

Fellowship Forum Membership Committee

Standing Rules and Guidelines

Preamble to Standing Rules

While the Fellowship Forum By-Laws include several sections specifying duties of the Membership Committee, they contain some ambiguities. Also, if interpreted strictly, they lead to a process which has some disadvantages, and which it has been our practice in recent years to work around. It is the intent of these Standing Rules to resolve any ambiguities and describe an unambiguous process for the Membership Committee to follow. The Standing Rules will not violate the dictates of the By-Laws. Rather, they will fill in details which the language of the By-Laws allows.

Since these Standing Rules only govern the internal workings of the Membership Committee, they can be agreed to by a simple majority vote of the Committee, and amended at the will of the Committee through a similar vote.

Standing Rules, relevant By-Laws sections and rationale for the Rules

Standing Rule	Relevant By-Laws	Comments
Rule 1. If there is more than one opening to be filled, the Secretary will be provided with balloting materials for all the candidates approved by the Membership Committee in By-Laws Section (c).	<i>The Membership Committee shall accept all proposals submitted before the specified deadline is reached. The number of proposals may exceed the number of vacancies.</i>	A problem in this section of the By-Laws lies in the final paragraph of section (d), highlighted. It could be interpreted to mean that, even in the event of an election to fill more than one opening, the member balloting must be repeated for each candidate. This would be inefficient (redundant actions), costly (postage for multiple mailings of ballots to absent members) and time consuming (10 days for the return of each ballot). Actual Membership Committee practice has been to ballot to fill all openings in a single step.
If the Committee has not approved enough candidates to fill all the openings, the election will proceed for the number of candidates the Committee has approved.	<i>(c) The Membership Committee shall consider each proposal and shall rank the proposed members by secret ballot. The highest ranking shall be handled as provided in section (d) below, provided there is unanimous consent of the Membership Committee. The number approved shall not exceed the number of vacancies.</i>	
For subsequent elections, candidates will be ranked without being constrained by prior rankings.	<i>(d) The Membership Committee shall give the Secretary a single-page biographical summary of the highest ranking candidate, including the information on the Proposal Form, or the Form itself if the Committee believes the information is sufficient.</i>	An ambiguity in these By-Laws also relates to the final paragraph in (d). It is unclear how to use the ranking determined in section (c) and “kept on file” after these openings are filled. When the filling of a new opening is approved by the membership, circumstances may have changed since the rankings were determined. New candidates may have been proposed. Membership Committee members may have obtained new information about the candidates that they had ranked
	<i>The Secretary shall send a copy of the Summary or Proposal Form and an election ballot to each Active</i>	

Member. A "due date" shown on the ballot shall allow 10 days for the return of the ballot.

The names of the next highest ranking candidates shall be kept on file by the Membership Committee and shall be submitted to the Secretary as provided in this section, one at a time as determined by the Membership Committee.

which would result in a different ranking. It seems preferable in considering candidates for a new opening to ignore prior rankings. The By-Laws do not disallow this.

Rule 2. If any of the five Past Presidents ***or elective members*** is unable to serve, those who are able to serve (including the elected members) shall, in consultation with the President, select additional members to fill the vacancies.

The incoming Past President will chair the Membership Committee unless the Committee decides to select another member as Chairman.

The most junior ***elective*** member shall be Secretary.

The Membership Committee shall consist of the five most recent living Past Presidents and two elected members. If any of the five Past Presidents is unable to serve, those who are able to serve (including the elected members) shall, in consultation with the President, select additional members to fill the vacancies.

The one elective member shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee to serve a two-year term (staggered so that one member is elected each year). An elected member may not serve two consecutive terms.

The Committee shall select its own Chairman and the most junior member shall be Secretary. The Committee shall maintain a Record of Attendance and shall administer all regulations of the Forum pertaining to the membership.

The By-Laws are silent on whether to fill a vacancy created if an elective member is unable to serve. Since each elective member has definite responsibilities, it is likely that the membership Committee would want to fill such a vacancy, and it would seem appropriate to use the same procedure as for replacing one of the five Past Presidents.

The By-Laws specify that the Committee shall select its own Chairman. Long-standing practice has been that the incoming Past President shall be Chairman. The Standing Rule so states, while allowing for the Committee to decide otherwise.

The By-Laws state that the most junior member shall be Secretary. This has been and will continue to be interpreted to mean the most junior elective member.

Preamble to Guidelines

Over time, as members join and leave the Membership Committee, questions about operating practices arise. Sometimes, questions that had been resolved before are re-addressed simply due to lack of knowledge. By keeping a set of written guidelines, Committee members will know what past Committees have decided. If they choose to change past practices, that is fine, but they will do so knowingly.

Since these Guidelines only guide the internal workings of the Membership Committee, they can be agreed to by a simple majority vote of the Committee, and amended at the will of the Committee through a similar vote.

Guidelines and Rationale

Guideline	Comments
#1. When there is an election, advise the sponsors of candidates not selected that there is no need for them to inform their candidate that an election has been held. Let the sponsor know that his candidate will be considered for future openings unless the sponsor chooses to withdraw his candidacy.	There is no requirement to inform a candidate of an election if he is not elected. Past practice was to simply keep applications for candidates who were not sufficiently high ranked for consideration for future openings. Many such candidates eventually were elected.
#2. Upon prior request by a sponsor, three or more Committee members will join the sponsor and his candidate at a table for lunch at a regular meeting. Ideally, the candidate will sit between two Committee members and near the third. Committee members will use this opportunity to get to know the candidate. If there are two sponsor requests for the same meeting, two different tables should be used. Any Committee member can coordinate a candidate lunch meeting. He should get firm commitments from three Committee members (possibly including himself) and the sponsor for the agreed upon day. Someone on the Committee should arrive at the meeting room in time to reserve five spaces together at a table.	An important consideration in ranking candidates for membership is what Membership Committee members can say about him from personal knowledge. It should be as convenient as possible for sponsors to let Committee members get to know their candidates. From time to time the Membership Committee has considered scheduling formal interviews of each candidate, but decided against it. This offers an optional alternative by which the sponsor can arrange for the Committee to get to know his candidate.
#3. When considering a candidate for membership, the Committee will weigh strongly his answers to the "expectation statement" and to the associated 3 numbered questions on the Membership Nomination Form: 1) how many meetings he will attend, 2) whether he is willing to assist the Program Committee and 3) whether he is willing to accept appointment or election. It also will consider the sponsor's answer to the "expectation question." 75 % attendance (36 meetings) would be a minimum expectation. 40 meetings would be preferred, and positively reflect upon the candidate in rating him.	In 2002, the New Member Proposal form was revised to include an estimate by the candidate of how many meetings he will attend each year, and a statement of his willingness to serve when asked. The Membership Committee made these changes because it felt that these were important factors to consider when electing new members. In 2008, "A Guide for Sponsors of New Members" added to the Proposal as a preamble to help sponsors understand their responsibilities. This included a statement regarding minimum attendance expectations.

#4. If the attendance of an Active Member is below 50 % for a year, the membership Committee will discuss with him whether this was a temporary situation, or whether it would be appropriate to change his status to Inactive.

The By-Laws state that the Membership Committee shall consider a member Inactive if he is unable to attend meetings regularly. This creates an opening for a new Active Member.

#5. New member selection criteria are described below in the section entitled: *New Member Qualifications* See *New Member Qualifications* below

New Member Qualifications

Per Section 3 of the Fellowship Forum by-laws, the Membership Committee (MemCom) reviews proposals for all prospective new members and decides which of those to recommend to the Governing Board for approval. Upon approval, the Governing Board submits the candidate to the vote of the Forum membership.

In making its decision, MemCom reviews each application form, interviews sponsors, and discusses each candidate. Usually the sponsor invites the candidate to lunch to meet some MemCom members personally. In appraising each candidate, MemCom evaluates two classes of the candidate's personal attributes:

- Fellowship attributes –characteristics that indicate how well the candidate will fit into the Forum membership and participate in the fellowship it offers.

- Contributory attributes – characteristics that indicate how much the candidate can contribute to the prestige of the Forum and enrich the experience of Forum members.

Fellowship attributes include:

- Sociability – How easily will the candidate get along and interact with Forum members?

- Energy and interest in fellowship – Will the candidate actively participate and interact with Forum members?

- Education and intellect – Is the candidate able to hold informed and interesting discussions with most forum members?

- Attendance – How often will the candidate attend meetings and be an active part of the membership?

- Evaluation confidence – How well is the candidate known by the sponsors?

Contributory attributes include:

- Ability and willingness to recruit speakers – What contacts does the candidate have? Has he shown previous ability to bring in speakers for other groups?

- A candidate's talents, abilities, and background that diversify and enrich the Forum experience – Does the candidate know something or has he done something that makes him particularly interesting?

- The prestige that a candidate brings - Do the candidate's background, accomplishments, and reputation add to the prestige of the Forum and thereby enhance our ability to attract speakers and new members?

- Ability to attract and bring in new members who meet or exceed these criteria.

MemCom recommends candidates whose attributes collectively are on par with or exceed those of the membership at large. The standard for Fellowship attributes is the same for all candidates.

Age Considerations

The Fellowship Forum values the age diversity of the group, which may range from middle age to 100+, and we want to preserve this diversity by inducting younger candidates who then remain members for many years. We encourage the recruitment of candidates under the age of seventy-five. Given this objective, sponsors of a candidate between the ages of seventy-five and eighty-five are expected to show that their candidate brings

contributory attributes that are special and unusual. And sponsors of a candidate over the age of eighty-five are expected to submit a written recommendation to Mem Comm demonstrating that their candidate offers extraordinary contributory attributes.

Miscellaneous

Forum By-laws specify the allowed membership to be in the range 50 to 55, and Mem Comm is obligated to accept enough proposed candidates to keep membership in that range. However, Mem Comm is not obligated to keep the membership up to the maximum of 55. When an opening materializes, then if no candidate seems appropriate, the committee may allow the membership to drop below the maximum.

If the Committee finds that the application does not meet the minimum qualifications for membership, it will be returned without action.

Revisions implied for existing Membership Committee Procedures document (shown in red)

THE FELLOWSHIP FORUM MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE PROCEDURES (existing)

Introduction

The membership selection process followed by the Fellowship Forum Membership Committee is illustrated by the accompanying flowchart. By design, the flowchart provides a somewhat terse description. This narrative traces the sequence shown in the flowchart and elaborates points where the flowchart may be too cryptic.

Guidelines, prepared by the Membership Committee for sponsors of candidates for membership, are presented in a separate document.

The accompanying process flowchart starts in the upper left corner. To traverse the flowchart, follow the arrows. Diamond-shaped boxes depict decision points. Two boxes - one near the lower right corner and another in the lower center - have no output arrows and therefore identify termination points. In the lower right, the whole process ends if only one opening is available and is filled by election. In the lower center, the process ends for those candidates who choose not to be reconsidered after an opening, for which they were considered, has been filled by another candidate. Otherwise, the process repeats cyclically until all approved membership openings have been filled. Per Membership Committee Standing Rules, all openings will be filled in one membership election cycle. Per MC Guidelines, applicants will not be informed that they are not elected unless the sponsor tells them. Both of these affect the flowchart.

Beginning the Selection Process

In accordance with Fellowship Forum By-Laws, active membership must fall within the range from 50 to 55. (Active membership may exceed 55 if an inactive member returns to active status). The Membership Committee can take no action if the active membership equals or exceeds 55. If the active membership is in the 50-54 range, the Membership Committee may decide to recommend selection of one or more new members. If the active membership falls below 50, the Membership Committee has no choice - selection of one or more new members must occur. The process illustrated in the flowchart assumes that either an optional or mandatory selection is being undertaken.

The Governing Board's Role

When the Membership Committee decides that new member selection should be undertaken, the committee so recommends to the Governing Board. If the Governing Board approves the Membership Committee's recommendation, active members present at a regular meeting are asked to vote their acceptance of new member selection. (This vote by the regular membership is not illustrated explicitly in the flowchart but subsumes the committee-to-board-to-membership sequence in the Single box, "Recommend to Gov. Bd number of openings to be filled.")

Following acceptance of new member selection by a majority of the membership, the President declares that applications are to be open for a period of 15 days or more.

The Selection Sequence

All active applications are assembled by the Membership Committee following the "open application" period referred to above. "Active applications" may include (1) ones newly received and (2) ones from candidates not selected in a prior new member selection

process who have opted to be reconsidered. Per the MC Guidelines, applicants are not informed they were not elected in a prior election. However, the sponsor will have the option of whether his candidate is to be considered for any new opening.

The Membership Committee ranks all active applicants. The ranking process usually is preceded by a period of interviews by the Membership Committee with sponsors and possibly other advocates of each candidate. This period of interviewing and any other fact-gathering by the Membership Committee is not illustrated in the flowchart but is subsumed in the box, "Mem Com ranks all active candidates."

Determining the highest ranked applicant is achieved through a candidate-rating system adopted by the Membership Committee in 2005. According to the By-Laws, unanimous consent within the Membership Committee is required to specify the highest ranked applicant. All nominees ranked less than highest would then be asked, through their sponsors, to decide whether or not they wished to be considered again in a subsequent selection. Normally, reconsideration would mean simply requesting that the previously submitted application remain in force (or be brought up-to-date if appropriate). Per MC Guidelines, nominees are not told of an election at which they are not selected. However, the sponsor should be asked whether his candidate is to be reconsidered.

The Election Sequence

A biographical summary of the highest-ranked applicant is forwarded to the Fellowship Forum secretary as specified in the By-Laws. The Fellowship Forum secretary prepares a ballot for all active members. Usually, this requires also mailing ballots to active members not present at the regular meeting when ballots are distributed. After a period of at least 10 days, ballots are counted. (The flowchart does not show specifically that the Governing Board "shall tabulate the results of the election" as stated in the By-Laws.

The flowchart box, "Ballots counted, " assumes adherence to the By-Laws.) Six or more negative votes will reject a candidate. Per MC Standing Rules, all openings are filled in a single member election cycle.

Repeating the Selection Process This step is superseded by the MC Standing Rule for filling multiple openings simultaneously.

If the election fills the only membership vacancy, the process ends. However, if two or more openings are to be filled, the selection process begins anew with consideration of all active candidates. Generally, "active candidates" are those who have chosen to be reconsidered after not being selected. However, "active candidates" also may include wholly new applications received between the end of the "open application" period and the end of the 10 day voting period.

The number of membership openings to be filled defines the number of selection cycles.

15 Oct 06/phs

The Ranking/Rating Process

In 2008, the Membership Committee decided that it would use a Rating Process that is in accordance with the recommendation from Phil Sorensen described below. Here is a brief summary of the procedure that he recommends:

1. Assign each candidate a score between 1 and 6, based on your opinion of his desirability as a member. 6 would be most desirable, 1 least desirable. There is no requirement to avoid assigning the same score to more than one candidate. To determine the score, try to compare him to the Fellowship Forum's existing members, and rank him against that yardstick (not so much against the other candidates). We should be able to assign a candidate a score based on what we know of him, without needing to hear about the other candidates. Consider as criteria: How would he be as a lunch companion; How many meetings does he expect to attend each year; Is he willing, and able, to serve the Forum when asked; Any other criteria you personally consider important.
2. The secretary will total all the voters' scores for all the candidates, and the highest total would be ranked #1. This should be done at the meeting, so that if there is a tie we can deal with it at that time.

This is an excerpt from a memo dated 12 Jan 05. (Jim Gibbs had become chair of MemCom.) From Phil Sorensen

What's Wrong With the Sum of Ranks Approach?

The Fellowship Forum By-Laws (11-3-c) state that "The Membership Committee shall consider each proposal and shall rank the proposed members by secret ballot. The highest ranking shall be handled as provided in section (d) below, provided there is unanimous consent of the Membership Committee." This has led to the practice of having each MemCom member rank the candidate set 1 ... n with no tied ranks. Rankings are then tallied, and the sum of ranks for each candidate defines that candidate's position in the ordered set (the smallest sum of ranks is overall 1st, next smallest sum is overall 2nd, etc.). Often, there is not an unambiguous ordering because of ties in sums of ranks after the first vote by committee members. If so, there's further discussion and additional ballots. Eventually, some committee member moves that so-and-so be accepted "unanimously" even though so-and-so may not be everyone's first choice; as gentlemen, we accede to the majority vote on the motion to accept so-and-so unanimously as the first-ranked candidate.

The above procedure "works" because of persistence and good will within the MemCom. However, it's a flawed method of measurement and could be improved.

Rankings are ordinal numbers and should not be summed. This may seem like nit-picking, but it is true that the differences between adjacent ranks cannot be defended as either qualitatively or quantitatively equal. If the qualitative differences between ranks are not apparently equal to one another, then any claim that, for example, 1st plus 4th equals 2nd plus 3rd cannot be defended. One way out of this box is to rate each entity in a set independently on the same dimension (e.g., candidates A, B ... G). The overall ratings computed from ratings assigned by each of several raters can define the rating group's ranking of entities A through G. (Although there's also an "equal interval" measurement problem with ratings, it's much less blatant than with rank-order differences.)

From a practical viewpoint, creating rankings from ratings should reduce the chances of ties and successive votes. There is no doubt that ratings

would be more defensible from a measurement standpoint. Thus far, the above argument has not persuaded the MemCom that they should abandon a "sum of ranks" approach. An illustration of a "ranking through ratings" approach is offered below.

An Optional Approach to Ranking Candidates

The following example shows how a rating form could be used to develop an overall ranking. The rating scale assumes equal intervals between scale points (i.e., [1-2] = [2-3] = [3-4], etc.) Also, please excuse what may seem like a patronizing tone to the instructions; I'm pretending to address naive raters. The example follows:

Instructions to Raters

Think of all the personal qualities and characteristics that, in your own private opinion, you consider most desirable for a member of the Fellowship Forum to possess. Now, based on your impressions and what you know about the person, rate each of the following candidates for membership according to how desirable that person seems to you as a prospective member of the Fellowship Forum.

Check any value from 1 (Not Desirable) to 6 (Very Desirable) for each candidate. Remember, you are rating each candidate separately, not ranking them all from 1st to nth.

	Not Desirable					Very Desirable
CANDIDATES	1	2	3	4	5	6
Able	-	-	-	-	-	-
Baker	-	-	-	-	-	-
Charles	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dogbert	-	-	-	-	-	-
Egbert	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fox	-	-	-	-	-	-
George	-	-	-	-	-	-

Regarding the foregoing example:

There is no magic about a 6-point scale compared to one of greater length. Consider 6 scale points as minimum but little is gained, for measurement purposes, in going beyond 10 scale points. Longer scales increases variability in an aggregation of ratings and thereby reduces the chances of ties in summed or averaged ratings. Using even numbers on a scale prevents mid-value ratings but an odd number of scale points also works. Let's say "dealer's choice" in a 6-10 range of scale points.

If every rater rates every candidate, then the sum of ratings across raters provides a basis for ranking the set of candidates. Average ratings could be used instead of sums if the rating rules allowed "don't knows" or "no answers" (but we'd expect every committee member to do his full rating duty).

I'd like to have the MemCom try a rating approach for deriving rankings to see if it does improve the process. The above example could become the rating form ("secret ballot") for committee use. If the approach proved helpful and then was used a few times, the instructions shown above might become unnecessary.