DATE: May 17, 2022

FROM: Neeli Bendapudi

TO: Kimberly Blockett

I have reviewed the Legislative report, “Proposed Preamble to the Senate Constitution entitled: A Statement on the Role of the Faculty Senate at the Pennsylvania State University” which was passed by the University Faculty Senate on April 26, 2022 at the Faculty Senate Plenary meeting. I concur with the following report and appreciate the University Faculty Senate’s strong commitment to shared governance.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this item.

cc: Kathleen J. Bieschke
    Nicholas P. Jones
    Laura Pauley
May 13, 2022

Neeli Bendapudi, President
201 Old Main
University Park, PA 16802

Dear President Bendapudi:

The University Faculty Senate, at its Tuesday, April 26, 2022 Faculty Senate Plenary meeting, passed the attached Legislative report:

“Proposed Preamble to the Senate Constitution entitled: A Statement on the Role of the Faculty Senate at the Pennsylvania State University”

Should you require a transcript of the discussion and vote on this report in the Faculty Senate Plenary Meeting, please contact Erin Eckley at ele2@psu.edu.

We forward this recommendation to you for approval.

Sincerely,

Bonj Szczygiel, Chair
University Faculty Senate

ENCLOSURE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES AND RULES AND SELF-STUDY COMMITTEE

Proposed Preamble to the Senate Constitution entitled: A Statement on the Role of the Faculty Senate at the Pennsylvania State University

(Legislative)
Implementation: Upon approval by the Senate and President

Introduction and Rationale

In 2020, as part of commemorating the 100th year of the University Faculty Senate (1921-2021), then-Senate Chair Beth Seymour appointed a Senate Self-Study Committee that has considered multiple aspects of the Senate’s structure, function, and documentation. The Self-Study Committee has worked in consultation with the Senate Committee on Committee and Rules and has welcomed additional input, including through Senate Listening Forums (the most recent of which was held on January 18, 2022).

The Self-Study Committee is here proposing that a Preamble be added to the Senate’s Constitution. Though the Constitution is arguably the Senate’s most important document, it presently lacks any initial statement of principles for this crucial faculty organization and for the concepts of shared governance on which it relies. In observation of the centennial of the University Faculty Senate’s contributions to this university, what follows is a statement of principles that we hold to be true. It is produced as an affirmation of the Senate’s purposes and as a recognition of the faculty’s fundamental role in the university’s highest and most noble of concerns: that of providing a quality education and advancement in action and mind for current and future generations.

We therefore make the recommendation to add the Preamble shown below.*

*We want to thank former Senate Chair Michael Bérubé (2018-2019) for his contribution to this document. He offered additional valuable insight into the history of shared governance at PSU in an essay prepared in advance, and found here. -Senate Chairs: Bonj Szczygiel (2021-2022), Beth Seymour (2020-2021)

Recommendation

Given that the principles above have been foundational to the University Faculty Senate as an institution and continue to guide our work, it is our recommendation that the University Faculty Senate adopt and include the Statement on “The Role of the Faculty Senate at the Pennsylvania State University” as a preamble to the Constitution of our Senate, as shown below.

Please note that the following contains bold text for additions and strikeouts indicating deleted text. Deleted text is notated with [Delete] [End Delete]. Added text is notated with [Add] [End Add].
SENATE CONSTITUTION

The [ADD] faculty governance body underlying the University Faculty Senate first came into existence in 1921. A [END ADD] new Constitution for the University Faculty Senate was approved by the President of the University and adopted by Faculty Referendum of March 27, 1971, to become effective on June 1, 1971. Since that date other major changes were made in May 1975, [DELETE] and [END DELETE] April 1993, [ADD] and April 2022. [END ADD] All changes in this [ADD] version [END ADD] are shown as approved by the Senate as of [DELETE] April 28, 2015 [END DELETE] [ADD] April -- , 2022. [END ADD]

- [ADD] Preamble [END ADD]
- Article I - Functions
- Article II – Membership
- Article III – Amendments

[ADD] PREAMBLE
The Role of the University Faculty Senate at The Pennsylvania State University

Faculty perform a fundamental mission of the University’s highest and noble purpose to educate an ethical global citizenry. As the cornerstone of the university, they provide the knowledge-based environment and expansive capacity to address educational issues. Their deep expertise, broad experience, diverse perspectives, multifaceted creativity, and passion to drive innovations in teaching, research, extension and outreach to stakeholders and the public, are critical to the mission of the university.
Therefore, we affirm:

The faculty of the Pennsylvania State University community, represented by the University Faculty Senate whose Constitution follows, along with the Senate’s elected student members and appointed members, have been delegated the authority by the Board of Trustees to participate authentically in the shared governance of the institution. Through its senate, faculty have authority over the University’s curriculum (programs, requirements, courses, etc.) and all changes must occur through senate action. Furthermore, faculty serve in many ways as participants in the decisions and actions of the University’s administrative and Board leadership. Additionally, faculty, in collaboration with the University’s administrative and Board leadership, share the responsibility to guard and protect the mission of the University by keeping each other accountable.

Those principles mean that in addition to its primary role in oversight of an ever-evolving body of curriculum and guidance in implementation of the curriculum, Penn State’s University Faculty Senate operates as a general advisory and consultative body to achieve shared governance. This entails an ongoing role beyond that of a conduit of communication between faculty and administration. In the course of their various committee assignments
or areas of expertise, Senators engage with and influence policies in wide-ranging areas from athletics to ethics, sustainability and planning, human resources and beyond. The purview of the Senate, therefore, is quite broad. The voice of the faculty, expressed individually and collectively through its duly elected representatives on the Senate, is essential for shared governance to exist in principle and in practice.

It is hereby affirmed that the quality of this institution is, in large part, measured by its success in sharing communication and expertise between the faculty, the University administration, and Board leadership, and in working together in partnership toward the inviolability of its mission. Respect and esteem for the faculty must be strong for our institution to continue its inspiring and successful mandate. Balanced and meaningful collaboration between all parties—shared governance—must exist for our institution to successfully continue to fulfill its mandate. [END ADD]

Revised Constitution

SENATE CONSTITUTION
The faculty governance body underlying the University Faculty Senate first came into existence in 1921. A new Constitution for the University Faculty Senate was approved by the President of the University and adopted by Faculty Referendum of March 27, 1971, to become effective on June 1, 1971. Since that date other major changes were made in May 1975, April 1993, and April 2022.

All changes in this version are shown as approved by the Senate as of April -- , 2022.

- Preamble
- Article I - Functions
- Article II – Membership
- Article III – Amendments

PREAMBLE

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2021-22 SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES AND RULES

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