

Professional Staff Senate By-Laws

I. Preamble

“The variety and complexity of the tasks performed by the institutions of higher education produce an inescapable interdependence among governing boards, administration, faculty, students, and others. The relationship calls for adequate communication among these components, and full opportunity and appropriate joint planning and effort.”

“Thus, while the Board of Trustees of the University of Maine System delegated responsibility for the administration of the University of Southern Maine to the President, the President shares that responsibility with the USM faculty, professional, administrative, and classified staff, and with the student body.” Effective USM governance necessarily includes meaningful input from these respective constituent groups to the President. The Professional Staff Senate (hereafter known as ProSen) shall serve as a meaningful contributor to shared governance within the University of Southern Maine. ProSen shall serve as a vehicle for channeling the professional responsibilities of active and meaningful participation into the process of University governance. In that context, the ProSen complements the activities of the faculty, student, and Classified Staff Senates. In executing its responsibility in shared governance, ProSen specifically seeks to achieve several goals.

II. Purpose

- A. Support/enhance the further development of the mission of the University of Southern Maine.
- B. Advise/make recommendations to the President on any matter of concern to the professional staff.
- C. Ensure the involvement of the professional staff in policy and information flows, providing advocacy where necessary and appropriate.
- D. Represent the professional staff on committees, boards, and at appropriate symbolic occasions.
- E. Support/assure appropriate recognition of the contributions of the professional staff.
- F. Create forum(s) for networking and community building among the professional staff.
- G. Communicate to the rest of the University community information regarding professional staff.
- H. Provide opportunities to share information about state-of-the-art theories, practices, and activities in the various professional fields.
- I. Support research publications, public and community service and teaching activities of professional staff.

III. Organization and Structure

A. Membership:

1. The Professional Staff Senate shall consist of twenty members.
2. Each member will be elected for a two-year term, except when elected to complete a vacated, uncompleted term. A member may serve a maximum of three (3) consecutive terms, where any fraction of a term is to be considered a whole term.
3. The Professional Staff will be partitioned into divisions with each division electing two members, and the remaining members being elected at large.
 - a. Each division will elect one member each year.
 - b. If there are insufficient members nominated and/or elected from a given division, then at-large members will be utilized to fill these positions in accordance with the Election Committee Standard Operating Procedures (ECSOP).

B. Elections:

1. Elections will be completed, except for any pending appeals, by May 1 of each year, with new terms of office beginning in June.
 - a. Nomination Process- The annual election will begin during the semester with a general call for nominations either by others or by oneself.
 - b. Nominees for Professional Staff Senate will decide if they will run for a seat representing their division or an at-large seat.
2. Filling Seats
 - a. A seat will be filled by the candidate receiving the largest number of votes.
 - b. If there are an insufficient number of candidates for a divisional seat, then the seat shall be filled as if it were an at-large seat.
 - c. If seats with different lengths of terms are to be filled, the candidate receiving the most votes will serve the longer term.
 - d. All ties will be decided by a run-off election between only the candidates involved in the tie.
 - e. A public announcement of the results will be made within one week following the completion of the election, including resolution of any tie votes.
 - f. The Election Committee Chair will provide the Chair of the Senate with documentation of election results for use in the event of any subsequent vacancies. (See Article III, Section C).
 - g. Any appeals to the election must be submitted in writing to the Chair of the Senate within ten days of the public announcement. The Senate will consider the appeal at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Senate. Only elected Professional Staff Senate members not involved in the appeal will be present during the discussion of the appeal, unless invited in writing by the Chair.

3. Ballots:

Each division shall vote for their own candidates and for candidates for general at-large seats. Returning Senators will be so noted on the ballot.

C. Vacancies:

When a vacancy occurs on the Professional Staff Senate, one of the following will apply:

1. If the vacancy occurs prior to the June meeting in a position which was filled in the election that spring,
 - a. the person from the proper division who receives the next number of votes,
 - b. followed by the at-large candidate from that division with the most votes,
 - c. Or an at-large candidate in general with the most votes will be considered elected to the position (See ECSOP for selection process).
2. In all other situations, the Senate may appoint a person to complete the remainder of the term (See ECSOP).
3. If a member of the Professional Staff Senate not elected at-large, moves from one division to another prior to the completion of his/her term, no vacancy will occur and he/she will remain in the position until the end of the current term.

D. Officers:

1. There will be four officers: Chair, Vice-Chair, and two Co-Secretaries. These officers will be part of the Executive Committee.
2. Officers will be elected at the June meeting each year. Any individual running for Chair must have served in the Professional Staff Senate the previous year.
3. The Chair will preside over all meetings of the Professional Staff Senate and the ProSen Executive Committee. The Chair or Chair designee will serve as the ProSen member of the University of Southern Maine Board of Visitors. The Chair will represent the ProSen at all formal functions of the University of Southern Maine. The Chair will house the official ProSen files and keep them in good order.
4. The Vice Chair will preside over the meetings of the Professional Staff Senate and the ProSen Executive Committee in the absence of the Chair. The Vice Chair will administer the ProSen treasury. The Vice Chair will assist the Chair with such other ProSen duties that may be required.
5. The Co-Secretaries will share the duties of taking meeting notes at all Senate and Executive Committee meetings. The Co-Secretaries will make available the meeting agendas and the minutes to all members of the ProSen (including ex-officio members) and the USM professional staff. Agendas and minutes will also be made available to the Chairs of the other USM Senates, and to the ProSen liaison to the President's Staff.

E. Ex-Officio Members:

All ex-officio members are non-voters. The President and Vice Presidents of the University are considered ex-officio members of the ProSen. Representatives selected by the Faculty, Student, and Classified Staff Senates are also considered ex-officio members.

F. Meetings:

1. Meetings will be held monthly on dates to be determined at the first meeting of the new term. Meetings will be held at all branches of USM per a schedule to be created by the Senate in the July meeting. Attention should be paid to distributing the meetings fairly among all branches when the schedule is created.
2. Meetings that are cancelled due to severe weather conditions will be rescheduled for the following week.
3. Senators that miss three consecutive regular meetings without notifying the Chair will forfeit their ProSen seats. The seats will be declared vacant and will be filled according to the provisions of Article III, Section C, of the by-laws and ECSOP.
4. A quorum (consisting of a majority) of ProSen voting members must be present for all votes except those described in Articles II and III, Section I.
5. Meetings will be open to all members of the University community. Visitors may speak to agenda items after being recognized by the Chair, but may not vote.

G. Special Meetings:

The President of the University, any twenty members of the Professional Staff, a majority of the Executive Committee of the ProSen, or a simple majority of current ProSen members may call a special meeting at any time.

H. Committees:

The following six standing committees shall carry out the various activities of the ProSen as assigned:

1. *Executive Committee* -The Executive Committee will meet periodically at the call of the Chair to discuss matters for presentation to the ProSen. This will consist of the Chair, Vice Chair, and Co-Secretaries.
2. *Election Committee* -This committee will coordinate and oversee the election process. Only ProSen members who are not candidates for the upcoming election are eligible for membership.
3. *Professional Recognition and Awards Committee* - This committee will coordinate the Professional Staff Recognition function including the nomination and selection process for the Distinguished Professional and Emerging Professional Staff Awards. The committee will periodically examine the feasibility of other recognition vehicles. Membership is open to all USM professional staff.
4. *Professional Development Program Committee* - This committee plans and delivers a minimum of one activity per year. Membership is open to all USM professional staff.

5. *Colleague Connection Committee* - This committee collaborates with the USM Staff Development office to assign colleague connectors from the professional staff to new staff members on request. The committee also plans ways to welcome, orient, and involve new professional staff members in USM life. Membership is open to all USM professional staff.

6. *Communication Committee* - This committee produces two ProSen newsletters each year for distribution to the USM community. Membership is open to all USM professional staff.

Other committees shall be formed as needed. Except for the Executive and Election Committees, ProSen committees are subject to refocus, reorganization, or discontinuance upon recommendation of the committee members and a majority vote of the ProSen. Unless otherwise noted, membership to ProSen committees shall be open to all USM professional staff members.

Professional staff representatives on USM committees, groups, panels, etc., are expected to submit a report to the ProSen Chair for the next scheduled meeting. Failure to report or attend for two consecutive meetings will result in the ProSen selecting another representative. Representatives for standing committees will be made from current Senators and USM professional staff. All committee representation will be reviewed annually.

IV. Amending the By-Laws

A. Any member of the ProSen or any member of the professional staff may propose By-law amendments.

B. Amendments will be adopted by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the entire ProSen.

C. Proposed amendments must be read into the minutes at one meeting and voted on at the next regular meeting. If there is not a two-thirds vote quorum, at the ProSen meeting that a vote has been scheduled, that vote shall be postponed to the next regular meeting.

D. Portions of the by-laws that are contained within the USM Governance Constitution must be amended by the process outlined in the USM Governance Constitution.