

Report of the Council Bylaws Committee for 2021-22

Membership: Thomas Schmeling (chair), Maureen Reddy, Suzanne Conklin.

Like all Council Committees this year, the Bylaws Committee was not constituted until well into the fall semester. The Committee met via Zoom four times over the year, twice in each semester. No formal minutes were taken.

We began by reviewing the current Charter and Bylaws. It quite quickly became evident that the Charter and Bylaws have been neglected in recent years. Bylaw amendments that had been passed by Council had not been incorporated into the document, references to administrative titles and structures were out of date, and so on. The recent changes to the College website made it difficult to track down the documentation needed to establish what happened and when.

Once we got a sense of where things stood, we began to prepare needed amendments. These amendments were introduced at the first (February) meeting of the second semester and are attached to this document. They consist of:

- a. A revision of the bylaw for the Academic Standing Committee. This bylaw revision was passed by Council at the February meeting and, as the Charter requires, passed a second time after a one-month period of review.
- b. A set of six amendments to the Charter, ranging from grammatical corrections to major revisions of processes. All six of the proposals were approved by the required vote of 2/3 of Council and 2/3 of authorized voters in a referendum conducted by the Elections Committee.

We were unable to resolve two issues that were brought to the attention of the Committee:

- a. A proposal for revision of the bylaw on the Committee on Convocations was brought forward by the Director of College Events and Conferences. Difficulties arose around aligning the proposal, which was essentially for a *Commencement* Committee, with the existing bylaw, which covers all convocations. These difficulties were not resolved, and the proposal seems to have been dropped.
- b. The bylaw for the Faculty Research Committee is out of date and essentially inoperative since the latest the Faculty Contract creates a different Faculty Research Committee that overlaps the Council Committee but whose membership and bylaws are unclear. Several individuals and groups attempted to reconcile the different provisions but were unable to do so. It was eventually determined that the soundest course was to revise and clarify the Contract provisions themselves. We hope that will happen in 2022-23.

The final task remaining for the Committee is to engross the Charter and Bylaws with all amendments and corrections included. We hope to accomplish this by the time of the final Council meeting on May 13th, 2022.

The fact that the Committee was required to spend significant time simply figuring out what changes had been made but not incorporated into the charter made progress slower than we had hoped and prevented us from going further in suggesting and soliciting other useful amendments. We hope, however, that our work on this will make the work of next year's committee smoother.

Academic Standing Committee Bylaw

Proposed changes January 2022

Proposed: To replace the entire bylaw for the committee with the following:

VII. Article on the ACADEMIC STANDING COMMITTEE

A. Powers and Duties

The Committee shall:

1. Recommend policies regarding academic standing issues (e.g., course repeats and retroactive withdrawals).
2. Review and act on appeals for the following:
 - a) Request for permission to take a course for a 3rd time
 - b) Request for a retroactive withdrawal from a course
 - c) Request for a retroactive withdrawal from a semester
 - d) Request to reverse academic dismissal when a grade correction, completion of an incomplete, or approval of a retroactive withdrawal results in a new cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher.
3. Allow students to ask to meet privately with the chair of the Committee or with a member designated by the chair if there are extenuating circumstances of a confidential nature.
4. Require that members of the Committee who are designated parties in an appeal must absent themselves from the hearing of that case (except for their presentation), including the vote on that case.
5. Ensure that appropriate faculty are consulted for appeals involving requests for retroactive withdrawals from courses.
6. Ensure that a codified file of decisions (which may be electronic) be kept in the Records Office.
7. Report its specific actions to the academic advisor and department chair or program director.
8. Review and act on petitions via email consultation in order to provide timely review and action. If a petition is urgent or complicated, the Committee may decide to meet in person and/or virtually for discussion.

B. Membership

The Committee shall consist of nine members:

1. Four faculty members, appointed by the Committee on Committees to serve two-year staggered terms. No more than one member may be from any one department.
2. One undergraduate student, appointed by SCG after consultation with the Dean of Students. This appointment is subject to ratification by Student Parliament.
3. One academic administrator, appointed by the President of the College.
4. The Director of Records or designee (non-voting), who shall serve as Secretary to the Committee.

5. The Vice President for Student Success or designee.
6. The Chair shall have the power to appoint a Vice Chair from among the Committee members to serve in the Chair's absence.
7. The term of membership for all Committee members shall be from July 1.

Rationale:

The bylaw for the Academic Standing Committee was revised in 2019. The revisions, reproduced below, were approved by Council, but were never incorporated into any public version of the bylaws. As the Bylaws Committee prepared to update the Bylaws, we noticed several difficulties with the revisions that had been made:

1. The 2019 revision removed the power and duty of the committee to recommend policy changes. These are restored in this revision.
2. The 2019 revision has a very non-standard format which does not follow the format of other bylaws. It was apparently not reviewed by the Bylaws Committee before being brought to Council.
3. The 2019 revision includes a URL under “powers and duties” and also includes instructions for students submitting petitions to the committee. These details are subject to change and are more appropriate in the internal operational rules of the committee than in the committee bylaw.
4. The committee has consistently found it very challenging or impossible to recruit two students for this committee. The number of students has been reduced to one.

The changes now being recommended have been reviewed and approved by the current chair of the Committee on Academic Standing, Geoff Harkness, and Vice-Provost Holly Shadoian.



**Council of Rhode Island College
Elections Committee**

Report on vote to approve proposed amendments to the Charter

The following six amendments to the Charter of the Council of Rhode Island College were submitted by the Bylaws Committee for consideration by the Council:

Such amendments are subject to the following provisions of the Charter:

A. Amendments to this Charter

1. Amendments to this Charter may be proposed by a two-thirds majority of Council or by a petition signed by 20 percent of the entire faculty and presented in writing to Council. Each member of the faculty shall be furnished with a copy of the proposed amendment at least two weeks in advance of the balloting.

2. Amendments to the Charter shall become effective when approved by two-thirds of the votes cast (by secret ballot) by members of the faculty and approved by the President of the College.

After approval of the proposed amendments by the Council on February 11, 2022, the Elections Committee submitted electronic ballots to all faculty and other eligible members of the RIC community according to the Charter. The vote took place between March 14, 2022 and March 28, 2022. We received 159 responses; the results are presented below.

Proposal 1

III.B.8.

The Faculty may at any time review decisions made by Council. Upon petition signed by 30 voting members of the Faculty and submitted to the Executive Committee of Council not later than one month after publication of Council action, any vote of Council shall be submitted to the Faculty by means of a referendum conducted by a secret ~~mail~~ ballot. A majority of the votes cast shall be conclusive provided that a majority of the Faculty participate in the referendum. Such referendum shall be conducted by the Executive Committee of Council.

Rationale: Secret Ballots can be conducted through the Qualtrics survey platform or other means and do not require paper mail.

Results

Approve	97.86%
Abstain	1.43%
Reject	0.71%

The proposed amendment is approved.

Proposal 2

III.C.1.ii.

For the purposes of the above provisions, Adams Library ~~and the Henry Barnard School~~ shall be considered an academic departments.

Rationale: The Henry Barnard School is no longer part of Rhode Island College.

Results

Approve	93.57%
Abstain	5.71%
Reject	0.71%

The proposed amendment is approved.

Proposal 3

III.C.1.d.

Two students, elected for one-year terms in accordance ~~to~~ with a Council by-law.

Rationale: Corrected grammar.

Results

Approve	99.27%
Reject	0.00%
Abstain	0.73%

The proposed amendment is approved.

Proposal 4

II.H.1.2.c

The Secretary shall take and maintain a record of all business of Council and of faculty meetings ~~and shall also be responsible for ensuring that the College Handbook is current at all times~~. The Secretary shall keep minutes of the proceedings of Council and shall attend to the distribution of such minutes, or portions thereof, as Council may direct. All minutes of Council shall be kept on file at some convenient place so that they may be consulted by any member of the faculty.

Rationale: We no longer have a College Handbook. Policies that were formerly contained in the Handbook are now spread across multiple document and web pages. It is no longer reasonable to expect the Council Secretary to track all of this. The charge to the Secretary to “maintain a record of all business of Council” includes meeting minutes, meeting calendars, membership lists for Council and all of its committees, as well as a record of actions on Charter, Bylaw, and policy proposals.

Results

Approve	87.77%
Reject	5.76%
Abstain	6.47%

The proposed amendment is approved.

Proposal 5

Amend Charter Section III. B

1. The authority of Council shall extend to all matters of interest to the Faculty that are not governed by collective bargaining agreements.
2. Nothing in this Charter shall be construed as abrogating the right of the Administration to initiate and adopt policy duly approved by the [Council on Postsecondary Education](#) ~~Board of Governors~~.
3. Recommendations of Council that alter College policy must have the approval of the President before they take effect.
 - a. Upon a vote of three-fifths of Council, the President agrees to convey to the [Council on Postsecondary Education](#) ~~Board of Governors for Higher Education~~ any Council proposal for a change of policy which has not been approved by the President.
4. The President and other officers of the Administration agree not to alter College policy of concern to the faculty until Council and the faculty have been informed in writing of the proposed change and given reasonable time to react.
 - a. Upon a vote of three-fifths of Council, the President agrees to convey to the [Council on Postsecondary Education](#) ~~Board of Governors for Higher Education~~ the position of Council on changes of policy recommended or adopted by the administration.

Rationale: The Board of Governors for Higher Education has been renamed as the Council on Postsecondary Education.

Results

Approve	98.55%
Reject	0.00%
Abstain	1.45%

The proposed amendment is approved.

Proposal 6

Add

III.B.3.b

Proposals passed by Council that require the President's approval shall be transmitted to the President immediately upon passage by Council. By the following meeting of Council, the President shall either a) approve the proposal, b) reject the proposal with explanation, or c) provide reasons for delay or inaction.

Rationale: If a proposal that is passed by Council but is neither formally approved or disapproved by the President, there is confusion about its status. The ability to hear the president's objections, if any, allows Council to revise the proposal.

Results

Approve	94.93%
Reject	1.45%
Abstain	3.62%

The proposed amendment is approved.