

**NINTH SENATE REVIEW COMMISSION  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2025  
4045 WYMER HALL  
MINUTES**

Present: Chair Nolan Miller, Jenny Amos, Nizam Arain, Hunter Farnham, Michael Grossman, Kirsten Pullen, Joyce Tolliver, Eric Kurt, Beth Meschewski, Jenny Roether, Jess Williams

Absent: Carol Symes

Guests: Angela Lyons (Chair, Senate Executive Committee), Ryan Pearlman (Reporter, Daily Illini)

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

A regular meeting of the Ninth Senate Review Commission (SR9) was called to order at 12:05 pm with Chair Miller presiding.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No requests received.

**3. CHAIR'S REMARKS**

Chair Miller welcomed the committee members and invited each member to introduce themselves.

Chair Miller thanked SR9 for their service and reviewed the charge of the committee, which is to conduct a comprehensive review of the Senate. A public report of the review will be distributed to both the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) and the Senate.

Chair Miller noted that SR9 operates under the Illinois Open Meetings Act (OMA) which imposes certain constraints on how the committee can conduct its work. He emphasized that discussions outside of scheduled meetings must be limited to no more than three participants. To comply with OMA while maintaining progress, Chair Miller suggested that portions of the work be divided among three person subgroups tasked with conducting research and reporting back to SR9.

Chair Miller stated the review of the honorary degree award process is a priority. SR9 will submit a report on its findings and recommendations to SEC by January 23, 2026. During this time SR9 will also begin gathering information for other areas of review.

Angela Lyons, Chair, Senate Executive Committee, also thanked SR9 members for their service. Lyons referenced the charge letter and noted a list of topics compiled by SEC for consideration by SR9. She stated that a comprehensive review of all committees is to be done, with the honorary degree award process identified as the initial priority. Lyons also noted the sensitivity of the honorary degree award process.

Lyons encouraged SR9 to develop creative and forward-thinking solutions to address key issues, urging members not to feel bound by past practices. She stressed the importance of finding an approach to the honorary degree award process that meets OMA requirements while protecting the privacy of individuals who have been nominated. Lyons concluded by encouraging innovative thinking and exploring new opportunities for improvement across all areas of review.

#### **4. OLD BUSINESS**

No old business.

#### **5. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **a) Establish the Process for Collecting Feedback**

Discussion was focused on how to best collect feedback from the large number of Senate committees. With approximately twenty committees to review, meeting with all committee chairs simultaneously was deemed impractical. It was agreed that smaller working groups would be more efficient, potentially dividing into three-person subgroups to engage with assigned committees.

Consideration was given on whether to communicate directly with entire committees or primarily with committee chairs. A tiered approach of emailing chairs for initial input while allowing them to consult with their committees was suggested. SR9 may also request to appear on committee agendas to gather feedback directly. It was noted that several of the members serving on SR9 already serve on other committees.

Several key questions were identified to guide the feedback process:

- What is the committee's purpose and how well is it understood?
- Does its work align with its charge and *Bylaws*?
- Is membership appropriately composed and resourced?
- Are there functions the committee should be performing but currently is not?
- Are there overlaps or redundancies with other committees?
- What value do annual reports provide beyond summarizing activities?
- How do committees evaluate their own effectiveness?
- What changes or support would help them fulfill their charge more effectively?

It was acknowledged that official charges may not always match what committees can realistically accomplish. A question to consider posing to committees might be "If you could redefine your committee to make it more useful, what would you change?".

It was noted that some committee responsibilities are set by University Statutes, while others are Senate-defined. There was discussion on making broad recommendations

where needed, balancing proactive versus reactive committee work, and ensuring the structures of committees remain aligned with the current needs of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

The intention is to take a broad approach and conduct a holistic review to evaluate if the current Senate committee system, much of which dates to the early 1970s, still serves the Urbana campus effectively. Comparisons with peer institutions may also be helpful.

Questions were raised on whether there may be too many committees and how to define the Senate's broader goals. A survey to gather wider input may be used.

Outreach will primarily target committee chairs, with communication also shared with members. Feedback may also be accepted directly by SR9 or from former committee members. A dedicated SR9 email address was suggested to streamline the responses.

The importance of including student perspectives in the review was also emphasized. This will include consideration of students' roles in the Senate, students' role in the Illinois Student Council, and input from the broader student body.

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

Roether and Lyons will attend the 2025 BTAA Senate Leadership Conference.

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

Miller noted that recommending honorary degree candidates is a Senate responsibility, but nominees do not volunteer for consideration, creating privacy concerns.

Under OMA, all discussions must occur in public. A priority should be to balance the Senate's duty to recommend candidates along with the need to protect individual privacy. Current *Statutes* seem to require a Senate floor vote but do not specify how earlier stages should occur. Any recommendations should respect the fundamental principle that senators are free to speak their minds on the senate floor and vote according to their conscience.

Potential alternative approaches were discussed, including sharing candidate names with the SEC for an additional level of review prior to consideration by the full Senate. OMA requires meetings be open to the public but does not require draft documents be shared publicly. The exceptions allowing a public meeting to be closed are specific and do not include discussion of honorary degree award candidates.

Concerns were raised about candidates being publicly debated for reasons other than merit. A discussion ensued on whether nominees should be informed and asked for consent before their names appear publicly.

The observation was made that minutes from the prior year for the Senate Committee on Honorary Degree (HD) did not include names. It was agreed that flexibility should remain on how much information is shared. One idea was for SEC to review the proposal with the names of the candidates prior to the vote on the Senate floor.

It was acknowledged that informal practices and external pressures influence the process. It was agreed upon to continue brainstorming ways to protect privacy while meeting OMA and statutory requirements.

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

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

Chair Miller, in conjunction with Pullen and Tolliver, will prepare a draft request for information from committees that will be sent to committee chairs.

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 pm.

Corazon Johnson  
Committee Support Staff