

**REFERRAL**

**TO:** The University Committee on Academic Governance  
**FROM:** The Steering Committee  
**SUBJECT:** Request to Consider Changing the Process for Electing the Steering Committee/Faculty Senate Chairperson and Vice Chairperson  
**DATE:** September 7, 2021

Section 3.3.2.1. of the *Bylaws for Academic Governance* says, in relevant part:

The Chairperson of the Faculty Senate will be selected by all voting members of the Faculty Senate from a slate made up of the at-large faculty representatives sitting on The Steering Committee. The at-large members receiving the two highest vote totals will constitute the final slate. Voting will be conducted again, and the at-large member receiving the majority of the votes will be declared the Chairperson of the Faculty Senate and the other candidate will be declared the Vice Chairperson.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, at-large members of the Steering Committee and others have expressed frustration with this complicated and lengthy system for electing the chairperson and vice chairperson of the Steering Committee and the Faculty Senate.

Much of the concern is based on the fact that the bylaw, as written, prevents an at-large member from opting out of running for chairperson, as the “slate [is] made up of the at-large faculty representatives.” If an at-large member does not wish to be the chairperson but is elected anyway, their only option is to resign their role as an at-large member completely, as “the at-large member receiving the majority of the votes **will** be declared the Chairperson” (emphasis added).

This system has not always been the one in place. In 1965, the Steering Committee elected its own chairperson from among the five at-large members, and the Academic/Faculty Council/Senate was chaired by the university president.<sup>2</sup> This was the case until 2010, when the system was changed to the current one.<sup>3</sup>

The Steering Committee requests that the University Committee on Academic Governance consider whether the chairperson/vice chairperson election process should be changed such that 1) there is only one round of voting, 2) only at-large members who wish to be chairperson are on the ballot, and 3) there are provisions for electing a chairperson from among the at-large members in the event that no at-large member volunteers to run. Of course, the committee could also recommend that the system be changed in a different way or not at all.

Given that faculty senators would be affected by any change to the process, the Steering Committee would like Faculty Senate to review any recommendation from UCAG on this matter. As such, we would greatly appreciate if UCAG could deliver a report containing a recommendation to the Steering Committee by the end of Fall Semester 2021 so that any proposed changes could potentially be adopted before the next election.

---

<sup>1</sup> Michigan State University, *Bylaws for Academic Governance* (as amended April 16, 2021), [3.3.2.1.](#)

<sup>2</sup> See Michigan State University, *By-Laws of the Faculty Organization* (as amended December 1, 1965), [V.D.1.](#), [V.B.3.a.](#) and [V.C.2.a.](#)

<sup>3</sup> See Michigan State University, *Bylaws for Academic Governance* (as amended June 18, 2010), [3.3.2. et seq.](#)

**This document is a draft referral and is not effective until it is approved by the Steering Committee.**