

# **Undergraduate Student Association Elections Committee Guidelines**

## **Class Officers**

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The Undergraduate Student Association Elections Committee (USAEC) in accordance with Article VI Section II of the Constitution of the Undergraduate Student Association herein establishes its powers, obligations, and procedures as the standing committee in charge of all Student Association (SA) sanctioned elections. All guidelines, by-laws, procedures, rules, and regulations of the USAEC are binding on declared, undeclared, and write-in candidates. The following guidelines, as approved by SA Executive Committee, represent the working procedures of the USAEC.

*Last Updated 1/2010*

### **Article 1 – Powers and Procedures of the USAEC**

- A. Each year, the Student Association President will appoint a USAEC Chair according to the procedure laid forth by the SA Constitution.
- B. The SA President, with counsel from the USAEC Chair, will appoint a Committee of no less than five (5) and no more than ten (10) persons—not including the USAEC Chair—who will fulfill all requirements of USAEC and not themselves be a member of the SA Executive Committee, a candidate for any office nor an advocate for or against any referendum question.
- C. All decisions which below are listed as being at the discretion of USAEC will be made by a majority vote of the Committee and the USAEC Chair with the following exceptions:
  - If the guidelines below list a different voting requirement
  - In the case of election complaints, the USAEC Chair will make a decision and this decision must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the USAEC.
- D. The USAEC Chair reserves the ability to keep voting open in the event that voter volume requirements are left unsatisfied.
- E. The USAEC is prohibited from publicly endorsing or denouncing any candidate or referendum. Any violation by any USAEC member will be dealt with at the discretion of the USAEC Chair. Complaints against the USAEC Chair may be lodged with the Student Court by any member of the Undergraduate Student Association and shall be handled in accordance with SA policy.
- F. The USAEC Chair will compile and make public a “Disclosure of Relationships” report that will highlight any meaningful relationship between a candidate for office and a USAEC member. Such reports will also be furnished by the Chief Justice on

behalf of the Student Court. All reports will be forwarded to the USAEC Chair, who will compile such reports and distribute them to USAEC members, SA Exec, Student Court, and the Lamron.

- G. The USAEC Chair will be responsible for all official communications from the Committee. In the case of a question being posed by a candidate, an answer must be sent to all candidates within a twelve (12) hour period, except when the college is closed.

## **Article 2 – Petitions and Applications for Elected Office**

- A. It is the responsibility of the USAEC to judge the validity of any candidate, any candidate's petition, any candidate's application, any petition for referendum, or a petition seeking the impeachment of a member of the Executive Committee using the criteria set forth by this document.
- B. To gain access to the ballot, class officer candidates must complete all appropriate paperwork that will be reviewed by the USAEC. Once the form has been validated, that candidate's name will appear on the ballot.
- C. For the purposes of Student Association elections, student class standings would be defined by their admit code:
- Freshman is defined as a student whose admit code is the year they enter (e.g. 200809)
  - Sophomore is defined as a student whose admit code is the year they enter plus one (1) (e.g. 200709)
  - Junior is defined as a student whose admit code is the year they enter plus two(2) (e.g. 200609)
  - Senior is defined as a student whose admit code is the year they enter plus three (3) (e.g. 200509)
- D. Class Officer candidates who feel they do not appear on the appropriate class list may indicate on their Intent to Run form a desire to be a candidate in his/her cohort class. (The graduating class year when the candidate entered the College.) Without direct and compelling knowledge that a claim is false, the USAEC must allow class officer candidates to run in their cohort class when it is requested.

### **Article 3 – Petitions for Referendum**

- A. As per the Student Association Constitution, any member of the Student Association has the right to initiate a bill for referendum.
- B. Referenda proposals seeking to eliminate, mandate or alter funding for a particular organization shall not be entertained by the USAEC, shall not be put to vote and shall have to force if adopted.
- C. Petitions seeking to initiate referendum legislation must bear the valid signatures of fifteen (15) percent of the Student Association. To be acceptable, advocates of the petition must have presented signatories with full and legible information on the aim of the petition. The petition must also be accompanied by one and only one specific resolution that is in accordance with the Student Association Constitution, SUNY Trustee Guidelines, New York State and Federal law.
- D. If the USAEC rules the petition valid, the petition containing the proposed resolution shall be presented before the SA Executive Committee. The SA Executive Committee will then legislate a date for the referendum to be held. The USAEC will be responsible for conducting the referendum no more than three (3) weeks after the date legislated by the SA Executive Committee.
- E. The referendum will be considered passed, and the legislation adopted, if at least twenty (20) percent of the voting membership of the Student Association participate in the election, and a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote for approval.
- F. The USAEC will follow standard candidate procedures for release and certification of election results, and any student who cast a vote in the referendum will have standing to issue a formal complaint to the USAEC.

### **Article 4 – Petitions for Impeachment of Officers**

- A. As per the Student Association Constitution, any member of the Student Association has the right to initiate impeachment proceedings against members of the Executive Committee.
- B. Petitions seeking to initiate impeachment must clearly name the officer in question, specific charges against the officer, and the name of the principal student who makes the charges. The petition's advocate must present signatories with full and

legible information on the aim of the petition. A single petition may not be used to initiate impeachment proceedings against more than one officer.

- C. Upon being presented with a petition for impeachment, the USAEC must verify that it contains the necessary number of valid signatures, that such signatures were honestly gathered, and that the items required by Section B are included.
- D. If the USAEC rules that the petition is valid, the charges listed therein will be forwarded to the Student Court for further action. If the USAEC does not find the petition valid, then it must inform the student who originated it, and retain the invalid petition for a minimum of two (2) years.

### **Article 5- Student Activity Fee**

- A. As per SUNY Board of Trustee Guidelines, a referendum must be held every two (2) years to determine the status of the student activity fee.
- B. The referendum shall be presented as a question asking whether or not the activity fee shall be mandatory for all undergraduate students.
- C. Referendum voting shall be held in tandem with spring officer elections as determined by the USAEC
- D. The student activity fee's status as mandatory must be approved with at least twenty (20) percent of the voting membership of the Student Association voting, and two-thirds (2/3) of the voters in favor.

### **Article 6 – Recognized Candidates**

- A. Any candidate running for a position of Class Officer :
  - Must have a G.P.A. higher than or equal to 2.00
  - Must sign and agree to the Acknowledgement Form.
- B. The USAEC will distribute an Acknowledgement of the USAEC Guidelines Form (Herein referred to as “form”) to be signed and completed by candidates seeking to be placed on the ballot. On the form, a candidate gives permission to the USAEC (via the Dean of Students or Registrar) to check the class standing and GPA of that candidate before elections commence and while that candidate serves in office, if elected. Upon receipt of the form, the USAEC will check to ensure that each candidate is eligible to hold the position to which he or she seeks election, and will

inform ineligible candidates promptly. For all candidates who take office, forms will be kept on file with the USAEC for two (2) years with the ballots.

- C. If a student that is studying abroad or student teaching wishes to run or vote in an election, they must make payment of their activity fee to the Student Association before they can be considered a candidate or vote.
  - Please consult Article 10 and 11 for Rules of Candidates running from abroad or student teaching.
- D. The USAEC will distribute all pertinent forms to be signed and completed by candidates seeking to be placed on the ballot. Candidates who violate the necessary forms for candidacy or USAEC Guidelines may be sanctioned, including but not limited to disqualification from the ballot, during any stage of elections, upon a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of USAEC.
- E. If a candidate faces extraordinary circumstances where they can no longer participate in campaigning or elections, the candidate may appoint a temporary designee at the discretion of the Chair.

#### **Article 7— Write-In Candidates**

- A. All students receiving votes during an SA sanctioned election who are not on the official USAEC ballot shall be considered Write-in Candidates and shall be subject to the guidelines contained in this section.
- B. All students who do not undergo the requirements for becoming an official and recognized candidate of the USAEC may still run a campaign for any office under the following circumstances:
  1. Write-In Candidates shall continue to abide by USAEC guidelines and all policies and procedures established herein.
  2. Write-In Candidates are excluded from privileges and courtesies extended to recognized candidates of the USAEC including but not limited to: having their name published on the ballot, mass emails, and the right to submit appeals on USAEC decisions or election results.

- C. Any Write-in Candidate who receives equal to or less than ten (10) percent of the total vote, to be determined as a function of the complete voter turnout, will be disregarded as a candidate.
- D. Should a write-in candidate be unofficially elected to an office, that candidate must submit to the USAEC the forms necessary to verify GPA and class standing and must sign all necessary forms for candidacy. The USAEC may not declare the election official until it has confirmed these requirements have been met.

### **Article 8 – Ballots**

- A. Candidates running for SA Executive Committee may organize themselves into an official party. Voters do not need to vote for the entire party.
- B. There will be one write-in space for every available position.
- C. Sample ballots will be available for inspection five (5) days before the start of the elections. All complaints regarding the ballot must be registered in writing with the USAEC Chair four (4) days before the start of the elections.
- D. Each official candidate on the ballot will be responsible for signing his/her initials next to his/her name on the ballot to make sure there are no errors in the spelling of their name, the name of their party or any related issues. The absence of either a candidates' initials next to his or her name or a letter to the USAEC Chair explaining a mistake in the ballot will be assumed to be a forfeit from the ballot.
- E. If any candidate requests changes on the ballot, the USAEC Chair will make an updated ballot available to candidates within two (2) business days. All affected candidates must again initial next to their names within one (1) business day, or they will be removed from the ballot.
- F. If a candidate is still not satisfied by the read of the ballot, the matter will be settled by those candidates and the USAEC Chair before the start of the election.

### **Article 9 – Campaigning and Election Publicity**

- A. Candidates must supply their own materials for use in their campaigns, but may use Student Association equipment, under the direction of the Director of SA Programs, Personnel & Finance.

- B. Since campaigning often requires that College and Student Association facilities and services be reserved and/or used, and since this can only be done by recognized student organizations, candidates should make such reservations under the name USAEC and reference their own name with the reservation. Candidates themselves are fully responsible for following all College and Student Association policies and procedures governing such use.
- C. All campaign material for college buildings must be approved by the respective offices (Residence Halls, dining halls, the College Union, and libraries) before posting.
- Displays on building interior surfaces must be confined to bulletin boards or similar areas provided for that purpose. Taping, nailing, tacking, etc., signs or other displays to walls, doors, glass, stairs, railings, balconies, or other building surfaces can cause damage or create a dangerous situation and, therefore, is not permitted.
- D. Posting of any campaign materials on the *outside* of any buildings on campus is strictly prohibited and will be subject to action by the USAEC. As per college policy:
- Writing, drawing, etching, painting, chalking, or otherwise marking the exterior of College buildings, is considered defacement of College property and therefore is not permitted.
  - Affixing signs, banners, posters, or other displays and writing, drawing, etching, painting, chalking, or otherwise marking College trees, benches, roadways, and other features of the landscape are similarly not permitted.
    - i. Exception: Chalking of paved pedestrian campus pathways is permitted except on walkways directly in front of building entrances. (Chalking is not permitted directly in front of building entrances in order that the chalk dust does not get tracked into College buildings.)
- E. Email and the Internet may be used for campaigning:
- The use of list-serves will be outlined at the beginning of the elections process by the USAEC to be in accordance with the professional staff moderators who control the list-serves.
  - Mass emails and use of list serves must adhere to all USAEC Guidelines and be forwarded to the Chair of USAEC prior to its publication and/or distribution for review by USAEC.

- No candidate may use a computer for any campaigning purposes during the period of voting.
- F. Any forms of publicity not mentioned in any of the above must be specifically approved by the USAEC. If approved, it is the full responsibility of the candidate to follow all USAEC policies concerning them.
- G. Any suspicions of a candidate tampering with another candidate's campaign materials will be reviewed by the USAEC. If a candidate is found guilty of such tampering, they will be automatically disqualified from election to office.
- H. It will be the responsibility of the candidate to remove all of his or her material from polling stations by 11:59 PM before the Election Day (For example, if Election day is Friday, materials must be removed by 11:59PM Thursday).
- The polling places will be designated by the USAEC and candidates will be informed of these locations before candidates' declaration of candidacy.
- I. No campaigning of any kind will be allowed inside the building(s) in which the USAEC will be tabling and within a 50-foot radius of such building(s) beginning at 11:59 PM the day before election day(s), (For example, if Election day is Friday, materials must be removed by 11:59PM Thursday) including but not limited to:
- Public statements of candidacy or requests for support
  - Distribution of campaign materials
  - Organized activities to persuade voters.
- J. After the election is completed, each candidate will receive 24 hours after the last Election Day to remove all forms of physical publicity. If any publicity remains after the 24-hour period, the candidate responsible will be penalized accordingly:
- One (1) vote per flyer or piece of paper
  - Ten (10) votes per banner

### **Article 10 – Student Teaching and Internships**

- A. Candidates who are student teaching must show proof of payment of their Student Activity Fee to USAEC before the candidate's name can be placed on the ballot. Candidates who were exempt from paying their Student Activity Fee must pay the Fee before they can be recognized as a candidate.

- B. The candidate's active participation in the election will be determined by the Chair of USAEC. If it is deemed that the candidate is in a close enough proximity to the campus that they should be expected to commute, the candidate is expected to file paperwork normally and follow the Guidelines. If it is deemed that the candidate is in excess of a reasonable commute, the candidate shall follow the Guidelines prescribed to candidates that are studying from abroad

### **Article 11 – Studying Abroad**

- A. All candidates must pay their Student Activity Fee before participating in the elections process. Receipt of payment must be provided to both the USAEC Chair and the SA Director of Programs, Personnel and Finance.
- B. In the event where the candidate is in a different time zone, all deadlines as posted by USAEC are to be interpreted as the time in Geneseo, NY.
- C. The candidate will have the option of appointing a designee to campaign on behalf of the candidate. The candidate must notify the USAEC Chair of this designee, and upon confirmation by the Chair, the designee will be acting on behalf of the candidate for the remainder of the elections process.
- a. The candidate's designee is subject to all USAEC Guidelines that other candidates must follow. Any incident that involves the designee breaking USAEC Guidelines will result in actions against the designee's candidate.
  - b. A designee is defined as an Activity Fee paying student at Geneseo who is not running for or currently holds any position monitored by USAEC. A student may not be the designee for more than one candidate.
  - c. This designee will remain the same throughout the campaigning and elections process.
- D. In regards to Article 2, the appropriate paperwork to be filed with USAEC before being considered a candidate must be transmitted through email to the USAEC Chair. The email must contain all required information, and in the case of the Acknowledgement Form, must contain the entire text of the form. The full name of the candidate at the end of the email will be considered by USAEC as an electronic signature.
- E. In the event where a complaint is registered with USAEC or against USAEC, the complaint must be from the candidate. In addition, as they would have no material

evidence themselves, their designee must also notify USAEC that they concur with the candidate's complaint. All responses will be sent to both the candidate and the designee within the appropriate timeframe.

- F. In the event where a complaint is registered with USAEC or against USAEC, the complaint must be from the candidate. In addition, as they would have no material evidence themselves, their designee must also notify USAEC that they concur with the candidate's complaint. All responses will be sent to both the candidate and the designee within the appropriate timeframe.

### **Article 12 – Voting Procedure**

- A. "Voters" are defined as full-time or Student Activity Fee-paying undergraduate students at the College.
- B. The voter's name, located in the student register, will indicate which elections survey is applied to the student's Knightweb account. Students will be given the proper online surveys based on official register standing (unless that voter has submitted a written affidavit requesting to vote in his/her cohort class.) Such affidavits are to be submitted to the USAEC at least two days prior to election.
- C. Voters will be allowed to vote for Student Association offices according to the following voting classification:

Offices:	Eligible voters:
SA Executive Committee and Student Assembly Representative	All voters
Senior Class Officers	Juniors
Junior Class Officers	Sophomores
Sophomore Class Officers	Freshmen
Freshman Class Officers (Fall Semester ONLY)	Freshmen

- D. Machine voting booths and/or paper ballots will be utilized only when Knightweb is unavailable for voting purposes over a period of seven (7) or more days from the time elections are scheduled to begin, or at the discretion of USAEC Chair.
- E. No one other than the individual voter will be allowed in the voting booth with the exception of a member of the USAEC to receive assistance with the controls of the booth.

- F. Any voter with a disability that is unable to cast votes themselves may request and shall receive the assistance of a member of the USAEC in casting their vote.

### **Article 13 – Ballot Counting Procedures**

- A. The USAEC Chair and one member of the College staff or administration will witness the opening and tallying of the voting results.
- B. The Chair, in conjunction with at least three (3) members of the USAEC and one member of the College staff or administration, will witness the opening of the paper ballot box(es) and the counting of the paper ballots.
- C. The totals from all votes will be added together if multiple methods were utilized in the election of the same position(s).
- D. The person with the greatest number of valid votes for the office he or she was seeking will be declared the winner of that office.
- E. Initial election results will be made available to candidates as soon as they are ready and do not become official until twenty-four (24) hours after candidates are informed. If an appeal is filed by a candidate to the USAEC or Student Court, the results of the affected position will not be considered official until either a final ruling has been issued, or the appeal is dropped.
- F. Vote totals that separate two candidates or referendum questions by equal to or less than ten (10) votes will be subject to an automatic recount.
  - 1. Such recounts will take place within two (2) days of the last election day.
  - 2. In the event of a recount, unofficial results posted as per section E. of this Article will remain unofficial until the recount is completed.
  - 3. A candidate receiving more votes than his or her competitor will be declared the winner, regardless of the margin of victory.
  - 4. Recount totals will be made available to candidates as soon as they are ready and do not become official until twenty-four (24) hours after candidates are informed.

- G. The USAEC Chair reserves the right to call for a recount of votes for any position(s) in any election(s) at his or her discretion. Such recounts will be subject to the guidelines outlined in Subsection F. of this section.
- H. Under the following circumstances a ballot will be invalidated:
  - 1. The intent of the voter was unclear
  - 2. The voter attempted by some action to influence another present at time.
  - 3. In the case of online voting, if a ballot contains more than one vote for a question.
- I. A two-thirds (2/3) majority of the members of the USAEC during ballot counting must agree to an invalidation.

#### **Article 14- Tied Results**

- A. For the purposes of these guidelines, a tie is defined as an exact same vote total between two or more candidates.
- B. Should an election for a specific position result in a tie between two or more candidates, an automatic recount must be completed as per Subsection F. of Section VIII.
- C. If the automatic recount does not change the result, a runoff election will be held within one week following the recount, and will not last longer than two days.
  - 1. Runoff elections will consist of the two or more candidates tied for the highest vote total only.
  - 3. Due to the expense of an inability to reset voting machines in time, runoff elections will be completed on Knightweb only, and will consist of no more than the undecided position and the tied candidates names.

#### **Article 15 – Filing a Complaint with the USAEC**

- A. Charges of violations of any guidelines, by-laws, procedures, rules, or regulations of the USAEC may be brought by any voting member of the Undergraduate Student Association except where otherwise specified in these regulations.

- B. Any reported instances of candidates failing to adhere to all USAEC guidelines will be reviewed by USAEC. Such candidates may be penalized at the discretion of the USAEC with a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote.
- C. All protests concerning elections must be filed in writing within twenty-four (24) hours after the end of the last Election Day.
- D. The USAEC will meet within two (2), working days to decide on any protest or alleged violations issued by a member of the Undergraduate Student Association.
- E. The decision of the USAEC will be final, unless appealed in writing to the Student Court Chief Justice within two (2) working days of the USAEC decision.
- F. If appealed; the Student Court will hold a hearing and make a final ruling on the protest.

#### **Article 16 – Filing a Complaint Against the USAEC**

- A. Charges of violations of any guidelines, by-laws, procedures, rules, or regulations by the USAEC may be brought by any voting member of the Undergraduate Student Association.
- B. All complaints against the USAEC need to be filed with Student Court within twenty-four (24) hours of the transgression.
- C. The ruling of the Student Court shall be final, and the USAEC will correct the error within two (2) days, if possible.

#### **Section 17 – Certification of Results**

- A. Absent any ongoing appeals, the USAEC Chair shall announce the official results of the election and release the results to the campus media after all the ballots have been counted and twenty-four (24) hours have passed since the posting of the unofficial results.
- B. Ballots will be sealed immediately after being counted and be held on file with the Student Association for two (2) years.
- C. The USAEC Chair will be responsible for the ballots during his or her term of office.

D. The USAEC Chair will submit a written summation report to SA Executive Committee of all elections under the Committee's supervision one (1) week after the official election results are announced.

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