



ELECTION GUIDELINES

Version: Spring 2024

I. Introduction

1. As stated in section 601.1 of the Student Association Bylaws, the Elections Commission shall be empowered to oversee just and fair Student Association elections. The Commission shall be responsible for ensuring that candidates for Student Association offices are aware of and adhere to the guidelines set forth in this policy.
2. As stated in section 601.2 of the Student Association Bylaws, the Elections Commission is comprised of 5 Commissioners, and in accordance with section 601.4.1.1, a Chair and Vice Chair are elected by majority vote among the Commission membership.
3. As stated in section 601.4.1 of the Student Association Bylaws, the Elections Commission shall be responsible for running all internal and external SA elections, in addition to deciding and resolving any and all disputes arising out of this policy. Any decision may be appealed to the Supreme Court of the Student Association.
4. As stated in section 601.4.3 of the Student Association Bylaws, the commission shall ensure that all candidates are eligible to run as defined by university policies and election bylaw policies.
 - I. As stated in section 602.2.1 of the Student Association Bylaws, the Chair of the Elections Commission will provide written notification to each candidate of their eligibility, but only when ALL eligibility criteria have been met.
5. As stated in section 601.4.4 of the Student Association Bylaws, the Commission shall have the responsibility of producing and/or updating the Student Association Election Guidelines. The Election Guidelines should contain all pertinent election information including, but not limited to, all relevant University policies as well.
6. All information or questions about the election process can be directed to SAElect@albany.edu.

II. Rules

A. Mandatory Meetings

1. **All candidates must attend the mandatory candidates meeting on the day and time when announced by the Elections Commission.** If a candidate is unable to attend this meeting, they must supply a valid excuse.
2. It is entirely the responsibility of the candidate to communicate with the Elections Commission any reason for a lack of attendance at all mandatory scheduled meetings.
3. A valid excuse will only be accepted if received no later than 24 hours prior to the scheduled candidates meeting.

4. A valid excuse can include, but is not limited to, a class scheduling conflict, a work conflict (evidenced by a boss's name and phone number for an on/off campus job), or a valid medical or family emergency.
5. The excuse will be validated by a member of the Elections Commission.
6. This candidate must then set aside a time in which to meet with one or more members of the elections commission. You must first meet with a member of the commission before campaigning.
7. Failure to attend a rescheduled candidates meeting will result in automatic disqualification from the Election Ballot, pursuant to SA bylaws.

B. The Campaign

1. Campaigning may not begin until the time noted by the Elections Commission.

Campaigning will be defined as, but not limited to, actively seeking the vote of the student body via announcing candidacy, campaign speeches, poster posting, flyers/handout material, campaign merchandise, social media campaigns, website campaigns, dorm storming, meeting with student groups, seeking endorsements, or statements of the candidate's platform.

2. It is the responsibility of the candidate to know, understand, and follow all elections policies.
3. Candidates are permitted to have campaign designees to campaign on their behalf, however, the candidate is responsible for ensuring their knowledge, understanding, and adherence to all election rules.

I. Failure to do so will be the fault of the candidate, and the consequences for any infraction will directly affect the candidate.

C. Posters

1. Posters being hung on the Podium must be approved by the Office of Student Organization and Resource Center (SORC), located in Campus Center West (above the Starbucks). Candidates must complete the Poster Authorization Form specified for the relevant election cycle they are running in (for example: "Poster Approval Spring 2024 General Election"), which can be found in the "Forms" section on the SORC MyInvolvement page.
2. As per the posting rule, ALL pillar colors will be approved. You will be allowed to post one poster per pillar and observe the general rules of posting (no posting over someone else's poster). Any posters missing a SORC stamp of approval issued upon authorization of poster material will be removed and the candidate liable for a violation of election guidelines.
3. Posters hung on any of the Quads, Apartment, or Residential areas will also need to be stamped/approved by SORC. Please follow the rules for EACH area (which may be different for each one).
4. Posters and handouts are not to be slid under doors in all Quads, Apartment, or Residential areas.
5. Any handouts/flyers that are not being hung up do not require SORC approval but must be handed directly to a student. No handouts/flyers may be left in public areas; i.e., on tables, in libraries, etc.

D. Dorm Storming

1. The hours for dorm storming will be pre-determined and confirmed by Residential Life ahead of each General Election cycle.
2. Up to 2 additional people may dorm storm on the candidate's behalf.
3. The candidate may also have up to 4 people accompany them when dorm storming.
4. For policies regarding dorm storming (i.e., alcohol, drugs) please refer to the Ethics section of the guidelines.
5. Candidates are only permitted to dorm storm during the specified hours. Any candidate or campaign designee found to violate the assigned dorm storming hours will be subject to the issuance of Election Sanctions by the Elections Commission.

E. Endorsements

1. An endorsement is defined as a statement of support for a candidate.
 - I. A statement of support can constitute, but is not limited to, a public declaration of support for a candidate or their platform, be it verbal, written, or on social media platforms.
 - II. A candidate must be able to verify all endorsements they have both sought or received should the Elections Commission inquire.
 - III. Candidates, to the best of their ability, are to ensure their campaigns are being accurately represented by endorsers, as they alone are liable and subject to infractions should Election Guidelines be violated.
2. Seeking an endorsement is defined as contacting a student group, individual, or group to make an appointment for after the candidates meeting.
 - I. Receiving an endorsement can be understood as a candidate's action of seeking said endorsement, or an indication of acceptance of a statement of support.
 - II. This can be, but not limited to, verbal, written, or re-sharing of social media content issuing support for their candidacy or platforms, across their own personal channels or communication outlets.
3. UAlbany faculty, staff, office, and off-campus business endorsements will not be allowed.
4. Candidates can receive endorsements from student groups. They can be communicated using flyers, handouts, student group listservs, and social media, but candidates may not seek to acquire any endorsements until they have attended a mandatory candidate meeting.
5. Student groups may use their own listservs to endorse candidates. Only the president or e board members of said student group can use the listserv on the candidate's behalf. These emails, however, must follow the Student Code of Conduct and section 610 ethics policy. These emails cannot contain any defamation of character or malicious statements.
 - I. Candidates who are members of an e-board(s) of a group(s) they are seeking a campaign endorsement should recuse themselves from both the decision-making process to make an endorsement and from any student group led promotion or communication of their campaign.
6. Student groups may also have the candidate's flyers with them while tabling. Student groups may not put endorsed candidates on their posters and flyers; however, candidates may put endorsements on their own posters and flyers.

7. Candidates can receive endorsements from Student Association current executive, legislative, and judicial branch members. The endorser cannot use Student Association equipment (i.e. SA listservs, phones, or computers) or actively endorse the candidate during Student Association office hours, or actively endorse the candidate in the Student Association office. Again, candidates may not seek to acquire any endorsements until they have attended a mandatory candidate meeting.

F. Ethics

1. All candidates are expected to conduct themselves and their campaigns in an ethical and appropriate manner, in line with University Community Standards and the Elections Commission's policies and guidelines. Violations of ethical behavior will be investigated and put under review by the commission.

2. Character attacks are not allowed. Character attacks are defined as any form of defamation of character or disparagement- this includes any destruction to another candidate's campaigning materials.

I. Policy disagreements ARE ALLOWED. Example: "I believe your goal is unattainable because of a lack of funds".

3. Ethical violations are considered serious infractions and are therefore subject to more severe penalties.

G. Preferred Names & Pronouns

1. Candidates will be allowed to use preferred names and pronouns on the election ballot. However, the preferred name needs to be appropriate to their given/chosen/formal name. (i.e. Bill for William, etc.)

2. Preferred names and pronouns must be submitted on the self-nomination form to provide adequate time for approval.

3. Any questions, or if a candidate wishes to discuss this outside of the self-nomination practice, they may contact the Elections Commission directly at SAElect@albany.edu.

H. SA Office, Funds, and Equipment

1. No SA funds or equipment can be used for campaign purposes (photocopying flyers, making phone calls from SA office phones, emails (i.e. computers)) and no campaigning is allowed while in the SA office.

I. Campaigning within the SA Office can be defined as but not limited to, actively seeking the vote of the student body via announcing candidacy, campaign speeches, poster posting, flyers/handout material, campaign merchandise, social media campaigns, website campaigns, dorm storming, meeting with student groups, seeking endorsements, or statements of the candidate's platform.

II. It is imperative that the SA Office remains a politically neutral space during Election Cycles. Violating this principle will be subject to investigation that could result in the issuance of a policy infraction by the Elections Commission.

2. Any candidate that uses a Student Association listserv for their campaign will be subject to disciplinary action at the discretion of the Elections Commission.

3. Violations of SA Funds and Equipment rules carry more increased sanction outcomes, that may significantly impact a candidate's ability to participate in the election process.

I. Polling Site

1. The primary location of the polling place will be each student's MyInvolvement account.
2. It is an infraction to bring a laptop or mobile device to someone for them to vote on and counts as bringing the polling place to someone. Voters must logon on their own device, unassisted by a candidate, or any other representative, to vote.
3. It is at the discretion of the Elections Commission as to whether they will organize a physical polling site, where students can cast their ballot on a device provided other than their own. If a site is arranged, the polling site will be run and monitored exclusively by the Elections Commission, and candidates and/or their campaign designees, endorsers, or other representatives, are prohibited from campaigning at or near the arranged polling location.

J. Presidential and Vice-Presidential Open Forum (Spring General Elections)

1. The open forum is open for all students and staff of the State University of New York at Albany to attend.
2. The open forum will be held and moderated by the Elections Commission.
3. All official questions asked by the Elections Commission will be applicable for all candidates to answer and will provide each speaking candidate with their remaining time, in a method like, but not limited to, timecards.
4. All candidates must remain respectful of all parties and behave in adherence to ethical rules.

K. Other Guidelines

1. Candidates are also required to adhere to any and all University at Albany (Res Life, etc.) and SA policies while campaigning as well as the Communities Rights and Responsibilities.

III. Process

A. Filing a Complaint

1. All concerns and complaints regarding a campaign violation guideline can be alerted to the Elections Commission by completing the "Complaint Form", which can be found on the Elections Commission MyInvolvement page.
2. When submitting a complaint form, please provide as much evidence as possible regarding a situation you have encountered. Evidence may include; photo documentation, video recording, and preponderance of evidence. The Elections Commission will fairly assess each complaint and determine if there have been an infraction of the guidelines.
3. The Elections Commission will inform the complainant of the decision they have determined on the complaint raised.
4. Complainants can feel free to contact the Elections Commission at any time for further information on the complaints process, by emailing SAElect@albany.edu. However, if they wish to formally file a complaint this must be done by completing the process outlined above, as said complaints will only be considered official and subject to investigation and review, upon completion of the MyInvolvement Complaint form.

B. Commission Actions

1. Upon a candidate's violation of the election guidelines, the Elections Commission will review the infraction and take further steps to determine the outcome of their action (i.e. a reminder, a warning, campaigning suspension, or removal from the ballot).
2. It is at the discretion of the Elections Commission to determine what, if any, action is to be taken on a filed complaint and/or violation. The Commission will review the case presented using a preponderance of evidence standard.
 - I. Preponderance of Evidence Standard: the greater weight of the evidence required in a civil proceeding to decide in favor of one side or the other. The preponderance is based on the more convincing evidence and it's probable truth or accuracy, and not on the amount of evidence.
3. In the reviewing process, the Commission may request a meeting with the candidate or reporting individual. Reporting individual shall encompass any of the following terms: victim, complainant, and claimant.
4. All decisions voted on by the Commission are final. However, should a candidate dispute a ruling of the Elections Commission or believe themselves to have been treated unfairly, they shall have 48 hours from the time of the Elections Commission's ruling to appeal to the Supreme Court of the Student Association.

IV. Sanctions

A. Overview

1. The below Infraction Sanction Guide serves as a framework for the Elections Commission to issue fair and consistent sanctions to candidates who have earned infractions. This guide lists common infractions but is not a comprehensive list of all possible infractions. There are also varying degrees of each policy infraction that is not reflected in this guide. The Commission has the right to issue any sanction they deem appropriate, commensurate with the infraction. For example, a candidate can have one infraction and can be removed from the ballot.

B. Definitions

1. Written Warning: a written notice to a candidate that their behavior is counter to the expectations in the Elections Guidelines. A written warning is issued for low level behavior infractions. This is a written understanding between the Elections Commission and candidate with the expectation that the student modifies future behavior.
2. Probation & In- Person Meeting: this is a higher-level sanction issued and is imposed for serious violations or a pattern of violations of the student code of conduct. Upon a candidate's violation of the campaign guidelines, the candidate will be called to have an in-person meeting with the Elections Commission.
3. Suspension of Campaign: a student who is suspended from campaigning will be prevented from any campaigning including: dorm-storming, flyer posting, email use, and active use social media to promote their campaign.
4. Disqualification and Removal from Ballot: this is the most severe sanction issued by the Elections Commission. Upon the review of the candidate's violation, they will be disqualified as a candidate and removed from the election ballot.