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Senate Motions from the Floor

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Senate Executive Committee Request Form

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Request for Information

11/4/2019

SHORT TITLE:

(Please provide a short descriptive title.)

Senate Motions from the Floor

QUESTION(s):

(Please state your request or requests in question form as concisely as possible.)

Question:

When did it become Senate protocol to not allow motions from the floor? In looking at senate minutes it appears that last year was the first year in which senators were not allowed to make motions from the floor. How was this decision established as protocol?

RATIONALE(s):

(Please explain why this issue is one of general concern for the Faculty Senate or for the University and not a matter concerning only an individual college or administrative area. Please note what other, if any, attempts you have made to garner this information before submitting this request to the Faculty Senate.)

The Faculty Senate needs to be able to function in real time in order to best serve our task of shared governance. That means that when discussion requests or reports, or Requests for Information come before the Senate we should be able to take action on them through the process of making a motion and having the senate vote on it. In the past this happened occasionally, primarily in response topics under discussion. The given reason from the last senate meeting that motions from the floor allow no time for senators to examine them and confer with the faculty they represent is somewhat misleading. The majority of motions come up as a result of discussions, RFI's, or reports. The only items that are not presented to the senators ahead of time would be items in the President's or Provost's reports, as all RFIs, Discussion Requests, and the Librarians Report are published at least two days prior to the senate meeting. The SEC should be publishing all Motion Requests, RFIs, and Discussion Requests, even if they choose not to put them on the agenda. In this way we all have access to these items prior to the meeting. An example of this would be the discussion request of the last senate meeting regarding non- Tenure Tracked professors. It would have been a logical result of that discussion to move to request the Administration provide guidelines on what constitutes a NTT professor as distinguished from a lecturer or instructor and what limitations are placed on NTTs in terms of promotion. In addition, the Senate needs to have the flexibility to address issues in real time, for example the excellent motion that was debated and voted on in response to the book burning issue at the last meeting. RFI's are very often presented to gather information in order then make a motion to the floor if need be. Upon review of the minutes of the past several years, it appears that last year was the first time that motions from the floor were not allowed. This does not seem to be protocol as it is a fairly recent phenomenon. As senators we should be allowed to make the decision regarding motions from the floor as opposed to this seemingly imposed decree. If there was discussion of this protocol I was not able to find it. The "protocol" disallowing motions from the floor feels very much like a gag order and does not allow us to do the work we have been tasked to do.

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Note to faculty users: Double-check your data before submitting, because the data cannot be edited afterward

SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTION

11/13/2019 

Response:
 

Executive Committee Response:

Response Given 11/17/2019 (by Helen Bland, President and Dustin Anderson, Past President)
 The practice or protocol in question has been the policy in our bylaws at least since they question comes from were "amended on March 23, 2018 to reflect the consolidated senate for Georgia Southern University Statesboro, Armstrong and Hinesville campuses". The nature of the Senates changed during consolidation, and the newness of this environment for both campuses warranted as faithful an alignment to the governing documents as possible. The question posed in this RFI looks back to a Senate structure that no longer exists. These bylaws (including II.3) in place during the 2017-2018 year under Moderator Pirro on the Statesboro campus; the Armstrong Bylaws had no specific language about circulating motions ahead of the meeting. Former-moderator Richard Flynn co-chaired the Governance OWG, and during the November 2017 related that the bylaws (including those elements previously delivered by Senator Williams-Johnson in October of 2017) had been reconciled and rewritten by the OWG and vetted by the SEC before being approved by the Senate. Article II, Section 3 reads: "Senators will receive in writing any item intended for notification, discussion, or action at least two workdays in advance of the Senate meeting at which said item will appear on the agenda, and they will receive copies of any documents related to said agenda item at least two workdays in advance of the Senate meeting. For purposes of these Bylaws, the work week is defined as 8 a.m. on Monday until 5 p.m. on Friday when classes are in session." This article was approved both on March 23, 2018 and on April 3rd, 2019. During the September 5, 2018

Senate meeting, the Senate President noted that the submission of Business Items ahead of the meeting would be a change for those coming from the Armstrong campus, and clarified the since the Senate structure does not ensure representation from every department, Senators acted as representatives for their colleges which would require engaging with that larger body on any Item that came forward. He confirmed that, in accordance with the new Senate bylaws, all Items approved by the SEC would be circulated to the Senate a week ahead of the upcoming meeting to allow Senators and faculty time to engage with those Items. As part of the orientation meeting, the Senate President moderated a "Business Item Informational Session" to clarify what kinds of Items would be most appropriate for RFIs, Discussion Items, or Motions. During the 2018-2019 year, the format of the agenda changed to reflect the charge of the SEC and Senate, while maintaining the requests made during the 2017-2018 year. The order of items prioritized items requiring a vote in order to ensure the maintenance of a quorum. Since the Senate would not be able to reconvene digitally, any items not requiring a vote (i.e., informational items, RFIs, discussion items, reports) were moved after those items requiring votes. Those items, being held on a single campus, could be circulated via minutes afterwards. Based on the practice in under moderator Pirro, the Senate agenda included a report from both the President and Provost as the time for questions after those provided Senators with an opportunity to engage with the other half of the shared governance equation first-hand. The need for transparency and engagement with our shared governance process was abundantly clear coming into the first year of consolidation. The by-the-line interpretation of Article II, Section 3 is a reflect of that need. The purpose of the time for review is to allow for thoughtful and genuinely representative engagement with the Items at hand. Since Senators represent colleges, that lead time should allow them to discuss the impact or implications of those items with their colleagues from both campuses to provide circumspect information during the discussion of any motion or discussion item. To take motions from the floor eliminates half of the shared governance equation: the faculty side. It prevents our colleagues from engaging with our Senators to share the totality of our thoughts, positions, or concerns, and limits the legislative actions of our faculty to those people who happen to be present in the room on a given day.