Council of University Librarians (CoUL)
Decision Making Mechanisms and Protocols

The University of California (UC) Council of University Librarians (CoUL) employs three mechanisms for decision-making: (1) supermajority "yes-no" voting; (2) fist-of-five; and (3) consent-agenda decisions. All mechanisms are described at the end of this document.

The following protocols will be employed for decision-making:

A. Consent-agenda items will be clearly outlined in the agenda for the applicable meeting; CoUL members will notify the chair in advance if they wish to discuss or object to a consent item.

B. For discussion items that include decision-making, either the CoUL Chair or the member responsible for the agenda item will affirm which decision-making mechanism should be used (for CoUL confirmation).

Decision-making mechanisms

(1) Supermajority "yes-no" voting: Council members vote in favor or against a decision item. To receive endorsement, a threshold of 8 out of 11 members must be met.

(2) Fist-of-Five: Typically used for decision items that involve significant discussion and endorsement from all 11 partners, members vote along the fist-of-five scale (see below). An initial fist-of-five may be taken early in a discussion, to help identify members with reservations; typically, those members voting three or below are given the floor to discuss their concerns and the council will see if any amendments can help address those concerns. If a member votes (1) in the scale, they are blocking the council from endorsing the item.

Fist-of-five decision-making scale:

(5) Full support (endorsed by member with no concerns)

(4) Agreement (endorsed by member with minor concerns)

(3) Reservations, but can live with it (endorsed with reservations/caveats)

(2) Don't like it, won't block it (endorsed but the member registers their disagreement, though they will support the group's decision; this includes publicly supporting the decision, beyond the council)

(1) Cannot support it (member does not endorse and seeks to block it)

(3) Consent-agenda decisions: Low-risk decisions are bundled into a "consent agenda" item and, unless a group member calls for discussion or objects to the inclusion of a decision item, the consent agenda is immediately approved/endorsed at the meeting in question.