

# Rutgers University Senate

## Report of the University Structure and Governance Committee On Charge S-1309, Senate Election Procedures

**Charge S-1309 - Senate Election Procedures: Review election procedures used by the Senate, and, if appropriate, recommend improved procedures.**

**Background:** The Senate's internal election cycle occurs once per year in late April or early May. At that time, officers, Executive Committee members, and representatives to the Board of Governors and Board of Trustees. The Senate elects a chair and vice chair from the pool of eligible Senators. Each election is carried out by written ballot. The election for these officeholders occurs in real time at the last Senate meeting of the year (which is also the first meeting of the following-year's Senate).

**Considerations:** Senators who compete for the position of chair cannot run for vice chair if they lose the contest for chair. The elections of both positions occur simultaneously. The University Structure and Governance Committee (USGC) was asked to consider whether the Senate should adopt single transferable voting (also called ranked-choice voting). This model of voting enables the Senator who receives the second-highest number of votes in the chair's election to be among the candidates eligible for election as vice chair. Single transferable voting (STV) involves holding the election for one office, for example, chair, adding the unsuccessful candidate of that contest to the slate of candidates for the position of vice chair. STV would thus automatically add any unsuccessful candidate for chair to the slate for vice chair regardless of whether they wish to run in that election. STV, if adopted, would require a significant change in the election procedures. The USGC considered whether changing the current process would provide any benefit, as well as any potential costs, to the integrity of the election process, time, technology and resources.

The USGC discussed at length the merits and limitations of instituting STV for the Senate's internal election of leadership and board representative positions. We concluded that, for the purposes of the Senate's relatively uncomplicated election, STV is more complex than necessary, and that its disadvantages outweigh any possible benefit. For example, comparing the current election process with STV:

- STV requires a technician, as well as hardware and software which can malfunction.
- STV is not as easily verifiable as simply recounting paper ballots.

- Completion of STV ballots requires more instruction, and requires pre-printing of machine-readable media. Nominations from the floor are not easily accommodated with STV.
- If technology is used with STV, proper safeguards must be used to prevent individuals from voting more than once, or if equipment malfunctions occur, from being prevented from voting.

The USGC also agreed that it is not appropriate to assume that a candidate who runs for, but is not elected, chair would or should automatically be considered as an appropriate candidate for vice chair. Any candidate who does not prevail in the chair or vice chair election will be considered a candidate in the runoff election for at-large faculty member of the Executive Committee, and is therefore not closed out of Senate leadership positions.

Based upon our discussion and consideration of this charge and closely related issues, the USGC proposes the following recommendations.

**Conclusion:** Single Transferable Voting (STV) is not viable or desirable as a mechanism in the internal Senate leadership elections because of the potential problems and complexity it brings to the election process. Therefore we recommend against STV and instead endorse the current process for electing the chair and vice chair.

**Further Consideration:** USGC has requested and secured an additional charge from the Executive Committee. This charge investigates the eligibility and process for the election of Senate leadership. It is charge S-1501: Eligibility, Nomination, and Election of Senate Leadership and Board Representatives - Consider and make recommendations on the eligibility of candidates, and the nomination process and schedule for election of Senate officers, Executive Committee members, and board representatives. Respond by March 2015.

**University Structure and Governance Committee:**

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