The membership of Faculty Senate Standing Committees includes a diverse set of people who bring different skills to the committee work. However, membership on a Standing Committee does not grant the right to vote on issues or legislation unless the member is a Senator (Bylaws Article IV Section 1.c).

As a rule, any Senator can vote in both Standing Committee meetings and the Plenary Meetings.

There are four basic categories of Senators who have the right to vote:

1. Elected Faculty Senators
2. Elected (by former senators) Retired Senators
3. Ex-Officio Senators (e.g., The President and the Provost)
   a. the President of the University;
   b. the Executive Vice President and Provost of the University;
   c. the Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School;
   d. the Chair of the Academic Leadership Council;
   e. the Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education;
   f. the University Registrar;
   g. the Executive Director, Division of Undergraduate Studies;
   h. any elected member of the Faculty Advisory Committee who is not an elected faculty senator.
4. Appointed Senators (Appointed by the President)
5. Student Senators

There are also non-voting members of Standing Committees who are not Senators. In the Senate we refer to these important colleagues as Resource Members. Members of our administration who are committee members but not Senators are Resource Members.

Since they are not Senators, Resource Members do not have the right to vote either at Standing Committee meetings or Plenary Meetings under both our Senate rules and Robert’s Rules. However, our Faculty Senate rules provide these Resource Members with special privileges to be recognized by the Chair and speak on the floor of the Senate when the subject of discussion pertains specifically to the work of their respective committees (Bylaws Article IV, Section 2).

To avoid confusion, Committee Chairs should consult with the Senate Office to determine which members of their committees are Senators, and which are not, before holding votes on reports or other issues. The Senate Office also determines this status for all our plenary meetings.

There has been confusion regarding our ex-officio members’ rights to vote and attend meetings. Ex-officio status grants full voting membership by virtue of the office rather than the person; e.g., all Penn State presidents will always have voting privileges. Robert’s Rules is clear that ex-officio members, such as the President and Provost, have the same rights as any elected Senator when it comes to voting and the privileges of the floor.

Additionally, under our rules, senators appointed by the president have full voting privileges.

One way to understand this is, if a person has the right vote in the plenary meeting, they can vote in a standing committee of which they are a member. However, if a member cannot vote in the plenary meeting, they cannot vote in a standing committee meeting either.
Standing Rules

Article IV – Committees

Section 1.(c) The voting membership of Senate standing committees, special committees, and subcommittees consists of elected faculty, ex-officio, student, or appointed Senators.