

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

FACULTY HANDBOOK COMMITTEE

BYLAWS

Approved by Committee on May 7, 2019
Approved by Rodney Bennett, President on June 6, 2019

Amended and Approved by Rodney Bennett, President on August 27, 2020, September 10, 2020, June 14, 2022. Amended and Approved by Joseph Paul, President on July 19, 2024.

Notice: governance and standing committee bylaws shall not supersede the authority of the University President as designated by the State Institutions of Higher Learning Board of Trustees or the State of Mississippi.

ARTICLE I

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The Faculty Handbook Committee considers proposals, modifications, and amendments to the Faculty Handbook brought to it from an official university governing body or administrative office, including the Faculty Handbook Committee. The committee ensures that proposed changes are clear, well-written, and consistent with other parts of the Faculty and Employee Handbooks as well as other University and IHL documents and policies.

ARTICLE II

MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Members

Voting Elected Members:

- Member of the faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences elected by the college*
- Member of the faculty from the College of Business and Economic Development elected by the college*
- Member of the faculty from the College of Education and Human Sciences elected by the college*
- Member of the faculty from the University Libraries elected by the library*
- Member of the faculty from the College of Nursing and Health Professions elected by the college*
- At-Large Member of the faculty from the Gulf Coast elected by the coast locations*

Voting Appointed Members:

- Member of Faculty Senate appointed by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee

- Member of the Dean's Council appointed by the Deans's Council
- Member of the Council of Directors appointed by the Council of Directors

Non-voting Ex-officio Member:

- A representative from the Office of General Counsel
- A representative from the Office of the Provost

* Must be regular faculty with at least 3 years' experience in a tenure-track or teaching-track line at the university, be below the level of school director, and cannot be serving on one of the other major governing bodies (described in the faculty handbook 1.8).

Section 2. Terms

Terms will begin on September 1, and end on August 31. Voting appointed members and non-voting ex-officio members will serve annual terms, renewable as deemed appropriate by their appointing body. Voting elected members will be split into two groups and shall serve staggered three-year terms. The groups are assigned as follows:

Group 1 (3-year terms beginning September 1 of 2024, 2027, 2030, etc.)

- Member of the faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences
- Member of the faculty from the College of Nursing and Health Professions
- Member of the faculty from the University Libraries

Group 2 (3-year terms beginning September 1 of 2025, 2028, 2031, etc.)

- Member of the faculty from the College of Business and Economic Development
- Member of the faculty from the College of Education and Human Sciences
- At-Large Member of the faculty from Gulf Coast

Section 3. Elections

The Faculty Handbook Committee will elect a chair and secretary at the first meeting of the year. Members representing Dean's Council, Council of Directors, The Office of General Counsel, and The Office of the Provost are not eligible to serve as chair or secretary. The chair and secretary will be voting members of the committee. Elections to the Faculty Handbook Committee will be coordinated by the chair and historian and they will assist in verifying qualifications (see section 1 for qualifications), developing the ballot, administering elections, and reporting the elections of new members. If the bodies represented by both the chair and secretary are up for reelection, the committee shall select an alternate member of the committee to coordinate the election process.

Each constituency group needing an elected or appointed member will be notified in February of the need for an election or appointment (see section 1 for qualifications). All members of the corps of instruction (described in the Faculty Handbook 2.1.2) in the represented body are eligible to vote. The chair is also responsible for confirming membership for the academic year for the voting appointed and ex-officio members before the first meeting in September.

Section 4. Responsibilities

Members are to attend all regularly scheduled meetings of the Faculty Handbook Committee and communicate the issues raised in the committee meetings to their represented bodies. If a member of the Faculty Handbook Committee fails to attend two regularly scheduled meetings in a single academic year without supplying a proxy, they shall be notified in writing by the chair of the committee that their position will be declared vacant in the event of a third absence without a proxy. Upon a third absence in a single academic year without a proxy, their position shall be declared vacant by the chair of the committee and recorded in the minutes. A position shall also be declared vacant if a member is no longer a member of their represented body or are otherwise unable to continue serving.

Section 5. Proxies and Vacancies

Proxies: In the event that a member of the committee must be absent from a meeting it is expected that a proxy will be named to represent the committee member at the meeting. The proxy must meet the eligibility requirements for membership (see section 1 for qualifications) and it is preferred that the proxy be chosen from the members of the represented body. It is the committee member's responsibility to notify the chair via email of need for a proxy and the name of the proxy. Proxies retain voting privileges in representing regular committee members. Proxies may not represent more than one voting member of the committee.

Vacancies: Should a position on the Faculty Handbook Committee be vacated for any reason the chair of the committee shall notify the body or office from which the position was vacated of the need for a replacement. For voting elected members, an interim appointment will be made from the previous election results of the represented body with full voting rights until a new election can take place. After a new election, the newly elected replacements will be seated at the next scheduled meeting with full voting rights. Permanent replacements for members shall serve out the remainder of the original 3-year term and will be eligible for additional terms.

ARTICLE III

OPERATING PROCEDURES

Section 1. Meetings

Regular meetings of the Faculty Handbook Committee will be held on the second or third Monday of the month at 3 PM during the academic year. The chair may call special meetings as needed. A quorum, consisting of a majority of members or their proxies, is required. The chair will conduct meetings according to *Robert's Rules of Order*. Each meeting must have minutes, attendance, and proxies recorded. Each meeting agenda is expected to be distributed to the committee at least one week before the meeting, and all meetings are open to all faculty members. Effort should be made to explicitly invite any group that might be particularly affected by a proposed modification.

Section 2. Changes to Handbook

Proposals, modifications, or amendments to the Faculty Handbook may come from any official

university advisory body or administrative office, including the Faculty Handbook Committee. Proposals, modifications, or amendments must be submitted in writing at least 10 days prior to the next meeting and shall receive reasonable consideration from the committee.

Faculty members may submit matters they would like the Faculty Handbook Committee to consider to their representative or the committee chair in writing at least 10 days prior to the meeting date. Matters should be described in as much detail as possible and reference specific sections in the Faculty Handbook. Matters will be distributed as written to the committee but will be blinded in an attempt to preserve anonymity. The matter shall receive reasonable consideration from the committee and will determine whether they should move forward with drafting a proposal, as indicated by a majority vote.

Proposals coming before the Faculty Handbook Committee are given two votes. After a first reading, the proposal is voted on and then taken to the represented bodies, the Office of Human Resources, and the Vice President of Research for a period of review and comments. The representative will report any feedback or suggestions regarding the proposed change to the Faculty Handbook Committee before the second vote. A proposal is considered approved after it passes a second vote by the committee. Editorial or clerical changes can be approved without a second reading upon approval of the majority of the committee.

Annually, the Faculty Handbook Committee secretary will review all active URL links in the current Faculty Handbook to verify accuracy. Any errant URLs will be reported to either the Office of the Provost or Office of Human Resources.

All changes approved by the committee will be formally recommended to the President of the University through the Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs by June 1 so they can make a final decision. Changes to the official handbook take effect July 1 of the next fiscal year. All changes made to the handbook in a given year will be included in an annual appendix.

Section 3. Changes to Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the committee's voting membership, excluding proxies, at any regular meeting of the committee. Proposed revisions must be submitted in writing at least 10 days prior to the meeting. Proposals will be read to the floor and given at least a 28-day review period before a vote is held. Revisions to the bylaws are submitted to the President of the University through the Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs for approval.

ARTICLE IV

COMMUNICATIONS/REPORTING

Section 1. Administrator to whom the committee reports

The Faculty Handbook Committee reports and moves recommendations to the President of the

University through the Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Section 2. Staff Support

The Faculty Handbook Committee will have staff support from the Office of the Provost as deemed appropriate by the Provost. The Office of the Provost will assign a point of contact for uploading minutes and other documents to the Provost's website. The Office of Human Resources will assign a point of contact for review of new policies against the current Employee Handbook. The Office of General Counsel will use the non-voting ex-officio as the point of contact for counsel reviews.

Section 3. Minutes

Minutes of the Faculty Handbook Committee meetings are recorded by the secretary and approved by the committee members. The approved minutes are distributed to the designated Office of the Provost staff support member to post to the Provost's website within 60 days of the committee's meeting and for distribution to the committee members, directors, deans, the Provost, and the President. Past minutes are kept on the website for a minimum of five years.

Section 4. Website Location and Changes

The Faculty Handbook Committee will communicate to the university community utilizing an appropriate website. The Faculty Handbook Committee website will be the primary resource regarding amendments/revisions in the Faculty Handbook, committee minutes, membership list, and bylaws.

Section 5. System for Preserving Changes, and Copies

The most current copy of the Faculty Handbook is retained by the Office of the Provost as a .pdf and is designated as the official Faculty Handbook. The Provost's Office will be responsible for keeping records of amendments and revisions to the Faculty Handbook and disseminating the amendments and revisions to the faculty.

Section 6. Annual Report

By June 1 the chair of the Faculty Handbook Committee will submit an annual report recommending the changes that were approved by the committee during the academic year to the President of the University through the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs so they can make the final decision. Changes to the official handbook take effect July 1 of the next fiscal year. All changes made to the handbook in a given year will be included in an annual appendix.