

Debate and Decision-Making at UC-AFT Council Meetings

In 1999, UC-AFT adopted a set of rules of order that govern debate and decision-making at Council meetings. Here are the basics:

An action item is an agenda item on which the Council will vote (not an item on a to-do list).

A motion is a proposal for a position or an action that the Council will take.

Aside from brief introductory remarks or clarifying questions, discussion of/debate on an action item should not begin until after a motion has been moved and seconded. Anyone at the Council meeting except the Chair may bring a motion (although the Chair may solicit particular motions).

A motion needs a second in order for discussion to commence. Anyone at the Council meeting (including the Chair) may second a motion. A motion that is not seconded will not proceed to discussion or a vote.

Motions should be specific, narrow, and targeted to the issue at hand. The way the motion is phrased matters, since that is what the Council will vote on.

During discussion of the motion, speakers should first be clear about whether they support or oppose the motion and why. Remarks should be relevant to the motion.

The Chair will ask to hear both support for and opposition to the motion. If there are many people who want to speak to one side, the Chair may limit discussion after a number of points have been made in order to hear from the other side (if the motion seems to be contested) or to keep moving through the agenda in a timely fashion (if the motion seems largely uncontested).

Approval of a motion is not a foregone conclusion. Those who oppose a motion or have reservations about it should speak up during discussion.

Speakers who see a way to improve a motion may propose an amendment. Amendments must also be seconded in order to proceed to discussion and voting. If the maker and seconder of the original motion like the amendment and it does not seem to be controversial, it may be incorporated into the original motion without a vote. If the amendment may be contested, it should be debated and voted on. Speakers may withdraw amendments if they become aware of an alternative amendment that they believe is better suited to the motion. Each amendment must be seconded, discussed, and either adopted, rejected, or withdrawn before the Council can consider any other amendments.

After amendments have been concluded, debate on the main motion as amended recommences, concluding with a vote.

Since votes are currently allocated to campuses, the Chair will ask whether campuses want to caucus before casting their votes. Campus delegations should have a system in place for caucusing.