

Statement by GSSW, MCE, and Library Senators regarding new chat protocol for online Faculty Senate meetings:

As Senators, we have worked collaboratively with the Faculty Senate President and FSEC, to enable the chat feature during Zoom meetings to address accessibility. In particular, accessibility best practices in the specific context of online Senate meetings are different from accessibility issues in, for example, a classroom or other spaces. In the specific context of online Senate meetings, accessibility best practices are about ensuring Senator colleagues who are unable or uncomfortable speaking “on the floor” on Zoom are able to have their voices heard. In further consultation with the Senate President, we support Senate changing the Zoom chat setting in a way that better addresses the intended accessibility issue: We support the Senate President changing the settings so that Senators are able to chat directly with her and/or a moderator, but not with one another. This helps Senate most closely mimic an “in person” Senate meeting on Zoom while addressing the accessibility issue: the Senate President or designated moderator will keep an eye on the chat and will share with the floor questions and comments from individual Senators. This new approach will better ensure that the President is able to recognize and lift up the voices of anyone who is unable or uncomfortable speaking that day for any number of reasons. This new approach will also contribute to a more organized structure that avoids the frenzied pace of multiple conversations happening simultaneously which pose their own equity issues. From an accessibility perspective, not everyone is able to process more than one conversation at a time and this can disadvantage some participants, thereby unintentionally excluding them. The new structure foregrounds accessibility and inclusion as it better allows all Senator voices to be heard on the Senate floor.

GSSW Senators: Aneesha Bharwani, Donny Gerke, Amy He, Jae McQueen, Ann Petrila,
Marquisha Lawrence Scott

MCE Senator: Michele Tyson

Library Senators: Erin Elzi, Elia Trucks