

## **Part III: Resolution Writing and General Advice**

### **RESOLUTION WRITING**

Since the resolution process guides the work of the Academic Senate, care should be taken in developing the resolutions. The following are some guidelines for Senate resolutions, as well as recommendations for proper resolution writing. When in doubt, consult with the Resolutions Chair or Executive Director.

1. **Four is the Limit:** Resolutions cannot contain more than four “whereas” or “resolved” statements (this is a requirement per the published resolutions process for session).
2. **Homework:** The Academic Senate has hundreds of resolutions, and they are accessible for review on its web site, [www.asccc.org](http://www.asccc.org). It is possible that a resolution already exists for the position you wish to take. Please review the existing resolutions first so that duplication can be avoided.
3. **An Introduction:** Consider using the first “whereas” as an introduction, outlining the situation in general or providing background and indicating the people or groups involved before justifying your resolutions in the other “whereas” statements.
4. **Acronyms:** Write out the names of groups or organizations in your first reference to them in your resolution. The full name may be followed by a parenthetical abbreviation, which may then be used for future references. It is unnecessary to note an acronym if the group or organizations is not referenced again in the resolution.
5. **Make the Point:** Be as direct and to the point as possible. Cleverness that makes a resolution less clear will likely cause confusion and lead to the resolution being defeated, amended, or referred.
6. **Avoid Lumping:** Limit yourself to one reason in support of or in defense of your resolution per “whereas” statement. Lumping too much into one statement causes confusion and is likely to provoke calls for revision.
7. **Professionalism Preferred:** Avoid personal attacks or insults of any person or group, even subtle ones. No matter how justified the statement or how offensive the target, such attacks will almost inevitably draw opposition from some members of the voting body.
8. **Only Academic Senate Action:** Remember that resolutions can only direct the Academic Senate to take action. The Academic Senate does not have the authority to direct or require action from any other group or individual, including local senates. Resolutions can also request or recommend actions from other entities, or it can endorse or support particular positions of other entities.
9. **Reality Check:** If your resolution directs an action by the Academic Senate, be certain that the action is possible for the Academic Senate to accomplish. Specifically, remember that the Academic Senate cannot absolutely ensure or prevent the actions of any other body. Some qualifying or alternative terms, such as “work with [other body] to ensure” rather than “ensure,” or “oppose” rather than “prevent,” may help to produce a more realistic resolution.

10. **Word Choice:** Judiciously use words such as “any,” “every,” “all,” “never,” “none,” or other qualifiers that make sweeping generalizations.
11. **Models:** You may benefit from reading some past examples of resolutions for ideas about structuring and phrasing your resolution.
12. **Resolution Title:** Be sure that the title of the resolution accurately reflects the content of the resolution, and follows proper rules of punctuation and capitalization.
13. **Citing Legislation:** In the body of the resolution, cite the last name of the bill’s author and the year passed or the date of the most recent version of the proposed stated legislation or regulations included in the resolution. In the title of the resolution, indicate the position on the bill and the topic of the bill. Place the author’s last name followed by a comma and the year or date in parentheses behind the title or number of the legislation and include a hyperlink to the language in the legislation in a footnote. For example, AB 1602 (2016, Committee on Budget); AB 620 (Block, 2011); AB 705 (Irwin, as of April 4, 2017).
14. **Facts:** Resolutions should focus on facts rather than empty rhetoric. Resolutions should include references to specific information such as legislation, previous resolutions, papers, and the like, and should include footnotes, appendices, or links to those references for the delegates to research and make an informed vote.
15. **Electronic Copy:** Resolutions and amendments are submitted at session electronically.
16. **Amendments:** Amendments are made to the original resolution (the main motion).
17. **Senate Papers:** All of the Academic Senate adopted papers contain recommendations to local senates as well as to the state senate. These recommendations are considered to be directions to the field and are comparable to resolutions. Review the recommendations in Senate papers related to your topic to see if your issue has already been addressed.

## ADVICE ON WORDING FOR RESOLUTIONS

The wording of an Academic Senate resolution is an important matter that can sometimes prove tricky or confusing. A resolution with controversial, unclear, or offensive wording can lead to prolonged debate on the session floor and can ultimately cause a resolution to be delayed and rejected, even when its ideas are worth approving. In order to help resolution writers avoid such frustrating experiences, the Resolutions Committee offers the following advice in order to help you avoid wording and issues that have raised objections in the past:

- **Recommend:** If using the word “recommend” within your resolution, be very clear and cautious about what you are recommending and to whom. Make certain that any recommendation is directed to a specific body with authority over the issue in question, and make certain that the Academic Senate has standing to make such a recommendation.
- **Ensure:** If using this term, be certain that the Academic Senate has the power to

fulfill the goal of your resolution. The Academic Senate may not have the power to ensure many outcomes, especially on its own. In many cases, better phrasing might ask the Academic Senate to work in cooperation with another group to ensure or to accomplish the outcome.

- **Assert or Affirm:** “Assert” and “affirm” imply that the Academic Senate is taking a specific position on an issue, and these terms have often been used in resolutions relating to matters on which the Academic Senate has not yet researched and developed a clear position. Be cautious about what stand you ask the Academic Senate as a statewide body to take without proper discussion and foundation.

It may also be the case that the Academic Senate has taken a contrary position to one you now expect to affirm. Please take some time to review the resolutions listed on the Academic Senate website to see if a prior position on your issue has been determined. After such a review, you then can decide if you want the Academic Senate to take a new position on the issue because evidence or recent developments now indicate a need to reconsider. It is not necessary or recommended to affirm a previously stated position that remains valid.

- **Require:** As with “ensure,” make certain that the Academic Senate has the authority to require the action in question. In many cases, the Academic Senate may not have the power to fulfill the action requested.
- **Support:** Directions to support local senates, other organizations, documents, students, and more, are acceptable as desired actions of the Academic Senate. It is worth noting that the Academic Senate does not have the wherewithal to financially support individuals or organizations, but resolutions may direct the Academic Senate to support funding from the state or other source for colleges, programs, students, etc.
- **Work with:** When directing the Academic Senate to work with another official body, be certain that the body in question has appropriate involvement in or authority regarding the issue at hand. Often, the action “work with” is followed by another direction to accomplish something. Consider which is more important to the intent of your resolution: is it more important that the Academic Senate work with another group or that the action is accomplished? Then word your resolution in the manner that best emphasizes the goal you most wish to accomplish.
- **Verbs:** At past plenary sessions, the following verbs sometimes have raised fewer issues and received less negative response than those listed above. As such, you might consider whether calling for one of these actions would make your resolution more likely to be well-received by the delegates:

1. Urge
2. Research
3. Develop (a position, materials, a paper, etc.)
4. Distribute
5. Oppose
6. Publish

7. Survey
8. Encourage
9. Conclude
10. Adopt
11. Request
12. Express
13. Form
14. Collect
15. Communicate
16. Recognize

#### **Part IV: The Role of the Resolutions Committee**

##### **A. Composition of the Resolutions Committee**

The Resolutions Committee is comprised of a Chair (usually an Executive Committee member) appointed by the President, one other executive committee member, the Executive Director, and a representative from each Area. Because of the need for Committee members to assist the Area Representatives during the pre-session and session area meetings, the members of the Resolutions Committee should not be Area Representatives.

##### **B. Resolution Development**

During the resolution process, the Resolutions Committee should pay close attention to the following items while reviewing and editing the resolutions and amendments:

- Check to see that the proposed resolutions do not duplicate any resolutions previously adopted by the body.
- Check to see that proposed resolutions do not contradict a prior position taken by the body (through resolution or other mechanisms).
- Check to see that resolutions follow the format as defined in the session materials.
- Check to see that “resolved” clauses of resolutions can stand alone, and if not, consider combining two or more into one “resolved” clause. The problem to avoid here is leaving two resolved clauses that may be separated during debate, which would then be nonsensical standing alone.
- Check to see that the resolved statements do not reiterate or contradict previous positions taken by the body, unless it is clear that the intent of the resolution is to reverse previously adopted senate positions. This is to avoid confusion over whether or not existing positions have been reversed.
- Consult with contacts to edit for clarity, readability, and understanding.
- Confer with contacts (as makers of the motion) when conflicts or duplicate resolutions or amendments exist.
- Verify that actions requested or directed in resolutions are within the purview of the Academic Senate.