

BYLAWS OF THE ACU STAFF SENATE

ARTICLE I. Name of Organization.

The name of the organization shall be the Abilene Christian University Staff Senate hereinafter referred to as Staff Senate. The employees represented are employees of Abilene Christian University who devote at least two-thirds (2/3) of their employed time in a staff position, are not currently represented by the Faculty Senate, and are not considered administrators, including president, vice presidents, assistant or associate vice presidents, provost, assistant or associate provost, deans, assistant or associate deans, general counsel or assistant to the president.

ARTICLE II. Mission and Function

Section 1. Mission

The Staff Senate is organized as a voice to foster a spirit of a unified staff community by encouraging the exchange of ideas and concerns in keeping with the mission of the University. As such, the Staff Senate will seek to promote a positive and collaborative work environment that is committed to assessing, prioritizing, and communicating staff needs.

Section 2. Function

- A. The Staff Senate is authorized to function in a study and advisory capacity to address issues brought before it by the University community.
- B. The Staff Senate shall serve as an advisory body to the University president regarding issues affecting ACU staff by formulating, coordinating or recommending enhancements or priorities on behalf of University staff. Any proposal or position paper regarding University policy or operations that is passed by the Staff Senate shall be presented in writing to the president of the University. The Staff Senate shall communicate the president's timely responses through the most appropriate means.
- C. The Staff Senate shall seek opportunities to promote a positive, collaborative work environment among all employees at ACU.

ARTICLE III. Staff Senate Membership.

Section 1. Staff Senate Eligibility.

Anyone employed in a staff position (as classified by Human Resources) at Abilene Christian University who has completed one full year of continuous service to the University, who is employed at least half-time (part-time employees are not eligible), who has not served on the Staff Senate within the last two years, who is not currently represented by the Faculty Senate, and is not employed as an administrator, including president, vice presidents, assistant or

associate vice presidents, provost, assistant or associate provost, deans, assistant or associate deans, or assistant to the president, shall be eligible for membership in the Staff Senate. However, part-time staff employees, regardless of hire date, shall be eligible to nominate and vote for candidates to the Staff Senate.

Section 2. Staff Senate Representation.

The Senate shall be comprised of twenty senators. An annual review of the number of staff members currently employed shall be conducted to determine whether additional senators are necessary.

In addition to the twenty elected senators, the Past Chair will serve as an ex-officio member of the Senate. The Past Chair will be able to participate in discussions of the Senate and will serve as an advisor to the Executive Committee, but he/she will not be a voting member of the Senate.

Section 3. Staff Senate Term of Office.

Senators shall serve two-year terms, and elections shall be held for one-half the senate seats each year. Terms begin on the first day of June and end on the last day of May to coincide with the University fiscal year.

In the first year (2007-2008) of the existence of the Staff Senate, ten senators (five exempt and five non-exempt) shall serve for one year to establish an orderly rotation of representation. Thereafter, terms shall be staggered with elections conducted annually for one-half of the Staff Senate seats. Senators may not serve sequential full terms; after serving one full term a Senator must sit out one full term (two years) before becoming eligible for re-election. An elected senator whose employment classification group changes during his/her term of office shall continue to serve in the same senate seat for the remainder of the term.

Section 4. Staff Senators' Duties and Time Allowances.

- A. Senators shall attend all meetings of the Staff Senate. When a senator is unable to attend a Staff Senate meeting, the senator must notify the Chair.
- B. Senators shall serve on committees as members, may be elected as chair of committees, and may be elected as an officer of the Staff Senate.
- C. Senators shall be available to their constituents and shall indicate how they may be contacted. They shall be willing to hear concerns, to receive information and suggestions, and to communicate these effectively to the Staff Senate. In turn, senators must keep their constituents informed of the work of the Staff Senate and matters that the University administration communicates to the Staff Senators. The Staff Senate will not hear grievances. University employees wishing to file grievances must follow the established procedures as outlined through Human Resources (see Code of Ethics, Anti-Harassment, or Whistle-Blower procedures).

- D. Senators shall be allowed a reasonable amount of time by their supervisors to devote to Staff Senate meetings and work as part of their normal working duties. Senators must discuss the demands for Staff Senate work and/or assignments with their supervisor in advance of their election to the Senate to get approval to serve.

Section 5. Staff Senate Alternates.

- A. Alternates shall be nominated individuals who receive the next highest vote count of an employment classification group in an election.
- B. If a member of the Staff Senate resigns or is unable to serve for any reason, the unexpired term shall be filled from among those nominated but not elected at the last election in the order of the highest number of votes received. Alternates shall serve the remainder of the term and be designated as a member of the Staff Senate.
- C. Alternates are eligible for reelection the following full term.

Section 6. Provisions for Removing a Senator from Office.

- A. Any senator who is absent for four regular and/or special called meetings of the Staff Senate during the year shall automatically be removed and notified in writing. An alternate, as defined above, shall serve the remainder of the removed senator's term.
- B. In all other cases of removal, a written petition signed by a majority of the senators initiates the process for a vote to remove a sitting member of the Staff Senate. If the removal process is approved by vote of the eligible senators, then an alternate shall serve the remainder of the removed senator's term and be designated as a member of the Staff Senate.

ARTICLE IV. Staff Senate Elections.

Section 1. Election Process.

- A. Each senator shall be elected by secret ballot for a two-year term.
- B. Once elected, each senator shall represent and serve all staff.
- C. The terms shall be linked to even and odd years so that half of the positions of the Staff Senate will stand for election each year.
- D. Election of Staff Senators shall be held in the spring, with terms beginning on June 1. The election process must end in time to allow adequate notice to new senators in order to attend the first Staff Senate meeting.
- E. In the initial year (2007-2008) of the Staff Senate, Senators chosen by lot to serve an initial one-year term will be eligible to be re-elected for a new two-year term. The

Chair of the Staff Senate shall determine by lot which members will serve the initial one-year terms.

Section 2. Vacancies.

Staff Senate positions that become vacant between annual elections shall be filled by alternates (see Article III, Section 5).

Section 3. Nominations.

Any eligible Staff member may nominate candidates for the Staff Senate. The Nominations and Elections Committee is responsible for verifying eligibility of nominees. If the minimum number of candidates is not reached through the nominations process, the Committee shall solicit further nominees from within the respective classification group(s).

Section 4. Procedures for Elections.

- A. The Nominations and Elections Committee, of which the Executive Committee Chair Elect and Corresponding Secretary shall be members, shall solicit nominations and verify in writing each nominee's eligibility and willingness to run and serve. The Committee shall inform all nominees of attendance requirements, time commitments, and the fact that service on the Staff Senate is voluntary with no additional compensation.
- B. The Nominations and Elections Committee shall prepare and distribute ballots adhering to the principles of the secret ballot process. There is no maximum number of candidates.
- C. At least three members of the Nominations and Elections Committee will count the ballots. A report of the ballot count will be prepared, certified, and submitted to the Senate Chair no later than five working days after the end of voting. In the event of a tie vote, the Nominations and Elections Committee shall prepare a run-off ballot, repeat the election process, re-certify, and present the results to the Senate Chair no later than five working days after the end of voting. This report will be presented to the full Senate at the following meeting.
- D. Any election challenges or disputes must be presented to the Staff Senate Chair within seven working days of the end of voting. The Staff Senate Chair shall investigate all election disputes and determine what, if any, irregularities occurred during the election process. The Chair shall take whatever remedial action necessary to settle any dispute.
- E. All ballots shall be sealed and held for thirty days by the Corresponding Secretary. If no allegations of election disputes or errors are brought forward, the ballots shall be destroyed. The Corresponding Secretary shall store all remaining records (final certifications, approvals, notifications, correspondence, disputes, etc.) concerning the outcome of the election process with other archived materials found in the Guidelines for the Nominations and Election Committee.

- F. Notification to campus staff employees of the results of the election shall be made by the end of April based on the communication procedures found in the Guidelines for the Nominations and Election Committee.

ARTICLE V. Staff Senate Officers.

Section 1. Titles and Membership of the Executive Committee.

- A. Officers of the Staff Senate shall be elected by the Staff Senate. The Officers of the Staff Senate shall be the Chair, Chair Elect, Past Chair, Recording Secretary/Historian, Corresponding Secretary, and Treasurer. These officers will make up the Executive Committee of the Staff Senate.
- B. Any Senator who is an employee in good standing as defined by the Human Resources Department shall be eligible to serve as an officer of the Staff Senate with the exception of the office of Chair and Chair Elect who shall have been employed by Abilene Christian University for at least three consecutive years. However, if no employee with at least three years is nominated, an employee with less than three years consecutive service may serve as Chair or Chair Elect.
- C. The Past Chair will also serve as an advisor to the Executive Committee, but they will not be a voting member of the committee.

Section 2. Election of the Executive Committee.

- A. In the June meeting, the Chair will call for nominations to be made from the floor for Executive Committee vacancies. Verification of good standing from Human Resources and supervisor approval shall take place before the July meeting.
- B. In the July meeting, Executive Committee vacancies shall be filled from the eligible nominated Senators. Notification to campus staff employees of the results of the election shall be made by mid-August.
- C. Replacement of an officer shall be by appointment made by the voting members of the Executive Committee from eligible Staff Senators. The appointed person will serve out the vacated term.
- D. Replacement of an officer would be necessary if:
- An officer no longer holds a staff position (as defined by Human Resources).
 - An officer leaves the University.
 - An officer is not a staff member in good standing (as defined by Human Resources).
 - An officer requests removal for personal or health reasons.

Section 3. Terms of Office of the Executive Committee.

- A. Executive Committee members will serve a one-year term with the exception of the Chair Elect, which will serve the first year of a two-year term as Chair Elect and the second year as Chair.
- B. Officers may serve up to two consecutive one-year terms.

Section 4. Quorum of Executive Committee.

For purposes of these guidelines, a quorum of the Executive Committee exists if the number of Executive Committee members present exceeds one-half of the total number on the Executive Committee.

Section 5. Duties of Members of the Executive Committee.

- A. Chairperson –
 - Shall preside at all meetings of the Executive Committee and of the Staff Senate.
 - Shall bring such issues before the Staff Senate as may be deemed reasonable and worthy of consideration.
 - Shall notify Staff Senate and campus staff employees of election of new officers within one week of elections.
 - Shall oversee the Staff Senate budget.
 - Shall serve as Past Chair for additional year upon completion of Chair term.
 - Shall keep an open line of communication with the President, and have the option of inviting the President and/or the Senior Leadership Team to participate with the Staff Senate.
 - Shall speak at a Board of Trustees meeting, and provide an update on the Senate and staff on campus.
- B. Chair Elect –
 - Shall perform the duties of the Chairperson in the Chairperson's absence.
 - Shall chair any special committees as requested by the Chair.
 - Shall work with the Staff Senate Communication Committee to post meeting minutes and to keep website current and accurate.
 - Shall work with the Corresponding Secretary during the nominating, balloting, and finalizing process of the election of Staff Senate members.
- C. Recording Secretary/Historian –
 - Shall maintain accurate records of all meetings of the Executive Committee and of the Staff Senate.
 - Shall be responsible for keeping an accurate account of member attendance at Executive Committee and Staff Senate meetings.
 - Shall keep an account of the year's activities and incorporate this report into the permanent history of the Staff Senate.

- Shall serve on the Communications Committee and work with the Chair to distribute minutes as required in Article VI, Section 8 of the Staff Senate Bylaws.

D. Corresponding Secretary –

- Shall prepare all correspondence with external audiences on behalf of the Staff Senate as delegated by the Executive Committee and maintain a file of such correspondence.
- Shall confer with nominees to the Staff Senate or Executive Committee as to their willingness to serve once nominations have taken place.
- Shall, along with the Chair Elect, distribute and collect election ballots, tally votes, and present results to the Executive Committee for reporting to the Staff Senate and campus staff employees.
- Shall be responsible for notifying Staff Senators of meeting dates, times and place and the deadline for submittal of agenda items.

E. Treasurer –

- Shall be responsible for the financial aspects of Staff Senate functions.
- Shall operate under the accounting procedures followed by Abilene Christian University.
- Shall be responsible for monthly budget reports to the Staff Senate and for an annual financial statement.

ARTICLE VI. Meetings of the Staff Senate.

Section 1. Schedule of Meetings.

- A. The Abilene Christian University Staff Senate shall meet on a monthly basis from June to May of the following year.
- B. At the first regular meeting of the Staff Senate in June, the Staff Senate shall establish regular meeting times. All meetings, whether regular or special, shall be held during normal university working hours Monday through Friday. Meetings of the Staff Senate shall not exceed ninety minutes in duration. The length of a meeting may be extended by a majority vote of representatives present and voting.
- C. If the Staff Senate Chair and Executive Committee have no new agenda items or proposals, they reserve the right not to hold a meeting, but they must give notification of the cancellation to Senators three working days prior to the scheduled meeting.

Section 2. Quorum.

- A. A quorum shall consist of a simple majority (more than one half) of the Staff Senate or committee membership. Neither the Staff Senate nor its committees shall conduct business without a quorum present.

- B. In the absence of a quorum, (1) the Chair may only make announcements of an informative nature; (2) any business transacted shall be null and void; and (3) the Executive Committee may convene a special meeting to consider time-sensitive issues that require immediate action.

Section 3. Special Meetings.

Special meetings may be called by the University President, the Staff Senate Executive Committee or at the request of a quorum of the Staff Senate membership. One working day notice must be given of any special meeting. Without prior notice, the University President may call an emergency meeting at any time. Depending upon circumstances, notice may be given at Staff Senate meetings, by campus mail, telephone, e-mail, website, or the most appropriate means. Only business specified in the call of the special meeting may be conducted.

Section 4. Meeting Attendees.

The Staff Senate Chair/Executive Committee may invite, with advance notice to the Staff Senate, other members of the University community or the general public to designated meetings as informative resources.

Section 5. Voting.

- A. Only elected Senators may vote on issues brought before the Senate.
- B. Unless a roll call vote or vote by secret ballot is requested by a majority of the voting Senators, voting on motions and issues brought before the Staff Senate shall be by voice or by show of hands. The Recording Secretary will record all roll call votes in the meeting minutes.
- C. Each Senator is entitled to one vote.
- D. Senators are not allowed to use proxy votes.
- E. A simple majority (more than one half) vote of the Senators present and voting shall decide a question. The Chair shall vote only to break tie votes.

Section 6. Floor Privileges.

Only Senators may introduce proposals, measures, and resolutions on the Staff Senate floor. Persons who are not members of the Staff Senate may be granted the right to speak, but not to vote, on matters before the Staff Senate. When a request is made for this privilege, the Chair shall ask the Staff Senate for objections and, hearing none, shall grant permission to speak. If objections are raised, the privilege shall be extended only by majority vote of the Senators present.

Section 7. Agenda.

- A. Meetings of the Staff Senate shall have an agenda that includes the time and place of

the meetings, the order of business, and copies of any substantive proposals. The Executive Committee shall set the agenda. However, items may be added to the agenda at the meeting if approved by a majority of the Senators present. The Corresponding Secretary shall solicit agenda items and set a deadline of seven working days prior to the next meeting of the Staff Senate for receiving agenda items. The agenda shall be distributed two working days prior to a regular meeting by e-mail and other appropriate means to the campus staff employees.

- B. The Executive Committee shall: (1) receive proposals for Staff Senate action or other presentations to the Staff Senate from any Staff Senate committee or Senator, from any individual Staff, or from the University President or his/her designee; (2) use an Agenda Request web form, including the following requirements for information submitted with a proposal: (a) the name and contact information of the campus staff employee presenting the proposal as well as date submitted, (b) a one-line caption describing or naming the proposal, (c) the reasons for submitting the proposal, such as goals and objectives, problem to solve, etc., (d) details of proposal, and (e) backup documentation or materials, when appropriate; (3) refer all substantive proposals for Staff Senate action to appropriate committees for review prior to placing them on the agenda unless the Executive Committee is prepared to address an issue and present it to the Staff Senate; (4) include on the agenda of a regular meeting as soon as possible all items presented from various sources; (5) set the agenda so that business may be addressed in a meeting of reasonable duration; (6) if necessary, advise the Staff Senate of the need for a special meeting; and (7) respond to the submitted proposals within a reasonable amount of time, considering the circumstance of the proposal.

Section 8. Minutes.

Minutes shall be made available to the Staff Senate within a timely manner after each regular meeting. After any corrections and/or additions and approval at the next regular meeting, the Recording Secretary shall electronically distribute copies of the minutes to the campus staff employees within a timely manner. A permanent copy of the minutes shall be kept in the University archives. Archived minutes of Staff Senate and Executive Committee meetings will be maintained on the Staff Senate website indefinitely.

Section 9. Order of Business.

The order of business for meetings shall be set forth in the agenda. Unless modified by the Chair, the order of business shall be: (1) call to order and establishment of a quorum; (2) approval of the previous meeting's minutes; (3) committee reports; (4) unfinished business; (5) new business; (6) miscellaneous (comments, announcements, round table items, tributes, etc.); and (7) adjournment.

Section 10. Parliamentary Authority.

The rules contained in the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* shall govern the Staff Senate and its committees in all cases to which they are applicable except when they are not consistent with any special rules of order the Staff Senate may adopt.

Section 11. Forum Meeting.

Annually there shall be an open forum of the University Staff. The Staff Senate Chair shall invite available University administrators to be speakers and answer questions from the floor.

ARTICLE VII. Staff Senate Committees.

Section 1. Formation, Membership and Duties of Committees.

- A. The formation of a committee shall be approved by a majority vote of the Staff Senate. Committees shall act as forums for study and consideration of issues and activities and shall make recommendations to the Senate. All proposals and recommendations of committees must be made to the Executive Committee at the monthly meeting and approved by a majority of Senate vote.
- B. Members of a committee may consist of both members and non-members of the Senate as long as they are campus staff employees. Makeup of the committees shall consist of no more than one-third of non-Senate members, and committees must be chaired by a Senator. All committee members must indicate their willingness to serve by notice to the chair of the committee. The Executive Committee and the Nominations and Elections Committee shall determine the manner by which campus staff employees are chosen (elected or appointed) for committees.
- C. Each committee member is responsible to attend meetings as scheduled by the committee chair. If a member does not attend three or more consecutive meetings without notifying the chairperson, the committee shall assume the member has relinquished his/her position and shall notify the former member of his/her removal.
- D. Each committee shall have a chairperson who will be responsible for the budgetary, administrative and project coordination of all committee functions. The committee chair shall also preside over all committee meetings and be responsible for the general report of committee activities to the monthly Senate meeting.
- E. Request for expenditures from the Staff Senate budget must be approved by the majority of the Senate.

Section 2. Standing Committees.

The Staff Senate shall elect the following standing committees:

- A. Nominating and Elections Committee — to facilitate the nomination and election process for the Staff Senate, including publicizing the opportunities, receiving nominations, and tabulating the election results.
- B. Communication Committee — to focus on how ACU communicates with the staff, to

coordinate Town Hall meetings, and to oversee the Staff Senate website.

- C. Benefits and Advocacy — to represent the interests of staff members on the University-wide Benefits Committee and to make recommendations to the Senate regarding issues of concern to staff members.
- D. Service Committee — to encourage staff to be involved in volunteer service opportunities, as well as focusing on efforts to serve the staff of the University through annual staff events and coordinating the Senate's involvement with those events.
- E. Development and Recognition Committee — to focus on recognizing significant events and achievements with the staff, such as years of service awards, personal and professional achievements. This committee will also facilitate the selection of the John C. Stevens award each year.

Section 3. Ad Hoc Committees.

The Staff Senate shall create ad hoc committees as the need arises. Ad hoc committees shall have broad representation and will include members of the staff who are directly involved in the issue being studied.

ARTICLE VIII. Amendments to the By-Laws.

Section 1. Proposals to Amend.

A proposal to amend the By-Laws may be made by (1) a majority vote of the Staff Senate, (2) by a petition signed by not less than 10% of the campus staff employees represented by the Staff Senate, or (3) by the University president and general counsel following their determination that some portion(s) of the By-Laws are in conflict with Texas state law or university policies.

Section 2. Publication of Amendments.

Proposals for amendments must be made available to the Staff at least ten working days before the issue comes up for a vote in the Staff Senate.

Section 3. Approval of Amendments.

Proposed amendments shall require approval of a 2/3 vote of current Staff Senators casting ballots.

ARTICLE IX. Budget for Staff Senate.

- A. The University may, in its discretion, establish and fund an operating budget at the beginning of each fiscal year to meet reasonable operating expenses of the Staff

Senate.

- B. The Staff Senate Treasurer shall maintain this account in cooperation with the Chairperson and shall maintain all transaction records. Permanent storage for all records shall be with the Staff Senate archived materials.
- C. Request for expenditures from the Staff Senate budget must be approved by the majority of the Senate. At all times, details of expenditures made on behalf of the Staff Senate shall be available for review and audit.

ARTICLE X. Legal Status of Staff Senate.

The Staff Senate is not a separate legal entity apart from the University and may not enter into any legally binding contracts on behalf of itself or the University without the University's prior written approval.

*Bylaws changes were voted on and passed in the November 2017 Staff Senate meeting. This is the updated document.