

## **Student Assembly Elections Rules**

*Adopted on Thursday, December 3 2009. Amended Friday, December 3, 2010; Friday, December 2, 2011, Thursday, November 29, 2012, and Friday, December 6, 2013, Thursday, \_\_\_\_\_ November 2014*

### **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:
  - a. Specific to college of enrollment
  - b. Freshman at Large
  - c. 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:
  - a. 300 for President and Executive Vice President
  - b. 150 for all other At-Large seats;
  - c. 100 for Arts and Sciences seats;
  - d. 25 for New Transfer seat;
  - e. 75 for all other seats.
4. Have not violated the early campaigning guidelines, as outlined in Article 1, Section C(2)

To be a candidate, a person must, prior to the commencement of voting as specified in the elections calendar:

1. Attend at least one full SA meeting in that semester and register his or her attendance at that meeting with the Director of Elections, unless waived by the Director of Elections for extenuating circumstances;<sup>1</sup>
2. Apply online to serve on at least one committee of the SA<sup>2</sup>

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 for viewing only to members of the Cornell community and may be examined in the Office of the Assemblies, 109 Day Hall. Petitions may not be photocopied once submitted.
3. The Office of the Assemblies will notify the Director of Elections, who will notify any candidates who fail to meet petitioning requirements prior to the scheduled announcement of candidates.
4. Candidates who are listed on the ballot but found to have not fulfilled eligibility requirements prior to tabulation of results will be disqualified with vote counts untallied and discarded.

## **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 C(1) of these Election Rules, the following restrictions are in place to ensure 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. ~~Circulate unattended petitions. Pass unattended petitions around a classroom during class hours.~~

## **3. Written Statements**

1. Each candidate is asked to submit a short statement, which may be no more than 1,250 characters, including spaces (NOT word count) via the online Candidate Profile portal.
2. Statements will be displayed in informational materials published by the Elections Committee, both in print and online.
3. Statements may not include names of any political coalitions.
4. If a candidate's statement does not conform with these guidelines, the statement will not be posted

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<sup>1</sup>However, this rule does not apply to past SA representatives.

<sup>2</sup> A list of such committees is provided in Appendix A to this document.

#### 4. 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. May 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](mailto:assembly@cornell.edu) before the petitioning deadline.

#### 5. Promotional Materials

Each candidate may receive a combination of up to ~~300~~ 150 one-sided 8 1/2" X 11" or ~~150~~ 75 two-sided 8 1/2" X 11" printed materials at no charge. These may be posters or quarter-cards<sup>3</sup>, or a combination of both.

1. The design must be attached, exactly as it is to be copied, as a PDF to the Candidate Profile Form online and submitted by the application deadline.
2. All materials must include the dates and times of the elections and be in compliance with election guidelines.
3. Candidates may select up to two different paper colors from the swatches provided by the Office of the Assemblies.
4. Materials will be printed in black & white only.
5. No Cornell insignia or logo is allowed.
6. Candidates who do not submit materials, which meet these criteria by the petitioning deadline, forfeit the opportunity to receive such materials.
7. The Office of the Assemblies will be responsible for making the copies.
8. The office will not assist in designing, modifying, or otherwise formatting a printed submission.

#### 6. Candidate Forum

All candidates are encouraged to participate in the Candidates' Forums held by the Elections Committee during the campaign period. The Elections 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

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix B for an example of an approved quarter-card.

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
4. Promoting their candidacy through email, social networking tools, or other digital media
  - a. The Elections Committee may challenge or disqualify a candidate if a violation is found to compromise the fairness of the election

#### **2. Restrictions for Current SA Members**

Current SA members seeking reelection:

1. Must refrain from any form of individual or self-promoting publicity during the petitioning period
2. Must 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 policies and provisions of the Campus Code of Conduct, including but not limited to:

1. Use of Cornell Name, Logo, and Artwork policy
2. Event Registration/Use of University Property policies
3. Facilities reservation policies, including Willard Straight Hall area reservation policies
4. University Postering & Chalking policies
5. Campus Life policy for posting in residence halls
6. Dining hall policies, including a prohibition of distributing printed campaign materials in dining halls without permission from authorized staff, and as designated in the Campus Code of Conduct.<sup>4</sup>

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. It is the candidate's responsibility to read the referenced documents and be familiar with the rules and regulations established within them. 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.

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<sup>4</sup> Please note that it is against the University Postering and Chalking Policy to chalk on any vertical surface, regardless of the location.

#### **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 obtain permission from the owner of any university-hosted bulk mailing lists
2. Must comply with Cornell University e-mail policies
3. May create a website or Facebook “Event” to promote a campaign as long as events are scheduled to occur entirely within the voting period.
4. May not create Facebook “Pages”, “Profiles”, or “Groups” dedicated to a candidate or a candidate’s campaign.

#### **6. Campaign Finance**

Candidates or supporters acting on their behalf must submit all receipts and/or proof of fair market value with the signed Expenditure Form 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.
  - a) Fair market value is the value at which something is to be obtained normally if documentation of its dollar value is not provided.
  - b) 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.
  - c) 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.
  - d) 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 150 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) byline 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:

1. May not, at any time before, during or after the elections, harass, threaten, or coerce others
2. May not provide anything of material value to a member of the University community to further themselves in the election, aside from the complementary promotional materials provided to them by the Office of the Assemblies
3. May not 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
4. May not criticize others on the basis of their character
5. 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**

- 1) Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf may not:
  - a) 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 ~~except if the candidate does so for another candidate in the President and/or Executive Vice Presidential races~~
  - b) Share or pool campaign finances with any other candidates or supporters acting on their behalf
  - c) Distribute any promotional materials, send any electronic communication, or utilize any other form of electronic media on behalf of any other candidate;
  - d) Campaign with or on behalf of each other or engage in any 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.~~

## **2. 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 Director of Elections, in consultation with the Office of the Assemblies, will draft the elections calendar prior to the semester of the elections, and **will be approved by the Elections Committee at a meeting in the prior semester**
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 a designated representative 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 Elections 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. Independence of the Elections Committee**

While members of the Elections Committee are expected to abide by the highest standards of integrity, they also enjoy independence from undue interference. Hence, students may not falsely accuse, harass, threaten or coerce any member of the Elections Committee for actions taken in his or her official capacity.

Subject to the determination by the Elections Committee, any violation of the above rules can result in temporary or permanent disqualification from contesting elections to the Student Assembly. It may also result in disciplinary referral to the Judicial Administrator. The procedures of reconsideration and review laid down in Article III, Section E will apply in such cases.

### **D. 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 as follows:**
  - a. **The President, Executive Vice President, and other Undesignated-at-Large representatives will be elected by a single transferable voting system according to the Article IV, Section 2 of the Charter of the Student Assembly. Voters may rank all candidates on the ballot for each of these races.**
  - b. **All other representatives shall be elected by a plurality voting system. Voters will cast one vote per available seat, (e.g. if three Arts and Sciences representatives are to be elected, the voter will vote for three candidates).**
3. The Office of the Assemblies will post preliminary results for unchallenged races by 4:30 p.m. on the day following the election. Preliminary results for challenged races will be posted after the Elections Committee has ruled on those challenges.
4. The Elections 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 for qualified candidates shall be available in the Office of the Assemblies, 109 Day Hall, for one year following the election. Disqualified candidates will not have their vote tallies made available.

### **E. Challenges**

#### **1. Eligibility to Challenge**

1. Any member of the Cornell community may submit a challenge.
2. **The Director of Elections may submit a challenge.**
3. The Elections Committee as a body may submit a challenge by majority vote.

4. Individual committee members except the Director of Elections 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. The Director of Elections or the Elections Committee by a majority vote can submit a challenge at any time before the declaration of results.
4. No challenges or further supporting documentation will be accepted after these deadlines.
5. Once submitted, a challenge becomes part of the formal record, and may not be withdrawn except by the explicit permission of the Director of Elections.

## **3. Format of Challenges**

Challenges must be in writing, submitted on the signed Challenge Form, 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 notify the Director of Elections** who will send an email notifying anyone who is named in an election challenge. The email will contain a scanned copy of the 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 Executive 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.

The Committee **will first vote by simple majority to determine if the evidence substantiated each alleged violation. If the violation is substantiated, the committee will vote** 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**

- 1) For each rule violation, the Director of Elections or a member of the Elections Committee as delegated by the Director will create a written report summarizing the challenge(s), the decision made, and how the decision was reached.
- 2) The preliminary report is kept confidential and only released to the challenged candidate and the challenger(s).
- 3) A copy is kept in the Office of the Assemblies, 109 Day Hall.
- 4) 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 the Preliminary Report. To be reconsidered, the candidate seeking such reconsideration must submit a request in writing to the Office of the Assemblies via email to [assembly@cornell.edu](mailto:assembly@cornell.edu). The statement should address the specific findings in the preliminary report to be reconsidered.

The committee will convene in response to such a request. The committee, after evaluating each request for reconsideration, will take a vote requiring a simple majority to determine if the previous decision to disqualify should be overturned. If the committee votes to overturn the previous decision, then the committee will consider the initial challenge again and will vote to disqualify the candidate by two-thirds majority.

If a disqualified candidate finds that the Elections Committee was biased in their application of the rules, he or she may request a review by the Senior Director for Campus Relations. If that review finds that the application of the rules was biased, the decision of the Elections Committee may be overturned.

### **9. Finality**

The determination of the committee after expiration or resolution of requests for reconsideration shall be final.

### **10. Confidentiality**

1. 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~~ Director of Elections.
2. Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information may result in a disciplinary referral by the Judicial Administrator.

3. A review of the Challenges may take place in the Office of the Assemblies, 109 Day Hall, by any member of the Cornell community. Challenges may not be photocopied, photographed, digitally recorded or removed from the Office of Assemblies.

## **Appendix A**

List of approved Student Assembly committees:

1. Appropriations Committee
2. Committee on Inclusion & Diversity Initiatives (SACIDI)
3. Communications Committee
4. Community Life Committee
5. Dining Committee
6. Diversity Affairs Coalition (SADAC)
7. Financial Aid Review Committee
8. Infrastructure Fund Committee
9. Ivy Council Committee

## **Appendix B**

Sample Quarter Card