

Statement

The University Senate

FACULTY • STUDENT • P&A • CIVIL SERVICE

HOW TO WRITE A STATEMENT FOR UNIVERSITY SENATE GOVERNANCE

The University Senate Office recommends the following format (see below for explanation):

Title

On the Development of Policies Impacting Academic Freedom

Statement

As noted in the [1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#) of the AAUP, “institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole,” where “the common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.” Academic freedom, which guarantees members of the university the right to speak or write in a way that is “free from institutional censorship or discipline,” is essential to the realization of these objectives. By the intended purpose of academic freedom, policies governing it must be significantly influenced by personnel engaged in the intellectual activities of the university. They should not be crafted solely or in major part by university administrations or political entities. This principle has been well-recognized at our institution. To take one recent example, when the Supreme Court decision in 2006 in *Garcetti et al. vs Ceballos* endangered the ability to speak against institutional policies, [as described by Professor Clayton](#), a past chair of the Senate Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure, that committee studied the issue and suggested amendments to the existing Board of Regents Policy governing Academic Freedom and Responsibility with the support of the Provost. Their work received a positive endorsement from the Board of Regents.

Policy governing matters as important as academic freedom and freedom of speech must be the end result of a careful and deliberative process. This requires adequate time for the process to be completed and the freedom to fully explore and understand the intended and unintended consequences of any policy proposals being considered. Timetables and boundaries on the

Title: The title of the statement.

Statement: Lay out the committee’s opinion, as well as any desired background information, context, supporting evidence, etc. **A statement should not ask for any action from the administration.** (It can **suggest** it, but not **ask** for it.)

When initiating a statement, please submit [this form](#) to the University Senate Office.

Updated 6.9.2025

Letter

The University Senate

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HOW TO WRITE A LETTER FOR UNIVERSITY SENATE GOVERNANCE

The University Senate Office recommends the following format (see below for explanation):

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA	
<i>University Senate Office</i>	427 Morrill Hall 100 Church Street S.E. Minneapolis, MN 55455 Phone: 612-625-9369 Fax: 612-626-1609 Email: senate@umn.edu Website: www.umn.edu/usenate/
University Senate Office Letterhead	

December 19, 2023

Dear Vice President Gulachek and Vice President Ramírez Fernández:
Title and Name of Addressee(s)

I am writing on behalf of the University Senate Disabilities Issues Committee to express our support for the creation of a new entity that would support digital accessibility at the University of Minnesota. This initiative holds great potential in supporting the University's dedication to fostering an inclusive education experience, as digital accessibility plays a pivotal role in cultivating a diverse and equitable learning environment. Moreover, the establishment of this entity is not only timely but also strategically positioned to address current pressing needs and the foreseeable future federal requirements for digital accessibility as well.

Body of letter. Include your ask (if there is one) and as much text as needed.

Sincerely,

Jennifer J. McComas, Ph.D.
Chair, U of MN Senate Disabilities Issues Committee
Signed by the committee chair or the committee.

Letterhead. Letters should go on official Senate Office letterhead. Senate Office staff will put the letter on letterhead for you.

Addressee(s): A letter may be addressed to one or several individuals.

Body. Lay out the committee's opinion, as well as any desired background information, context, supporting evidence, etc. A letter may ask for action from the administration. The administration is required to respond.

Signature. Can be signed by the committee chair or the full committee.

When initiating a letter, please submit [this form](#) to the University Senate Office.

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Resolution

The University Senate

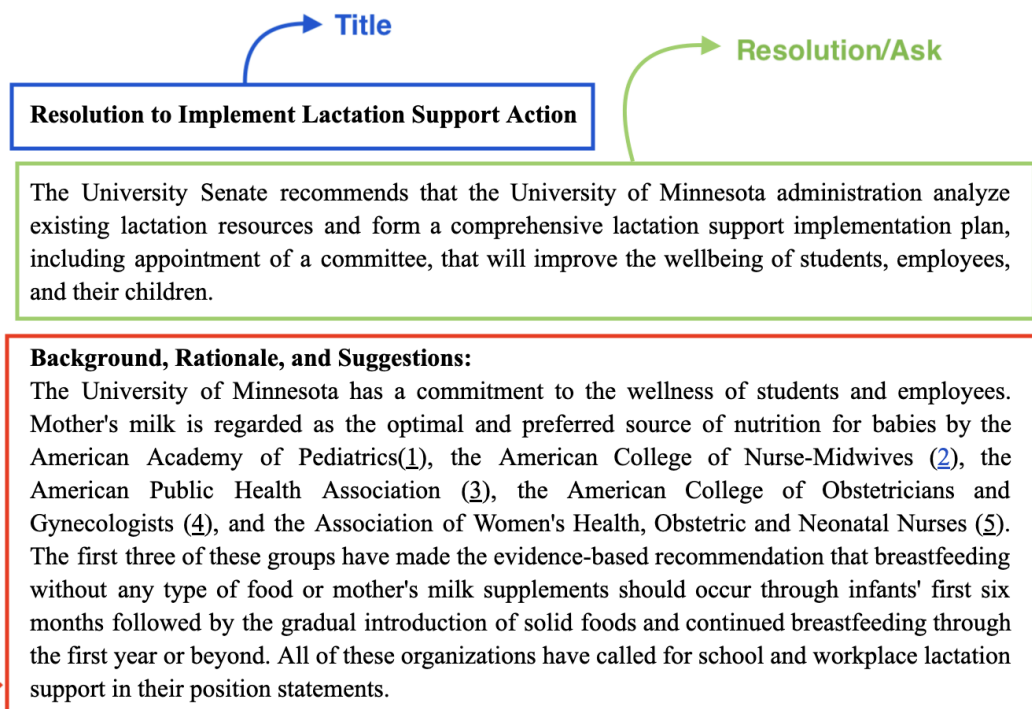
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HOW TO WRITE A RESOLUTION FOR UNIVERSITY SENATE GOVERNANCE

Resolutions are generally more successful when they are written in language that is clear and easy to understand. In addition, limiting the text that people are asked to vote on to the actual “ask(s)” helps reduce time spent discussing and revising language that is meant to be supporting evidence, suggestions, etc. Because **resolutions are advisory to the administration** (not binding), it is best not to get too bogged down in such details.

Remember, also, that resolutions should focus on the end result, not the details of implementation. In other words, the purpose of a resolution is to lay out what the body is asking for; it is not the role of governance to figure out how to make it work.

The University Senate Office recommends the following format (see below for explanation):



Background, Rationale, and Suggestions campuses; other universities comparable to the University of Minnesota offer more lactation space per capita. University students and

Title: The title of the resolution.

Resolution: Lay out the desired outcome, clearly and concisely. This is the section people will vote on, and should be fairly brief. On a senate docket, the motion would be to approve this section (i.e. vote on this specific language).

Limit this to the main request(s), and think carefully about how much to include here. If there are subsidiary asks or suggestions for implementation, it is best to put those in the Background, Rationale, and Suggestions section rather than dilute the main objective(s) of the resolution.

Background, Rationale, and Suggestions: In this section, lay out any relevant background information, context, supporting evidence, suggestions for implementation, etc. When conducting consultation, it is important to make it clear to stakeholders that they may offer suggestions on this section, but they are not voting on it. This section can be as long as needed to make the case.

On a senate docket, this would be listed as “Background, Rationale, and Suggestions” and would not be part of the motion. Senators do not vote on this section.

When initiating a resolution, please submit [this form](#) to your University Senate Office contact.

Updated 6.9.25