

To: The University Senate
From: Senate Faculty Affairs Committee
Subject: Creating a University Senate Listserv to enable unmoderated communication between senate leadership and faculty
References: See Footnotes
Disposition: The University Senate for discussion and adoption
Rationale: “The University Senate is the governing body of the faculty, and it exercises the legislative and policy-making powers assigned to the faculty, subject to review and check only by the faculty by established procedures.” [1]

The membership of the University Senate also includes voting representatives the Purdue Administration as well as from other representative bodies Purdue Student Government (PSG), Purdue Graduate Student Government (PGSG), Senates of Purdue-Northwest and Purdue-Fort Wayne. In addition, the University Senate also has advisors drawn from a number of units across campus, prominently including campus support staff (through CSSAC) and management and professional staff (through MaPSAC).

The University Senate does not have direct access to the use of university-wide mailing lists. For the University Senate leadership to email the Faculty directly, it must send a request to the Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs that justifies how the proposed email content is “official University business of broad interest.” [2] The VPFA must provide advance approval for the Senate leadership to email the faculty directly.

The above policy was put in place to address concerns about misuse of university-wide listservs for unimportant items.[2]

The AAUP Report on Academic Freedom and Electronic Communications [3] states:

“[S]enate officers and other faculty representatives engaged in institutional governance activities should have free and unfettered

access to university-controlled lists of faculty members they represent, and all faculty members should be able to comment electronically on governance issues without restriction or fear of disciplinary action.”

Purdue Student Government (PSG) and Purdue Graduate Student Government (PGSG), MaPSAC leadership, and CSSAC leadership currently enjoy the right to directly email their constituents without mediation by administration. Additionally, the Senate leadership at Purdue-Northwest and Purdue-Fort Wayne have the power to email their faculties without asking permission from the administration.

The University Senate Chairperson is entrusted with carrying on a number of regular and emergency tasks of the Senate. They are also usually designated by the President of the university as the Presiding Officer of the Senate. The University Senate Chairperson serves a one-year term.[4] The Vice Chairperson of the Senate is elected by the Senate, assists the Chairperson in the business of the Senate and acts as the presiding officer of the senate in the absence of the President and Chairperson of the Senate. The Vice Chairperson serves a one-year term and goes on to succeed the Chairperson of the Senate.[5] The Secretary of the Faculties is a designee of the University President to serve as Secretary of the Senate.[6] They typically serve the Senate across multiple academic years, thereby providing organizational continuity and consistency. These are Senate officers entrusted with ensuring the business of the Senate is carried on expeditiously, and that the will of the Senate is clearly expressed to various constituencies.

In pursuit of this charge, these Senate officers might have need to communicate with the faculty body at large from time to time.

Proposal:

The Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs issue an authorization request to IT at Purdue to create a University Senate listserv. The listserv will operate in a manner consistent with the relevant university IT policies [7]. It will have the following stipulations and take supportive measures to disseminate knowledge about the existence of the University Senate listserv.

1. The Senate Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary of Faculties have the right to send emails on the University Senate

listserv without needing advance approval by any member of the University administration. Deliberation among these three parties will be the sole basis for deciding what is appropriate content for posting on this listserv.

2. The listserv be created such as to allow any member of faculty, staff and students of Purdue University to:

a. Opt-in to receive emails sent on this listserv.

b. Once admitted, opt-out of this listserv if they wish.

3. That, once created, the university administration facilitate dissemination of knowledge about the University Senate listserv and instructions on how to access it through all available channels including (but not limited to):

a. One university-wide email annually

b. A monthly reminder in Purdue Today during the first academic year of the creation of the listserv.

c. Inclusion in the orientation materials sent to all new faculty hired at Purdue University.

d. Inclusion in orientation workshops to new faculty at Purdue University.

References

1. Bylaws of the University Senate, Article 1: Purpose and Powers

<https://www.purdue.edu/senate/about/bylaws.php>

2. Discussion during Question Time of University Senate meeting of 27 January 2020. Minutes available at

<https://www.purdue.edu/senate/documents/meetings/Jan-27-2020-Minutes-Complete.pdf>

3. AAUP report on Academic Freedom and Electronic Communication, 2013, p. 48.

<https://www.aaup.org/report/academic-freedom-and-electronic-communications-2014>

4. Bylaws of the University Senate, Article 3.20: Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the University Senate.

<https://www.purdue.edu/senate/about/bylaws.php>

5. Bylaws of the University Senate, Article 3.30: Secretary of Faculties. <https://www.purdue.edu/senate/about/bylaws.php>

6. Bylaws of the University Senate, Article 3.40: Sergeant-at-Arms. <https://www.purdue.edu/senate/about/bylaws.php>

7. Acceptable Use of IT Resources and Information Assets policy

[https://www.purdue.edu/policies/information-](https://www.purdue.edu/policies/information-technology/via4.html)

[technology/via4.html](https://www.purdue.edu/policies/information-technology/via4.html) and Electronic Mail (S-7) **S-7 - University Policy Office - Purdue University**

Committee Votes:

For:

Arezoo Ardekani
Françoise Brosseau-
Lapré *
Stephen Cameron
Alice Johnson
Nastasha Johnson
Bhagyashree Katare
Robert Nawrocki
Jennifer Scheuer
Anish Vanaik*

*FAC Co-Chairs

Against:

Abstained:

Ali Bramson
Lisa Mauer
Sunil Prabhakar

Advisors

Lisa Mauer
Sunil Prabhakar

Absent:

Alexander Francis
Stephanie Masta
J. Paul Robinson