

May 10, 2012

Hello Student Senators!

Thank you all for having me at your meeting two weeks ago. As promised, I have come back to you with a document that lists all of the comments, suggestions, ideas, and concerns that have been collected over a series of meetings with a variety of people (senators, AS Board members, advisors, AS employees, etc.) regarding the current state of the Student Senate and where it is/could/should be going. This is by no means an exhaustive list, so feel free to add items that you think are missing.

In many ways, you are experts on the Student Senate. You have all invested a year in your positions and understand the inner workings of the group and how the Senate works with other entities on campus, including the student body and the AS Board. Because of your experience, we are asking you to take the first pass at prioritizing changes and setting a direction for the Senate.

Setting a direction and articulating a vision for a group or organization requires that we take a step back and look at the larger picture. **I encourage you in your assessment of the Senate (and your prioritization of steps forward) to think big-picture by starting with the “why?” (i.e. the purpose of the Senate) and working out from there.** Small changes that are quickly implementable are good to consider, but there are many moving parts and complexities to the Student Senate and how it interacts with other groups that also need to be considered on a broader scale. These larger relationships and dynamics must be considered for any changes to the Student Senate to be effective.

Thanks for considering my direction and thoughts on this process. I look forward to hearing your recommendations.

Sincerely,

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Student Senate

May 2012

Note: These items are in no particular order

- Resolutions that take a political stance or take a side on a controversial issue would go to the Senate before the AS Board.
- Update Senate membership to include representatives from boarder constituent groups (RHA, all colleges, transfer students, clubs, and others)
- Elevate status of Senate positions by differentiating the application process from general committee applications (“It’s not just another University committee”). Application process is an important tool in framing the role and importance of the senate for senators and AS Board members.
- Elect the Student Senate Chair (possibly with an AS Board vote, possibly not)
- The Senate could have a 2/3 override veto over an AS Board decision. The veto would institute a “cooling off period” and require a revote of the AS Board after that time had passed.
- Increase depth and length of Senate training. Increase understanding of the AS Board processes among senators.
- AS Board meeting training should include the Senate Chair so that s/he may participate more fully in the meetings and in the discussion. Have the group define the role of the Student Senate chair in Board meetings.
- The Senate could serve as a mechanism for gathering student feedback on issues.
- The Senate is less intimidating to students than the AS Board and students may feel more comfortable coming to them first to find their representative voice.
- The Senate needs to determine its scope in developing resolutions and recommendations. Guidelines would be helpful about when resolutions, recommendations, forums, events, collaborations with other AS offices, information gathering, etc. are appropriate.
- Senate could act as a filter for the AS Board by vetting certain agenda items first.
- Senate minutes/recommendations should be attached to resolutions/recommendations that are forward along to the AS Board.
- The Senate is a “foot in the door” for students who want to get more involved in the Associated Student.
- More emphasis should be put on strategic placement of senators on university committees. This would promote engagement.
- Senators can serve as the AS Board’s “ears on campus.”
- The name of the Senate should be changed to reflect what the body actually does.
- Start with the Why –and have that “why” reflected in the Senate’s guiding documents.