

Speaker of the Student Senate End of Year Report

Emily Smith; Speaker 2020-2021

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Introduction

I'd like to start by saying that I really loved my time as Speaker of the Student Senate. The job is a lot more nuanced than a lot of people on the body would expect. As said by Jared, the Speaker before me, the key to doing a good job is finding a balance between parliamentary procedure and what is most efficient and understandable for the body. I viewed the speakership a lot differently than speakers before me, in that rather than acting as a completely neutral non-political extension of "the institution," I felt that I had a role in shaping the body's attitude towards approaching work and creating a space that was conducive to dialogue but also stayed productive. Although you can use the powers of the speakership in meeting, I never felt the need to or felt that it would be useful. The biggest problem I found myself having was that after creating a very efficient meeting space, it *was* less conducive to open discussion. Whether this was as a result of a usually very unified opinion-base on the body or because new members didn't feel comfortable dissenting, I do not know, but I believe it's important that the Speaker allow for and encourage productive dissenting dialogue. As you start to work with your particular body, you learn how to use your position to give them the best shot for success that you can.

Responsibilities and Duties

- 1) **Facilitation of Meetings.** First and most obvious is the facilitation of meetings that mostly includes making sure you know basic parliamentary procedure as well as the more complicated procedures such as appointments and the sort.
 - a) I used my tablet to write and keep track of the speaker's list. It wasn't much of a busy list in most meetings this year, but it can get out of hand sometimes. The hardest part is making sure you can keep track of the zoom participants as well. The easiest way to do this I have found is through the main chat-it's the most obvious and the rest of the body is able to help keep you accountable.
 - b) This year there was not a single close vote and the secretary and I did not sit next to each other. In past years the voting doc has been shared between the two positions, but I have never personally had to have it pulled up. Still, this is important for you to keep track of in the next year.
- 2) **Agendas.** Put the Agenda out 24 hours before the meeting is occurring. I didn't ever need to put a strict deadline on agenda items, but typically I would have people aim for Friday night so you can put it together Saturday morning.
- 3) **Listserv.** The listserv is a terrible and necessary evil. The biggest lesson I learned this year with it is to make sure the secretary also understands and has access to the listserv so

that they can add new members throughout the year. Keaton, a former speaker, put [together this helpful document](#), but important listserv commands are below:

- a) Add new members: approve step4qaz subscribe stugov abc1234@truman.edu
 - b) Remove members: approve step4qaz unsubscribe stugov abc1234@truman.edu
 - c) Check who is on the Listserv: Who stugov
 - d) Make sure the body and title of the email are blank and addressed to majordomo@truman.edu, separate commands with returns, and finish the command with 'end' on its own line
 - e) Send the listserv an email by using stugov@truman.edu
 - f) PRO TIP!! Use [google sheets](#) to copy/past email addresses with commands so you do not have to do it manually.
- 4) **Elections.** Make a gameplan for elections! Start working on Fall elections stuff at the end of July, you want to start working with the e-board and meet with the advisors to choose dates, choose a potential theme, and start deciding how you want to promote and facilitate elections. Voter turnout is an issue, but this past year I worked on the project of purchasing bulk, reusable supplies for election promotion! IMPORTANT: Do not use all of the election yard signs if you can help it! I do not know if this is warranted, but I am worried about wear and tear and theft of the signs and want to make sure this resource lasts for the future. About 25-30 signs cover campus really well. Owen, the Spring 21 elections administrator did some seriously impressive work on the elections handbook to make it more digestible for prospective candidates. Make sure you initiate contact via email with campaigners once you are aware they are running, we have not always been great about that.
- 5) **Ethics.** There are many things that may happen with ethics stuff whether it be from FAC, the body through your role as ethics justice, or as chair of the elections hearing board. This year presented an interesting ethics issue that I was unable to chair the ethics hearing board for the resolution of. The process involved the utmost confidentiality that was really crucial to keep at all times. In the case of any ethics issue, always be in constant communication with Dr. Edwards and Laura Bates first and primarily.
- 6) **Serve as a resource.** Help your friends! Ask questions when you need to!
- 7) **Other:** You have some powers- appoint associates if you want. It's a rarely used power. You don't even technically have to ask the President.

Suggested Governing Documents Review Board Areas of Interest

- a. Examine and explore new options for the selection of the OAF chair.
- b. Examine the possibility of creating some sort of election-planning committee however formally or informally you would like. Make a list of things only the speaker/elections administrator should be allowed to do to keep the election process impartial and figure out what could be done by senators/members of the executive committee that may be running for re-election, if anything.

- c. Look into getting the Student Activities Board (SAB) popularly elected just like FAC leaders, in which there are external, SAB requirements, specifically a requirement of having been on the board for some time, yet still is elected by the student body at large.
- d. Remove, dissolve, or revise the funding processes of the Appropriations Committee
- e. Process of the Ethics Hearing board to be more specific and better apt to handle out of the ordinary situations. Reach out to Laura.

Elections

- 1) Don't forget to put out the yard signs the week of campaigning and the banners in front of the SUB when voting starts. There is a spot on the yard signs for you to put the dates of voting at the bottom.
- 2) Be creative with new ideas to promote elections and recruit candidates! *Involve the e-board!*
- 3) I didn't successfully do this, but reach out to Truman week coordinators to advertise to freshmen. Do the same with TRU 100 classes.

Governing Documents Review Board

The board was called together in the middle of the Spring semester primarily to address some loose concerns we have with the OAF auditing process. After a discussion, this year's board and President, Katie Alexander, recommend looking into the possibility of having OAF president as a position elected by the student association as a way to provide more student oversight than the current process, which currently entails the three fee-based organizations choosing directly who will audit them. This issue will require a considerable amount of attention from the next body that deals with it. It is my recommendation that the board is pulled together as soon as possible after the Fall elections.

Other issues the board tackled included a rewrite of the organizational representative structure that requires an online petition to be filled out and makes recognition by the body automatic, while removing a couple of the rights originally allotted to them. Additionally, there were minor changes made to the description and name of committees.

Leading this committee can be challenging. It often attracts some of the most invested senators that are often also the most opinionated about individual Student Government issues. It requires some grace and an ability to be able to keep control of the room when things begin to escalate.

Final Comments and Conclusions

The Speakership is a great way to get to know the body and its members. It has such an important role in shaping the attitude of the body towards many things, including discourse, parliamentary procedure, and reports. I went into the year with a focus on making things more efficient, as the year before was spent in many long meetings and discussions that often fell into repetitiveness within minutes. However, I wasn't always happy with how smoothly they went.

The body had much less discussion to offer on the resolutions passed this year, and while a good deal of that is a result of a young body that is quite like-minded, I wish I would have done more to encourage discourse and discussion within the body. It is the only way we can truly be able to help students. That being said, I believe that the balance between efficiency and opinion sharing can be found somewhere between discussions consisting of repetitive restatements and complete silence.

Don't be afraid to use your power to control the meeting as needed. You have the ability to give preference to an individual on the speaker's list that has yet to speak over a member that has already spoken. Sometimes meetings can benefit substantially from your interference, as long as you are doing it in a fashion that allows all sides of an issue to have the opportunity to be heard and without a personal opinion shaping your decisions. This year I had to call out behavior of individuals I was friends with and who were sharing opinions I agreed with, nonetheless, it's your responsibility to keep the meeting running fairly for all perspectives.

As Jared said before me, this role is up for your interpretation, and I know I personally did it much differently than he or past speakers would have liked me to. I think the body can and should be a little bit less formal in its procedures in order to boost morale and coherence, and I think that my speakership was able to lighten the mood while still keeping on task and getting things done. I would love to see that continue. I also took a much less neutral position in my speakership than Jared before me. While he would take Stu Gov politics to his grave, I found it necessary to remain neutral only in general body meetings-as the governing documents require-and other times found myself whipping votes on issues I cared about, although it was rarely needed. Finally, trust in your body! Trust your e-board, reach out to them if you have any questions about anything, especially agenda items you receive that may be touchy to them or the body. Trust that the senate has the University's best interest at heart! You can learn so much from them and them from you.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Smith, Speaker of the Student Senate 2019-2020

