Rutgers University Senate
Information Technology Committee (ITC)
Report and Recommendations on Charge S-2325
"Explore the Current Virtual Senate Meeting Format and Develop Best Practices and Meeting Format Recommendations."

February 21, 2025

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The Charge: S-2325:

Title:

Explore the Current Virtual Senate Meeting Format and Develop Best Practices and Meeting Format Recommendations.

Description:

The Senate should: explore the current format of the virtual meetings via the Zoom application to ensure it aligns with the defined Senate practices.

Part I. Background and Rationale of Charge:

The Senate shifted to meeting virtually in 2020 because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Senate handbook includes guidance for in-person Senate meetings, but not for virtual meetings.

The Senate voted to continue virtual meetings for the 2025/2026 Senate year. To support this decision and provide clear documentation, the ITC has developed a statement outlining its reasoning.
See: Appendix C.

Part II. Investigation

The Senate IT Committee (ITC) explored a variety of issues with regard to current methods and models for virtual senate meetings. Discussions included how best to utilize the existing technology to align with the defined Senate procedures and handbook, as well as considerations for best practices for virtual meetings.

A key challenge in this effort is the inseparable connection between technology and human behavior. The investigations and resulting recommendations aim to explore technological solutions while also recognizing the influence of human behavior.

The committee's investigation included conducting surveys, reviewing the Senate bylaws and handbook, exploring existing policies and practices, and familiarizing itself with the technological options of the current virtual application platform.

Part III. Investigation 1: Internal Survey

1. **Internal Survey**
   In December 2024, the committee drafted a Qualtrics survey designed to solicit the views of Senators regarding their preferred modality for Senate meetings, as well as their perspectives on how Zoom's chat function should be used during those meetings. ITC sent the survey to the full Senate via the "all_senators@email.rutgers.edu" email distribution list on December 13th, 2024,

along with three additional follow-up reminders prior to January 22nd, 2025. Ultimately 105 Senators (44% of the membership) responded to share their perspectives, which are summarized below; the full results can be found in Appendix I:

- ***A Strong Preference for Continuing Remote Meetings***: 63% of survey respondents preferred to continue to hold meetings fully online via Zoom. 29% expressed a desire to adopt a hybrid format in which the Senate would either alternate in-person and online meetings or have a combination of in-person and remote attendees for each meeting. Only 6% want to return to fully in-person meetings.

- ***Consensus and Disagreement on the Use of the Zoom Chat Function***: A large majority (71%) of respondents strongly disagreed with the idea of making the chat function inaccessible for the *entire* online meeting. A majority (59%) approved of making the chat function accessible *only during specific portions of the meetings* (not during speaker presentations, for example), while 28% disapproved of this. Finally, 42% of respondents indicated a preference for *always* having the chat function open (with 50% opposed to this idea).

- ***Mixed Views on the Use of the Zoom Q&A Function***: Survey respondents were provided with a link to a video demonstrating how the Zoom Q&A function can be used to moderate large meetings. A plurality (42%) expressed support for using this function during Senate meetings, while 24% opposed doing so. 34% of respondents indicated uncertainty, which suggests the utility of a future demonstration of this functionality to the members of the Senate.

The internal survey also included an open-ended question that gave Senators an opportunity to share additional thoughts. Approximately 1/5th of survey respondents did so; these responses can be broken down into the following general categories:

- ***Lack of Decorum in Chat Interactions***: some respondents noted what they described as "rude", "abusive", and "unprofessional" behavior in the chat feed that is not "respectful" of the views of others. One respondent urged the adoption of a code of conduct enforced by a chat room moderator who is empowered to "cut off people who are abusive" in the chat.

- ***Disruptiveness of the Chat Tool***: others described the chat tool as "disruptive" to meetings, particularly during speaker presentations. One observed that "there is no meaningful equivalent available during in-person meetings", where the ability to be recognized to speak is governed by Robert's Rules.

- ***Utility of the Chat Room***: other respondents expressed a preference for supporting multiple methods for encouraging speech, including the chat room. Some wrote that everyone should be able to freely express opinions; others emphasized the beneficial role that the chat tool plays in facilitating "fact-checking in real time" of speaker presentations.

Part IV. Investigation 2: Big Ten Survey

2. Big Ten Academic Alliance Survey

The committee also sought to gain insight into how our peer institutions in the BTAA were conducting their own Senate meetings. In early January 2025, the committee sent out a Google Survey to the chairs of University Senates across the Big 10, with eight institutions responding. The survey asked questions about the makeup of the Senate, the current format of the meetings, the platform used if virtual, and use of the chat functionality during the meetings. Some of those findings (along with information collected from their websites) are summarized in the chart and bullet points that follow (please refer to Appendix II for more details):

Big 10 Governing Bodies	Membership Size & Composition	Locations	Meeting Modalities	Chat Room Functionality
Rutgers University Senate	238 faculty, staff and students	3 (New Brunswick, Newark, Camden)	**Remote**. Monthly meetings held via Zoom.	***Sometimes* enabled** (closed during speaker presentations in recent meetings)
University of Michigan Faculty Senate	7,300+ faculty members*	3 (Ann Arbor, Flint, and Dearborn)	**Hybrid**: In-person meetings (with Zoom option) for annual Faculty Senate meetings and monthly Senate Assembly and Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs	***Sometimes* enabled** (closed chat once in-person meetings resumed)
University of Iowa Faculty Senate	80 faculty	1 (Iowa City)	**In person**: Monthly meetings held on campus.	***Always* enabled** (mainly so officers could communicate among themselves)
University of Maryland Senate	209 elected faculty, staff, and students, along with 15 deans	2 (College Park, UMD Agricultural Extension School)	**Hybrid**: Most held online via Zoom, except for presidential State of Campus addresses [UMD].	***Always* enabled** (open but not monitored)
University of Nebraska Omaha Faculty Senate	37 faculty	1 (Omaha)	**In person**: Monthly meetings held on campus. Per bylaws, "(m)ixed meetings, where some members participate remotely while others participate in person, are not allowed"	***Never* enabled**
University of Illinois Senate	210 faculty, staff and students	1 (Urbana)	**Hybrid**: in-person meetings; additional remote participation is authorized via unanimous consent, unless a senator objects [see 12.9.24 meeting]	***Never* enabled**
Northwestern University Faculty Senate	95 faculty	3 (Chicago; Evanston; Doha, Qatar)	**Hybrid**: in-person meetings; Zoom option	***Never* enabled**

			available, but "(s)enators are encouraged to prioritize in-person attendance" [see Quick Reference Guide]	("using the chat function is speaking without recognition")
University of Minnesota University Senate	277 faculty, staff and students	5 (Rochester; Twin Cities; Morris; Duluth; Crookston)	**Remote**: Monthly meetings held via Zoom, but **hybrid** beginning 2025-26 academic year (alternating in-person and remote meetings)	***Sometimes* enabled** (closed when "people were using it to get their say without being recognized")
Penn State University Faculty Senate	250 faculty, staff, students and administrators	25 (University Park main campus, 23 satellite campuses, 1 online 'world campus')	**Hybrid: in-person** meetings with remote option; a small number of meetings are entirely remote	***Always* enabled** (open, "but not part of the official record")
*Includes 77 elected members of Senate Assembly (legislative body) and 9 elected members of Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs (executive body)				

- ***Meeting Modalities***: while every Senate profiled here pivoted to remote meetings during the early years of the COVID-19 pandemic, most returned to some form of in-person or hybrid meeting modality in 2022 and 2023. Only two of the surveyed institutions (Iowa and Nebraska Omaha) have returned to fully in-person Senate meetings, however. Iowa's leadership did so in part because they believe that "there was more engagement with in-person meetings". Nebraska-Omaha has a provision in its bylaws requiring that a meeting be either entirely online or entirely in-person. Most institutions, however, currently use some hybrid combination of in-person and remote attendance to conduct their meetings. Rutgers and Minnesota are the only two to have continued fully remote meetings through the 2024-25 academic year, though Minnesota is planning to transition to a hybrid approach starting in 2025-26.

- ***Use of the Zoom Chat Feature***: every Senate surveyed responded that they use(d) Zoom as their platform of choice for remote meetings. Some of these institutions do not always keep their chat tools open. Northwestern's Senate, for example, declines to keep the chat tool open and available because "using the chat function is speaking without recognition." Others, like Penn State and Maryland, do keep the chat tool open, though its content goes unmonitored and is not considered part of the official record of the meeting.

- ***Use of Zoom Webinar***: only two institutions (Michigan and Maryland) directly addressed the question of whether they used the Zoom webinar tool in their meetings. Michigan reports using the tool for its meetings, while Maryland rejected it for "limit(ing) interaction" and "be(ing) cumbersome to administer."

- ***Use of Robert's Rules***: Most of these institutions use Robert's Rules to conduct their meetings. The only two exceptions were Nebraska Omaha and Penn State, which use the Democratic Rules of Order and the American Institute of Parliamentarians Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (AIPSC), respectively. None of these institutions has developed a specific written

version of Robert's Rules to be applied in an online meeting setting. As mentioned previously, however, some have closed their chat rooms specifically because individual senators effectively sought to bypass Robert's Rules and 'take the floor' without being recognized by the chair.

Part V. Investigation 3: Robert's Rules

3. Reviewed Robert's Rules
   The committee reviewed Robert's Rules of Order, seeking to find any changes or modifications in support of virtual meetings.

   Key Principles of Robert's Rules:

   1. **Majority Rule** – Decisions are made based on the will of the majority while protecting minority rights.

   2. **Equal Rights** – Every member has an equal right to participate in discussions and vote.

   3. **One Item at a Time** – Only one motion or issue should be discussed at a time.

   4. **Courtesy and Respect** – Members must be recognized before speaking and should address the chairperson, not each other.

   5. **Orderly Debate** – Discussions follow a structured process, preventing interruptions and ensuring fairness.

   Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised 12th edition includes an appendix of sample rules for electronic meetings. These rules specify the four types of electronic meetings that can take place. There is no specific guidance or mention of the use of chat. Further research indicates that the use of chat is up to interpretation. Investigations found that it is suggested that an organization develop Standing Rules that would include use of the chat feature during electronic meetings. We found examples of strict interpretations where use of chat is viewed as speaking out of order but do not recommend this. Lacking specific guidance for chat functionality, it is ultimately up to the chair and presiding officers to judge what technology and behaviors adhere to the organization's bylaws.

   Example interpretations (in addition to BTAA survey comments):

   - Upstate University of South Carolina interprets the rules to only allow the chat to be used to make a complex motion, and only then once a speaker has the floor and that any other use is a violation of RONR.

   - Parliamentarian Jim Slaughter cautions against using the chat functionality as debate is supposed to happen aurally on the floor and advises that chat be restricted to getting recognized to speak or IT problems and views other uses to be out of order.

- Robert's Rules has a provision for Forced disconnections in electronic meetings, which could be interpreted to include chat: "The chair may cause or direct the disconnection or muting of a member's connection if it is causing undue interference with the meeting. The chair's decision to do so, which is subject to an undebatable appeal that can be made by any member, shall be announced during the meeting and recorded in the minutes."

- If an organization is going to use the chat function, Standing Rules for virtual meetings should be established. These would include instructions/policies on using the chat functionality during the meetings.

Part VI. Investigation 4: Zoom Functionality

4. The committee explored the technical aspects of the current platform, Zoom. While there are other options available at Rutgers such as Webex, we chose to focus on how to leverage the current technology of the Zoom platform rather than seek to explore or suggest different platforms. The options available for text during a video meeting are chat and/or Q&A. Chat allows for full discourse by anyone in the meeting but can also be limited in different ways. The Q&A functionality is set up for questions and answers and less discussion. It is possible to use both the chat and the Q&A functionality in a meeting.

Chat options [Zoom Support]

- ***No one:*** Disables in-meeting chat.

- ***Host and co-hosts:*** Only the host and co-host can send messages to everyone. Participants can still send private messages to the host.

- ***Everyone***: Participants can only send public messages. Public messages are visible to all participants. Participants can still send private messages to the host.

- ***Everyone and anyone directly***: Participants can send public or private messages. Public messages are visible to all participants. Private messages are sent to a specific participant and are not visible to the host.

Q&A options [Zoom Support]

- ***Allow anonymous questions***: Select this option to allow participants to send questions without providing their name to the host and co-hosts.

- ***Allow participants to view***: Choose if you want attendees to be able to view answered questions only or view all questions.
    - If you choose for participants to view all questions, you can then enable the following options:

- Participants can upvote: Participants can view all submitted questions and upvote questions important to them. This can help point out to the host and co-hosts questions that more participants want the answer to.
- Participants can comment: Participants can view all submitted questions and add additional comments

Part VII. Investigation 5: Senate Handbook and Bylaws, Code of Conduct, Best Practices

The committee looked at the Senate Handbook and Bylaws and reviewed existing University policies and guidance.

- The bylaws are currently being reviewed and will be updated to include verbiage regarding virtual meetings.
- The current Senate Handbook does not address virtual meetings.
- There is no Code of Conduct for Senate meetings, nor for any Rutgers meetings. There is a Student Code of Conduct and a Code of Ethics, but these do not meet the need for guidance on conducting and participating in virtual meetings.
- Rutgers has a reference document for best practices for meetings using web conferencing: https://it.rutgers.edu/knowledgebase/etiquette-and-best-practices-for-web-conferencing/

PART VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS:

The survey results from both our senators and our Big Ten partners lead the ITC to determine that combining both Q&A and chat during Senate meetings would ensure open communication with minimal disruption.

The Senate should establish Standing Rules regarding the use of chat functionality during a virtual meeting to maintain parliamentary procedure as dictated by Robert's Rules of Order.

The Senate Bylaws are currently under review by the University Structure and Governance Committee to incorporate procedural practices for virtual Senate meetings. The Senate may wish to consider updating the Senate Handbook to include information regarding virtual meetings.

The Committee determined that writing best practices fall outside of our charge and purview and would be better assigned to another area of the university with the appropriate expertise.

The ITC also determined that a code of conduct would provide clear guidelines for appropriate decorum and clear standards for engagement for virtual Senate meetings.

A **Code of Conduct for Virtual Meetings** is essential because it helps ensure a professional, respectful, and productive environment, even in remote settings. Such a code helps to:

1. **Maintains Professionalism** – Establishes expectations for behavior, helping participants stay professional and courteous.

2. **Encourages Respect** – Prevents disruptive behavior, offensive language, or inappropriate actions.

3. **Enhances Engagement** – Helps meetings run smoothly by minimizing interruptions and distractions.

4. **Ensures Inclusivity** – Promotes a welcoming environment where everyone feels valued and heard.

5. **Reduces Miscommunication** – Sets clear guidelines on how to interact, use technology, and resolve conflicts.

6. **Protects Confidentiality** – Reinforces policies on data privacy and sensitive discussions.

7. **Improves Productivity** – Keeps meetings focused, reducing time wasted on off-topic discussions or technical issues.

RESOLUTION

Whereas, the Senate will continue to host its meetings virtually for the next fiscal year FY26,

Be it Resolved that the Rutgers University Senate recommends that:

- The Rutgers Senate develop a code of conduct for University Senate virtual meetings.

- **"The Case for Virtual Senate Meetings"** be made available on the Senate website.

- The Senate adopt the following **Standing Rules** during Senate virtual meetings:
    - The **Chat** feature (for Zoom or any other virtual meeting platform) be disabled during all presentations; the chat will be available at all other times during the meeting, at the discretion of the chair.
    - The **Q&A** feature (for Zoom or any other virtual meeting platform) be enabled during presentations to allow for questions and comments related to those questions

Information Technology Committee (ITC): 2024-2025

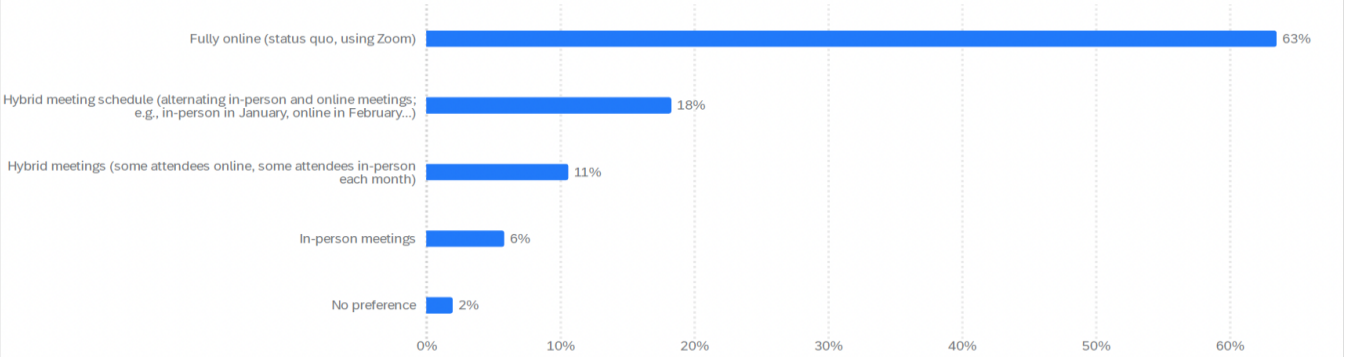
Senator	Constituency
Katie Anderson, Co-Chair	Libraries, Faculty
Timothy Knievel, Co-Chair	Faculty of Arts and Sciences-Camden, Faculty
Warren Allen, Member	School of Communication and Information, Faculty
Liza Barbarello Andrews, Member	Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy, Faculty
Charlie Collick, Member	New Brunswick Staff
Susan DeMatteo, Member	Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences Staff
Adrienne Esposito, Member	New Brunswick Staff
Charles Haberl, Member	School of Arts and Sciences-NB, Faculty
Joshua Kaplan, Member	New Jersey Medical School, Faculty
Kameswari Maganti, Member	RBHS Centers, Bureaus, and Institutes, Faculty
Pal Maliga, Member	New Brunswick Centers, Bureaus, and Institutes, Faculty
Bharat Sarath, Member	Rutgers Business School: Undergraduate NB, Faculty
Karina Schafer, Member	School of Arts and Sciences - Newark, Faculty
Frank Sonnenberg, Member	Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Faculty
Wojtek Wolfe, Member	Faculty of Arts and Sciences-Camden, Faculty

Appendix A – Internal Survey

Rutgers University Senate Survey-Zoom & Chat Room / Page 1

Responses: 105

Which of the following is your most preferred modality for University Senate meetings? 104



Please review Zoom's Q&A functionality instructions (and/or watch the brief video linked here). Would you prefer the use of this Q&A function during presentations as an alternative to the current method of open public chat to "everyone"?) 104

Q3 - Please review Zoom's Q&A functionality instructions (and/or watch the brief video linked here). Would you prefer the use of this Q&A function during presentations as an alternative to the current method of open public chat to "everyone"?)	Percentage	Count
No	24%	25
Yes	42%	44
Don't know/undecided	34%	35

Please read the following statements, and indicate your level of agreement with each: Senators should be able to use public chat function (with messages sent to everyone): 104

Please read the following statements, and indicate your level of agreement...	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
at any time during online Senate meetings (including during presentations)	35	15	9	16	26
only during specific times during online Senate meetings (e.g. outside of p...	20	8	13	20	39
at no times during online Senate meetings	69	10	8	5	5

Thank you for doing the survey!

I don't find the chat to be disruptive, I often don't even notice it, but it is a useful tool.

Additional Comments (Optional):

If all member use decorum, then the Chat will work better.

Less fighting in emails please. It's distracting and flooding my inbox.

Keep the chat function on during all meetings

If we keep the chat function during meeting, there has to be a code of conduct and we will need a moderator to cut off people who are abusive when using chat.

Thank you!

I would like to use whatever method allows and encourages more people to participate, rather than having a few people dominate the discussion by repeatedly speaking.

Additional Comments (Optional):

I would prefer both Q&A and Chat -- they serve different functions in a Zoom meeting and are useful in different ways.

Overall, we should support in person interaction where possible recognizing that using technology to support inclusion is important given the geography represented by the Senate membership--therefore hybrid options meet both. Regarding chats, we need to foster productive conversation that is respectful, which is not the current status of our meetings.

Although most things coming through on Chat during presentations have nothing to do with asking questions.

Thank you for doing this. I didn't get this earlier. So, such surveys should be resent a few times.

The open chats have been very rude and unprofessional and are disruptive to listening to the speaker.

Love the survey. Whichever subcommittee came up with this should get extra vacation

I like that the Q&A feature requires answers, where chats can be ignored. However, it eliminates the ability to speak to other Senators. I would prefer that invited speakers are asked to shut down their chat during the presentation if they believe it would be distracting to them. It was only President Holloway that had problems. Also, there should be a moderator to tell Senators that their comments are offensive. What has the world come to that Senators can't control themselves.

Additional Comments (Optional):

Zoom based Senate allows for easier attendance regardless of campus. It provides equality as it reduces time and cost for faculty who are NOT New Brunswick based

END ZOOM.

keep chat off during speaker presentations

Chat should not be used to circumvent the normal; (Robert's Rules) of debate. Use of Chat to solve technical issues, should be OK.

open communication should be encouraged, regardless of the person's opinions. all should be able to state their opinions.

There needs to be equal opportunity for members from each campus. If the New Brunswick people are in person, and the others on Zoom, they are naturally placed at a disadvantage. Further, the administration is providing information the Senate needs to do its business. It is entirely reasonable to have commentary and fact-checking in real time on the chat during these presentations.

Appendix B – Big 10 Inquiry

The full results of the Big 10 survey illustrated below can be found at this link.

Timestamp	What institution of higher learning is your University Senate based at?	What is your name, and what is your position in your University Senate?	How many members does your University Senate have?	Which groups are members of your University Senate? Check all that apply.	How many different instructional sites/campuses are your members drawn from?	Which of the following modalities is currently used for your University Senate meetings?	Which online platform do/did you use for online meetings? Select all that apply.	Please respond to the following question if your meetings are currently held in-person: Did your University Senate switch to holding online meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic? When and why did you resume holding in-person meetings?	Please respond to the following question if you ever used Zoom for University Senate meetings: Do/did you use the Zoom 'webinar' function for Q&A? If so, who can view and respond to these questions?	Has your University Senate ever implemented Roberts Rules for online meetings? If so, did you produce written guidelines for that?	Which of the following best describes the approach your University Senate takes to the use of chat rooms during online meetings of the full University Senate?	Please explain to the best of your knowledge why your University Senate adopted the policy it did respecting the use of chat rooms during online meetings.	Does/did your Senate have an individual member, officer, employee, etc. who is responsible for moderating chatrooms during online meetings?
1/10/2025 16:11:01	University of Michigan	Rebekah Modrak, Chair of the University Senate	7600	Faculty	Three, Ann Arbor, Flint, and Dearborn	We have one University Senate meeting per year unless members call for a second meeting. The single meeting is held In-person with a Remote option.	Zoom	Yes. We did switch to online during the pandemic. Post-pandemic, the meeting is led in-person but members have the option of joining virtually.	We use Zoom webinar. Members raise their hands to ask questions.	We implement Roberts Rules for all our meetings, virtual and in-person. We do not have written guidelines for this.	the chat room function is/was open at some points in meetings, and closed at other points	Initially, we offered the chat function, but when we shifted to hybrid (in-person and virtual) meetings, we were concerned that in-person members didn't have access to chat, and we were concerned that the Chair leading the meeting couldn't monitor both the live discussion and the chat discussion so we closed the chat. In some ways, this was a loss because members were much more inclined to "talk" in chat than to raise their hand and share information/perspectives.	We did when we were using the chat.
1/10/2025 16:21:12	University of Iowa	Caroline Sheerin, President of Faculty Senate	Approximately 80	Faculty	one	In-person	Zoom	Yes. We resumed in-person meetings in Fall 2022. We believed that there was more engagement with in-person meetings.	No.	Yes, we use Robert's Rules. No, we didn't produce written guidelines.	the chat room function was always enabled (members could communicate with anyone at any time)	Mainly so the officers could communicate amongst themselves. It was a useful tool during Q and A. Didn't even occur to anyone to disable the chat.	It was a joint effort between the officers and the FS admin to monitor the chat. There was not a formal policy.
1/10/2025 16:34:35	University of Maryland, College Park	Jordan Sly, Chair	approx 224	Faculty, Staff, Students	UMD College Park, UMD agricultural extension program	Hybrid approach (some meetings in person, some remote/online)	Zoom	Yes – we moved senate meetings online only during the height of the pandemic, but have since moved hybrid offering 2 meetings in-person with zoom participation as well and zoom only meetings. We found that this has aided in participation/attendance. We had resumed in-person meetings in 2022 or 2023	No because this limits interaction and can be cumbersome to administer	Yes, we use a lightly modified Roberts Rules for all senate matters including committee meetings with only very few exceptions.	the chat room function was always enabled (members could communicate with anyone at any time)	We allow this space to be open to be a digital version of being in person where chat can happen – that said, we also do not monitor the chat "live" as it were and encourage senators to bring issues of substance to the floor. This also allows us to share relevant links and resources.	not specifically, but if matters arise from the chat senators are to voice them for all
1/10/2025 16:55:46	University of Nebraska Omaha	Patty Bick, Faculty Senate President	37 this year, 39 next year	Faculty	6 colleges + library + external faculty	In-person	Zoom	During Covid, the meetings were held via Zoom. Our bylaws stipulate that meetings must be 100% in-person or 100% online. Online was only ever used during the pandemic.	I wasn't in senate during Covid, so I'm not sure.	We used to but now we use Democratic Rules of Order. Even when we were using Roberts, we didn't have additional written guidelines.	the chat room function is/was always disabled	I wish there was an "N/A" for the last question as we have not had an online meeting during my tenure on faculty senate.	Not that I'm aware of.
1/13/2025 15:27:37	U of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	Jon Hale, Chair	210	Faculty, Staff, Students	1	In-person	Zoom	Yes, September 2023 - state emergency mandate	can't remember	Yes; no	the chat room function is/was always disabled	not sure	no - don't have chatrooms
1/13/2025 21:04:17	Northwestern University	Jared Spitz, Secretary to the Faculty Senate	99	Faculty	3	Hybrid approach (some meetings in person, some remote/online)	Zoom	Yes, we held online-only meetings during the pandemic. We switched back to hybrid meetings in Fall 2022. We did this because the Senate leadership felt when faculty met in person they were more engaged and committed to the Senate. We still have a remote option given that we have campuses in Qatar and in Chicago.	We use regular Zoom meetings and close the chat function to "host" or "co-host" only. We closed the chat because senators must be recognized by the chair to speak and using the chat goes against that rule.	We do use Robert's Rules for online-only or hybrid meetings. We have a crib on RR that we share with senators at the beginning of the year and have an FAQ on our website.	the chat room function is/was always disabled	I explained it in an earlier response, but the gist is speakers must be recognized by the chair and using the chat function is speaking without recognition.	Yes, as one of two staff members in the Senate office, I monitor the chat during Senate meetings.
1/16/2025 16:32:00	University of Minnesota	Senate Associate (staff to the senate)	277 when all seats filled	Faculty, Staff, Students	5	Remote/Online (via Zoom, WebEx, Teams, etc)	Zoom		Never used Webinar function	Yes. We didn't produce written guidelines that are shared as such, but we have a script that the chair announces when applicable (use the "raise hand" function to be recognized, explains how the pro and con debate works with the Zoom controls, etc)	the chat room function is/was open at some points in meetings, and closed at other points	We had it open at first, but had to move to a policy of closing it down because people were using it to get their say in without being recognized (circumventing debate procedures)	No
1/30/2025 21:41:48	Penn State	Josh Wede, Chair	250	Faculty, Staff, Administr	20	Hybrid approach (some	Zoom, Microsoft Teams		We use Zoom meetings for Senators - visitors view	We use the Standard Code	the chat room function was	The chat is open - but is not a part of the official n	We have office staff and officers that somewhat m

"Big 10" institution	Senate Chair	Process for Senate to communicate with constituents	Senate Type	Email Access	Access to All University	Social Media, Other
University of Illinois	Jeffrey Eric Jenkins, Chair, Senate EC	As for reaching the full university (or system) community, we have a "massmail" process that goes through approvals at the upper administration level. We have discussed sending a massmail in the past but decided against it. To my knowledge, we have not been denied access to the system, but the system and the university try to limit the number of those communications due to the sheer volume of emails we process.	Faculty, Students, Academic Professionals	No	No	
University of Illinois-Chicago	Sandra De Groote	Our senate does have an email list for all faculty that we maintain – that we are able to email through. It is certainly not very active. Communication occurs more directly through members of the senate. There are official announcement venues that potentially we might be able to go through, but I have not tried.	Faculty	Faculty Lists	N/A	
Indiana University-South Bend	Carolyn Schult, President	I receive a list of all faculty and their emails from our Academic Affairs office every semester. I seldom send out a direct email, **but can do it if I need to**. For normal Senate business, we post to the Senate blog and our daily electronic bulletin board. Faculty and staff get a daily email digest of posts.	Faculty	Faculty Lists	N/A	
University of Iowa	Edward Gillan, President	The Faculty Senate at Iowa **does have "blanket approval" to send emails directly to all faculty or subset of faculty without prior university approval**. We rarely do that (other than to solicit nominations for awards) and I suppose our "approval" could easily be taken away if we overused the direct emails to all faculty.	Faculty	Faculty Lists	N/A	
University of Maryland - College Park	Christopher Jarzynski, Chair	At UMD, individual Senators are able to send emails to their constituencies. After each Senate meeting, the Senate Office provides a summary of the meeting to Senators, who in turn can send that summary to their constituencies, together with whatever commentary they wish to add (as long as it is made clear that additional commentary represents the Senator's, not the Senate's views). We have a University (not a Faculty) Senate, and the Senate Office does not have access to university-wide email lists.	Faculty, Staff, Students, Admininstrators	Personal Lists	No	
University of Michigan - Ann Arbor	Tom Braun, Chair	(The Senator Assembly includes all 3 campuses) At University of Michigan, **I am able to directly email all of our faculty senate constituents, although not through a simple email group**. The director of our Faculty Senate Office needs to generate the list of constituents on-the-fly (which can change daily based on people's appointments, new hires, etc). I then craft my email text, give the text to the FSO director, and he sends out the email on my behalf.	Faculty	Senators Internal	N/A	
Michigan State University	Jack Lipton, Chair	At Michigan State University, **our office of Academic Governance can email the entire faculty**. This is because in our bylaws, we not only have the faculty senate as a governance body of representatives, we also have the "academic congress" which consists of all voting eligible faculty. We had to fight for this as well, but have had it in place for a few years. It is only one email account that can do this, but we have that ability. I send a monthly video message to all faculty to keep them informed of the activities of the Faculty Senate, the University Council, etc.	Faculty	Faculty Lists (through Senate office)	No	
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities (aka UM- the main campus)	Mark Bee, Rachna Shah, Vice Chair (Chair is the U President)	(From Mark Bee, head of the Senate EC equivalent) Our Senate Office (which is staffed and financed through the President's Office) has the authority to send emails to all constituents on behalf of senate leadership. We have standing communications ("Semester Updates") that go out twice each academic year. Last fall, the Senate Office also sent out this email at my request to all faculty regarding a report my committee issued looking at the competitiveness of faculty compensation relative to peer institutions. The Senate Office was extremely helpful in getting this email sent out. To the best of my knowledge, they did not have to "clear it" with the administration before sending.	?	Faculty Lists (through Senate office)	No	
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	Kelli Kopocis, President	At UNL, there is a listerv for all academic faculty. However, because of how the permissions work, our staff senate coordinator manages the listerv and she sends emails on my behalf. Our coordinator is amazing and this works well for us. We also have the ability to survey the full faculty about anything anytime we want. If this wasn't working, I would push for the ability to send communication myself. Our Senate Executive Committee is also going to start sending a monthly newsletter letting people know what has been going on because we are not sure how many people are actually reading the minutes.	Faculty	Faculty Lists (through Senate office)	No	
University of Nebraska- Omaha	William Melanson, President	From Kelli (UNL): Their Senate president has the ability to send emails directly and he utilizes it fairly regularly. UNO is under the same system as UNL, but they are unionized and we are not.		Faculty Lists (through Senate office)	No	
Northwestern University	Regan Thompson, President	At Northwestern, **we can access the bulk email system without the need for approval**. We use this for quarterly newsletters and important announcements (such as special events).	Faculty	Faculty Lists	No	Announcements, Newsletter
Ohio State University	Ben Givens, Secretary (? Faculty member)	At Ohio State, our senate is comprised of faculty, students, staff, and administrators. The senate office most frequently communicates with the 141 senators who represent the various constituencies. For faculty, we maintain separate listservs for all the faculty in each college, and we encourage the senators who represent those colleges to use the listserv to communicate with their constituents. These range from a listserv of 50 faculty in Optometry to 2800 in Medicine. **We also can email all 7500 faculty directly, although like others, we rarely do this.** As for the students, staff or administrators, we do not typically email all of the constituent members of those groups. If we had a good reason to, we would work with the appropriate communications office, who I assume would send the communication on our behalf. The bottom line is that the Office of Academic Affairs provides the senate office annually a spreadsheet that contains the names of all faculty, with columns for college, department, titles, campus, and email addresses. We use the information to construct listservs to communicate with various subgroups of faculty. The senate office has always been very judicious in our use of emails, while some of our faculty senators are more pointed in their communications to their constituents. In either case, we have not received any cautions or restrictions on our communications, or access to faculty emails.	Faculty, Students, staff and administrators	Faculty Lists	No	
Pennsylvania State University	Michele Stine, Chair	At Penn State, **I am able to email ALL faculty at the university through our senate office**. We fought for some time for the ability to do that and made the same argument that it sounds like you are making, that not allowing direct communication with the faculty as a whole disenfranchises the faculty and inhibits the faculty senate. There are occasionally time sensitive issues where we cannot wait for communication to filter down through the representatives. We use the faculty list developed from our yearly census that helps us determine how many representatives every unit gets. Other than our senate plenary agenda and meeting notice, I don't communicate with all faculty directly often (maybe a few times a year) because I want people to pay attention to those emails when they do see them.	Faculty	Faculty Lists (through Senate office)	N/A	
Purdue University	Brian Leung, Chair	I've asked our Secretary of Faculties to write Anna directly if she has a deeper history. At Purdue University, as University Senate Chair I am able to email Senate members at once. I did so today, as a matter of fact. This account is not available for general Senate member use. The From Nush (Manushag Powell), Secretary of Faculties: At Purdue, we do not have direct access to the faculty or university-wide listservs (we are technically a university, rather than a faculty Senate). Our most frequent means of communication is via the Senators to their constituents; we also produce a newsletter and put announcements as needed in the daily university-wide email ("Purdue Today"). In recent years, when we've had a compelling reason to contact the faculty or, as happened sometimes during COVID, the entire university, we have been able to work with the Provost's Office to get access to the web mailer and do so. There was a push last year for the Senate to have more direct access to university-wide communication, but it was not embraced by leadership. One question that was never fully answered: what happens when individual Senators want to have input into Senate messaging?	Faculty	Senators Internal	No	Newsletter

Appendix C – The Case for Virtual Senate Meetings at Rutgers University

The Case for Virtual Senate Meetings at Rutgers University

Introduction

The university senate plays a pivotal role in governance, fostering collaboration across diverse stakeholders. Adopting virtual meetings for the senate offers opportunities to enhance accessibility, efficiency, and inclusivity while aligning with modern technological practices. Below is our detailed case for virtual senate meetings.

1. Enhanced Accessibility

Virtual meetings remove geographical and logistical barriers, ensuring broader participation.

- **Faculty and Staff Availability**: Faculty with heavy teaching loads or staff with rigid schedules can more easily attend from remote locations.
- **Inclusivity for All Members**: Participants with mobility challenges, family obligations, or health concerns can engage.

2. Increased Efficiency

Virtual meetings streamline processes and save time for participants.

- **Time Savings**: Eliminates commuting and parking challenges, especially for those traveling from satellite campuses.
- **Streamlined Agendas**: Digital tools enable better tracking of discussions and votes, leading to more focused meetings.
- **Cost Reduction**: Reduced need for physical space, printing, and other logistical expenses.

3. Technological Integration

Virtual meetings utilize existing tools to enhance functionality.

- **Recording and Archiving**: Sessions can be recorded for members unable to attend live, improving transparency and record-keeping.
- **Real-Time Collaboration**: Features like chat, and document sharing improve interaction and decision-making.

4. Emergency Preparedness

Virtual meetings ensure continuity of governance during disruptions.

- **Weather and Crisis Events**: Meetings can proceed regardless of weather conditions, pandemics, or other emergencies.
- **Uninterrupted Operations**: Virtual formats guarantee critical discussions and decisions occur without delay.

5. Alignment with University Goals

Virtual meetings reflect the university's commitment to innovation and sustainability.

- **Sustainability**: Reduces the university's carbon footprint by minimizing travel and paper usage.
- **Technological Leadership**: Positions the institution as forward-thinking, embracing tools that enhance institutional governance.

Conclusion

Virtual senate meetings enhance inclusivity, improve efficiency, and positions the university as a leader

in modern governance practices. By leveraging virtual technologies, the senate can better serve its diverse stakeholders and align with the university's mission.