

A summary of the PSC constitution for union activists

by Chris Natoli of the Graduate Center chapter, written on 1 February 2017

Purpose

- Objectives of the PSC include “improv[ing] the quality of education”, collective bargaining, and “promot[ing] the professional and economic interests and the welfare of all workers”, not just those in the bargaining unit. (II.2)

Membership

- All members of the bargaining unit and also retirees can join the union. (III.2.a,b)
- Chancellors, deputy chancellors, vice-chancellors, presidents, vice-presidents, provosts, deans, associate deans, and assistant deans are barred from membership in the PSC. (III.4)
- Only members who joined at least four months before the ballot is mailed can vote in that general election, chapter election, referendum, or ratification. (III.5.a,c)
- Only members who joined at least one year before the time of nomination can run for election. (III.5.d)
- A member who changes campus affiliation cannot vote in their new chapter’s elections for four months or run for chapter elections for a year. (III.5.c,d)
- A part-time instructor who has been a member of the PSC for at least two years and who goes off payroll for one semester cannot vote for four months or run for union office for a year unless they pay dues covering the semester off payroll, equal to those during their previous period of employment. (III.5.e)

Executive Council (EC)

- The EC “shall exercise overall executive and administrative responsibilities for the policy and operation of the union”. (VII.1)
- The powers and responsibilities of the EC include “recommend[ing] policies and resolutions for action by the Delegate Assembly” (VII.2.a), “implement[ing] and execut[ing] policies and resolutions decided by the Delegate Assembly” (VII.2.b), “authoriz[ing] the expenditure of funds by the Treasurer” (VII.2.f), and approving appointments to the union’s administrative staff (VII.2.i).
- The EC consists of twenty-seven General Officers: President, First Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, five University-wide Officers, Vice-President for the Senior Colleges, three Senior College Officers, Vice-President for the Community Colleges, three Community College Officers, Vice-President for Cross-Campus Chapters, three Cross-Campus Officers, Vice-President for Part-Time Members of the Instructional Staff, three Part-Time Instructional Staff Officers, and two Retiree Officers. (VI.1, VII.1)

- Although the General Officers for senior colleges, community colleges, cross-campus chapters, and retirees are elected by only their constituents, the Vice-President and three General Officers representing the part-time instructional staff are elected by the entire membership of the PSC, including full-timers. (VI.1)
- General Officers have three-year terms without a term limit. (VI.2)

Delegate Assembly (DA)

- The DA is “the principal governing body of the Professional Staff Congress”. (VIII.1)
- The powers and responsibilities of the DA include “formulat[ing] and adopt[ing] policies and resolutions to govern the actions and positions of the union” (VIII.2.a)
- Each chapter, except the Retirees Chapter, is entitled to either one delegate for every hundred members, or, if a chapter has fewer than one hundred members, then exactly one delegate. (VIII.2.a)
- All twenty-seven General Officers are members of the DA. (VIII.2.d)
- Delegates have three-year terms without a term limit. (VIII.2.e)
- The Committee for the Part-Time Instructional Staff, colloquially known as “First Fridays”, is a standing committee of the DA and is chaired by the Vice-President for the Part-Time Instructional Staff. The sole power of this committee identified in the constitution is “recommend[ing] policies related to the part-time instructional staff”. (VIII.3.c)
- A majority of the DA constitutes a quorum. (VIII.5)
- A petition by ten percent of the members of the DA forces the DA to hold a special meeting. (VIII.6)

Chapters

- Higher Education Officers, College Laboratory Technicians, and Registrars have separate cross-campus chapters. (IX.1.b)
- Each chapter must hold at least two meetings per semester. (IX.3)
- The Executive Committee of each chapter consists of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, four At-Large Officers, Delegates, and Alternate Delegates. (IX.4,6)
- Chapter officers have three-year terms without a term limit. (IX.5)
- A petition by at least ten members of a chapter forces the chairperson to hold a special meeting of that chapter. (IX.7)
- Ten percent of the entire chapter membership constitutes a quorum at chapter meetings. (IX.8)

Amendments and referenda

- Proposing an amendment requires either two-thirds vote of the DA, two-thirds vote of the EC, or a petition by at least ten percent of the membership. (XIII.1.a)
- Ratifying an amendment requires three-fourths vote of the DA or, if the amendment was proposed by a petition from the membership, three-fourths vote of the membership provided that at least half of eligible voters voted. (XIII.1.b,c)
- If an amendment is to be ratified by the DA, the vote must occur at either of the two DA meetings following its proposal. Furthermore, the text of the amendment must be submitted to the DA and the entire membership two weeks prior to the vote. (XIII.1.a,b)
- A referendum on union policy can be proposed by either two-thirds vote of the DA, two-thirds vote of the EC, or a petition by at least ten percent of the membership. Referenda are passed by majority vote. (XIII.4)

Contracts

- The members and chair of the Committees on Contract Negotiations, which are standing committees of the EC and include the bargaining team, are appointed by the EC. (VII.2.d,3.a)
- Contracts are first proposed by the bargaining team to the EC for approval (VII.3.a), who upon approval recommend the contract to the DA for approval (VII.2.a), who upon approval recommend the contract for a ratification vote by the members to be employed under that contract (VIII.1.j, XIV.1).

Slate voting

(See “Rules Governing All General and Chapter Elections”, a document separate from the PSC constitution.)

- A slate is a collection of union members running together in an election.
- A slate must be sponsored by a caucus. A caucus is a named group of union members, “including a designee who may authorize nominees for that slate” and who is the point-person to be contacted by PSC staff if a nominee is found to be ineligible. (VIII.A)
- A slate must run candidates for at least twenty-five percent of the offices up for election. (VIII.C)
- A voter can vote for candidates individually (regardless of whether those candidates are on a slate) and/or vote for an entire slate. A vote for a slate gives one vote to each member on that slate. E.g., in an election for five offices with two competing slates each of size three, a voter can either vote for one slate and two individuals or vote for five individuals, which may include members from both slates. (VIII.E)