

Student Assembly Elections: 2014 Fall Rules

Cornell Assemblies

April 2014

Adopted on Thursday, December 3 2009. Amended Friday, December 3, 2010; Friday, December 2, 2011, Thursday, November 29, 2012, and Friday, December 6, 2013

Article I. Election Guidelines

Elections are the foundation upon which representative governance rests. These rules are designed to protect the rights of all candidates, as well as all members of the University community, and to ensure that the election process takes place in an open and fair arena. Candidates must respect the rights and privileges of all members of the Cornell community, and to follow all election guidelines outlined in this document. Election rules are subject to yearly approval by voting members of the Student Assembly.

A. Voter Eligibility

To vote in an election for a seat in the Student Assembly (SA), a person must:

1. be a full-time, matriculated undergraduate student enrolled in a degree-granting unit of the Ithaca campus of the University; and,
2. be a member of the constituency for which the seat is designated, if it is designated for one of the following:
 1. a seat specific to college of enrollment,
 2. Freshman at Large, or
 3. Transfer at Large.

B. Candidate Information

1. Eligibility and Requirements

To be a candidate, a person must, prior to the petitioning deadline specified in the elections calendar:

1. be eligible to vote in the election for the seat and plan to remain so for the full term for which he or she is seeking election;
2. submit a completed candidate registration form and any associated materials required in that form;
3. submit petitions endorsed by the required number of people who are eligible to vote in the election for that specific position, which is the lesser of 10% of those eligible to vote for that specific position or:¹
 1. 300 for President and Executive Vice President
 2. 150 for all other At-Large seats;
 3. 100 for Arts and Sciences seats;
 4. 25 for New Transfer seat;

5. 75 for all other seats.
4. attend at least one SA meeting and register his or her attendance at that meeting with the Director of Elections, unless waived by the Director of Elections for extenuating circumstances;
5. apply *online* to serve on at least one committee of the SA
6. have not violated the early campaigning guidelines, as outlined in Article 1, Section C(2)

The Office of the Assemblies, assisted by the Elections Committee, will review submitted materials for compliance with petitioning requirements as follows:

1. A sampling method may be used as long as at least 10% of signatures are validated for all petitions and all signatures are validated for any petition found to be ineligible.
2. All petitions will be available to any member of the community who wishes to examine them in the Office of the Assemblies, 109 Day Hall. Petitions may not be photocopied once submitted.
3. The Office of the Assemblies will notify candidates who fail to meet petitioning requirements prior to the scheduled announcement of candidates.

Candidates who are listed on the ballot but found not to have fulfilled eligibility requirements prior to tabulation of results will be disqualified with vote counts discarded untallied.

2. Petitioning

In order to demonstrate that he or she will be a respectable representative of the Cornell Student Assembly and student body at large, candidates are required to collect a certain number of petition signatures. The required number of petition signers is designated above.

Candidates are expected to maintain the highest integrity when collecting petition signatures. In addition to the Early Campaigning rules detailed in Article 1, Section B(1), the following restrictions are in place in order to maintain fairness during the petitioning period.

Candidates may not:

1. announce their candidacy on social media platforms in order to collect signatures
2. announce their candidacy in front of a classroom during class hours in order to collect signatures.
3. pass unattended petitions around a classroom during class hours.

3. Written Statements

Each candidate is asked to submit a short statement [comprising no more than 13 lines when constrained by a space 5 1/2" X 2 1/4" (1,250 character count NOT word count)] via the web. Statements will be displayed in informational materials published by the Elections Committee. Statements may not include names of any political coalitions.

Candidates who do not submit materials meeting these criteria by the petitioning deadline forfeit the opportunity to have such statements disseminated.

4. Optional Campaign Plans

Each candidate is allowed to submit a short, optional statement about his or her tentative campaign strategy. This plan is not required, and it will only be seen by members of the Elections Committee and the Office of the Assemblies. This statement will not be seen by other candidates or the general public.

Statements are to be attached to the other campaign materials and are due to the Office of the Assemblies at the petitioning deadline.

5. Pictures

Candidates must have their photos taken in the Office of the Assemblies, 109 Day Hall, before the petition deadline. Photos will be displayed in informational materials published by the Elections Committee .

Candidates who do not have their photos taken by the petitioning deadline forfeit the opportunity to have such photos disseminated.

Candidates who are studying abroad and not able to appear in person to have their picture taken may submit a photograph of themselves that conforms to the following specifications and any others required by the Office of the Assemblies:

1. must be in JPEG format;
2. must feature the face of the candidate;
3. must not be professionally produced;
4. may not be enhanced after being taken;
5. must have a plain, white background; and,
6. must be cropped to 263 pixels wide by 351 pixels tall or proportionally larger dimensions.

Such a photograph must be submitted by email to assembly@cornell.edu before the petitioning deadline.

6. Promotional Materials

Each candidate receives any combination of up to 300 one-sided 8 1/2" X 11" or 150 two-sided 8 1/2" X 11" printed materials at no charge. Post or quarter card design should be submitted to the Office of the Assemblies, 109 Day Hall, for copying. All materials must include the date and time of the election and be in compliance with election guidelines. Candidates may only select up to two different paper colors for printed materials that are provided by the Office of the Assemblies. Candidates who do not submit materials meeting these criteria by the petitioning deadline forfeit the opportunity to receive such materials.

7. Candidate Forum

All candidates are encouraged to participate in the Candidates' Forums held by the Elections Committee during the campaign period. The Election Committee will be responsible for planning, coordinating, and marketing these forums.

At the forum, candidates are encouraged to discuss their experience, platforms, and more. Candidates are also encouraged to use the forum as an opportunity specifically to discuss why they are more qualified for the contested position than their opponent(s).

The Director of Elections shall reach out to student organizations that receive funding from the Student Assembly, encouraging them to use the candidate forum as an opportunity to vet candidates for endorsements.

C. Election Guidelines

1. Early Campaigning

Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf must not participate in the following campaign activities until campaigning officially begins:

1. distribution of printed campaign material to the public,
2. advertising candidacy by chalk, poster, or other method designed for public viewing
3. making speeches or statements to student organizations or groups of students, or
4. promoting their candidacy through email, social networking tools, or other digital media.

A violation of this rule is grounds for a challenge and disqualification if it comprises the fairness of the election, at the discretion of the Elections Committee.

2. Restrictions for Current SA Members

Current SA members seeking reelection must:

1. refrain from any form of individual or self-promoting publicity during the petitioning period; and,
2. not host constituency outreach events from the deadline for election materials through the last day of voting.

3. Compliance with Campus Life Policies and Conduct Codes

Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf must be aware of and comply with all applicable campus policies and conduct codes, including but not limited to:

1. Use of Cornell Name, Logo, and Artwork Policy
2. Use of University Property Policy
3. facilities reservation policies. including Willard Straight Hall area reservation policies
4. *University Postering & Chalking Policy*,
5. *Campus Life policy for posting in Residence Halls*,
6. Dining hall policies, including a prohibition on distributing printed campaign materials in dining halls without permission from authorized staff, and,
7. *Campus Code of Conduct* .

A violation of any University policy is a violation of these rules and therefore grounds for a challenge if it compromises the fairness of the election.

The Director of Elections may also refer any reported violations to the Office of the Judicial Administrator or other appropriate office, which may impose disciplinary remedies and penalties according to its own rules and procedures.

4. Campus Mail

Candidates and their supporters may not use Campus Mail for campaigning purposes.

5. Electronic Communications and Social Media

Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf:

1. must comply with owners' policies when using bulk mailing lists hosted by the university;
2. must comply with Cornell University Email Policy;
3. may not create Facebook pages, profiles, or groups dedicated to a candidate or a candidate's campaign; and,²
4. may create Facebook events related to a campaign as long as those events are scheduled to occur entirely within the voting period.

6. Campaign Finance

Candidates or supporters acting on their behalf must submit all receipts and/or proof of fair market value in person to the Office of the Assemblies, 109 Day Hall, by the deadline specified in the elections calendar. Candidates who do not submit receipts and/or proof of fair market value will be presumed to have spent \$0 on their campaign.

1. Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf may not exceed the \$50 limit for out-of-pocket expenses and fair market value of donations of materials, professional services, and/or money. Fair market value is the value at which something is to be obtained normally if documentation of its dollar value is not provided. Therefore, if there is a supporting receipt for a good used in a candidate's campaign, then the value of that good is the dollar value on the supporting receipt. For donated materials, professional services, or other goods for which no official receipt is provided, candidates must seek the most plausible assessment of the fair market value of the good. Paid advertisements and related costs on social networking sites or other websites must also be accounted for at fair market value.
2. Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf in races where only one candidate has submitted a petition are limited to 300 copies and \$10 for out-of-pocket expenses. Donations may be used, but proof of their fair market value must be provided and accounted for.

7. Endorsements

All registered student organizations receiving funds from the Student Assembly are encouraged to endorse candidates. The Director of Elections will encourage groups to do so, through email notification. If an organization chooses to endorse a candidate, it is expected to abide by the guidelines below.

1. Student Assembly Finance Commission (SAFC) funded organizations may endorse candidates. All groups must act in a way that is fair and balanced when deciding endorsement of candidates.
2. Student Activity Fee (SAF) by-line funded organizations seeking to endorse candidates for a position must give all petitioners for that position and the Director of Elections 24 hours advance notice of endorsement meetings.
3. The Elections Committee may recommend that the SA impose fines on or revoke allocated funds from organizations failing to comply.

8. Campaign Ethics

Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf may not:

1. harass, threaten, or coerce others;

2. provide anything of material value to others to further themselves in the election, aside from the complementary promotional materials provided to them by the Office of the Assemblies and similar informational materials of negligible material value;
3. compel any person to endorse their candidacies, assist their campaigns, or act as supporters as an explicit or implicit condition for initiation to, admission into, affiliation with, or continued membership in a group or organization; or,
4. criticize others on the basis of their character; however, candidates are allowed to comment on other candidates' platforms, experience, or voting records as long as such comments are grounded in factual evidence.

Article II. Direct Election of President and Executive Vice President (EVP)

A. President and Executive Vice President Designation and eligibility

1. Two of the Undesignated At-Large Representative Seats will be reserved for the directly elected seats of President and Executive Vice-President.
2. Candidates running for the Undesignated At-Large Representative seats may specify themselves as a Presidential candidate or Executive Vice Presidential candidate.
3. Candidates who do not wish to run for the position of President or Executive Vice President may run individually for an undesignated at-large seat.
4. All candidates running for any undesignated at-large seat will be listed as undesignated at-large candidates on the ballot.

B. Restrictions on Ticketing and Slates

1. General Rules

Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf may not:

1. include any other candidate's name, a common "ticket" name, or a shared slogan and/or symbol on any promotional materials or within any form of electronic communication and/or media;
2. share or pool campaign finances with any other candidates or supporters acting on their behalf;

In addition, candidates and supports acting on their behalf may not:

3. distribute any promotional materials, send any electronic communication, or utilize any other form of electronic media on behalf of any other candidate, except if the candidate does so for another candidate in the President and/or Executive Vice Presidential races
4. campaign with or on behalf of each other or engage in any active coordination of campaigning activities, except if the candidate does so for another candidate in the President and/or Executive Vice President races

2. Special circumstance for the President and EVP Elections

Candidates in any race, besides those running for the position of President or EVP, will be given the freedom to distribute promotional material, send electronic communications, campaign on behalf of, and speak for candidates in the President or EVP races. Candidates who chose to do so are considered supporters and are held accountable to all clauses in these rules that pertain to candidates and their supporters.

The President and EVP are strictly prohibited from coordinating activities.

Candidates are strictly prohibited from performing the actions above for candidates not in the President or EVP races.

3. Plagiarism

Candidates may not disseminate written statements, promotional materials, or electronic communications that are plagiarized or substantially copied from any such items created or distributed by any current or former candidate

Article III. Election Procedures

A. The Elections Calendar

1. The calendar for the fall and spring elections shall be confirmed by the Student Assembly in the semester prior to the election. The calendar should be submitted to the Office of Assemblies and the Student Assembly before the end of classes of the preceding spring semester for fall elections, and before the end of classes of the preceding fall semester for spring elections, by the Director of Elections.
2. Consideration shall be given to any religious holidays that may fall during the election period, guaranteeing that the right to free religious observance is afforded to all potential candidates.

B. The Elections Committee

1. The Director of Elections shall serve as chair and the Director of the Office of the Assemblies shall serve as a non-voting ex-officio member of this committee.
2. Members of the Elections Committee may not seek SA or UA office for the academic year following their term of service on the committee.
3. The Director of Elections shall publish at the beginning of each semester a list of Assembly seats to be filled, in accordance with Student Assembly Charter section 3.1.
4. Elections Committee members are expected to abide by the highest standards of personal conduct and integrity. Students are mandated to excuse themselves from serving on the Election Committee if they plan to actively take part in a campaign or sit on the executive board of an organization that has endorsed a candidate. Therefore, members should not be actively involved in the campaigning process. All conflicts should be considered and resolved before the election cycle begins.
5. The Elections Committee should be prepared to meet immediately following the challenge deadlines to rule on all pertinent challenges. All challenges must be heard simultaneously.
6. The Elections Committee shall use Robert's Rules of Order in accordance with Student Assembly Charter § 6.6 to consider challenges, in addition to the Undergraduate Election Rules. The Elections Committee has no power to overrule the Undergraduate Election Rules under any circumstances.
7. The Director of Elections shall give a final report on the results of the elections when there are no remaining unresolved matters.

C. Conduction of Election and Tabulation

1. The order in which names appear on the ballot shall be randomly selected.
2. Tabulation of the results of voting shall be carried out using simple plurality.

3. The Office of the Assemblies will post preliminary results for unchallenged races at 4:30 p.m. on the day following the election. Preliminary results for challenged races will be posted after the Election Committee has ruled on those challenges. Tabulation of the results of voting shall be carried out using simple plurality.
4. The Election Committee will not have access to the preliminary results prior to and during challenge deliberations. The Office of Assemblies will release election results from the challenged races after the Elections Committee has validated the election results.
5. The official announcement of results shall be at the next Student Assembly meeting following the validation of the election results by the Elections Committee.
6. A printout of election results shall be available in the Office of the Assemblies for one year, but disqualified candidates will not have their vote tallies made available.

D. Challenges

1. Eligibility to Challenge

1. Any member of the Cornell community may submit a challenge.
2. The Elections Committee as a body may submit a challenge by majority vote.
3. Individual committee members may not submit a challenge.

2. Challenge Deadlines

1. Petition challenges must be submitted to the Office of the Assemblies, 109 Day Hall, by the petition challenge deadline specified in the elections calendar.
2. Election challenges must be submitted by the election challenge deadline specified in the elections calendar.
3. No challenges or further supporting documentation will be accepted after these deadlines.

3. Format of Challenges

Challenges must be in writing and accompanied by the following supporting documentation:

1. challenger's name
2. candidate's name
3. date of challenge
4. reason for challenge and supporting evidence

4. Notification of Election Challenges

The Office of the Assemblies will send an email notifying anyone who is named in an election challenge.

5. Response to Election Challenges

A challenged candidate may review challenges in the Office of the Assemblies, 109 Day Hall and address written statements in response to the committee. The challenged candidate may request a hearing in person with the committee. The deadline for responses is set in the elections calendar.

6. Challenge Review Meeting

The committee will schedule a meeting to review challenges in closed session. The committee will provide an opportunity for the challenged candidate to respond in person if requested by the challenged candidate or a member of the committee. For each challenge, the committee will determine:

1. whether a preponderance of evidence substantiates each alleged violation; and,
2. which, if any, substantiated violations or combination thereof compromised the fairness of the election to the extent the challenged candidate should be disqualified by a two-thirds majority.

7. Preliminary Report

For each challenge, the committee will report to the challenger(s) and the challenged candidate all evidence received, any violations substantiated, and any decisions to disqualify the challenged candidate.

8. Reconsideration

If the committee determines a candidate should be disqualified, the candidate may request reconsideration within twenty-four hours of receiving notice. The candidate seeking such reconsideration should submit a request in writing to the Office of the Assemblies. The statement should address the specific findings in the preliminary report to be reconsidered. The committee will convene promptly in response to such a request.

9. Finality

The determination of the committee after expiration or resolution of requests for reconsideration shall be final. The committee will release a final, public report identifying all violations substantiated and any decisions to disqualify challenged candidates.

10. Confidentiality

Members of the committee and parties to a challenge may not share the contents of challenges, evidence, or decisions submitted to or received from the committee, except when explicitly permitted by these rules or by the committee. Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information may result in a disciplinary referral.