

MAKING SENATES EFFECTIVE

**** Set the agenda.** It is important for the senate to take the lead in putting forward issues that are of concern to faculty and not simply to be reacting to initiatives that come from the administration. It is crucial for the senate to be chaired by a faculty member who is elected by the faculty and to have a faculty-dominated executive committee determine the agenda for each senate meeting.

**** Establish priorities.** There may be many issues of concern to faculty that could come before the senate, but it is important for the senate leadership to determine in advance of its term in office what issues should receive the highest priority. Unplanned for issues may come up that will have to take precedence, but having a few issues that the leadership sets as goals is likely to make its term in office more effective.

**** Keep track of committee activities.** Much of a senate's work must take place through committees that should be either elected by the faculty at large or appointed by an elected senate committee on committees. It is imperative, however, for the officers of the senate to maintain a regular reporting schedule for senate committees and to make sure that committee chairs are fulfilling their responsibilities. Too often, committees can become "black holes" of inaction if senate officers do not closely monitor what they are doing.

**** Insure timely action.** Administrators often complain that faculty governance bodies are much too slow to act. While it is important for senate leaders to defend the need for deliberation and efforts at consensus building that usually take time, it is also generally appropriate to set reasonable deadlines for action so that deliberation does not turn into unnecessary delay.

**** Choose your own representatives.** As a general rule, it is best to have governance work conducted through standing senate committees where the faculty are either elected or appointed by an elected senate committee on committees. However, at many institutions, ad hoc committees are often established to deal with specific issues or immediate crises. In such cases, it is crucial that the elected senate leadership play a role in determining which faculty serve on these committees.

**** Make effective use of parliamentary procedure to run orderly meetings.** It is important for a senate chair to have a command of the basics of parliamentary procedure. It is the chair's responsibility to use proper procedures to prevent discussions from going off on irrelevant tangents, and to keep all senators clear about what resolutions or motions are being considered at any given moment.

**** Recognize and reward governance work.** Service as senate chair can be very time consuming and should be recognized with some course release time. Effective service as a senator should be recognized as fulfilling an important service responsibility to the institution and be recognized as part of any merit reward system.

**** Secure institutional support for the senate.** The administration ought to recognize the importance of shared governance by providing office space and secretarial assistance for the senate. Senate officers should not have to spend most of their time on routine clerical work and should have a place where records are readily accessible.