

Election of University of Minnesota Regents

Regents are elected by the legislature to govern the University of Minnesota. This short subject describes the current requirements for recruiting, reviewing, recommending, nominating, and electing regents and highlights recent changes to the process.

The Minnesota Constitution provides for regent elections

The Minnesota Constitution requires that 12 regents be elected by a joint convention of the Minnesota Legislature to staggered six-year terms to govern the University of Minnesota. One-third of the Board of Regents is elected each odd-numbered year at a joint convention of the legislature. [Minn. Const. art. XIII, § 3](#), and University of Minnesota Charter §§ 4 and 5.

The board represents specific areas and includes one student

Minnesota law specifies that eight of the 12 regents must reside in Minnesota's congressional districts, one in each district. The four remaining regents are elected from the state at-large. Minnesota law also requires one of the four at-large regents to be a University of Minnesota student at the time of the election. [Minn. Stat. §§ 137.023](#) and [137.024](#).

Minnesota law requires an advisory council to recruit and screen regent candidates

The regent candidate advisory council is established in law to identify, recruit, and recommend qualified candidates. The council has 24 members, including two student members, appointed by the House of Representatives and the Senate to staggered terms. Student members serve two-year terms. All others serve six-year terms with a two-term limit. The council screens and recommends regent candidates to a joint committee of the legislature. [Minn. Stat. § 137.0245](#), subd. 2.

The council must develop selection criteria for recruiting regent candidates. In 2005, diversity became an explicit part of the criteria, including geography, gender, race, occupation, and experience. The council must identify the membership needs of the board, including the skills and characteristics necessary to govern the university and must develop criteria to ensure membership diversity. The council's selection criteria must not include a limit on the number of terms served by an individual regent. [Minn. Stat. § 137.0245](#), subd. 3.

The council recommends regent candidates to a joint legislative committee

The regent candidate advisory council must make recommendations to the regent nomination joint legislative committee by January 15 of each odd-numbered year. The council must recommend two to four candidates for each regent to be elected and must submit, with the recommendations, a report that identifies the membership needs of the board. [Minn. Stat. § 137.0245](#), subd. 4.

The regent nomination committee receives the council recommendations and may nominate other candidates

The regent nomination joint committee was first established in law in 2005 to consider the governor’s slate of regent candidates. Previously, legislative rules governed the makeup and duties of a joint committee for the regent election process. Under current law, the joint committee consists of the members of the higher education budget and policy divisions of the Senate and the House. The Senate and House committee chairs serve as cochairs of the joint committee.

The joint committee must meet by February 28 of each odd-numbered year, or on a date set by concurrent resolution, to consider the regent nominees. A committee quorum exists when a majority of the House members and majority of the Senate members are present at the joint committee meeting. The 2009 Legislature repealed a requirement that the committee meet more than once.

The joint committee may nominate and consider a candidate who is not recommended by the advisory council. To be considered, the nominee must be supported by at least five members of the joint committee—two from the Senate and three from the House. [Minn. Stat. § 137.0246](#).

The regent nomination committee recommends candidates to the joint convention

For each vacancy on the Board of Regents, the regent nomination joint committee may recommend only one candidate to the joint convention of the Senate and the House. A majority of the House members and a majority of the Senate members on the joint committee must support a candidate for that candidate to be recommended to the joint convention. In making recommendations, the law requires the committee to consider the needs of the board, and the gender, racial, and ethnic balance of the board. [Minn. Stat. § 137.0246](#).

Joint rules of the Senate and House provide for the operation of the joint committee, including how nominations are made and votes are taken. Joint Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives, 4.01.

A joint convention of the Senate and the House elects regents

The joint rules also provide for the election of the regents at a joint convention of the legislative bodies, as required in the constitution. Under the joint rules, the joint committee must report the names of persons recommended for each vacant regent seat. The person named is considered to be nominated for a regent position. Members of the legislature may submit additional nominations, and the joint rules govern voting on all nominations. The candidate for a regent vacancy who receives a majority of the votes cast is declared the winner.

The regent selection process was last modified in 2005 and 2007

In the early 2000s, the legislature made several changes to the process for nominating regent candidates. The 2005 Legislature established a role for the governor in the nomination process and created a joint committee of the legislature to consider nominations. In 2007, the governor’s role was subsequently eliminated, and the composition and responsibilities of the joint committee were modified.

For more information: Contact legislative analyst Sean Williams at 651-296-5053. For a list of regents, see the higher education page on the House Research website, www.house.mn/hrd.

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