colleagues informed of Senate actions and decisions and of relevant information provided at senate meetings. *This is especially important when a motion is brought forward for discussion and possible adoption.* You will be expected to share the motion with your colleagues and gather their feedback, views, and reactions. Faculty senators act in accordance with the will of the academic unit as a whole and this is only possible if there is sufficient communication.
  - b. Maintain an awareness of the interests and concerns of your colleagues and submit relevant issues to the appropriate Senate committee or officer.
  
2. **Committee assignment:** Each senator serves on at least one committee. Please refer to the roster in Canvas to see your committee assignment, and feel free to reach out to the committee chair for more information about meeting times, etc.
  
3. **Dues collection:** One of your first tasks will be to collect dues from your full-time colleagues. Dues are \$5 per full-time instructional faculty member and submitted no later than the November Faculty Senate meeting. The Treasurer will explain the procedures for submitting dues. Faculty Senate treasury funds are used for two broad purposes: (1) paying for memorials for JMU faculty members or loved ones who have passed away and (2) funding projects and initiatives adopted by the Faculty Senate.
  
4. **Sending an alternate when necessary:** If you cannot attend a meeting, please make sure to send a proxy in your place so your academic unit will be represented. Email the Marshal and the Communications Director prior to the meeting with this information.
  
5. **Keeping track of your two-year term and ensuring that your department holds an election when your term is expiring.** You are responsible for keeping track of how long you have been in the senate. Although there are no term limits, when your two-year term is coming to an end in the spring semester of your second year, it is your responsibility to make sure that your department holds a timely election so that your academic unit will continue to be represented. Please inform the Marshal of the election results (if there's a change).
  
6. **Publicize the Faculty Senate mini-grants:** The mini-grant program has been a great success, and it is in our collective interest to ensure that it remains viable. As long as the interest is there, the funding will likely continue, so it behooves us to advertise the program among colleagues so that faculty members apply for these grants each year. *Please help to remind your colleagues about this program.*

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## FACULTY SENATE COMMITTEES AND THEIR TASKS

1. The **Faculty Senate Steering Committee** comprises the leadership of the Faculty Senate. Its members include the officers and the chairs of the various standing Senate committees. It sets the agenda for the Faculty Senate meetings and performs a variety of other duties associated with Senate governance.
2. The **Faculty Concerns Committee** studies, formulates, and recommends action on university-wide concerns pertaining to
  - a. methods of selection and appointment of faculty, including academic unit heads and administrative officers
  - b. tenure, promotions, salaries, academic leaves, consulting practices, research and publication of instructional faculty members
  - c. fringe benefits and working conditions of instructional faculty members
  - d. issues concerning academic freedom and responsibilities
  - e. development and utilization of university resources and services as they affect faculty morale and professional development of instructional faculty members.
3. The **Policies Committee** deals with issues related to new or existing university policies. When policies are published for review, the committee reviews policies to determine if any merit further faculty consideration, feedback, and/or comment.
4. The **Budget and Compensation and Government Relations Committee** handles issues related to the fiscal operation of the university as it is relevant to the university's academic mission. The committee also studies matters related to compensation at the university and other comparable institutions and makes recommendations regarding fair and adequate compensation for the faculty. It identifies opportunities to mediate civic and community engagement of faculty and students through elected representatives of the people and works with the Faculty Senates of sister institutions and the Faculty Senate of Virginia to lobby for increases in state support for higher education.
5. The **Teaching and Student Relations Committee** handles issues related to matters of mutual responsibility and concern among faculty and students, such as the following:
  - a. graduate and undergraduate student concerns and initiatives
  - b. course evaluations
  - c. student advising
  - d. syllabus requirements
  - e. faculty needs related to instructional and assessment processes
  - f. online and in-person pedagogy initiativesThis committee often works with the SGA and assists the SGA, when necessary, with the SGA-run Madison Vision Teaching Award.
6. The **Faculty Appeals Committee** receives appeals from instructional faculty members, determines whether a hearing will be held, and, if so, selects a Hearing Committee under the terms of the Faculty Handbook. *Senators are advised to ensure that their colleagues are aware of the existence of this committee.* It functions as an "as needed" committee with each member participating in another standing faculty senate committee until dealing with a faculty appeal.

7. The **Research and Scholarship Committee** considers and makes recommendations concerning policies and procedures for research, research support, and research infrastructure. The committee also oversees the Faculty Senate Engagement Mini-Grant competition.

8. The **Adjunct Affairs Committee** studies, formulates, recommends, and advocates for action on all matters relating to adjunct instructional faculty business, including, but not limited to contracts, compensation, benefits, working conditions, morale, work-life balance, status, and resources.

9. The **Shared Governance Committee** supports and monitors faculty participation in JMU shared governance with primacy in curriculum development, teaching methods, research, faculty status, and those areas of student life related to the educational process. The responsibility of faculty status includes hiring, appointments, reappointments, tenure, promotion, and dismissal of faculty.

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## **FACULTY SENATE OFFICERS AND THEIR TASKS**

1. **Speaker:** Presides over Senate meetings, helps to set the Senate agenda, and serves as faculty liaison with the administration and the Board of Visitors.

2. **Speaker Pro Tempore:** Assumes the Speaker's duty in cases of absence; serves as the liaison with the Faculty Senate of Virginia; chairs the Faculty Concerns Committee.

3. **Communications Director:** Takes attendance and keeps minutes of all meetings; distributes the minutes and other relevant documents to the faculty senators; updates the Faculty Senate website.

4. **Treasurer:** Maintains the Faculty Senate treasury; collects dues; arranges memorials upon request for JMU faculty or loved ones who have passed away; conducts the annual computer lottery.

5. **Marshal:** Serves as parliamentarian during meetings (Robert's Rules); chairs the Research and Scholarship committee; serves as the mace-wielding marshal at university commencement ceremonies.

6. **Adjunct Representative to the Steering Committee:** Represents the views and concerns of adjunct faculty to the Steering Committee.

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## **PUTTING FORWARD MOTIONS**

According to the Faculty Senate Constitution, the purpose of the Faculty Senate is to "represent the instructional faculty of James Madison University, and to exercise the delegated authority of the instructional faculty in the consideration of all policies and issues that affect the academic climate and direction of James Madison University."

According to our Bylaws, "The Faculty Senate shall seek to create, maintain, and protect a university environment conducive to the growth of scholarship, learning, teaching, research, service, and respect for human dignity and rights."

The primary way we go about these tasks is by putting forward, debating, and passing motions. What follows are basic guidelines for advancing formal ideas, decisions, or actions through the Faculty Senate.

A **motion** is a proposed piece of business for the Faculty Senate. In some cases, motions will only affect the Faculty Senate (e.g., changing our Bylaws). In some cases, motions will affect or seek to affect the university more broadly (e.g., suggesting that the university take or refrain from some course of action). Some motions will have impacts that are both internal and external to the Faculty Senate (e.g., proposing we spend internal Faculty Senate treasury funds in a way that has positive impacts on the student body).

***Who can make a motion?***

Motions may be brought forward by any member of the Faculty Senate. In some cases, these motions may be written by others (e.g., a departmental colleague may ask their senator to put forward a motion).

***How do you write motions?***

Motions have two basic parts: (1) a “whereas” portion containing the reasons for adopting a particular resolution, and (2) a “be it therefore resolved” portion that contains the resolution itself. The exact format of the motion is not important as long as these two parts are present and clear.

***How do you put motions forward?***

A motion should be directed to the Speaker of the Faculty Senate, who, in consultation with the Steering Committee, will either put it on the agenda for a future meeting as new business or will refer it to a particular Faculty Senate committee for further study or investigation.

***What happens when your motion is put forward as new business?***

The senator putting the motion forward will typically be called upon to say a few words about the motion and its justification. *Typically* (see below for the exceptional case), this will be considered a “first reading,” after which senators will then be asked to discuss the proposed motion with their colleagues prior to the *next* Faculty Senate meeting (approximately one month later). At that next Faculty Senate meeting, the motion must be moved and seconded before discussion about it can take place. Amendments may be suggested, and voting on the amendments may take place. In addition, other procedural avenues may be explored (e.g., tabling the motion for a later date). Most procedural avenues are based in *Robert’s Rules of Order*, so senators are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the basics of these rules. If not tabled or otherwise delayed, the motion will eventually come to a vote. Whether a passing vote requires a simple majority or 2/3 of those present or voting (or some other threshold) is determined by the type of motion under consideration.

The exception to the standard *first reading–month’s delay–discussion and voting* procedure takes place when the Faculty Senate votes to suspend the rules and proceed with discussion and voting immediately. This will sometimes be warranted or helpful in cases requiring prompt action.

***What happens if the motion passes?***

That depends entirely on the type of motion. In some cases, it might require a bit of bookkeeping (e.g., updating the Bylaws); in some cases it might require writing a check (e.g., use of Faculty Senate treasury funds); in some cases, it might require communication with the administration or some other university entity (e.g., a motion advising that the university take action in a particular direction). It is the responsibility of the Faculty Senate Steering Committee to follow up on motions that have been passed to see that they are brought to fruition or, in matters outside of our direct control, attempted to be brought to fruition.

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As mentioned above, this account of motions is rough and incomplete. For instance, many specifics from *Robert's Rules of Order* are missing, but hopefully this will give senators, especially new senators, a better sense of how the Faculty Senate conducts business.

Any questions regarding the procedure for putting forward motions should be directed to the current Faculty Senate Marshal (who also serves as the chief parliamentarian).