

Arts and Sciences Senate Policy on Public Access to Meetings of the Arts and Sciences Senate and its Standing Committees

Regular meetings of the Arts and Sciences Senate are open to all Stony Brook students, faculty, staff, and interested members of the university community. Decisions to speak at these meetings are at the discretion of the Arts and Sciences Senate president and priority is given to senators of the Arts and Sciences Senate. In contrast, the Arts and Sciences Senate's standing committees do not hold open meetings unless the committee explicitly states otherwise.

Requests for access to standing committee meetings have cited New York State's Open Meetings Law (OML) as mandating that the public be allowed to attend them. To clarify whether OML applies to our committees, the Arts and Sciences President contacted Douglas Panico, Stony Brook University's Assistant Vice President for Audit & Management Advisory Services and Records Access Officer. He advised as follows:

According to Stony Brook University's General Counsel's Office, which consulted with their counterpart in SUNY System Administration, campus-based senates are not subject to the Open Meetings Law as they are advisory and have no statutory authority.

In accordance with this advice, the policy of the Arts and Sciences Senate at Stony Brook is as follows:

By default, senate committees operate in what Robert's Rules of Order calls "executive session." Such meetings are closed to non-members of that committee except by invitation of its chair or by majority vote of the committee. Committees are free to invite guests who can contribute to their work, as has long been accepted procedure. After discussion and a vote by the committee, a standing committee can also decide to meet in "open session." This choice is left to the committees.

The Arts and Sciences Senate and its standing committees are willing to report on their work to anyone who asks, within reason. But while committed to openness and transparency, the Arts and Sciences Senate must conduct its business with appropriate care and confidentiality.

Approved by the Arts and Sciences Senate, 18 November, 2019