

# The Faculty Organization of the University of Texas at Dallas

## A Brief Overview

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Formally, the most general governing legislation of the University of Texas at Dallas, as campus of the University of Texas system, is the University of Texas Regents' Rules. The Rules are generally consistent with academic tradition and logic, assigning responsibility for deciding what should be taught to those who know what can be taught and how to do it. They require that:

Subject to the authority of the Board of Regents and subject further to the authority that the Board has vested in the various administrative officers and subdivisions of the System, the faculties of the component institutions regularly offering instruction shall have a major role in the governance of their respective institutions in the following areas:

- 3.1 General academic policies and welfare.
- 3.2 Student life and activities.
- 3.3 Requirements of admission and graduation.
- 3.4 Honors and scholastic performance.
- 3.5 Approval of candidates for degrees.
- 3.6 Faculty rules of procedure.

The governance system at the University of Texas at Dallas reflects the traditional division of labor between faculty and the administration, in which the faculty has primary responsibility for curricular and academic policies and procedures and the administration has primary responsibility for the institution's financial and fiscal soundness and compliance with general law. The central policy-making body of the faculty is the Academic Senate. The Senate consists of not less than ten percent of the faculty, elected annually. The Senate-elect in turn elects the Speaker of the Faculty, the Secretary, and the Academic Council from among its members. The Senate operates mainly through a system of committees, appointed by the Senate on recommendation of the Senate Committee on Committees.

All Senate committees except the Committee on Qualifications of Academic Personnel also have students as non-voting members with privilege of the floor, nominated by the Student Government. Representatives of Student Government also sit in the Senate and with the Academic Council, again with privilege of the floor but not voting. It has generally been understood that the Senate and any Senate committee can co-opt additional members or call in additional people to discuss specific matters as they might see fit. It is further understood that with the exception of the deliberations of the Committee on Qualifications of Academic Personnel, all committee and Senate meetings are, in principle, open.

The Academic Council is the agenda committee of the Senate. It is explicitly not a policy making or decision making body. It is not an executive committee or council. It has no other stated function than to prepare the agenda for the meetings of the Senate. It does not have the power to veto an item proposed for the Senate, although it may

consider that the item is too unclear or otherwise not ready for Senate discussion and refer it back to its author or, alternatively (and more often) to an appropriate Senate committee for consideration and advice. The agenda committee for the Council consists of the Speaker, the Secretary, and the President. A vote of any two of the three is sufficient to call a meeting of the Council.

Normally, meetings of the Council are held on the first Wednesday of every month. The Senate meets every third Wednesday. Meetings of the Senate and Council are chaired by the President of the University. In the absence of the President, they are chaired by the Provost. In the absence of the Provost, they are chaired by the Speaker of the Faculty. President and Provost need not be present to have a meeting or enact legislation. There is, however, provision in the bylaws of the Senate for a Senate Caucus, at which administrators may not be present. A Caucus cannot decide policy, however. Its purpose is to provide a venue for more than the usual degree of openness in expressing faculty concerns (although the faculty is not notably reticent in meetings where the administrators are present), and/or to formulate issues that might be voted on in a Senate meeting.

The President, Provost, and other administrators at the rank of Dean and above cannot be elected to Senate and cannot vote in Senate meetings, although by policy and rule Senate meetings are always open. They are welcome to attend and they have the privilege of the floor.

### **Senate Committees**

In 1975-76, when UT Dallas just began operating its full range of undergraduate programs, the various faculty committees then in existence were invited to write their own charges for the future. This resulted in many contradictions and no provisions for overall coordination. The difficulties were pointed out in the first accreditation self-study (1975-77), and the university was in consequence required (not unwillingly) to remedy the situation. A special subcommittee (Murray J. Leaf and John Kimmeldorf) was appointed to systematically rewrite the charges. This was done in 1978-79, taking the University of California as a model. The basic idea in the California systems is that the Senate committees are executive committees, not merely investigative or advisory committees. Each Senate committee was to make decisions on specific matters within its purview and was to have a responsible university official who was understood to act on the decisions of the committee without, normally, a need for higher-level administrative approval. Although this understanding has not always been consistently recognized in the intervening years, it was reaffirmed and formalized in memorandum of understanding with the Administration approved by the Academic Senate in 2001-2002.

In principle, subordinate bodies in the governance system act for the superior faculty bodies and are charged to make decisions on behalf of the faculty so long as they are sure those decisions are consistent with the policies of the faculty. The Senate acts for the faculty as a whole, the Senate Committees act for the Senate. If a committee membership is not sure that the action they contemplate is consistent with established policy, or if they think there is a problem in established policy they cannot themselves resolve, they can refer the question to the Senate. It is a corollary of this that the Senate may identify policy issues in the action of a faculty committee that the committee itself does not recognize, and take charge of the issue. Generally, however, the Senate recognizes the need to defer

to its committees who, as a rule, are better able to look closely at complex matters and discuss the full range of options that might be taken in dealing with them.

In the same way that the Senate may overrule the policy view of a Senate committee, the General Faculty may overrule the policy view of the Senate. The bylaws provide that faculty may, by petition, call a meeting and set the policy itself. There are also two annual meetings of the General Faculty, at which it may pass legislation. In practice, however, the annual meetings thus far have been used only for an annual “state of the university” address by the President and a general discussion of university issues and welfare in relation to it.

Committees of the Senate are divided between standing committees, whose charges have no time limit, and committees that may be formed from time to time with specific time-bound charges. There are now thirteen Senate standing committees. They are the Advisory Committee on Research, Chancellor’s Outstanding Teaching Award Committee, Committee on Academic Integrity, the Committee on Committees, the Committee on the Core Curriculum, the Committee on Distance Learning, the Committee on Educational Policy, the Committee on Effective Teaching, Committee on Faculty Mentoring, Committee on Faculty Standing and Conduct, Library Committee, Committee on Qualifications of Academic Personnel, and the Committee on Student Scholarships.

Committee activity is coordinated by the common application of general university policies, senate oversight, council routing of actions prior to senate consideration, and a system of overlapping memberships through ex-officio appointments.

Although the Council on Undergraduate Education is not a formal committee of the Senate and is not appointed through the Senate, it acts for the Senate in certifying that the policies and procedures of the faculty (i.e.: the catalog) have been carried out in certifying students for the granting of degrees. This is based on Senate action initially taken in about 1980, when the Senate formally approved the procedure for degree approval that the Council of Masters (predecessor to the Council on Undergraduate Education) had developed and so designated them. The Council on Graduate Education was established by Senate action and Administrative agreement in 2002.

The two Senate committees with the heaviest workload and the most crucial role in the overall operation of the university are the Committee on Qualifications of Academic Personnel and the Committee on Educational Policy.

The charge of the Committee on Qualifications is to review all recommendations concerning hiring, promotion, and tenure that originate from university search committees and ad hoc review committees. Their explicit responsibility is to assure that the recommendations are consistent with the evidence and with university policy. This is understood to imply that they must also be concerned that the policies (standards) are applied or interpreted equitably across the several schools, and also with the general practicality and fairness of those policies. If CQ finds a problem in the policies, they are to bring it to the attention of the Senate.

The UTD rules for promotion and tenure require *ad hoc* committees to weigh all sides of a case, rather than to function as advocates. Similarly, although the membership is by rule drawn from all the schools, the members usually charge themselves anew each year not act as representatives of their respective schools but as representatives of the faculty as a whole. By tradition, the CQ does not impose time limits or other constraints on its discussions of recommendations and tries to work for a consensus assessment, even if

this is ultimately reflected in what looks formally like a close vote. It is an extraordinarily time consuming activity, and by and large has served the university consistently and well. Unlike all other committees, the CQ transmits its specific recommendations to the administration directly and in confidence, not to the Senate. It is, however, also charged with making an annual report to the Senate that describes its actions in general terms and identifies any policy issues that might have arisen. The Provost makes a similar annual report on the administration's responses to these recommendations.

The charge of the Committee on Educational Policy includes the biennial review and revision of the university graduate and undergraduate catalogs. Since the work involved in this process has never been otherwise parceled out and routinized and since the Texas Coordinating Board has taken it upon itself to require that courses in the catalog must be offered within two years or be withdrawn, this has come to involve a virtual biennial redesign of the curriculum, requiring extensive negotiations with the various programs. The CEP has established a calendar for catalog review as part of its bylaws. This process now involves a systematic relationship between CEP and the Graduate Council for courses, and the Committee on Undergraduate Education for undergraduate courses. These committees receive and coordinated catalog revisions from the various deans and/or programs, reviews them, often have to go back to the authors with problems that emerge, review the general rules and boilerplate to be sure it is consistent with the program information and vice versa. CEP then finally pulls the whole thing together to present to the Senate for approval. The by-laws of the CEP include the main guidelines for the catalog approval process. In principle, once the Senate approves the copy, it should not be altered by the administration except within parameters the Senate itself sets.

The Committee on Faculty Standing and Conduct is concerned with disciplinary matters regarding individual faculty, complaints about such matters by faculty, and policies and principles concerning such matters.

The Library committee advises the library administration on faculty needs, including acquisitions policy. It is also, at present, charged with bringing the various bodies and offices that provide such advice into a single decision making system.

### **University Committees**

In addition to the Senate committees, there are sixteen standing University committees that have faculty members, appointed by the Senate on the recommendation of the Committee on Committees. In general, these are set up in response to either a system, state, or federal mandate and are in some way or another concerned with compliance with regulations or law. Initially, the Senate was not greatly involved in constructing their charges. Since about 1995 this has changed, and several Senate initiatives have been the basis of some notable improvement in coordination. The most important example is the creation of the University Safety and Security Council, to provide a forum for coordinating all the various offices and committees concerned with safety, security, and the campus environment.

### **Three Plus Three Committees**

The University also often makes use of ad hoc "three plus three committees" (three administrators and three faculty representatives) to formulate policy on specific and usually controversial issues that cross the boundary between administrative and faculty concerns.

### **Schools and School Bylaws**

While the basic governance structure was set out in 1979 and the division of labor it entails between administration and faculty has been reasonably effective at the level of the general University ever since, the same has not been true at the levels of schools and departments. Accordingly, in 2002 the Senate and the Administration formally required all the schools of the University to write by-laws consistent with general university policy. The Senate also provided guidelines indicating the general elements such guidelines should contain (if their faculty agreed) and pointing out the policies that they needed to comply with. The Schools of Economics, Politics, and Policy Sciences, Brain and Behavioral Sciences, and Arts and Humanities have completed their by-laws and had them formally approved by the Academic Senate and Administration. The School of Management has bylaws, but has not rewritten to conform to the university guidelines or submitted them for Senate approval. Natural Sciences and Mathematics has established a group to write bylaws, but has made little or no progress. The result, apart from NS&M, appears to be a notable improvement in the general sense that faculty and administration are working together rather than at cross-purposes.

### **Handbook of Operating Procedures**

The authority and organization of the governance system is summarized in Title III, Chapter 21, of the UTD Handbook of Operating Procedures.

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