

To: Faculty Senate

From: **The Faculty Senate Committee on Constitution and Rules**
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Date: April 20, 2026

Subject: Proposed Amendments to Current Faculty Senate Practices Regarding the Meeting Minutes

The Faculty Senate (FS) Committee on Constitution and Rules unanimously recommends the following amendments to current FS practices.

Issue: The Current Minutes Are Inconsistent with Accepted Parliamentary Standards

Summary:

- The current minutes do not conform to academic governance standards.
- The current minutes require extensive time to produce, limiting the Senate Secretary's ability to perform essential duties.
- The current minutes are not always fully verified and accurate as perceived by Senate.
- Action-based information is difficult to locate within the verbatim transcript.
- A standard minutes format would be more accurate, significantly less time consuming to produce and will allow Senators to readily identify the motions, actions and decisions of the Senate.
- Edited transcripts will still be available to faculty and to those who request them, but will no longer be posted publicly.
- A shared online transcript document will streamline editing and eliminate the need to merge multiple edited versions.

The FS governing documents do not define what constitutes the official "minutes" of a FS meeting. In practice, the minutes have evolved into verbatim transcripts, which is inconsistent with widely accepted academic governance standards. Under these standards, minutes record actions taken and may summarize discussion, but do not attribute comments to individual speakers.

The current practice is also creating a significant workload burden. The Senate Secretary currently spends approximately 15 hours per week preparing the minutes (30 hours total), which is half of the Secretary's total workload. This includes circulating draft transcripts to all participants for corrections and consolidating all changes into a final version. This time commitment limits the Secretary's ability to perform essential duties such as drafting communications, scheduling meetings, assisting with election administration, working on FS website improvements and helping prepare FS meeting agendas. Notably, the Secretary does not have sufficient time to attend FS Executive Committee meetings to assist with the production of meeting summaries, a responsibility historically associated with the role.

Accuracy is also a concern. Although transcripts are sent to speakers for review, an analysis of two recent minutes documents, performed by the committee chair and the Senate Secretary,

revealed that fewer than half of the speakers respond. In addition, there was at least one instance where transcript text was replaced with new information provided after the meeting. This means the current minutes are not fully verified and do not always accurately reflect what occurred.

A standard minutes format will make motions, actions, and vote results easy to locate and will allow senators to meaningfully review and approve the official record.

First Recommendation: Adopt a standard minutes format.

Without amending the Bylaws, the FS should replace the current transcript-based minutes with a standard minutes format that records:

- Attendance
- Approval of previous minutes
- Adoption of the agenda
- A list of reports presented, including the report titles and presenter names
- The exact text of every motion made and seconded
- The action taken on each motion
- Vote results
- Any assignments or follow-up tasks
- Time of adjournment

The Senate Secretary will assist in producing the minutes under the supervision of the Senate Executive Secretary consistent with Bylaws Article IV.1.D.2, which states that the Executive Secretary shall “*supervise the recording and distribution of the minutes of the regular Senate as well as special meetings of the Senate and the Executive Committee.*” This change will reduce preparation time, allow the Senate Secretary to resume essential secretarial duties, and ensure that senators can reasonably review and approve the minutes.

Some senators have expressed interest in maintaining access to meeting transcripts for historical reference and for reviewing detailed discussion. This is still possible under the second recommendation. However, because some senators and faculty raised concerns about posting transcripts and audio files online, the committee recommends distributing transcripts directly to faculty and to individuals who request them, rather than posting them publicly.

Second Recommendation: Implement a New Transcript Protocol

To preserve access to meeting transcripts while reducing workload, the committee recommends that the Senate Secretary:

1. Tag the automatically generated Webex transcript with speaker names and, as time permits, provide editing for clarity.
2. Post the document as an online shared Word document accessible to all senators.
3. Allow senators a defined period to edit their own remarks using “Track Changes.”
4. Save both the red-line and clean versions of the edited document.
5. Distribute the clean version to faculty and retain the red-line version and audio file for FS records.

Conclusion

These recommendations will improve clarity, preserve transparency and reduce workload so that all essential duties in the Faculty Senate office can be completed. The goal is not to reduce the Senate Secretary's hours, but to redistribute responsibilities so the office can function effectively within a 30-hour work week. The Faculty Senate President will work with the Senate Secretary to implement this redistribution.

This new protocol for producing and editing transcripts can be implemented on a trial basis over the next semester. During that period, senators can assess whether it meets their needs, and adjustments can be made to ensure the process serves the Senate and the faculty effectively.