

Report of the University Structure and Governance Committee on Charge S-1906: Time Limits

Charge: Consider possible changes to the standard time limit for Senate meetings and make appropriate recommendations for such changes.

Background: Full Senate meetings are conducted to deliberate and vote on reports and other official Senate business. The work of the Senate is done in committee, but all votes and discussions are conducted at the main meeting in the view of the university and the public. Because any robust shared governance organization can often have multiple agenda items actively debated, the Senate must allow for their active debate. The Executive Committee has the right and responsibility to set time limits for debates of particular items as necessary, but has not generally found it necessary to do so. The Senate has operated for many years with a standard time limit of 2 ½ hours for Senate meetings. Whenever it proves impossible to complete scheduled business on the approved agenda within that time, the Chair asks for an extension to the time limits. This requires approval by a majority of those senators present which is normally, but not always, forthcoming.

Considerations: This charge recognizes that the Rutgers University Senate is responsible to the university community to ensure that all issues brought before it, are properly debated and discussed. Since the current default time limit of 2 ½ hours was adopted many years ago, the Senate has begun to follow a practice of inviting the President, the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the Chancellors, to present Administrative Reports. The need for an extension to the time now arises more often than before this was standard practice. The University Structure and Governance Committee considers that adoption of a standard default time limit of 3 hours per meeting would be beneficial. Meetings will still finish promptly when business is concluded, and if the business on the approved Agenda does not require extra time, meetings will not be extended. This change, however, should be sufficient to avoid most of the necessity for approved extensions that we have seen in recent years, while still being only a modest change approximately restoring the time given over to Administrative Reports. Extensions beyond three hours will still require explicit Senate approval. While there will always be situations in which not all senators can stay for three hours, this is already true of the current default period. Even so, it may be preferable that we be able to finish more often in less than an anticipated three hours, and have to extend time beyond what was expected on fewer occasions.

Resolution

Be it resolved that:

the Rutgers University Senate adopts a standard time limit of 3 hours for all Senate meetings, except when:

- it has approved an Agenda containing different time limits; or
- it has adopted by a majority vote a Resolution To Extend The Meeting to a specified time or by a specified period.

University Structure and Governance Committee

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