

1/20/11 (revised by Implementation & Steering committee)
email with SUBJECT: 2011 Changes for a more effective PSU Senate.

To the PSU Community

A number of important changes in the PSU Faculty Senate are under way.

As 2011 begins, we are writing to you to describe them and invite you to take part in Faculty Senate elections scheduled for March 2011.

Calls for remaking our governance structure came in response to changes in PSU's size and identity. Since 1995, student enrollment and faculty headcount doubled and PSU's research activity and the number of programs and degrees offered grew significantly. That growth increased the number of stakeholders involved in planning PSU's future and the importance of giving voice to their hopes and concerns.

In 2008-09, the Faculty Senate initiated a study of faculty-staff participation in PSU governance. Many of you took part in the survey, focus groups, interviews, and campus-wide conversations with our consultant, Adrianna Kezar of University of Southern California. The study suggested the desire for a more focused, participatory, and effective Faculty Senate as a vital partner in PSU's process of shared governance.

In 2009-10, that research guided the work of a committee charged with restructuring the Faculty Senate. Discussed at four Senate meetings, the full set of changes was voted upon and passed in June 2010. The most important of these changes will be implemented in 2011. With input from the Senate Steering Committee, the committee proposed changes in five areas: eligibility, representation, elections, leadership, and responsibility, described below.

Eligibility The PSU Faculty Constitution extends faculty membership to those whose "primary responsibility [is] for ... curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life that relate to the educational process." In 1994, eligibility for the Senate was extended to all holding a master's degree regardless of their role in teaching, research, or educational support, with the intent of including student services. Since then, there has been a proliferation of unclassified positions which have been interpreted as falling under that rubric even though they do not have specific responsibilities in the areas listed above.

With the 2011 elections, the Senate will restore the original eligibility rule. Voting and service in the Senate will be limited to faculty who report to OAA and the Office of Financial Aid. The change will exclude members of FADM and a small number of administrative assistants. Current senators will serve out their elected terms. To ensure that the implementation of the rule is done correctly and fairly, the Senate Steering Committee will provide an appeals process for those who question why they are no longer eligible.

Representation In 2011, the size and structure of the Senate will change. Research suggested that as the number of senators doubled from 1995 to 2010, the Senate grew too large for effective participation. Beginning in 2011, the ratio of representation will change from 1:10 to 1:20, in effect, halving the number of senators. And in 2011, the representation of colleges and divisions will change. To ensure uniform representation of its large and diverse faculty, CLAS will elect senators from the divisions of Arts and Letters; Sciences; and Social Sciences as defined by the PSU Bulletin. Formerly a separate division, Extended Studies will become part of All Others. The goal is to encourage more effective communication between elected senators and sets of related departments and programs.

Elections In 2011, the most notable change will be a new election procedure *with a streamlined ballot*. The current opt-out nominations process will be replaced by a new opt-in nominations process. The opt-in process is expected to increase participation by faculty who desire to serve or are encouraged by their colleagues to stand for election.

Leadership In 2010, the Senate initiated a leadership succession of Presiding Officer-elect, Presiding Officer, and Past Presiding Officer. The terms of office for members of the Senate Steering Committee were staggered. These changes addressed two challenges. The most important Senate business such as making major curricular changes spans multiple years and requires continuity of leadership. But having continuity of leadership is difficult without a succession that enables the recruitment and training of new Presiding Officers. Leadership succession is standard practice in most academic associations.

Responsibility At the heart of the process of shared governance is the requirement that Senators take seriously their responsibility as representatives of the faculty and the University. Caucuses of senators and communications with colleagues and co-workers are vital elements of effective governance.

Senators who anticipate that they cannot regularly attend meetings because of sabbatical leave, travel, or off-campus teaching will be expected to resign. Senators who miss more than three meetings without an alternate will be removed.

These changes are the work of dozens of faculty, staff, and administrators who shared in the research, deliberated on committees, and discussed processes for shared governance at PSU. On January 3, the Senate had its first meeting of 2011 as a mini-retreat for senators and administrators to discuss PSU priorities. Moving forward, these discussions will shape the agenda for new more effective Senate and stronger communication between faculty and administration.

Now the work depends on you.

SIGNED Senate Steering Committee in cooperation with the Committees on Faculty Participation (08-09), Constitutional Change (09-10), and Implementation (10-11)