

From: [Office of the Faculty Senate](#)
To: FACULTYSENATE@LISTS.UPENN.EDU
Subject: Faculty Senate Return-to-Campus Updates
Date: Monday, August 23, 2021 10:11:26 AM

To Members of the Penn Faculty,

We are writing to update you on the work of the Faculty Senate as we prepare to return to campus. Linked here is the annual letter written by the Chair, which outlines the activities of the Senate last year and priorities for the year ahead: <https://almanac.upenn.edu/volume-68-number-2/#welcome-back-from-the-faculty-senate-chair-v68-n2>. However, as a witty prime minister once observed, our priorities will also be dictated by events as they continue to unfold.

Over the summer we have been meeting regularly with members of the administration on a number of pressing matters:

Pandemic Planning. With the alarming resurgence of the Delta variant, we consulted about the safety of returning to in-person teaching with the members of the Senate's Select Committee on Post-Pandemic Planning for Penn (known as "P4," <https://provost.upenn.edu/senate/p4>), which is co-chaired by Professors Jennifer Pinto-Martin, epidemiologist, and Harvey Rubin, infectious disease specialist. While the evidence supports the combined effectiveness of vaccination and masking indoors, even with the Delta variant, the discussion raised a number of practical issues that have been communicated to the administration, which is addressing them:

- First is the importance of providing reasonable exemptions from in-person teaching for those at greater risk, or with family members at risk.
- Second is the guidance about masking (<https://ehrs.upenn.edu/covid-19/universal-mask-and-cloth-face-covering-precautions>), which is being reviewed.
- Third is the challenge of teaching with masks. The Provost's office is making provisions through Classroom Technology Services to provide microphones and amplification for faculty that need them.
- Finally, it is important to continue completing PennOpen Pass (<https://pennopen.med.upenn.edu/>) daily, even if you are vaccinated, because it provides additional information to Penn's pandemic planning groups and can quickly connect you with testing and treatment services.

Search for a new President. As outlined in the Faculty Handbook (<https://catalog.upenn.edu/faculty-handbook/i/i-c/>), the Senate Executive Committee (known as "SEC," <https://provost.upenn.edu/senate/senate-executive-committee-sec>) has already been actively involved in the process of selecting a new president. SEC nominates and votes on the faculty representatives to the Consultative Committee, which identifies the strategic goals and priorities for the choosing next president. A subset of those committee members are then selected to the Search Committee, along with an equal number of trustees, plus staff and student representatives.

We solicited nominations of Standing Faculty (including self-nominations) through SEC between July 30 and August 10 to serve on the Consultative Committee. Twenty Standing Faculty were nominated. Nominators also submitted a 50-word justification for the nomination. The 52 current

members of SEC (<https://provost.upenn.edu/senate/2021-2022-membership>) balloted on the nominees, and the names of the 12 with the highest combined ranking and rating were shared with the Chair of the Board of Trustees, Scott L. Bok. From that list of 12, Mr. Bok will (in consultation with the Chair of the Faculty Senate) select a minimum of four who will represent the Standing Faculty on the Consultative Committee.

We will use some time in the first SEC meeting of the year (September 22, 3:00pm ET) to solicit faculty views on those strategic goals and priorities, and because of the importance of the process, we will also organize a more public event to allow faculty to provide input to the committee through the faculty representatives.

Climate Week. In recognition of Penn’s Climate Week (<https://climateweek.provost.upenn.edu/>), September 20-24, SEC is organizing a virtual Faculty Senate Seminar titled, “Faculty Research Opportunities in the Climate Emergency: Perspectives from the UNFCCC and IPCC.” It is co-organized by the Select Faculty Committee on the Institutional Response to the Climate Emergency (CIRCE) and the Environmental Innovations Initiative (EII) and will be held virtually on Wednesday, September 22, 4-5 PM. All faculty are welcomed by registering at this link: <https://primetime.bluejeans.com/a2m/register/eektvugk>.

Faculty Senate Tri-Chairs

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