

Revised text, approved by the University Faculty Senate on Oct. 27, 2007, to be placed in the Governance handbook.

Consultation and Visitation Procedures

Occasionally, governance and administration on a campus experience conflict as they carry on their efforts to foster responsible participation and consultation on college affairs.

When a situation of conflict arises between faculty and administration, it rarely begins as an intense, unsolvable problem. Initially, some minor disagreement between administration and faculty can, if not addressed and resolved, escalate to a more serious conflict. The University Faculty Senate has two separate procedures which may be undertaken to address and find resolution to this conflict. In the instance of a serious, but not major conflict, the informal "Consultation" should be considered. Where a major, severe conflict exists, which may lead to a vote of no confidence, the more formal "Campus Visit" should be used.

When a situation of conflict arises and efforts to resolve the issue on campus have not been successful, there is a sequence of steps that may be undertaken to address and find resolution to the conflict:

A. Consultation

A consultation is a somewhat informal process that leverages faculty governance expertise within the university to assist a campus experiencing significant governance issues. It should be viewed as a faculty to faculty process that can be utilized proactively to prevent a major breakdown between faculty and campus administration, or between groups of faculty, or between faculty and other campus constituencies.

A consultation is recommended in situations where there is a serious conflict in which there have been repeated unsuccessful efforts to address and resolve the situation, but where there is not a likelihood of an imminent crisis such as a vote of no-confidence.

In appropriate circumstances, the consultation has several distinct advantages over a visitation: (a) it is far less costly to the Senate, (b) it may be of assistance in solving problems before a crisis is reached, (c) the process is much less visible than a visitation, and is far less likely to be noticed in the public media, (d) it can be arranged quickly and quietly.

1. Process

A request for a consultation should be directed to the President of the University Faculty Senate by the local governance leader, the campus senator(s), or preferably, both, and with concurrence of the campus executive committee. The request may be either written

or oral, providing the President of the Senate with sufficient detail to permit the drafting of a charge to the consultants.

The President, with the advice and counsel of the UFS Executive Committee, prepares a charge to the consultants, and delivers the charge to the Chair of the Governance Committee. The charge should include the scope of the problem(s) to be examined, an expected completion date, and a budget. The President, after discussions with the UFS Executive Committee and the Chair of the Governance Committee, appoints a team of two or three consultants, naming one as the chair. In identifying possible consultants, the President should give preference to members of the Governance Committee.

The Senate office will assist the consultants in making travel arrangements and in scheduling appointments with persons identified by the chair. Costs of the consultation will be paid by the University Faculty Senate. The chair of the consultants will take care to insure that consultant's expenses remain within budget and adhere to state travel guidelines.

The consultants will accept such oral, written, and electronic submissions that are provided to them, except that unattributed documents or statements shall not be accepted nor considered. Contributors may seek confidentiality with respect to their submissions, and the consultants will maintain the confidentiality of all documents to the extent allowed by law.

The chair of the consultants shall keep the President of the University Faculty Senate apprised of the progress of the consultants and any difficulties that may arise with respect to either the charge or the budget. Any communication with the press that might arise should be channeled through the chair, whose public comments should be limited to process, not substance.

Materials received by the consultants will be delivered to the President of the University Faculty Senate who will maintain their confidentiality as required by law and will archive them for the length of time required by SUNY policy.

II. Visitation

In the event of a serious, prolonged conflict about faculty governance between faculty governance and administration, and where there is serious consideration of a vote of "no confidence" it is strongly recommended that the campus president and the campus faculty governance leader(s) jointly request the help of the University Faculty Senate in resolving the dispute. They should make this request in the form of a letter of invitation to the President of the University Faculty Senate asking the Senate President to render assistance by appointing a Visitation Committee to come to the campus.

A. Function and Charge

The Visitation committee will serve in the capacity of making an inquiry, in cooperation with the campus governance leader and the campus president, and of submitting a report. The report may include suggestions and recommendations to the local governance body and administration. [Copies of sample letters of invitation are on file in the University Faculty Senate Office in Albany.]

The President of University Faculty Senate appoints the Visitation Committee, names its chair, convenes it for its first meeting, and prepares a carefully developed charge.

B. Membership

Before forming the committee, the Senate President will consult with the University Faculty Senate's Executive Committee, past Senate presidents, persons who have previously chaired such committees, and possibly the faculty senator(s) from the campus in question.

For Visitation Committee membership, the Senate President will seek people with broad governance experience. They should be distinguished by reputations for reasonableness and integrity, and for their capacity to avoid being either advocates or adversaries in their dealings with administrators and faculty. The Senate President will also aim to establish a committee that is representative of the diversity of the "SUNY family."

The Visitation Committee's membership will always include a person from SUNY System Administration. This individual will act as a member of the committee for the Senate and not in an official capacity as a System administrator. Such a person will often have had prior service on the Senate and/or served as a SUNY System liaison to the University Faculty Senate.

It is not required that current members of the University Faculty Senate be appointed to the Visitation Committee. Experience in governance is the most important qualification. It is however, recommended that the Visitation Committee include the current Chair of the Governance committee or his/her designee.

C. Materials and Documentation

The Senate President or Visitation Committee Chair solicits all relevant campus documents from the campus governance leader and the college president. Both the college president and the faculty governance leader may send materials independently; however they are obligated to share with one another the materials they transmit. The Visitation Committee will accept all documents and materials that are provided, as long as they have appropriate attribution of source. No anonymous materials will be accepted. Contributors may seek confidentiality with respect to their submissions, and the Visitation Committee will seek to maintain the confidentiality of all documents provided to the extent provided by law. Members of the campus community or other relevant

persons may choose to talk to the Visitation Committee orally, either in person, or by phone. Again, while the confidentiality of the source will be maintained to the extent possible by the Visitation Committee, such sources must identify themselves to the Visitation Committee.

In every instance, the Senate President and the Visitation Committee will be careful to respect the authority, prerogatives, and responsibilities of the campus president and the campus governance leader.

D. Campus Visitation

During the collation and review of materials from the campus, the Chair of the Visitation Committee in consultation with the President of the University Faculty Senate, will schedule a visit to the campus. During this Campus Visitation, the Committee will expect to meet with the President, the Campus Governance Leader, key people in the administration, faculty, staff, and students, as well as others in the larger campus community that may ask to meet with Visitation Committee. The scheduling of such meetings may occur on-campus or off-campus (in order to protect confidentiality) and will be done in consultation with the Chair of the Visitation Committee. In every instance, the Senate President and the Visitation Committee will be careful to respect the authority, prerogatives, and responsibilities of the campus president and the campus governance leader.

After the campus visit, the President of the University Faculty Senate, or designee of the President, will write the report with recommendations that represent the Visitation Committee's findings. It is most fitting that this final report be delivered to the campus in person by the President of the University Faculty Senate and the Chair of the Visitation Committee, and two members of the Visitation Committee, and that they present it to the campus governance leader and the college president in a meeting with both parties present.

It should be understood that the Visitation Report, once handed to the president of the campus and the president (or chair) of the local governance body, becomes the property of the two parties, who then have independent authority over its distribution. While decisions about the specific distribution of this report do not lie with the Visitation Committee, and must rest on the parties concerned, it is urged that both parties recognize the sensitivity of the content of the report, and give careful consideration to the scope of the distribution.

The two groups: the president of the campus and members of his/her cabinet or council as well as the president (or chair) of the campus governance body, and his/her executive committee will have one week from the date of the presentation of the Visitation Report to respond to the report. If there are errors or omissions of fact in the Visitation Report, notification of such errors should be sent in written form to the Chair of the Visitation Committee. The Chair of the Visitation Committee may choose to convene the Visitation Committee to consider these responses, and any subsequent corrections that may be made

to the Visitation Report. The Chair of the Visitation Committee will send the Final Report of the Visitation Committee to the President of the University Faculty Senate who will submit the Final Report to the president of the campus and to the campus governance leader and to the Chancellor. A copy of the Final Report should be archived in the Office of the Faculty Senate. Materials developed by the Visitation Committee should be turned over to the President of the University Faculty Senate, who shall maintain their confidentiality to the extent allowed by law, and shall archive them for the period of time prescribed by SUNY policy.

The Chair of the Visitation Committee or the President of the University Faculty Senate may be asked, and may choose to comment on the visitation process, to the University Faculty Senate, the campus community, or the public about the visitation process. Members of the Visitation Committee should recognize that the substance of the deliberations, the content of the Report and its recommendations are sensitive issues, and should exercise care in maintaining the confidentiality of these issues.

The Committee members may also at this time discuss with the two campus officials steps that they might take to review and respond to the recommendations. [Sample copies of Visitation Committee materials are on file in the University Faculty Senate Office in Albany.]

E. Timeline for Visitation Process

1. Joint letter of request for Campus Visitation from the president of the campus and the campus governance leader is sent to the President of the University Faculty Senate.
2. President of the UFS assembles Visitation Committee.
3. Campus president and campus governance leader assemble documentation for Visitation Committee. Documentation is exchanged between parties on campus, and is then forwarded to University Faculty Senate office.
4. Documentation is forwarded by UFS office to Chair of Visitation Committee and committee members.
5. Committee meetings and scheduling of Campus Visitation takes place.
6. Schedule of meetings for Campus Visitation is sent to Chair of Visitation Committee.
7. Campus Visitation.
8. Committee convenes for writing of Report.
9. Report is submitted to President of the University Faculty Senate; President of UFS and Chair of Visitation Committee schedule joint meeting with campus president and campus governance leader.

10. Report is simultaneously given to campus president and campus governance leader.
11. Within one week written responses to Visitation Report are sent to the Chair of the Visitation Committee.
12. Final Report sent to UFS President who sends it to campus president, campus governance leader, and Chancellor.

It is anticipated that the total time for all steps should not exceed three calendar months.