



Staff Senator Handbook

2025-2026 Edition

I. Welcome

Fellow Senator,

Welcome to Staff Senate's 2025-2026 session. Whether you are new to Senate or returning for another year, thank you! Our jobs are busy and we are living through stressful times to work at a university; I am thankful for your choice to give some of your time to make Missouri State University a better place to work. Let's get started!

I am Phil Bridges, Chair of Staff Senate for the year. I am thankful for the opportunity to serve as Chair and work with all of you. Through my tenure as a senator and my time on Executive Board as parliamentarian and Chair Elect, my focus has been on helping Senate grow and establishing its presence as a voice for and service to all staff. I am proud to say that we'll start this term nearly full, with 56 senators! Our body's reach, influence, and success come from the dedication of our membership. Along with all of Staff Senate's Executive Board, I encourage you to find your place in what Senate does, to share your voice and perspective during meetings, to share information and news from meetings back to other staff, and to advocate for Staff members you represent. Whether incrementally or all at once, what we do helps staff.

I have many goals for Staff Senate this year. Let's increase involvement in the excellent service, support, and recreational activities we offer. I hope to fill the remaining three vacancies and maintain participation. It's important to amplify Senate's voice and role in the implementation of the new strategic plan and further collaboration and communication among Staff Senate, Faculty Senate, Student Government Association, and Administration. I hope to find ways to serve less-heard-from staff members. In doing all this, I want to be as transparent as possible and keep everyone's Senate-related workload appropriate for a voluntary, unpaid position. I hope you find your place in this work. Let's work together to implement your ideas, as well.

As we begin the year – the first in Conference USA, the first with Dr. Phillips as Provost, the second with President Williams, and the first under the new strategic plan – I challenge all of you to work together to navigate the change so that we leave Senate and the University better on June 30, 2026, than we find it on July 1, 2025.

Wishing you a great year in Senate and elsewhere,

Phil Bridges

II. History of Staff Senate

The Staff Advisory Council was initially established by Dr. Marshall Gordon in November 1988 and consisted of eleven staff members from various job classifications. It took some time for the Council to gain momentum, but it started to take off in 1993 under Dr. Keeling, acting President of the University. The Staff Advisory Council became known as Staff Senate in 2001.

Senate's priorities change over time, but we have maintained standing committees to support the Public Affairs mission, to support Staff's professional development and wellbeing, and to plan events to support and celebrate staff. We have also prioritized fundraising for scholarships and other worthy causes, mentoring fellow staff with available campus resources, and working to better communicate information. As the body representing university staff, we work closely with Student Government Association and the Faculty Senate.

Staff Senate has initiated and contributed to many decisions, events, policies and programs that have made the university a better place to work and study. We do not always do the best job of recording, celebrating, and sharing these wins. We have not always effectively passed knowledge and experience from Senate to Senate. As such, this year I am appointing a Historian to the Executive Board of Staff Senate to work on documenting Senate's work.

III. Staff Senate Advisor

Vice-President Matthew Morris

Staff Senate is advised by Vice-President for Administration and Finance, Matt Morris. He works closely with the executive board and is a strong advocate for staff.

Administrative Specialist IV Ronda Ladd

VP Morris's staff is available to assist Staff Senate in logistics and administrative functions, such as ordering, budgeting, and reservations.

IV. Staff Senate Leadership

Executive Board (and people filling the roles for the 2025-2026 session)

The Staff Senate Executive Board consists of the following elected officers:

Chair (Phil Bridges): the presiding officer, the chair sets the agenda, leads meetings of the Senate and represents Senate on a variety of committees

Chair-Elect (Misty Webster): will serve as chair the following year, serves as treasurer of the Senate and substitutes in case of the Chair's absence

Past Chair (Campbell Keele): serves in an advisory role on the Executive Board and may also substitute in case of the Chair's absence

Coordinator of Staff Senate Committees (Rachel Rigby): supports the establishment and administration of and reporting on the Senate's standing and ad-hoc committees

Coordinator of Communication (Kelly Schlinder): supports communication with Staff Senate and outside entities, sharing meeting agendas, minutes, and other key information

These five are voting members of the executive committee. Exec Board is empowered to advocate for Senate in a variety of committees and to vote on a variety of things per the Senate's bylaws. These include, but are not limited to, appointing senators to fill vacancies, spending on items under \$200, and setting the agenda during discussions with administration. Exec Board actions must be shared with membership and can be overruled by a vote. Staff Senate officers shall be voting members of the Senate except for the Chairperson, who shall vote only in tied votes. Informal Exec Board actions and discussion are not subject to Senate vote; however, we were elected to represent you. We will make every effort to be as transparent as possible in sharing what is discussed and reasons for our words and decisions.

Additionally, the Chair may appoint assistants who support and provide focus for key initiatives during that Chairperson's term. These assistants are included on Staff Senate Executive Board but are not voting members.

Parliamentarian (Will Hader): serves as an advisor to the Chair on following correct parliamentary procedures and Staff Senate bylaws

Secretary (Angie Piercy): maintains records and minutes, prepares agendas, and facilitates the smooth functioning of Senate in collaboration with others on Exec Board and administrative support

Historian (Ryan Reed): serves as an advisor to the Chair in drawing on precedent in decision-making and recording Senate actions and along with the Past Chair will lead the effort to better document Senate's past actions and improve processes for documenting things going forward

V. The Senator's Responsibilities

As a Senator, you represent the views of the job family that elected you or the division you represent. However, you also represent your own perspectives from your unique role in the University. Your actions as a Senator should be influenced both by your own perceptions and those of the University members you represent. Acting as a liaison between your department and job family to the Senate provides an avenue for information sharing that ensures all parties are heard and considered. Make your best effort to hear from and share information with others in your job family, division, building, etc. Your role is vital and should not be taken lightly.

Senate Meetings: Staff Senate meetings typically occur the first Thursday of every month from 11:00am to 1:00pm, unless otherwise noted. Attendance is expected in all meetings. During this time, Senators are encouraged to engage in the discussions brought forth with their constituents in mind. If you are unable to attend a meeting, please attempt to appoint a proxy so your constituents are represented at the meeting. Excessive absences can be cause for loss of your Senate seat.

Committee Involvement: Some of the most vital work Staff Senate accomplishes is through its committees. All Senators must participate in one standing committee and attend one meeting per month. Committee membership does not roll over to the following year. For more information about the current standing committees, please see Appendix C. Excessive absences from committee meetings can be cause for loss of your Senate seat.

VI. The Senator's Privileges

Being part of Staff Senate is a privilege, not a right. If you do not perform your duties and responsibilities, you will lose your position in the Senate. The quickest way to lose your privileges is through consistent absences. If you miss three Senate or committee meetings without prior notice or proxy, the Executive Board can revoke your senator position.

If you must miss a meeting or have an ongoing commitment where you need to arrive late or leave early, email the Executive Board (StaffSenate@missouristate.edu) as soon as possible. If you miss a meeting for a valid reason, such as a family emergency or unforeseen problem, you will not be penalized.

You can send a proxy from your Job Family that will represent you during the meeting; in this case, please make sure to notify the Executive Board or committee head at least one day before the meeting. If the Senate is voting on an issue you know is essential to your Job Family, report to the Executive Board any significant concerns your Job Family has, and they will read your concerns during the discussion.

Appendix A; Parliamentary Procedure (Robert's Rules of Order)

Parliamentary procedure helps make our meetings more official and efficient. By having a standardized method of conducting meetings, discussion, and business, our procedures for reaching our conclusions are systematically governed. We will not chastise you if you do not correctly use parliamentary procedure, but all Senators should try to grow in familiarity as they serve and do what they can to follow them during meetings.

Getting Recognized

In order to speak, you must first be recognized by the Chair. Raise your hand or placard to be recognized. Once recognized, say what you need to say, which is typically done through a motion. The specifics of this process are addressed below. If you are not sure how to ask or do it, pose the question to the Chair, and they will assist in making the proper motions.

Addressing the Chair

In Staff Senate, you always direct your questions, comments, or issues to the Chair as they are running the meeting. If they cannot answer your question, they will redirect it to the appropriate party to answer it. This prevents members from being 'put on the spot' if a situation or issue has vigorous debate or strong opinions.

What to Say Once You Get Recognized—Making Motions

Motions are parliamentary tools that guide communication. If you wish to ask a question, that's one type of motion. If you would like to change the course of action for a resolution, that's another motion. The list of common motions written on the back of all Senators' placard should cover the majority of actions you might take. The Parliamentarian can assist with the more complex motions.

Here are the most frequently used motions in Senate

A General Motion: I Move To...

For the most part, if you wish to make an action and are unsure how to do it, begin with "I move to..." then say what action you want to take or what you want to do, and the Chair or the parliamentarian will assist you in making the correct motion. We want to make sure your voice is heard, even if you don't know the proper way to say it.

Point of Information

If you have information that could be helpful to the discussion, raise your placard and say "point of information." When recognized by the Chair, you can then provide the information you have to benefit the discussion.

For example, if you wanted to state how a resolution would be paid for, you would get recognized and then say something like the following: "Point of Information. This will be paid for by the Staff Activities budget."

Point of Inquiry

If you ever have a question you want to ask, raise your hand and say, "point of inquiry." When recognized by the Chair, you can then ask your question. The Chair will either answer it or direct the question to someone who can.

For example, if you wanted to ask how a resolution would be paid for, you would get recognized and then say something like the following: "Point of Inquiry. How will this resolution be paid for?"

Point of Order

If you are convinced that the Senate has just violated a rule of parliamentary procedure, our bylaws, or our standing rules, then you need to make a point of order. This is a motion drawing the speaker's attention to the violation and must be instantly recognized and addressed by the Chair.

For example, if a motion was not seconded and went straight to discussion, you could state, "Point of order; we failed to second the resolution before we went into the discussion."

Point of Personal Privilege

Motions for personal privilege involve things related to you and unrelated to Senate business. If someone is speaking too softly for you to hear and you would like them to speak up, you can make a personal privilege for that. The way you would do that is to say, "Point of personal privilege. Is it possible to speak up?"

Calling the Previous Question

If you wish to end the debate and ask whether or not the Senate would like to vote, you call the previous question. This is a vote to vote on the resolution. Voting yes on a call to the last question means you want to end the debate and for voting on the resolution to take place immediately. Voting no means the Senate goes back to the debate. Calling the Previous Question should only be used when it is clear there is a consensus to a

resolution and continued debate would only slow the meeting. It should not be used to end the debate just to prevent the other side the opportunity to speak.

Motion to Suspend the Rules

Sometimes, rules will need to be suspended to accommodate specific circumstances or change something that may prevent an action. The most common example of suspending the rules is to vote on a General Business resolution in the same meeting it is read. This is a violation of the rules because General Business resolutions are supposed to be read one meeting and voted on at the next meeting (see below), but may be necessary due to deadlines or changed circumstances. If you wish to do this, simply gain recognition and say, "I move to suspend the rules and vote on this resolution today."

Another example of suspending the rules is moving out of the typical flow of a meeting. If someone needs to discuss a resolution earlier or if an essential item on the agenda might get overlooked, you could move to suspend the rules and push the resolution up on the agenda.

Appendix B; Resolutions

Resolutions are formally written statements calling for action on a particular matter. These documents are the way Staff Senate accomplishes its business. They serve as a written statement of Senate business and are debated, amended, and voted on by the Senate.

General Business Resolutions

Focus on matters of business that are external to our body. If we want to commend a group or staff member for their work or wish to push forward an issue on behalf of the staff, that would be a General Business resolution.

Senate Business Resolutions

Focus on internal matters or things that only affect the Senate. If we want to change the flow of our agenda, change rules, form a new committee, appoint new senators, that would be a Senate Business resolution.

Fiscal Business

Provides funding for a staff senate initiative. Most funding under a specific value is awarded by the executive board or has a line item in our senate budget. However, the annual budget should be approved by Senate and any changes or additional funds awarded out would be done by a Fiscal Resolution and filling out the funding forms.

Bylaw Business

They are rarely brought up because they deal strictly with changing our bylaws, which then requires University Administrative Council action to approve. They should only be made when a significant change is needed to the bylaws and generally will only be made when vetted through a rules committee.

How to Write a Resolution

Resolutions are structurally divided into brief statements called clauses. There are two types of clauses: pre-ambulatory and operative.

Pre-ambulatory clauses come before the action that Senate is asked to perform. These clauses review the history of the issue and give arguments in support of the action being called for. There are many words these resolutions can begin with, but some commonly used words are WHEREAS, UNDERSTANDING, RECOGNIZING, BELIEVING, ADVOCATING, ACHIEVING, ASPIRING, REALIZING. Basically, any verb that you can attach the suffix –ing to (ie, a gerund) can be used to begin a pre-ambulatory clause. You will notice that these are all capitalized. The reason is we always capitalize the beginning words of clauses in Senate (see sample resolution).

Call to Action The Operative Clause(s) Once the arguments have been outlined, you will want Senate to take action on a particular issue. That is what the operative clause is for. These clauses tell Senate and outside groups what should be done about a specific issue. An example of such a clause is given below.

Formatting a Resolution

There is a template that has most of the formatting already done for you located at the bottom of this section.

Numerical Identification of the Resolution

If you look in the upper left-hand corner, there is a set of information. The first line references whether the resolution is General, Senate, or Fiscal Business (GB, SB or FB), the semester and year, and the numerical designation given by the Secretary. The numerical designation is a number based on the number of resolutions of that type we have heard thus far in that year (i.e., if it is the 35th GB resolution, it will be given the number 35).

Process for Hearing a Resolution

Depending on the type of resolution, we may vote on it that day or wait and vote at our next meeting.

General Business Resolutions (GB)

Given the nature of this type of resolution, we must read it aloud and vote on it at the next meeting. The reason for this is we want you to take the information back to your Job Family and have time to discuss the legislation with them. This is not always possible, but we would rather this be the norm than the exception.

First Meeting

- a. Reading of the Resolution
- b. Motion to Adopt
- c. Discussion

Second Meeting

- a. Discussion
- b. Debate
- c. Vote on Resolution
- d. Ruling by Chair on Outcome of Vote

Sometimes, senators will move to suspend the rules and vote on General Business resolutions at the same meeting they are read. If so, we will go through the entire process mentioned above during the first meeting.

Senate Business Resolutions (SB)

Senate Business resolutions operate a little bit differently. Because Senate Business resolutions focus on internal matters, we can address them all in the same meeting.

First Meeting

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|----|--|
| a. | Reading of the Resolution | d. | Debate |
| b. | Motion to Adopt | e. | Vote on Resolution |
| c. | Discussion | f. | Ruling by Chair on the outcome of the vote |

Fiscal Business Resolutions (FB)

Fiscal Business resolutions operate a bit differently than the other two. The executive board may approve Fiscal Business below the threshold of \$250. If such an award is made, it will be announced to Senate at its next meeting. Otherwise, Fiscal Business above that threshold will be put to a Senate vote. Because Fiscal Business resolutions focus on funding, they may be internal or external but can be fully addressed in the same meeting.

First Meeting

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---------------------------|
| a. | Statements of the Funding Request or Resolution | c. | Discussion on the Funding |
| b. | Motion to Adopt | d. | Debate |
| | | e. | Vote on Resolution |

Resolution Template

FB Fall 2021, 1

*Title: **brief indications of what the resolution is***

*Authored by: **Your Name Here***

*Sponsored by: **Committee Name Here***

*Date: **insert meeting date this will be read during.***

WHEREAS Staff Senate receives yearly funding for programming, events, and supplies to support those initiatives which further support the goals of this Senate as outlined by precedent, policy, rules, and the Bylaws; and

WHEREAS procedures, policy, and rules have been put into place outlining the Senate's responsibilities for fiscal stewardship of funds; and

WHEREAS any funding requests exceeding the threshold for Executive Board action found in those governing documents ought to be brought before the Senate body in regular session for a vote; and

Insert clauses enumerating the actions that are requested and funding to be made

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that funds not to exceed **amount in whole** dollars be allocated to **provide here the project or initiative receiving the allocated funds.**

Appendix C; Committees and Councils

Staff Senate has several standing committees and temporary workgroups. Standing committees primarily serve to facilitate the work of internal Staff Senate programs and initiatives. All senators are required to serve on at least one standing committee or council per term year, but senators may serve on multiple committees and councils.

Staff Senate Committee Charges	
Staff Development Committee:	<p>The Staff Development Committee is charged with coordinating and raising awareness of opportunities for Staff to grow professionally, as well as pursuing opportunities to improve recruitment and retention of staff and participating in the Strategic Plan implementation to improve the university's standing as an employer of choice.</p> <p>The Staff Development Committee is responsible for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering with other MSU entities to present a professional development opportunity at least once a semester • Leading research into Senate initiatives to improve conditions for Staff • Working with the Chair and Chair-Elect to deploy, promote, and interpret the biannual Staff Satisfaction Survey • Working with any ad-hoc committees charged with addressing staff satisfaction
Public Affairs Committee:	<p>The Public Affairs Committee is charged with coordinating activities and developing proposals to produce citizens of enhanced character that contribute to the University community and society, and demonstrate civility in thought, speech and action.</p> <p>The Public Affairs Committee is responsible for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting the public affairs mission and events/activities that support it • Facilitating Cherry Street Adopt a Street • Coordinating a leadership book series at least once a semester • Coordinating donation drives as opportunity arises • Reporting updates to the Coordinator of Staff Senate Committees.
Staff Activities Committee:	<p>The Staff Activities Committee is charged with facilitating, planning and coordinating Staff Senate organized events, fundraising for Staff Senate Scholarship funds, and coordinating with University partners in the hosting of Staff Appreciation Week (in June).</p> <p>The Staff Activities Committee is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning staff events through the year • Creating new fundraising opportunities for the Staff Senate Scholarship • Coordinating participation for staff at MSU events, including athletics • Reporting updates to the Coordinator of Staff Senate Committees.
Staff Outreach Committee:	<p>The Staff Outreach Committee is charged with connecting with, hearing from, and serving groups that Senate has typically had trouble reaching. These include, but are not limited to, part-time staff, 2nd and 3rd shift staff, West Plains Staff Senate, SGA and faculty.</p> <p>The Staff Outreach Committee is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying barriers to participation in campus activities for 2nd and 3rd shift staff. • Creating and promoting accessible avenues for engagement tailored to varying shift schedules. • Collaborating with other committees to ensure shift-inclusive communications and event planning. • Reporting updates to the Coordinator of Staff Senate Committees

Appendix D; Additional Information

Staff Senate email: StaffSenate@missouristate.edu

This inbox is visible to everyone on Executive Board.

Chair's email: PhilBridges@missouristate.edu

Staff Senate website: <https://www.missouristate.edu/StaffSenate/default.htm>

Staff Senate blog: <https://blogs.missouristate.edu/staffsenate/>

To subscribe to the blog, click on a post, scroll to the bottom, add your email and click the subscribe button.

Minutes: <https://www.missouristate.edu/StaffSenate/current-meeting-minutes.htm>

Minutes are emailed shortly after meetings and archived on the website.

Bylaws: <https://www.missouristate.edu/StaffSenate/bylaws.htm>

You can read the full bylaws on the website.

Appendix E; Meetings of the Staff Senate

All meetings are on Thursdays from 11:00 – 1:00. All meetings for the 2025-2026 Senate are currently scheduled in Glass Hall 486. Changes will be communicated to all Senators via email.

- July 3, 2025
- August 7, 2025
- September 4, 2025
- October 2, 2025
- November 6, 2025
- December 4, 2025
- January 8, 2026
- February 5, 2026
- March 5, 2026
- April 2, 2026
- May 7, 2026
- June 4, 2026