

Undergraduate Student Association Elections Committee Guidelines

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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.

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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 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 by any member of the Undergraduate Student Association and shall be handled in accordance with SA policy.

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. Each candidate for campus-wide office wishing to be placed on the ballot must complete a petition that will be validated by the USAEC. Once the petition has been validated, the candidate's name will appear on the official ballot.
- C. Candidates running for campus-wide positions must gather the signatures of at least one hundred (100) full-time students, of fee paying students comprised of any class. Candidates are to get the student's signature and printed name to facilitate the validation process. The USAEC, will issue all rulings as to the validity of petitions.
- D. A signature will be invalid under the following conditions:
- If it is illegible.
 - If it is not that of a full time and/or Student Activity Fee-paying student.
- E. If a petition is invalidated, the candidate will not be recognized by the USAEC as an official candidate and will be excluded from the right to appeal USAEC decisions or election results.
- F. To gain access to the ballot, class officer candidates must complete an Intent to Run form that will be reviewed by the USAEC. Once the form has been validated, that candidate's name will appear on the ballot.
- G. 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)

- H. 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 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 2/3 of the voters in favor.

Article 6 – Recognized Candidates

- A. Any candidate running for a position on SA Executive Committee:
 - Must have a G.P.A. higher than or equal to 2.00

- Cannot serve as an executive board member of a Student Association funded organization after assuming office, unless duties of the SA Executive Committee position include such.
 - 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.
- An electronic signature will be considered valid if they student is unable to physically sign required documents
- D. The USAEC will distribute an Acknowledgement form to be signed and completed by candidates seeking to be placed on the ballot. Candidates who violate the form or USAEC Guidelines will be subject to removal from the ballot, during any stage of elections, upon a 2/3 majority vote of USAEC.

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 10% 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 the Acknowledgement Form. The USAEC may not declare the election official until it has confirmed these requirements have been met.

Article 8 – Ballots

- A. Candidate running for SA Executive Committee may organize themselves into a 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 moderators who control the list-serves.
 - Taking a portable computer door-to-door asking people to vote is prohibited. Any violation is subject to action by the USAEC.
- 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 active 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), including but not limited to:
- Public statements of candidacy or requests for support
 - Distribution of campaign materials
 - Organized activities to persuade voters.
- J. If a candidate violates any of the aforementioned restrictions on publicity, the candidate who violated those restrictions will be subject to possible disqualification by the members of the USAEC with a 2/3 majority vote and no longer be recognized as a candidate in the election.
- K. 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 – 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 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 11 – Ballot Counting Procedures

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- A. The USAEC Chair and one member of the College staff or administration will witness the opening and tallying of the total numbers of votes from the voting machines, if they were in use for the purpose of elections.
- 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:

- a. The intent of the voter was unclear
 - b. The voter attempted by some action to influence another present at time.
 - c. In the case of online voting, if a ballot contains more than one vote for a question.
- I. A 2/3 majority of the members of the USAEC during ballot counting must agree to an invalidation.

Article 12- 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.
 2. Runoff elections will be decided by new voters only. Those who had voted in the original election will be unable to vote again in the runoff election.
 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 13 – 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 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 14 – 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 15 – 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 week after the official election results are announced.

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