

**Bylaws of the Department of Sociology, Texas A&M University**

**September 2015**

**(Amended September 21, 2018, Amended December 2020, Amended October 2021, Amended April 2023)**

The Department of Sociology at Texas A&M is committed to collegial governance, with matters decided by majority vote of the members of the department eligible to vote and present at the meeting.

For the purposes of this document, “tenure-track faculty” refer to Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Full Professors with tenure or eligible for tenure. “Academic professional track faculty” refer to Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Instructional Assistant Professors, Instructional Associate Professors, and Instructional Professors, Assistant Professors of Practice, Associate Professors of Practice, and Full Professors of Practice.

**I. Issues Related to Departmental Voting Rights and Responsibilities**

- A. **Tenured and tenure-track faculty** whose appointment is 50% or greater in Sociology will have the right to vote on all matters not involving personnel issues. For personnel matters, all tenured and tenure-track faculty have the right to vote on all hiring decisions, regardless of the potential rank of the individual(s) being considered. All tenured faculty have the right to vote on matters involving the evaluation and promotion of Assistant Professors (tenure-track, instructional track, and professor of practice), and Full Professors have the right to vote on matters involving the evaluation and promotion of Assistant and Associate Professors (tenure-track, instructional track and professor of practice). All tenured faculty have the right to vote on matters involving the evaluation and promotion of Lecturers.
- B. **Tenured, tenure-track and instructional faculty** whose appointment is less than 50% in Sociology will not have the right to vote on department matters, but are welcome to attend and contribute to meetings (except meetings closed by a majority of those eligible to vote, as specified in F.1).
- C. **Instructional faculty** whose appointment is 50% or greater in Sociology will have the right to vote on all matters not involving personnel issues. For personnel matters, all Instructional faculty have the right to vote on hiring decisions involving Instructional faculty positions, Lecturer positions, and Professor of Practice positions, regardless of the potential rank of the individual(s) being considered. Instructional faculty also have the right to vote on promotion and evaluation of other Instructional faculty and Professors of Practice of lesser rank. All Instructional Associate and Full Professors have the right to vote on matters involving the evaluation and promotion of Lecturers.
- D. **Professor of Practice** whose appointment is 50% or greater in Sociology will have the right to vote on all matters not involving personnel issues. For personnel matters, all Professors of practices have the right to vote on hiring decisions involving Instructional faculty positions, Lecturer positions and Professor of practice positions. Professors of practice also have the right to vote on promotion and evaluation of other Instructional faculty and Professors of Practice of lesser rank. All Associate Professors of Practice and Full Professors of Practice have the right to vote on matters involving the evaluation and promotion of Lecturers.

- E. **Lecturers and Senior Lecturers** will not have the right to vote on department matters, but are welcome to attend and contribute to meetings (except meetings closed by a majority of those eligible to vote, as specified in F.1).
- F. **Graduate Students** may elect one graduate student member to attend departmental meetings that do not consider personnel matters or matters in which particular graduate students are being discussed. That one member may vote on issues not involving personnel matters.
- G. Unless personnel matters are under consideration, all departmental or committee meetings, except for the meetings of the executive council, are open to anyone, including graduate students and postdoctoral scholars.
  - 1. Upon request from a member of the department who is eligible to vote, all persons who are not eligible to vote on departmental matters will leave and a privileged discussion concerning closing the meeting can occur. A majority vote of the present members eligible to vote can close a particular meeting to those not eligible to vote.

## II. Organization and Positions

### A. Department Head

#### 1. Functions

- a. To represent the interests of the department and faculty to other departments, administrative officials and the larger community.
- b. To preside at departmental faculty meetings.
- c. To act as executive officer of the department in implementation of policies.
- d. To be responsible for the daily functioning of the department and its offices.
- e. To report to the faculty concerning the departmental budget and other matters pertinent to the faculty.
- f. To serve on and chair the executive council and the annual review committee.
- g. In consultation with each area concentration group, to appoint a member of each area to provide a list of graduate courses for each year.

#### 2. Appointment and term of office

- a. The department head appointment and tenure are determined by the rules and regulations of the university.

### B. Associate Department Head

#### 1. Functions

- a. To serve in the capacity of department head in cases where the department head is unable to serve.
- b. To attend executive council meetings as a non-voting member, unless elected, and to serve as recorder.
- c. To take the minutes at the faculty meetings, and distribute them to the faculty within 2 weeks of each meeting.

- d. To perform such duties relating to departmental matters as may be assigned by the department head and to advise the department head.

## 2. Appointment

- a. The associate department head is appointed by the department head in consultation with the executive council and the approval of a majority of the department's voting members (tenure-track, instructional faculty, and professor of practice). The associate department head serves at the discretion of the head to be appointed or reappointed by faculty majority vote for a term no longer than 4 years.
- b. The associate department head shall be compensated for duties as agreed upon with the department head.

## C. Director of Graduate Recruitment (DGR)

### 1. Functions

- a. To chair the Graduate Admissions Committee.
- b. To be responsible for all graduate admissions and recruitment activities, including recruitment trips, letters of nomination for fellowships, and providing information to admitted students.
- c. To be responsible for the First Year Graduate Student Proseminar course and providing information to students upon their arrival.
- d. To serve as a non-voting member of the Graduate Program and Evaluation Committee
- e. To implement departmental policies regarding admissions to the graduate program.

### 2. Appointment

- a. The DGR is appointed by the head in consultation with the executive council and the approval of a majority of the department's voting members (tenure-track, instructional faculty, and professor of practice). The DGR serves at the discretion of the department head to be appointed or reappointed by faculty majority vote for a term no longer than 4 years.
- b. The DGR shall be compensated for duties as agreed upon with the department head.

## D. Director of Graduate Retention, Professional Development and Placement (DGP)

### 1. Functions

- a. To chair the Graduate Program and Evaluation committee, and bring potential revisions to the program to the Graduate Program and Evaluation committee.
- b. To be responsible for award nominations for all of the graduate student awards.
- c. To be responsible for graduate student annual evaluation.
- d. To be responsible for knowing the details of the graduate program, answering faculty and student questions about assistantships and program requirements.
- e. To serve as a non-voting member on the Graduate Admissions Committee.

- f. To implement departmental policies regarding students currently enrolled in the graduate program.

2. Appointment

- a. The DGP is appointed by the head in consultation with the executive council and the approval of a majority of the department's voting members (tenure-track, instructional faculty, and professor of practice). The Director serves at the discretion of the department head to be appointed or reappointed by faculty majority vote for a term no longer than 4 years.
- b. The DGP shall be compensated for duties as agreed upon with the department head.

E. Director of Undergraduate Curriculum (DUC)

1. Functions:

- a. To meet with the department head and provide policy advice related to curricular matters.
- b. To co-chair the Sociology Undergraduate Curriculum and Program Committee.
- c. To serve on the College of Liberal Arts committee dedicated to undergraduate instruction and other committees relevant to Sociology course and program proposals.
- d. To review and serve as the final arbiter (official signatory) of syllabi that are submitted for transfer equivalent to the department.
- e. To be responsible for undergraduate course catalog content for the Sociology Department

2. Appointment

- a. The Director of Undergraduate Curriculum is appointed by the head in consultation with the executive council and the approval of a majority of the department's voting members (tenure-track, instructional faculty and professor of practice). The DUC serves at the discretion of the department head to be appointed or reappointed by faculty majority vote for a term no longer than 4 years.
- b. The DUC shall be compensated for duties as agreed upon with the department head.

F. Director of Sociology Undergraduate Programs (DUP)

1. Functions:

- a. To coordinate undergraduate co-curricular programs such as the Sociology Internship Program, professional development courses, and student awards, and extra-curricular programs such as AKD and Sociology Clubs.
- b. To oversee communication of undergraduate opportunities including maintaining social media and distributing announcements.
- c. To work with advisors regarding recruitment and retention initiatives and advising policies.
- d. To assist assessment committees and advisors and oversee other initiatives to assess undergraduate program.

- e. To assist the Director of Undergraduate Curriculum with implementation of undergraduate curriculum initiatives.
- f. To co-chair the Undergraduate Curriculum and Program Committee

## 2. Appointment

- a. The Director of Sociology Undergraduate Programs is appointed by the head in consultation with the executive council and the approval of a majority of the department's voting members (tenure-track, instructional faculty and professor of practice). The Director of Sociology Undergraduate Programs serves at the discretion of the department head to be appointed or reappointed by faculty majority vote for a term no longer than 4 years.
- b. The Director of Sociology Undergraduate Programs shall be compensated for duties as agreed upon with the department head.

## G. Standing Committees and Ad hoc Committees

Standing committees are committees that continue from year to year. Standing committees can be created or dissolved by a majority vote of the department's voting members (tenure-track, instructional faculty and professor of practice). With the exception of the executive council and the annual review committee, the head appoints faculty members to these committees. Individuals whose appointment in Sociology is less than 50% are not generally expected to serve on departmental committees, except where specified in letters of appointment. All faculty shall be asked for their committee preference at the beginning of the academic year. The department head, in consultation with the associate head, will consider these faculty preferences in committee appointments.

When the executive council or the annual review committee are not diverse in terms of gender and race (including the head), the head, in consultation with the diversity committee, shall offer an extra position on the committee for one year to assure diversity, equity and inclusion factors, as well as the individual faculty member's service burden, are adequately taken into consideration.

Ad hoc committees are created for a specific purpose or goal. Ad hoc committees can be created by the department head or they can be created by a majority vote of the department's voting members (tenure-track, instructional faculty and professor of practice). Upon completion of their particular tasks, these committees will be dissolved by the appointing authority.

### 1. Executive Council

- a. Functions and duties include:
  1. To prepare the agenda for departmental meetings, including adding any recommendations for departmental action to the agenda under the category of motions coming from committees.
  2. To act for the department in emergency matters and to report to the faculty on actions taken as soon as possible, but no later than one month after the action has been taken.
  3. To serve as an advisory board to the head.
  4. To consult with the head regarding matters of salary increases and counter-offers.
  5. To consider any other matter that might be brought to its attention by members of the faculty.

b. Membership

1. The executive council should consist of 4 elected members.
2. All of the department's voting members (tenure-track, instructional faculty and professor of practice) are eligible to vote and to serve on the committee.
3. Voting for council members shall be conducted by secret ballot within the first month of the fall semester.
  - a) In the nomination stage, each voting member of the faculty can nominate one person for each open position. Candidates receiving 3 or more nominations will be included in the ballot for the second stage election, provided they are willing to serve if elected. There are no limits on the number of candidates on the second stage ballot.
  - b) In the second stage, the two people receiving the largest number of votes are considered the executive council members.
  - c) In cases of ties in the second stage, a runoff election shall be held.
4. Results are made available to the department's voting members (tenure-track, instructional faculty, and professor of practice).
5. Terms are two year, staggered terms so that two positions are decided each year.
6. The associate department head is an ex officio, non-voting member of the executive council (unless he or she is elected, in which case the individual is a voting member).
7. Elected members cannot serve two consecutive terms.
8. The department head is a fifth, ex officio, voting member.

2. Graduate Admissions Committee

a. Functions

1. To admit or deny admission to the graduate program.
2. To recruit new students and increase the pool of qualified applicants to the program.

b. Membership

1. The committee chair is the Director of Graduate Recruitment.
2. The committee membership will include at least four faculty members who are graduate faculty (of any category). The committee membership, when possible, will represent all of the substantive areas in the department. In addition, the Director of Graduate Retention, Professional Development and Placement will serve as a non-voting member.

3. Graduate Program and Evaluation Committee

a. Functions

1. To evaluate, on at least an annual basis, the progress of graduate students and make decisions concerning retention.

2. To rank-order graduate students for department assistantships and other monies under departmental control that are available for retention.
3. To serve as a graduate course curriculum committee to recommend courses, changes in courses and coordinate the concentration areas courses.
4. To maintain a manual of current procedures for graduate students that specifies the requirements, rules and regulations to which they are subject. This manual must be approved by the faculty and when so approved becomes a supplement to these bylaws.
5. To suggest policy changes regarding the graduate program to the department.

b. Membership

1. The committee chair is the Director of Graduate Retention, Professional Development and Placement.
2. At least four faculty who are graduate faculty (of any category) shall serve on the committee. In addition, the Director of Graduate Admissions will be a non-voting member of the committee.

4. Undergraduate Curriculum and Program Committee

a. Functions

1. To serve as an undergraduate course curriculum committee to recommend courses, changes in courses and coordinate the courses required for undergraduate majors.
2. Faculty members of the committee may serve as proxies for the DUC on external committees as needed.
3. To suggest policy changes regarding the undergraduate curriculum to the department.
4. To suggest policy changes related to the Sociology undergraduate co-curricular programs, such as the internship, professional development, and awards programs, as well as the extracurricular organizations affiliated with the department, such as AKD.
5. To suggest policy changes related to content of undergraduate programs, advising, recruitment and retention.

b. Membership

1. At least four faculty shall serve on the committee; 1 graduate student and 1 undergraduate student serve on the committee.
2. Sociology Advisor serves as a standing member on the committee.
3. The DUC and DUP serve as co-chairs of the committee.

5. Graduate Student Award Committee

a. Functions

1. To nominate and select graduate students for scholarships or special awards.

- 2. To allocate monies available for various awards.
  - b. Membership: At least three faculty shall serve on the committee.
6. Colloquium Committee
- a. Functions: To coordinate, schedule and advertise speakers.
  - b. Membership: At least four faculty shall serve on the committee.
7. Annual Review Committee
- a. Functions: To conduct the annual reviews of the faculty.
  - b. Membership
    - 1. The annual review committee should consist of 4 elected members selected from the tenure-track faculty who are not currently serving on the executive council and have a 50% or greater appointment in Sociology.
    - 2. All of the department's tenure-track, instructional faculty, professor of practice are eligible to vote.
    - 3. Voting for committee members shall be conducted by secret ballot within the first month of the spring semester.
      - a) In the nomination stage, each voting member of the faculty can nominate one person for each open position. Candidates receiving 3 or more nominations will be included in the ballot for the second stage election, provided they are willing to serve if elected. There are no limits on the number of candidates on the second stage ballot.
      - b) In the second stage, the two people receiving the largest number of votes are considered the annual review committee members in years where there are two vacancies, and the one person receiving the largest number of votes is the member in years where there is one vacancy.
      - c) In cases of ties in the second stage, a runoff election shall be held.
    - 4. Results are made available to the department's tenure-track faculty.
    - 5. Terms are two year, staggered terms so that two positions are decided each year.
    - 6. Elected members cannot serve two consecutive terms.
    - 7. The department head is a fifth, ex officio, voting member.

### **III. Meetings, Quorum and Voting Procedures**

#### **A. Meetings and Quorum**

- 1. The Department shall meet at least once during the regular semester and at other times called either by the head or by request to the head of at least 20% of the department's voting members (tenure-track, instructional faculty and professor of practice). When such a request is received, the head will call a meeting within 2 weeks.



2. An agenda for each meeting (regular or special), to include specific motions to be voted on, shall be sent to all members at least three working days before the meeting. New business will be the last item on all department meetings of the full faculty.
3. A quorum will consist of not less than half of the department's voting members (tenure-track, instructional faculty and professor of practice, and the graduate student representative) who are not on leave or full-time administrative assignment outside of the department.
4. No proxy votes are allowed in faculty meetings, except when both a. and b. below are met:
  - a. The proxy is transmitted with respect to a specific motion, and
  - b. The proxy is transmitted to the department head or the associate department head.
  - c. In the event the original motion is amended or substituted, the head and associate head will determine whether the proxy applies to the amended or substituted motion. Any voting member present may challenge the decision and request a vote for final determination.

#### B. Voting Procedure

1. A secret ballot shall be used for all personnel decisions, elections, or whenever one voting member requests it.
2. Ballots shall be counted by two faculty.
3. Voting procedures for faculty hiring of interviewed candidates for tenure-track positions, or academic professional track positions that are part of a national search, are as follows:
  - a. A quorum is defined as earlier in III. A. 3. Proxies may be submitted and counted as defined earlier in III. A. 4. Proxies should specify an acceptable/unacceptable vote for each candidate, as well as a rank ordering of all the candidates that the voting individual believes should be included on the list of candidates who can receive an offer.
  - b. Abstentions do not count in the total number of votes cast.
  - c. The faculty cast an acceptable/unacceptable vote on each candidate.  
Acceptable/unacceptable is decided by majority vote. A majority is more than 50% of the votes.
  - d. Each faculty member votes for one of the candidates in the pool of candidates that were considered acceptable by a majority vote of the faculty. For proxy votes, this will consist of the candidate the individual ranked highest, out of the pool of candidates considered acceptable by a majority of the votes.
  - e. If a candidate receives a majority of the votes, an offer will be extended to that candidate. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes, the candidate receiving the fewest votes is (temporarily) dropped from the pool and the faculty vote on the candidates remaining in the pool of candidates. This procedure continues until one candidate receives a majority. The first candidate to receive a majority of the votes is the first choice candidate and is offered the job.
  - f. The second choice to receive an offer, third choice to receive an offer, etc. are determined in the same manner, by majority vote. (On these votes, all acceptable candidates that were in the original pool and not previously voted as the first choice, etc. are placed back in the pool of candidates.) Each candidate must receive a majority vote to be placed on

the list who may be offered the position. (In other words, it is possible for a majority to vote that a candidate is “acceptable” but not include that person on the list who can receive an offer if that individual does not ever receive a majority vote endorsing placing that individual on the offer list.)

In the event that only one candidate exists, the following procedure is followed:

- g. The acceptable/unacceptable vote follows the above procedure.
- h. A yes/no vote is cast for the candidate. If the candidate receives a majority of the votes, the candidate is offered the job.

4. Voting procedures for partner hires in academic professional track positions:

- a. Due to the very short time often available to make decisions about partner hires, these hires may or may not include an interview.
- b. The head will consult the executive council when deciding whether or not to extend an offer for partner hires. Executive council will notify the full faculty of the decision reached at the next regular faculty meeting.

#### **IV. Amendment**

The Department of Sociology may amend its by-laws at any time, subject to consistency with requirements of the College and University. An amendment may be proposed by written resolution presented to faculty members at least three working days prior to a department faculty meeting. A proposed amendment to the by-laws is adopted when it has been approved by a simple majority of the department’s voting members (tenure-track, instructional faculty and professor of practice) of the department.

#### **V. Adoption**

The by-laws shall be discussed in departmental meetings. In these discussions the draft shall be subject to amendment by a simple majority vote of the members present. The final draft (as amended) shall be submitted to all the department’s voting members (tenure-track, instructional faculty, and professor of practice) of the department for ratification by secret ballot.