

FAQ for Department Chair Elections

The following FAQs and answers have been developed in consultation between the SRU Administration and APSCUF to provide guidance for the Department Chair election process. The guidance should be considered before voting occurs.

Voting

1. Who can vote for the department chair?

Regular full-time, regular part-time, including those on leave, are eligible to vote in the department chair election. Temporary faculty are not eligible to vote.

2. How should the majority be determined in selecting the Department Chair?

CBA Article 6 states that the department chair will be elected by “the majority secret ballot vote.” The SRU administration and APSCUF agree to interpret this statement as the majority of faculty who vote, rather than the majority of members in the department. The term “majority” falls directly before “secret ballot vote” and not before members of the department. Therefore, “majority” is taken to refer to a majority of the votes cast, not a majority of the regular department members.

3. How will abstentions be handled?

The SRU administration and APSCUF agree that abstentions will be considered as equivalent to not voting rather than as negative votes. Abstentions, then, will not count in the election tally and will be removed from the full count. The majority will be determined as a percentage of the positive votes plus the negative votes.

For example, if a department in which ten people vote but two abstain, the count should be a majority of eight total votes.

4. What is the next step for department voting outcomes if there is no clear majority?

In an election where no majority (50.1% of the vote) is attained, the department may hold a runoff election with the top two candidates. If the department cannot determine a winner, the President or Provost may appoint an interim department chair in accord with Article 6.B.b.

5. How will election results be distributed?

As described in “What are the duties of the outside faculty supervisor?” the outside faculty supervisor will notify the Office of the Provost, the college Dean, the Department Election Committee chair, and APSCUF of the election results. Results will be kept confidential until released by the Dean.

The Dean will notify the candidate who won and the candidate(s) who did not win before announcing the winner to the full department.

Department election duties

What are the duties of the Department Election Committee?

1. The Department Election Committee should have at least three members with one identified as the committee chair. No candidate in the election may serve on the Department Election Committee.
2. The primary role of the Department Election Committee as described in the CBA is to approve the slate of nominees and inform the Office of the Provost of whether it approves of each nominee. Usually, a reason to not approve a nominee would be because a nominee is a temporary Faculty Member or a Regular Part-Time Faculty Member and not eligible to be chair per local agreement, although there may be other prudent reasons. Approval of the election slate by the Department Election Committee and the Provost must occur before the election can be held.
3. The committee, in consultation with the department, will choose an outside faculty supervisor before the election occurs who will oversee the election. The supervisor can be from the same college but must be from another department. The name of the outside faculty supervisor will be shared with the Office of the Provost.
4. The committee will work with the outside faculty supervisor to determine the election procedure—digital, in-person in a meeting, secure drop-box for paper ballots, etc.—including the timeline. The procedure must ensure confidentiality of votes and should address a process so that temps are not able to vote. In addition, the process should allow access so faculty who are not on campus can vote.
5. Although it may discuss election process and approach with the outside supervisor as stated in Item 4, the election committee does not have a role in carrying out the election and may not participate in creating the physical instrument or in monitoring or releasing votes.
6. The committee chair and committee members should not have access to any of the votes until after the supervisor has tabulated and released the result. If Qualtrics or some other electronic mechanism is used, only the supervisor should have access and the ballot should originate from the supervisor’s account. .
7. Since the committee members are also department members and have the opportunity to vote, they should not be involved in contacting faculty about the election.

What are the duties of the outside faculty supervisor?

1. The Faculty Member serving as supervisor will be from a different department from the one holding the election but can be from the same college.
2. The supervisor will work with the Department Election Committee to determine the election process (e.g., in-person, digital, in-meeting, drop-box, etc.). The process chosen will allow eligible faculty who are off-campus for leave, remote teaching, or another acceptable reason to cast votes.
3. The supervisor will monitor the election to make sure the process is followed, that confidentiality of votes is maintained, and that temporary faculty are not included in the vote.
4. The supervisor should have sole control over the election/voting process. If an electronic voting mechanism is used, it should be created through the supervisor's account and should not have access by other individuals.
5. The supervisor will invite department faculty to vote. It should include a deadline by which votes need to be cast. Departments use various timelines for voting, which can vary from the length of a department meeting to a number of days, depending on department needs, but must be by the deadline set by the Office of the Provost. Voting that occurs during a meeting must be conducted solely by the outside supervisor.
6. Individual votes and any raw data must remain confidential to the supervisor.
7. Once the votes are tallied, the supervisor will create an email with: (1) total number of votes cast, (2) number abstaining, and (3) name of candidate receiving the majority of the remaining votes. For example, if 20 faculty cast votes and 5 are abstentions, then the majority is out of the remaining 15 votes. The election supervisor sends the email to the Office of the Provost, the college Dean, the Department Election Committee Chair, and APSCUF with the results and informs them that the results must be kept confidential until released by the Dean.