

BUFFALO STATE COLLEGE

DIRECTORY OF POLICY STATEMENTS

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Subject: **College Senate**

I. HISTORY

The College Senate, in its current form, came into being in 1971. It replaced what had been a tripartite system of governance that consisted of a Faculty Council, a Student Council and an Administrative Council. While these deliberated as separate bodies, each provided for a specific representation from the other Councils so that there was communication among them and some interlocking via membership. However, this form of governance not only proved to be cumbersome, but also prone to foster divisiveness since it encouraged the practice of presenting issues and proposals most likely to be sympathetic on a given issue. In addition to the Faculty Council, the Student Council, and the Administrative Council, another group acted in an advisory capacity to the President of the College and was widely perceived as a “kitchen cabinet”

The original proposal for the present Senate included all the constituencies now represented except students. There was strong feeling in the college community both for and against the inclusion of students as voting members. The inclusion of students, and the number of student Senators (12), is the result of a series of compromises between those who had proposed and those who opposed seating students as Senators.

All-College Faculty meetings had been used as the vehicle to bring faculty and administration together to address issues; these had been convened (or not convened) at the pleasure of the President. They became unwieldy as the College grew in numbers and were, on occasion, by-passed. The option is provided in the present set of College By-Laws for the Chair of the Senate to convene All-College meetings, with the recommendation that the meetings occur at least twice a year.

In 1997, the College Senate Curriculum Committee established a web site to facilitate communication about curricular matters. In 1999, a separate web site for the full Senate was established. In 2001, the approved minutes of the College Senate began to be posted on the web site regularly. Maintenance of the College Senate and of the College Senate electronic elections (introduced in spring 2000, and formally approved as an option in fall 2000) has been informal, based on interest/talent of senators and members of standing committees of the Senate.

II. STATUS

The College Senate is the principal deliberative and advisory body of the College, established in the By-Laws of the College as "...the official agency through which the faculty and students engage in the governance of the College." It is from the College By-Laws that the Senate derives its authority. The Senate itself has a set of standing rules to govern the conduct of operations.

The College Senate is intended to serve as:

1. A forum in which representatives of faculty, staff, students and administration interact. The consultative and advisory functions performed by the Senate continue those functions which had been provided by each of the three separate Councils;
2. The agent of the college community which holds the administration, through the office of the President, accountable for actions taken and decisions made;
3. A advocate for that system of governance which has been agreed to by the various constituencies of the College and approved in the College By-Laws by the eligible voting faculty, the President, the College Council, the Chancellor and the SUNY Board of Trustees; and
4. The organizational structure through which faculty, staff, students and administration will be involved in issues of concern to the College.

The College Senate has deliberately avoided intrusion into certain areas of governance. It has, for example, never attempted to impose standards for selection of representatives from the various constituencies (student, administration, professional staff, Faculties). It has carefully avoided intruding upon the prerogatives of Faculties and is, in fact prohibited by law in New York State from intruding into the area of terms and conditions of employment which are properly the prerogative of the bargaining agent.

Schools and Department, United University Professions, the College Council, the Trustees and the Regents, the University Faculty Senate, and United Students Government all have relatively well defined spheres of influence/authority and particular ways of interacting with (or failing to interact with) the College Senate.

Actions taken at Senate meetings are advisory to the President of the College. The President of the College is responsible for setting policy for the College.

Source of Information: <http://collegesenate.buffalostate.edu/>