



**University Senate
Ad Hoc Committee on Senate Meeting Web Streaming**

**Report to the University Senate
April 2017**

Charge:

Consider the feasibility and desirability of video recording and live web streaming University Senate meetings, and archiving those video recordings online for later viewing. Include in discussions aspects of the issues of transparency, technology, costs, benefits, audience, need, personal privacy of participants, etc. Present arguments both for and against the streaming and archiving. Respond to Senate Executive Committee by February 2017.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Senate Meeting Web Streaming met and discussed this issue three times (10 June, 23 August, and 23 September, 2016) and prepared a report for consideration by the University Senate at a committee-of-the-whole discussion on October 14, 2016. A final report is due to the Senate Executive Committee by February 2017.

Issues:

The committee identified three issues pertinent to this charge: live web streaming of Senate meetings to facilitate 1) off-site viewing that may include 2) participation and voting; and 3) recording (video and/or audio) of Senate meetings for archiving and later access. Currently, Rutgers University Senate meetings are audio recorded, but these files are not archived. In its deliberations, the committee has been concerned only with the potential for live streaming and video/audio recording of Rutgers Senate meetings. Issues associated with off-site viewing and participation require separate consideration that is outside the scope of this charge.

Background:

By way of background, the committee examined the websites of other university or faculty senates that utilize video and/or audio recordings at meetings. In addition, the Senate leadership of fellow Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA, formerly the Committee on Institutional Cooperation) member institutions were polled for practices at their schools.

For institutions that utilize video or audio recordings, the committee observed that the quality and method of recording and distribution varies greatly. Some sites include well-done, archived video and audio. Recordings at some other institutions are not accessible (i.e., non-functioning web address or password protected), or are of poor quality. Practices

at some institutions are very comprehensive and include live streaming, posting of audio and video recordings and transcripts, and capture of recordings at off-site venues. At other institutions, only speakers at the podium are recorded (comments from the floor are not captured); pre-meeting activities or breaks in the meeting, once recorded, are not edited out; archives are not complete; or only audio is recorded for later access. YouTube or Adobe Connect are used by some of these institutions.

Feedback from Senate leadership in BTAA member institutions (Table 1) also indicates that recording or livestreaming practices vary. To summarize, those that do not fully use these technologies noted a lack of perceived demand, or the necessary facilities or technology. Other concerns include capturing of unfortunate events (such as extreme protests, a streaker, or health crises) during real time, and the need for a formal policy (as well as labor) if editing of recordings is required. Several institutions archive audio recordings only on the web, which may or may not be of good quality. The Penn State Senate, which includes Senators from 24 campuses, uses Polleverywhere (audience response system) and Mediasite (video platform) to capture remote participation from off-site venues. University of Minnesota used to make live streaming available for any computer, but abandoned the practice because so few senators used it.

Table 1. Feedback from BTAA institution Senate leadership:

Institution	Summary
Ohio State	Ohio State audio records Senate meetings and archives them on the Senate website. There is no real demand for video streaming of regular Senate meetings, although the annual addresses by the president or provost are live streamed.
Penn State	University Faculty Senate meetings have been streamed and recorded (via Mediasite) and archived (available online) the past several years. The Senate includes senators from 24 campuses, so the streaming permits senators to participate remotely from their campus or elsewhere if needed. Other individuals who are not affiliated with the Senate can view the proceedings as well. Senators who cannot attend the meetings in person can vote on action items using Polleverywhere. Mediasite (video platform) and Polleverywhere (audience response system) work well.
Purdue	Senate meetings are not video recorded. A low quality (no microphone) audio recording is made, but the voices of Senators cannot be heard.
University of Iowa	Senate meetings are not live streamed or recorded at this point, partly due to location. The Senate meets in a building and room that are over 100 years old, the former Iowa Senate chambers when Iowa City was the capitol. The technology that would support live streaming is not installed, so portable equipment would need to be brought in for every meeting.
University of	The Senate looked into this about a year ago, and in the end decided

Institution	Summary
Indiana	<p>that web streaming or video recording wasn't the direction they wanted to go. Drawbacks that made them cautious about live broadcasts (other than cost):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the meetings are public, there is risk that something might go horribly awry (e.g. a stalker, an extreme protest, health emergency, or other mishap) and go viral so quickly that the communications staff couldn't contain it. • Posting video after the meeting eliminates that risk, but any editing would require an editorial policy that might possibly get bogged down in issues of free speech, campus speech, what is edited out and why, etc. <p>Currently, University of Indiana posts the agendas, formal minutes, verbatim transcripts, and audio recordings on the Senate website. In addition, informal summaries are sent to all faculty via e-mail within a short time of the meeting, so there is a way they can keep casually abreast of proceedings without having to go beyond the click of an email message.</p>
University of Maryland	<p>University of Maryland audio records all Senate meetings and archives them in their library. The possibility of live streaming and video recording meetings was discussed during the Plan of Organization review process about 1 ½ years ago; but this was not enacted due to concerns about attendance at meetings and the impact on quorum. There were also concerns about the resources required.</p>
University of Michigan	<p>Senate meetings are not recorded, although reporters are permitted to audio record the meetings.</p>
University of Minnesota	<p>University of Minnesota has multiple campuses; Senate meetings are streamed to remote locations where Senators gather to participate. In years past it was possible to watch proceedings on any computer, but apparently so few did so that this practice was abandoned. Meeting recordings are not archived.</p>
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	<p>Senate meetings are not video recorded or live streamed.</p>

Deliberations:

The committee discussed these issues at length, and comments by committee members echo many of the concerns expressed above. In general, the committee realizes that video cameras are everywhere (even in cell phones), and in public venues there may not be an expectation of privacy. The committee also sees value, through live streaming and recording of Senate meetings, in letting others know what the Senate does and the impact it has within the University community. On the other hand, several on the committee do not feel that video streaming and recording of meetings are the only routes that serve these

purposes. For example, summaries posted to the Senate website and made available for Senators to distribute to constituencies may also be useful.

Regarding live streaming of meetings, positive aspects include providing more access to Camden and Newark Senators when meetings are held on campuses other than their own. Meetings held in New Brunswick can be live streamed via RUTV, for which there is little cost, but availability of this service is not guaranteed. Rutgers Camden Information Technology (RCIT) provides streaming services at no cost for Rutgers-sponsored events held on the Camden Campus. Similar arrangements for live streaming in Newark would need to be made. The committee agrees that access should be password controlled. Should streaming be made available, care must be taken to ensure quorum, and technology will be needed to capture discussion and voting (outside the scope of this charge), to which the Senate does not currently have access. Concerns over possible grandstanding, intimidation, lack of participation by Senators who feel that cameras violate their sense of personal privacy, or capture of unfortunate events were also expressed.

Archiving video and/or audio of Senate meetings poses other challenges. In addition to necessary technology, archival space, and additional labor and expertise, considerations regarding editing of footage to remove long pauses, breaks, etc. were discussed. A formal editorial policy (what gets left out and why) would be needed here. It is assumed that the Executive Secretary of the Senate will be gatekeeper of the process, and will be made responsible for arranging for recordings and archiving the proceedings. Finally, concerns were expressed that footage of Senate meetings could be captured and used out of context to support activities not sponsored by the Senate.

There will likely be costs to streaming and/or storing video online, the extent of which cannot fully be determined until after the senate body decides on the recommendations below. What is clear is that since the University Senate operates on an extremely conservative budget, a request will need to be made for additional funding to cover any additional costs.

Committee-of-the-whole discussion:

The Senate deliberated on this issue during a committee-of-the-whole discussion at its October 2016 meeting. Senators were asked to consider what purpose livestreaming and/or archiving serves the Rutgers University Senate, and if these technologies are a good solution for any perceived lack of transparency or impact, or if other suitable alternatives exist.

Discussion among Senators echoed many of the opinions expressed in committee. Comments in support of live streaming included enabling wider access by the University community to Senate processes and issues, and keeping current any Senators unable to attend a meeting in person. The debate on certain issues, such as mergers of academic units, might be of particular interest to others in the Rutgers community, and web streaming might be useful in those instances. Further, archived recordings of Senate

meetings permit Senators (and others) to revisit discussions and reports at a later date, although minutes serve a similar purpose.

Some feel that web streaming, recording, and archiving Senate proceedings increases “transparency.” It is not obvious if the need for transparency is simply satisfied by more public access to Senate proceedings, or if public access to voting and accountability to constituencies is desirable (which web streaming or recording will not capture). This has yet to be clarified.

Those more cautious about this use of technology in Senate meetings remarked on the chilling effect cameras may have on deliberations (especially for sensitive issues) and administrative reports, distractions, reduced attendance (and impact on quorum), possible legal issues, and conceivable lack of interest (Senate meetings may sometimes be perceived as “dull”). The body was reminded that the Senate handbook does not dictate that meetings be open to the University community and the general public, although the Senate does regularly allow open access to meetings, with some restrictions on participation in debate by non-Senators. In addition, Senators who prefer to observe proceedings from a remote location by definition cannot participate in debate and voting, which is at the heart of the Senate experience. In general, however, discussion captured from the committee-of-the-whole deliberation was generally in favor of adopting some form of web streaming and recording technology.

Resolution

Be It Resolved That the Rutgers University Senate endorses the following recommendations:

1. Live streaming (via RUTV) of Senate meetings at the New Brunswick location, where the camera remains on the dais or podium only, proceeds on a trial basis. In addition, unedited, recorded video/audio of Senate meetings, posted to a Senate archive, remain accessible to the University Community (where a Net ID and password are required), also on a trial basis.
2. After six months, and before recommending any future modifications to the process, the Senate Executive Committee shall review the effectiveness and practicality of web streaming and archiving, considering actual costs, any impact on attendance (Senators and non Senators), quorum, and perceived openness of Senate deliberations, and how often archived materials are accessed. This review may involve a survey of Senators in which they are asked if they or their constituents have utilized the web streaming or archives, and if they found it useful.

Ad Hoc Committee on Senate Meeting Web Streaming:

Gould, Ann (Chair) SEBS (F)
Chandler, Brandon Camden Staff

Cotter, Martha	At-Large NB (F)
DiVito, Timothy	Camden Staff
Durham, Jacqueline	RBHS Staff
Norville, William	Alumni
Samant, Asha	RSDM (F)
Swalagin, Ken	Executive Secretary of the Senate (non-voting)
Winkler, Matt	NB Staff