

How Abstentions Affect Faculty Senate Votes

Robert's Rules states that, in the absence of any other policy (and the University Handbook has no other policy), a majority means a majority of those voting where abstentions do not count as a vote. In the past on the Senate (I can only speak to previous senates I was on, I don't think it has come up before this year), we have always gone by majority of members present, but our handbook doesn't specifically say anything about the majority of members present. Thus, in a 7-6-2 vote, in the first case, the motion would pass (7-6); in the second case, the motion would fail (7-8).

If the faculty senate wants 7-6-2 votes to pass, the faculty senate does not need to do anything. That is the current policy (the default under Robert's Rules). If the faculty senate wants 7-6-2 to fail, as in previous faculty senate makeups, we need to add a change to the handbook that the vote will be a majority of those present, not a majority of those voting.