

**NINTH SENATE REVIEW COMMISSION
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2025
232 ENGLISH BUILDING
MINUTES**

Present: Chair Nolan Miller, Jenny Amos, Nizam Arain, Hunter Farnham, Michael Grossman, Kirsten Pullen (Zoom), Eric Kurt, Jenny Roether, Carol Symes, Joyce Tolliver

Absent: Beth Meschewski, Jess Williams

Guest: Patrick Holt (Undergraduate Student, ACES), Ryan Pearlman (Reporter, Daily Illini), Matthew Wheeler (Former Chair, Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees)

1. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Ninth Senate Review Commission (SR9) was called to order at 12:00 pm with Chair Miller presiding.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

No requests received.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the November 13, 2025 meeting were approved as distributed.

4. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Without objection, SR9 voted to allow remote participation by Pullen.

Chair Miller noted that spring semester meetings need to be scheduled. A report on the review of the honorary degree award process is due to the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) by January 23, 2025. SR9 will need to meet prior to that date.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a) Establish the Process for Collecting Feedback

Meschewski and Kurt worked on the email draft that will be sent to committee chairs. Amos and Grossman will collaborate to further refine the email. Chair Miller would like the email sent in early December.

Suggested changes to the email include:

- Add a catchall question at the end of the email, such as "What other observations should we be aware of?"
- Streamline and rephrase the questions.
- Pare down the bullet points to make them more concise.

- Measure the responses quantitatively with a scale to help prioritize areas of focus.

A timeline for the general survey was discussed, and Chair Miller believes that mid-February would be an ideal time to send the survey out. Webtools and Eweek were suggested as possible delivery methods. Arain recommended adding an initial question to identify the role of the respondent, including current senator, former senator, current committee member and former committee member.

b) Information Exchange with Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) Peers

Roether attended the 2025 BTAA Senate Leadership Conference with Angie Lyons, Chair of the SEC. In conversations with other attendees, many expressed surprise that UIUC has a senate committee dedicated to the honorary degree process. Some noted that their provost may consult them informally, while others said they are not involved in the process at all.

c) SR.26.01, Review of the Honorary Degree Award Process

SR9 will invite Prasanta Kalita, current chair of the Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees (HD), to one of the December meetings. Laura Wilhelm-Barr, former Senior Director of Special Events, was also suggested as a potential source of information. Kurt will do some research on the Big 10 schools who award honorary degrees. Tolliver has reached out to University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) and at the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) for information on their process.

Chair Miller reached out to legal counsel regarding the interpretation of the *Statutes*. It is unclear if he should speak with campus counsel or the system counsel.

Matthew Wheeler, Former Chair, Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees, provided the following information:

HD still met in private to discuss candidates at the time that Wheeler was chair. During his time, the process was changed to the current practices of HD. A preapproval process was implemented in which nominations are reviewed sequentially by the Office of the Chancellor, the Office of the President, and the Board of Trustees. Names of the candidates, and the dossiers were not distributed when the press attended HD meetings, for confidentiality purposes.

Chair Miller inquired if it would be helpful to provide more information to the Senate instead of just the summary page. Wheeler emphasized that HD solely looked at the merits of the individual and not their character. Arain asked whether a committee member would conduct additional research if relevant information was missing from the dossier, and whether such information would be considered. Wheeler responded

that this was not the responsibility of HD. However, if a member shared additional information and it was deemed appropriate for discussion, HD would address it. Wheeler noted that decisions are based on the criteria being met and that personal feelings should be set aside. He also believes that if other factors are being used to make the decision, then the criteria should change.

A recent HD candidate that did not pass the Senate was referenced. It was agreed that the nominator should have more clearly communicated the innovations of the candidate to the Senate. Tolliver asked if HD would have conversations with the sponsors of a nominee to give them guidance on how to best present and support the nomination at the Senate meeting. Wheeler responded that Franci Miller, Committee Support Staff, HD, would follow up with the sponsor to inform them of any issues that needed to be addressed.

Roether noted the Senate Committee on Educational Policy (EP) regularly presents proposals to the Senate and part of that process is notifying the sponsors when their proposals are sent to the Senate. She wonders if this same process should become one of the procedures for HD. She also suggested the possibility of the sponsors having more conversations with their faculty, to ensure they are on board with the nomination. Chair Miller added that consideration should be given to a process that more clearly highlights the role of the sponsor of an HD candidate. He believes that the sponsor, rather than the chair of HD, should make the presentation at the Senate meeting.

Amos noted that part of the challenge may stem from the Senate's limited understanding of the full process, including the preapproval steps involving the Office of the Chancellor, the Office of the President, and the Board of Trustees. Pullen asked whether some concerns could be addressed by first confirming with the nominee that they are willing to be put forward and questioned why this is not already part of the procedure. The Joint Advisory Committee on Investment, Licensing, and Naming Rights, the Athletic Board, and the General Education Board were mentioned as potential models for an alternative committee structure. Tolliver suggested the possibility of having the Senate elect a committee, similar to the process used during a chancellor search, in which the involvement by the Senate concludes once the committee is elected, and the elected committee then brings forward a nomination. A revision of the *Statutes* was also suggested. Roether suggested that SR9 step back and consider the broader question, "Ideally, what should this process look like?" She also proposed involving individuals outside the Senate to bring a wider range of perspectives and ideas to the discussion.

SR9 considered whether there were ways to focus the debate on the Senate floor solely on the nomination criteria. After discussion of the pros and cons, SR9 concluded that limiting discussion was undesirable, inconsistent with principles of shared governance, and impractical, and the idea was rejected.

d) SR.26.02, Ninth Senate Review Commission (SR9)

See Chair's Remarks and Establish the Process for Collecting Feedback for more information.

6. NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 pm.

Corazon Johnson
Committee Support Staff