

**SAN DIEGO
MESA COLLEGE
Academic Senate**

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE GUIDEBOOK

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I. Introduction: What is Parliamentary Procedure and Why Do We Use it?

The San Diego Mesa College (SDMC) Academic Senate exists as an integral partner in the shared governance process at SDMC and within the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) in compliance with California Education Code. The SDMC Academic Senate is comprised of SDMC faculty who actively engage in dialogue with one another and value the SDMC Academic¹ Senate as a constructive mechanism to advocate for students and faculty in cultivating academic excellence. Any SDMC faculty member or other constituent may bring concerns, ideas, or other issues to the Academic Senate.

We are fortunate to have so many energetic and passionate faculty interested in contributing to our Academic Senate. To help maintain decorum and ensure that our Academic Senate meetings are organized and productive, we use *Robert's Rules of Order* (RRO) (Robert, 2011) as a guide to structure the way we conduct business. Our goal is to follow “the spirit” of RRO as a process to encourage participation rather than implementing it as a rigid cumbersome policy. We hope this encourages everyone, as informed members, to engage in civil discourse and active productive participation. Whenever deemed appropriate, executive committee members may ask for a motion to suspend the use of RRO during a meeting.

This guide has been designed to provide Academic Senate members and others with basic information about how we use RRO to facilitate productivity within the SDMC Academic Senate. We hope that it will enable everyone to be better informed about how business is conducted by the Academic Senate. Additionally, this guide explains who can participate, and how to bring ideas forward, present motions, and vote. Some additional resources are also listed.

¹ Parliamentary Procedure terms are capitalized in this document for identification and emphasis.

II. Who can Participate and How?

Anyone may attend Academic Senate General Meetings. Any SDMC faculty may share ideas, concerns, and recommendations with the Academic Senate. Faculty are encouraged to work with their Academic Senators to bring their ideas forward to the body. Senate representatives are selected from each department according to the Academic Senate bylaws. A list of current senators can be found at <http://www.sdmesa.edu/about-mesa/governance/academic-senate/index.shtml>. While decision making within the senate is limited to SDMC faculty, the Academic Senate values collaborating with other constituent groups and community members to cultivate outstanding learning opportunities for students and to provide the best working environment for SDMC professionals. For example, the SDMC Classified Senate may address issues which also impact the Academic Senate and it may be advantageous for the two senate bodies to work together.

All SDMC faculty are encouraged to attend SDMC Academic Senate meetings. During the Fall and Spring semesters, Academic Senate meetings are generally held on the second and fourth Mondays of each month. Regular meetings are not held during the Summer semester or during break periods. Specific dates, times, and locations can be found on the SDMC Academic Senate webpage (<http://www.sdmesa.edu/about-mesa/governance/academic-senate/index.shtml>).

While all faculty and guests may attend meetings, voting and other official business activities are limited to elected Senate Representatives (Senators and Executive Committee Members).

III. How Do I Bring Ideas Forward if I am not a Senator?

If you have an idea or concern, please follow these steps:

1. Research the issue and ensure that it falls under the purview of the SDMC Academic Senate.
2. Decide if you want to have your Academic Senator bring your idea to the Academic Senate (highly recommended approach) or if you want to take the idea forward yourself. Working through your Senator is recommended because it enables senators to bring forth more than one idea/issue, thus optimizing the Academic Senate Executive Committee Meetings.
3. If you choose to work through your Senator, meet and share your idea with your Senator.
4. The person taking the idea forward (your Senator or you) then contacts the Academic Senate secretary to request to speak during the Executive Committee Meeting and for the topic to be placed on the Executive Committee Meeting Agenda. This should be done at least one business day prior to the Executive Committee meeting date.
5. During the Executive Committee Meeting, the person taking the idea forward (your Senator or you) will present the research and background material along with the recommendation.
6. The Executive Committee will choose one of the following courses of action:
 - a. Add the item to a future General Academic Senate meeting agenda.
 - b. Seek more information before referring it to the General Academic Senate. In this case the Executive Committee may ask you or your Senator to provide further details or refer the topic to the Academic Affairs Committee for review.
 - c. Decide not to include topic on the General Academic Senate meeting agenda. Examples of possible reasons for dropping the topic have included:
 - i. The topic is not within the purview of the Academic Senate.

- ii. A very similar resolution is pending.
- iii. The timeline for implementing the resolution was not be feasible.

IV. How Do I Bring Ideas Forward if I am a Senator?

Whenever possible, research and develop your idea, resolution, or concern, collecting as much supporting information as possible, prior to presenting your idea to the Academic Senate Executive Committee.

New Business

When an idea is on the Academic Senate meeting agenda for the first time for introduction to the Academic Senate Body, it is referred to as New Business. New Business provides details and background information to the Senate. When introducing this agenda item, the Presiding Officer² will explain that there is a New Business item to be considered. The Presiding Officer typically provides a basic introduction of the name/title of the item and then asks the Senator who brought the idea forth to provide further details. If the Senator was asked to present the item on behalf of their constituents, those individuals may address the Academic Senate Body at that time to provide further context. The Senator may present the idea along with a recommendation.

The interim period, between introduction of an idea and the next meeting when it appears on the subsequent meeting agenda, provides senators time to take the topic and supporting information back to their constituents for vetting, further investigation, and to seek input as to how they would like for their Senator to vote on their behalf. The Academic Senate Executive Committee also determines which meeting date would be most suitable for inclusion of the idea as an Old Business item for final action.

² The word "President" or "Presiding Officer" is herein used throughout this document to refer to the SDMC Academic Senate President, unless otherwise noted.

Old Business

During a subsequent meeting, the topic will appear on the agenda under Old Business. The Presiding Officer will usually explain that the item was previously introduced as New Business and when it was introduced. They also may call upon the Senator to once again share basic information about the topic. After doing so, the Senator may then introduce the recommendation as a Motion (see section on Motions). If the Senator does not introduce the recommendation as a Motion, the Presiding Officer will ask the Academic Senate Body if there is a Motion in support/related to the topic. Motions are used when a specific outcome is sought. Other topics may be presented as Round Table topics. Round Table Topics are often issues which warrant observation and possibly longer term discussion and research by Senators.

Once the Motion has been presented to the Academic Senate Body and has been Seconded, the Presiding Officer will allow limited discussion on the issue. During the discussion, the goal is to provide additional information about the issue, and both the pros and cons related to the issue. The information presented should provide enough information for Senators to collegially debate the issue in order to make informed decisions.

Following the discussion period, the Presiding Officer or Secretary will remind the Academic Senate Body what the Motion on the Floor is, who presented it, and who Seconded the Motion. The Presiding Officer will then ask the Academic Senate Body to vote on the Motion. If the motion fails, discussion and consideration of the issue ends.

Standing Business Items

Standing business items are important to the regular function of the Academic Senate and appear on the agenda for most meetings. Examples of Standing Business items are Approval of the Agenda, Approval of the Minute, and Motion to Adjourn.

General Discussion Items

In addition to topics and issues being brought by Senators as Motions or Round Table Topics, the Academic Senate Executive Committee often includes additional topics on the Academic Senate Meeting Agenda which warrant discussion by the Academic Senate Body. These items may be listed on the agenda under New Business, without any expectation of a motion being presented. They can often be information items which are not directly associated with any of the Academic Senate Executive Committee positions. The Presiding Officer may alternately choose to introduce these types of issues during the President's report.

V. How Can the Normal Rules for Conducting Business be Suspended?

At times the Academic Senate Executive Committee may determine that a topic is time sensitive and warrants the immediate attention and possible vote by Senators. This may also occur if the normal rules for conducting Academic Senate business need to be modified to address a complex issue. This determination and subsequent request by the Academic Senate Executive Committee is referred to as Suspending the Rules.

When deemed appropriate, the Presiding Officer will usually explain the situation to the Senate Body and ask for a Motion to Suspend the Rules. Sample language: "Is there a Motion to Suspend the Rules for... (share the justification)"

A Senator may then make a Motion to Suspend the Rules (the language of the Motion usually includes an explanation of why the Rules should be Being Suspended). Sample language: "I Move to Suspend the Rules to enable immediate consider of... due to..."

If seconded, the Motion to Suspend the Rules allows the Presiding Officer to call for consideration of an issue AND a vote on the issue during the same meeting.

When the topic has been acted upon, the Presiding Officer will then continue the meeting, following normal rules. No Motion or vote is needed to return to regular protocol.

VI. How Are Motions Presented?

Making a Motion

A **Motion** is a formal request for the Academic Senate Body to consider an idea/issue. Only Department Academic Senate Representatives (Senators) and Academic Senate Executive Committee Members may present Motions to the Academic Senate Body. Only one person may present a Motion at a time and only one Motion may be considered at a time. In order to present a Motion, a Senator would normally have communicated with the Academic Senate Executive Committee to request that the item be placed on the agenda as New Business. The Senator would “Obtain the Floor” by raising a hand and waiting for the presiding officer to allow the Senator to Present the Motion. This original Motion can also be referred to as a Main Motion. The Presiding Officer would announce, “(Senator’s name) has presented a Motion to/for (idea/issue).” The Motion should be an action item such as “to extend...” or “to remove...” The Senator would say, “I move that the San Diego Mesa College Academic Senate...” The Motion may also be presented as a Resolution. In this case, the presenter would then say something like, “I move that the San Diego Mesa College Academic Senate adopt Resolution Number... which...(statement summarizing the point - the presenter may read the Resolution if it is short).”

Once the motion has been presented, it must be supported by one other person before being considered by the Academic Senate Body. This step in the process is called getting a **Second** to the motion. Immediately after a motion is made, a member of the body may announce, “Second,” or “I second the motion on the floor.” A “Second” to a Motion does not imply agreement but is simply a way of announcing support for enabling discussion and debate of the issue. The Presiding Officer

would then acknowledge the Second by stating, “(Second Senator’s Name) has Seconded the Motion,” or simply, “Seconded.” When a vote is called, the Senator who Seconds a Motion is not subsequently obligated to vote in favor of the Motion.

After acknowledging that the Motion has been seconded, the Presiding Officer would then restate the entire motion and by whom it was presented and seconded. The Presiding Officer would then Open the Floor for Discussion.

If no one speaks up to Second the Motion on their own, the Presiding Officer may announce, “(Senator’s Name) has presented a motion to... Is there a Second to their Motion?” Someone may then speak up. If no one speaks up to second the motion, it automatically fails and is not considered further. The Presiding Officer would immediately move on to the next agenda item after announcing that the Motion has Failed.

Discussion

During the discussion period it is an important for Senators and others with pertinent information to debate the issue. This is an opportunity for Senators to learn from their collective research on the issue. It is helpful for Senators to learn about both sides of issues. Once a balanced perspective has been shared, the Presiding Officer will call the vote. If a Senator feels that this point is not being reached in a timely way, the Senator may say, “Call the vote.” The latter request suggests to the Presiding Officer that the Senator believes that enough has been shared on the subject. The Presiding Officer may end discussion or may explain why discussion will be allowed to continue.

When the Presiding Officer determines that enough time has been allotted for this process, the Presiding Officer will formally state that the discussion phase is ending and will then restate the entire original Motion and by whom it was Presented and Seconded. The Motion would then move to the voting stage (see section on voting).

Friendly Amendment

Ideally, the discussion phase leads Senators to think about the issue more deeply. This can often lead someone to think of issues or special considerations for the motion. For example, if the original motion did not include a timeline that is essential to the issue, someone may bring this up during the discussion period. If the original motion did not include important conditions, a Senator may ask the originator for permission to amend the motion. If granted permission, the Senator would make a motion for a “friendly amendment” to the motion. Friendly Amendments are slight modifications of a Motion that are made primarily to clarify the original Motion.

Other Types of Motions

There are other types of motions such as Subsidiary Motions, Incidental Motions, and Privileged Motions which are used in formal meetings when strict adherence to RRO is necessary.

The important consideration regarding Motions is that only one Motion may be considered at a time, unless it is an amendment to an original motion.

The Outcome of a Motion

After a Motion has been Presented, Seconded, and Discussed, the Presiding Officer will repeat the Motion word for word, to avoid confusion, hold a vote on the issue, and Announce the Outcome. If a majority of Academic Senate members vote in favor of the Motion, it is announced as “The Motion to (Motion language) carries.” If a majority of Academic Senate members do not vote in favor of the motion, it is announced as, “The Motion fails.”

VII. Voting

The Presiding Officer determines when sufficient time has been dedicated to a Motion, at which time they Call the Vote. In asking the Academic Senate Body to vote, the Presiding Officer will

restate the Motion. The Presiding Officer will then poll members by saying, “All those in favor,” and “All those opposed,” and “All those Abstaining.”

How Members Vote

Depending on the Motion, the Presiding Officer may ask that members vote by expressing their position verbally, or by a show of hands, or by written ballot.

Announcing the Outcome

After a Motion has been Presented, Seconded, Discussed, and Voted on, the Presiding Officer will Announce the Outcome by saying, “The Motion Carries,” or, “The Motion Fails”. In some cases, the presiding officer will announce how many members voted for or against a motion.

VIII. Additional Resources to Learn More About Parliamentary Procedure

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges. (2009). Staff Breakout: Understanding the Brown Act and Parliamentary Procedure. <https://www.asccc.org/content/staff-breakout-understanding-brown-act-and-parliamentary-procedure>

Robert III, Henry M.; et al. (2011). Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (11th ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press.

This guidebook was developed by Veronica Gerace, Ed.D. as a reference.