Guidelines for Faculty Senate Committee Meetings and Compliance with Open Meetings Law

Advance notice of meeting schedules
All Faculty Senate Committees need to announce their meetings at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting. Announcement will consist of posting of meeting information on the Senate web site. This facilitates the attendance of the public and interested parties at committee meetings.

Committee chairs must give Ms. Jasmine Love, the Senate administrator, news of their meetings’ time and place, ideally a week in advance of its date to allow her to post the information and coordinate room requests. (If you wish to schedule a meeting in the Senate office, check with Ms. Love for space availability. All of our committees’ files are housed in the Senate office, so it is often a convenient location to hold meetings.)

Anyone may attend Open Meetings. However, “the Law is silent with respect to public participation. While it has been advised that a public body does not have to allow the public to speak, many choose to permit public participation. In those instances, it has been advised that a public body must treat all persons in a like manner. For instance, the public body can adopt reasonable rules to ensure fairness; i.e., allowing those who want to speak a specific period of time to express their views.” *

Meeting quorum
In accordance with Section 41 of the New York General Construction Law (GCL), a quorum is a majority of the whole number of members of the body - i.e., available seats - without regard to vacancies; e.g., if the committee has 7 members, a quorum is 4, even if there are vacancies.

Remote electronic meeting participation
Meetings may be attended by remote electronic participation, such as real-time "videoconferencing," which is explicitly cited in Section 41 of the GCL. However, a meeting may not be transacted by email as that would not be a "meeting" and would defeat the purpose of the meeting being open to the public.

Meeting agendas
Every meeting must have a written agenda, to be given to the Senate Administrator immediately upon its creation, for filing and posting.

Meeting minutes
Every meeting’s business must be recorded in written minutes (including dates and time of meeting, those present, decisions reached, results of votes taken, etc). Minutes must be posted with two weeks of the date of the meeting. “The Law states that minutes of open meetings must be made available within two weeks of the meeting; minutes of executive sessions must be made available within one week of the executive session. It has been suggested that if the minutes have not been approved, they may be marked "draft," "unapproved," or "non-final" when they are disclosed.” *

Approved minutes are to be given to the Senate Administrator immediately upon approval, for her filing and posting. If draft minutes were previously posted, the submission of approved minutes will supersede the draft, which will be removed from the web site and replaced by the approved minutes.

“Executive Session”
Meetings may be “closed or go into "executive" sessions under certain circumstances prescribed in the Law. It is noted that an executive session is not separate from an open meeting but rather is a portion of an open meeting during which the public may be excluded. The Law requires that a public body take several steps to close the meeting. First, a motion must be made during an open meeting to enter into executive session; second, the motion must identify the general area or areas of the subject or subjects to

* New York State Department of State Committee on Open Government website, http://www.dos.ny.gov/coog/openmeetinglawfaq.html (consulted 6 October 2014)
be considered; and third, the motion must be carried by a majority vote of the total membership of a public body.” * It is rarely necessary to do this, however.

Committee records
All Faculty Senate Committees’ files will be kept as hard copy in the Faculty Senate office; all meeting agendas and minutes will additionally be posted on the Senate web site.

* New York State Department of State Committee on Open Government website, http://www.dos.ny.gov/coog/openmeetinglawfaq.html (consulted 6 October 2014)