

BYLAWS OF THE FACULTY ORGANIZATION SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Adopted February 10, 1978

**Amended: September 9, 1983; August 20, 1991; April 4, 1993; April 2016; April 2019; March 2021; August 2023, in accordance with university policy.*

PREAMBLE

[American Association of University Professors Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities](#); Text from the [Shared Governance Handout](#)

Shared governance, according to the Association's Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities, refers to the responsibility shared among the different components of the institution—governing boards, administrations, and faculties—for its governance, and the specifies [sic] areas of primary responsibility for each component.

The role of the faculty is to have primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process. The responsibility for faculty status includes appointments, reappointments, decisions not to reappoint, promotions, the granting of tenure, and dismissal.

Why should the faculty voice be authoritative in the academic area?

- Faculty are distinctly qualified to exercise decision-making authority in their areas of expertise.
- The faculty's "judgment is central to general educational policy."
- Scholars in a particular field or activity "have the chief competence for judging the work of their colleagues."

VCU University Council Philosophy of Shared Governance

Virginia Commonwealth University values a model of shared governance that furthers the mission of the University within a culture of collaboration, transparency and trust among and within the major constituencies of the university. VCU is a more efficient and effective institution when the interactions of individuals and groups are based on trust and the realization of a shared commitment to work together toward the common good of the university.

VCU values collaboration that appreciates the distinct, but mutually-supportive, responsibilities distributed among the board, the administration, faculty, staff, and students of the university. This collaboration seeks and represents the voice of all constituencies in decisions and all matters that impact those constituencies, recognizing that shared governance is neither consensus nor democratic governance.

VCU values transparency such that constituent groups and individuals at VCU are aware of how university and unit decisions are made and the rationale for these decisions.

Groups and individuals should have timely and easy access to information about the decisions for which they are responsible and about decisions that impact them. Such transparency also means that decision-making groups and individuals are accountable

for the decisions they make and for involving the appropriate constituencies in those decisions.

From the VCU Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Policy

1. Academic Freedom

It is the policy of Virginia Commonwealth University to support and foster freedom of inquiry, discourse, teaching, research and publication by any member of the academic staff in their sphere of scholarly interest. It is also the policy of the University to protect the academic community against attempts, from within or without the University that would restrict the exercise of these freedoms. These policies are rooted in the recognition that academic freedom is essential to the search for truth and for the extension of knowledge. They are supported by methods and procedures established to protect the academic freedom of all members...

2. Matters of Instruction and Curriculum

Within an institution, the faculty through a system of appointed or elected departmental, school, and University committees shall have the right to develop and recommend – or otherwise, to participate in decisions involving – new degree programs, new course offerings, modifications of existing courses, and degree requirements.

These rights, in turn, invest each faculty member with high standards of academic responsibility. This implies that faculty strives for excellence in instruction, research, scholarship and community service within their respective disciplines.

3. Admission, Retention and Graduation of Students

The faculty acting collectively, or through their representatives, shall actively participate in setting standards for admission, retention and graduation of students. The faculty of each School also shall determine which students are eligible for graduation. The Dean of each School shall recommend designated students to the President and the Board of Visitors for the appropriate degree or certificate

4. University Governance

The ultimate authority in University government is vested in the Board of Visitors which, with advice from the faculty, administration, classified employees and students, selects a President to whom it delegates the responsibility for managing the University. A vigorous university develops through the active participation of the faculty in the formal and informal decision-making processes concerned with educational functions and policies at various administrative levels. It is in the interest of the University to provide avenues of communication through which the faculty can provide counsel and advice on other matters of mutual interest.

Every faculty member shares a continuing responsibility for shaping the direction of their department, of their School, and for serving on University-wide councils, committees and offices. Since participation of the faculty in academic matters is vital to the proper governance of the University community, it is incumbent upon the University to provide ample opportunities for faculty participation.

School of Education Faculty Governance

This document has been developed, approved, and revised through a collaborative process between the dean and the faculty.

ARTICLE I—NAME OF ORGANIZATION

The name of this organization shall be the VCU School of Education Faculty Organization (hereafter referred to as the Faculty Organization).

ARTICLE II—PURPOSE

The Faculty Organization is a collaborative partner with SOE administration to ensure open communication and faculty voice in decisions and governance of the SOE, serving dual advisory and advocacy roles. The Faculty Organization serves as an instrument through which faculty can effectively participate in the formulation of School of Education policies and practices. The organization receives, reviews, and recommends matters relating to faculty and provides a forum for discussion of issues.

The Faculty Organization establishes an orderly process through which every faculty member is guaranteed the right to express freely their views and concerns about any and all matters vital to the University, the School of Education, and the faculty of the School of Education.

ARTICLE III—MEMBERSHIP

Section 1—General Membership

- a. All faculty members (including tenured, tenure eligible, and term) who hold appointments, joint appointments, part-time appointments, or affiliate appointments in the School of Education are members of the Faculty Organization. Officers are elected from the membership.

Section 2—Officers

- a. The Chair role is open to any full-time faculty member to ensure adequate service time.
- b. All other officer positions are open to any Faculty Organization member.
- c. Chair, Vice-Chair, Communications Chair, Finance Chair, Events Chair, and Past Chair serve as Officers of the Faculty Organization.

Section 3—Representatives

Representatives will be elected by faculty or appointed by the chair or director in their respective department/center. Representatives will be elected by the first Faculty Organization meeting of the academic year. Each department should elect or appoint two representatives, with another two representatives from SOE Centers. Each department and the centers must elect an alternate in the case a representative cannot attend a meeting or needs to step away from their duties. If the alternate cannot attend, then another faculty member should attend as a representative. When possible, the elected representatives shall represent two of the three faculty categories (tenured, tenure-eligible, and term).

Section 4—Culture, Climate, and Voice

- a. The Faculty Organization will follow the SOE's principles for renewing and strengthening trust. We realize that our wellbeing as an institution depends upon the wellbeing of our members. We respect all members, new and continuing, regardless of status; value honest communication and finding ways to respectfully address difficult issues; strive to listen without bias and search for common understanding; are committed to equity, fairness and a level playing field for all members; thrive because of diverse viewpoints and areas of expertise; and we foster collaboration, collegiality and mutual support among all members of our community.
- b. In the event our commitment to respectful interactions is breached, anyone who has felt harm should communicate the harm to any Officer, and the Chair will follow-up with those harmed and those who harmed to address the situation and promote open dialogue and healing.
- c. While all members of the SOE share the responsibility of holding each other accountable, the person who convened/led the meeting is responsible for follow-up and next steps.

Section 4—Communication

- a. The School of Education leadership and Faculty Organization leadership should strive for regular and timely communication. Requests for information, a discussion, or an answer to a question from either party should be responded to within 10 business days.
- b. Timelines should reflect the priorities and resources available within the School and be mutually agreed upon by the Chair, Dean, and those completing any labor associated with the task.

ARTICLE IV—MEETINGS

Section 1—Meeting Types

- a. Faculty Organization [FO] meetings occur monthly during fall and spring semesters.
- b. SOE Faculty Meetings, as distinct from Faculty Organization meetings, occur twice per semester and are a space for SOE faculty and the Dean or dean's designee to engage in discussion.
- c. The FO Chair(s) should meet with the Dean at least three times each fall and spring semester. Officers are welcome but not required to attend meetings with the Dean.

Section 2—Attendees

- a. Regarding Faculty Organization meetings, every SOE faculty member is encouraged to attend, but only officers, representatives, and alternates (when needed) are required to make every effort to attend.
- b. Regarding Faculty Organization meetings, staff are welcome to attend and to speak on any matter.
- c. Regarding Faculty Organization meetings, the dean or their representative may be invited to attend as needed to enhance the exchange of ideas, information, and perspectives.

Section 2—Frequency

Regular Faculty Organization meetings shall be held monthly during fall and spring semesters at such time and place as designated by the Chair.

Section 4—Meeting Agenda

Faculty Organization meeting agendas are determined by the Faculty Organization Chair. SOE Faculty Meetings shall be co-planned and co-led by the Faculty Organization Chair and Dean or dean's designee, barring exigent circumstances.

The order of business at regular meetings may be

- a. Disposition of the minutes of the previous meeting.
- b. Reports from standing SOE committees.
- c. Unfinished business.
- d. New business.
- e. Communications and announcements.

Section 5—Special Meetings

- a. Special meetings may be called by the Chair as deemed necessary or upon request of 25% of representatives.
- b. The order of business at special meetings shall be only the transaction of business for which the meeting is called.
- c. The chair shall send notice of special meetings via standard communication channels (e.g., email notice and calendar invitation) at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.
- d. Notices of Special meetings should include the date, time, and location of the meeting as well as the business for which the meeting is being called.

ARTICLE V—VOTING

Section 1—Rights

- a. Within the Faculty Organization, all representatives (as outlined in Article III) of the Faculty Organization shall have the right to vote on all matters coming before the Faculty Organization, including whether and how an item goes to a full faculty vote when full faculty input is needed.

Section 2—Quorum

- a. A Quorum shall consist of a majority of representatives being present, based on the total possible number of representatives elected that year.

Section 3—Procedures

- a. A motion shall be carried if it is approved by a simple majority of Quorum present during a quorum session.
- b. Carried motions will move to a vote of SOE Faculty when appropriate.
- c. When a vote of SOE Faculty is needed, it will be conducted using an online platform to ensure maximum participation and anonymity.

ARTICLE VI—NEW POLICIES AND AMENDMENTS

Section 1—Process

New policies or amendments to current policies may be proposed by the Dean or any member of the Faculty Organization.

- a. If the policy or amendment is proposed by the Dean, the dean or dean's designee will work with the Faculty Organization Chair and representatives to discuss, amend, or create a separate committee to examine the proposal.

- b. If the policy or amendment is proposed by a Faculty Organization member, the Faculty Organization will discuss.
- c. If a simple majority of Faculty Organization Quorum are in favor of pursuing further exploration, the proposal will move forward. If so, the Faculty Organization Chair and representatives will invite the Dean or dean's designee to discuss, amend, or create a separate committee to examine the proposal.
- d. Ideally, new policies and policy changes should be endorsed by a majority vote of all SOE Faculty and before moving to final approval of the Dean.

ARTICLE VII—OFFICERS

Section 1—Elections

Each year, the previous year's Chair shall become the Past Chair. Officers to be duly elected by the faculty each year shall be the Chair, Vice-Chair, Communications Chair, Finance Chair, and Events Chair.

Section 2—Terms

- a. Officers shall remain in office for one year running from the close of elections in May through the close of elections the following year.
- b. Representatives shall remain in office for one year running from election by their constituents in August through elections the following year.
- c. Representatives may be re-elected for up to three years. After one year as a non-representative, they may be re-elected.
- d. Officers may be reelected for up to three years. After one year as a non-officer, they may be re-elected.

Section 3—Nominations

Officers of the Faculty Organization shall be nominated during a spring School of Education Faculty meeting.

Section 4—Slate

When possible, there should be a minimum of two nominees for each office.

Section 5—Ballot

Voting for officers shall be by anonymous e-ballot sent to SOE faculty and completed within two weeks of the nomination date. A simple majority of the votes is required for election. If a majority is not reached on the first ballot, a run-off election will be held between the candidates receiving the two top numbers of votes for each office.

Section 6—Service

The role of an officer or representative in the Faculty Organization shall be recognized as a service contribution and considered as such in faculty evaluation procedures.

Section 7—Compensation

The Chair of the Faculty Organization will receive remuneration for the role, at the current cost for an adjunct instructor teaching a three credit course, which can be used for one of the following: (a) professional development funds; (b) special rate salary adjustment; or (c) one course buy-out. In the case of Co-Chairs, remuneration will be a special salary adjustment split between the co-chairs.

ARTICLE VIII—RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 1—Chair

The Chair shall

- a. Preside over all meetings of the Faculty Organization and co-plan SOE faculty meetings with administration.
- b. Discuss faculty concerns directly with the Dean.
- c. Be an Ex Officio member of SOE Leadership Council and Dean's Cabinet meetings to collaborate in the leadership of the School and provide Faculty Organization updates.
- d. Be an ex-officio member of all Faculty Organization committees and task forces.
- e. Establish a procedure for soliciting agenda items and distribute the agenda to all SOE faculty members prior to each meeting.
- f. Call any special meetings in consultation with officers and representatives per Article 5 Section 5.
- g. A majority vote of Quorum determines when an ad hoc committee is needed. The Chair creates that committee and solicits volunteers.
- h. Ensure information is accessible to Faculty Organization constituents.
- i. Conduct any needed outreach to solicit nominations or make announcements.

Section 2—Vice Chair

The Vice Chair shall

- a. Assume the responsibility of presiding over Faculty Organization meetings in which the Chair is absent.
- b. Assume or delegate the responsibility of recording minutes during any Faculty Organization meeting in which the Communications Chair is absent.
- c. Manage the faculty awards process each year, including the Faculty Organization Student Scholarship, GEHLI, and relevant SOE Awards.
- d. Assemble a Faculty Study Research Leave committee of tenured faculty representatives to review the merits of the application.
- e. Form committees as needed to accomplish the awarding of each type of award each year.

Section 3—Communications Chair

The Communications Chair shall, with appropriate clerical assistance provided by the School of Education,

- a. Record all minutes from the Faculty Organization meetings, including attendance.
- b. Ensure minutes are accessible to all faculty in the SOE via links on the Faculty Organization's [public webpage](#).
- c. Request website updates as needed but at minimum once per academic year to ensure accuracy of information about Faculty Organization, Agendas, Minutes, Officers, and Representatives.
- d. Maintain an accurate roster of committees, task forces, and their members.

Section 4—Finance Chair

The Finance Chair shall

- a. Manage the budget provided by the SOE Dean.
- b. Manage the SOE Faculty Organization Scholarship fund, including fundraising in collaboration with the development, alum, and SOE student engagement office.
- c. Report the Faculty Organization budget updates including expenditures and fund balances to date at standing meetings.

Section 5—Events Chair

The Events Chair shall

- a. In partnership with the Staff Council and SOE leadership, plan and execute a winter social event for the School.
- b. Plan and execute one social event per semester, with at least one of these being planned with the Staff Council.
- c. Work with the Finance Chair to ensure socials fall within the Faculty Organization budget.

Section 6—Immediate Past-Chair

The Immediate Past-Chair shall

- a. Supervise the election of the officers.
- b. Attend Faculty Organization Meetings.
- c. Attend meetings with Dean to provide perspective of the past-chair history.

Section 7—Representatives

Representatives shall

- a. Regularly report minutes to the faculty in their department or centers.
- b. Bring issues from their department or centers to the Faculty Organization as needed to support the well-being of the School.
- c. Ensure their department or the centers have a representative, alternate, or ad hoc representative at every Faculty Organization meeting.

ARTICLE IX—COMMITTEES

Section 1—Standing Committees

The Faculty Organization has no standing committees.

Section 2—Ad Hoc Committees

- a. Ad hoc committees will be created by the Chair, a majority vote of Quorum, at the request of the Dean or Dean's designee.
- b. No ad hoc committee should extend for more than one year from the date of establishment unless warranted.
- c. The chair of any ad hoc committee shall be appointed by the Chair or elected by the membership of that committee.
- d. Committee Chairs shall be responsible for
 - i. Convening the committee,
 - i. Ensuring the committee completes its work in a reasonable time, and
 - ii. Communicating with the Faculty Organization as needed to support the work of the committee.

ARTICLE X—BUDGET

Section 1—School Support

The Dean will provide the Faculty Organization with \$5,000.00 operating funds each calendar year, as funds allow.

Section 2—Process

- a. The Faculty Organization Chair, Chair-Elect, Immediate Past Chair, and Finance Chair will develop a budget for the annual operating funds and provide it to the Dean or dean's designee on or before the second SOE-All Meeting of the academic year.

ARTICLE XI—BYLAWS AMENDMENTS

Section 1—Voting

These bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of SOE Faculty and final approval of the Dean.

Section 2—Proposals

Amendments may be proposed by faculty or the dean, by written notification to the Faculty Organization Chair and, in all cases, amendments must be approved by the faculty with final approval of the Dean.