

Agendas, Minutes, and Reports for University Meeting Contexts

In universities, the framework for the business of deliberative bodies (committees, councils, senates) involves much that is routine, and time is precious, so faculty have often successfully collaborated with staff to produce agendas and minutes. Templates are useful, but it is the faculty member—whether by rotation, a secretary, or a chair—who has final responsibility for ensuring the clarity, accuracy, and timeliness of documents. A thoughtful staff member who is *not* focused on substantive issues during a meeting can be a boon to the process (e.g. providing correctly spelled members' and guests' names and designations; spelling out acronyms; noting who is present/absent and the time of adjournment; recording agenda changes, and the exact wording of motions and amendments for the minutes). If the member of staff does not know the members of the body, name cards can help.

AGENDAS

Repetitious items are best treated in headings: name of university, name of body, date, time, venue. Agendas should *identify action items* in some way so the members can prepare for discussion; and documentation should be attached or linked to the agenda. The usual order of business (adjusted for the size and purpose of the body) is approval of the agenda; approval of the minutes of the previous meeting; comments from the chair; comments from *ex officio* member/s; committee reports; business items listed separately, including subjects to be discussed or decided, and proposed motions when available; new business, normally not for action; and adjournment. A well-constructed agenda provides the backbone for informative minutes, but cannot be automatically transformed into minutes (see reverse).

MINUTES

While *Robert's* favors prose paragraphs for everything, universities usually dispense with routine items in headings, as with agendas, saving concise prose for business items. What must be minuted is the “record of what was *done* at the meeting, not what was *said* by the members.” In other words, minutes are the factual, archival record of *the decisions and actions* of a deliberative body—not an account of all pros and cons mentioned in discussion. Published versions of minutes should be redacted to remove the content of personnel actions. Another purpose of minutes is to inform absent members, so they should include anticipated deadlines and assignments.

If the meeting begins or continues without a quorum, that fact must be noted because the decisions and actions taken without a quorum fall away if not later ratified when the body has reached a quorum. Substantive motions should be recorded verbatim with the name of the proposer (not that of the seconder, and not those of persons speaking for or against). In some cases, it is useful to summarize supporting and opposing views, but without attribution; no personal opinions should appear in the minutes. If a motion is proposed by a committee, no second is required. Local culture determines whether persons are called Jane Smith, Professor Smith, Ms. Smith, or Smith—but using given names alone should be avoided. The disposition of motions must be recorded, including proposed amendments, referrals, tabling, and votes. The precise number of votes is recorded only if a member has called for a show of hands or ballot; since the chair is not required to call for abstentions, one cannot assume that an absence of “nays” means a vote was unanimous. Minutes also record points of order and appeals, whether won or lost. Minutes are signed by the person who vouches for their accuracy and revises them if corrected or amended in a subsequent meeting.

REPORTS

Reports are preferably attached to agendas but, even if given orally, are noted as *received* by the body. In a few cases, it is helpful to record the subject of an oral report (e.g. faculty searches in progress). Semester or annual reports should, like minutes—but further stripped of individuals' names—report the decisions and the actions of the body in as factual a manner as possible.

AGENDA

University of Goodstate
Governance Committee Monthly Meeting
December 8, 2016, Board Room, 2:00 p.m.

members: Mark Abdul, SCI; Sy Ebrey, SOC; Joy Franks, VC, *ex officio*; Pat Goode HUM, Jan Smith, HUM, chair; Ian Xio, student; Lee Wilson, SCI

1. approval of agenda*
2. approval of minutes of Nov. 10 meeting (attached)*
3. chair's comments
4. *ex officio* VC—Governance's comments
5. subcommittee reports
 - 5.1 Bylaws Task Force (interim report attached)
 - 5.2 Personnel Subcommittee
6. Motion to divide the Humanities College into a School of Music and a College of Arts and Letters*
7. Selection of volunteers for advisory councils*
8. Adjournment

*action item

MINUTES (too little):

University of Goodstate
Governance Committee Monthly Meeting
December 8, 2016, Board Room, 2:00 p.m.

present: Mark Abdul, SCI; Sy Ebrey, SOC; Pat Goode HUM, Jan Smith, HUM, chair; Ian Xio, student; Lee Wilson, SCI; *apologies*: Joy Franks, VC, *ex officio*

- agenda **approved** as distributed
- minutes of Nov. 10 meeting **approved** (attached)
- chair's comments: next meeting January 12
- *ex officio* VC—Governance's comments: traveling
- Bylaws Task Force interim report: received
- Personnel Subcommittee report: received
- Motion (P. Goode) to divide the Humanities College into a School of Music and a College of Arts and Letters: **failed**
- Selection of volunteers for advisory councils: **tabled**
- Adjournment 3:55 p.m.

MINUTES (appropriate):

University of Goodstate
Governance Committee Monthly Meeting
December 8, 2016, Board Room, 2:00 p.m.

present: Mark Abdul, SCI; Sy Ebrey, SOC; Pat Goode HUM, Jan Smith, HUM, chair; Ian Xio, student; Lee Wilson, SCI; *apologies*: Joy Franks, VC, *ex officio*

The agenda was **approved** as distributed, and the minutes of the November 10 meeting were **approved** as corrected (attached). Smith said the next committee meeting will be January 12 at the same place and time.

The committee received the interim report of the Bylaws Task Force, headed by Ebrey, who replied to questions. The final report, due in May, will include the results of winter semester faculty forums and further comments from each college-level governance committee.

The committee received the Personnel Subcommittee report presented by Wilson.

Goode **moved to divide the Humanities College into a School of Music and a College of Arts and Letters**, as previously discussed. Wilson **moved to amend with an implementation date of August 2019**; the **amendment passed**. Two visitors were granted voice. The chair of Foreign Languages, Joe Esposito, presented the results of his survey of his faculty on the proposal; and Bess Arden, Humanities Dean, addressed budgetary aspects of the division, including additional administrators and space. After further discussion in committee, including the recruitment advantage that a *School* might provide for the Music Department, the amended **motion failed**. The committee agreed to consider the possibility of a school within the existing college at a subsequent meeting.

There are forty-one volunteers for seventeen places on twelve advisory councils and boards. In view of the hour, the committee agreed to **postpone** action to a super-numerary meeting Dec. 15 at 2:00 in the Board Room.

The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Mark Abdul, rotating recorder

MINUTES (too much)

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The agenda was approved as distributed, and the minutes of the November 10 meeting were corrected to show that Smith, not Xio, had spoken against Wilson's motion to add a graduate student to the committee (attached). The minutes were then approved as corrected. In the chair's comments, Smith announced the next meeting. Vice Chancellor Franks is giving a talk in Boston this week, so there were no *ex officio* comments.

The committee received the interim report of the Bylaws Task Force, headed by Ebrey, who said that the task force has been very busy comparing bylaws language across colleges and at comparable institutions. In reply to Xio, Ebrey said that there are no plans at present to change student government bylaws. Goode said that bylaws changes should be in place before the search for a social science dean begins, but Ebrey said the task force will stay on track to meet its May deadline, following winter semester faculty forums and further comments from each college-level governance committee. A motion by Goode, seconded by Wilson, to advance the deadline unfortunately failed 4 to 2.

Wilson spoke for the Personnel Subcommittee, noting complaints about Mick Jones's mismanagement of the financial aid office, and said he would speak to Lynn Oke, Dean of Students. He also said that members of the Aerospace Department oppose hiring an internal chair.

Discussion of Goode's motion, seconded by Wilson, to divide the Humanities College into a School of Music and a College of Arts and Letters was heated. Joe Esposito, guest, said the foreign language faculty supports the division; but Dean Bess Arden felt it would be too costly. After they left, Ebrey said it was out of order to ask foreign language faculty without asking all college faculty; Abdul agreed. Smith asked where the proposal originated, and Goode said it was her suggestion, supported by other musicians. Smith objected that the good of the university as a whole is supposed to guide the committee, but Goode responded that recognition of a first-class music school ...