



Cornell University  
Student Assembly

# Student Assembly Election Rules

**Spring 2022**

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## **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 follow all election guidelines outlined in this document. Election rules are subject to the approval of voting members of the Student Assembly each semester.

### **A. Voter Eligibility**

To vote in an election for a seat in the Student Assembly (SA) or for the directly elected seats on the University Assembly (UA), 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
  - c. Transfer

### **B. Definitions**

The following words throughout the Election Rules are defined as such:

1. Candidate: is any person who has successfully completed the outlined steps to become a candidate, as described in these Election Rules.
2. Classroom: is any space in which a professor, teaching assistant, or any other instructor holds prescribed class time. “Classroom” includes in-person, hybrid, and online courses.
3. Cyber Bullying: is the act of bullying in any online space. These election rules follow the same definition of bullying as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct and applicable university policies or governmental laws.
4. Individual or self-promoting publicity: is any outreach events, office hours, postings, or public facing events, whether in-person or virtual, in which interaction with, or promotion of, the candidate is a substantial reason for the act.
5. Petitioner: is any person seeking signatures to become a candidate.
6. Social Media: is any online service that allows users to share, create, or post content for social-networking purposes. Social media services include, but are not limited to: Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Reddit, MySpace, Pinterest, YouTube, and CampusGroups.
  - a. Email, GroupMe, WhatsApp, Signal, and text messaging are not social media.

## C. Candidate Information

### 1. Eligibility and Requirements

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

1. Be eligible to vote in the election for the seat and plan to remain seated so for the full term for which they are seeking election.
  - a. Candidates should not plan to pursue study abroad programs or internships that would require them to leave the Ithaca campus for any semester during their tenure.
2. Submit a completed candidate registration form and any associated materials required in that form. You may not register for more than one position on the candidate registration 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. 75 for Womxn’s Issues Representative At-Large, Minority Liaison At-Large, First Generation Student Representative At-Large, and International Students Liaison At-Large, LGBTQIA+ Students Liaison At-Large, Students With Disabilities Representative,
  - c. 150 for all other at-large seats
  - d. 100 for Arts and Sciences seats
  - e. 25 for Transfer seat
  - f. 75 for all other seats
4. Not already hold a directly-elected voting position on the SA and/or UA for the term for which they are seeking election.
5. Have never held or currently hold the role of Director of the Office of Ethics.

6. Have not resigned for a reason other than a Health Leave of Absence or been removed from the SA or from a directly elected UA seat during the Student Assembly term prior to the academic year of the term for the seat being elected.

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

1. Apply online to serve on at least one committee of the SA.

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 required signatures are validated for all petitions and all required signatures are attempted to be 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 after the announcement of candidates. Petitions may not be photocopied once submitted.
3. The Office of the Assemblies will notify the Director of Elections, who will then notify any necessary candidates who failed to meet petitioning requirements prior to the 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 they will be a respectable representative of the student body at large, and/or of the community they vie to represent, candidates are required to collect a certain number of petition signatures. The required number of petition signers is designated above. In accordance with university policies in place at the time, and at the direction of the Elections Committee, petition forms will either be “in-person” paper forms (available from the SA Elections website), or “virtual/remote” online forms (available by link from the SA elections website). Candidates are expected to maintain the highest standards of integrity when collecting petition signatures. In addition to the Early Campaigning rules detailed in Article 1, Section C(1) of these elections 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 under any circumstances
2. Announce their candidacy in front of a classroom, during class hours, or in interference of the learning environment in order to collect signatures

Supporters of potential candidates may collect petition signatures in accordance with the above rules. The names and netID of both the potential candidate and the individual who collected the signatures must be noted on the petition form.

## **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. Submissions must be plain text.
2. Statements will be displayed in informational materials published by the Elections Committee.
3. Statements may not include names of any political coalitions.
4. If a candidate's statement does not conform to these guidelines, the statement will not be posted.

#### **4. Pictures**

Photos will be displayed in informational materials published by the Elections Committee. Candidates may submit a photograph of themselves that conforms to the specifications noted in the online candidate registration form, or have their photo taken by a staff member in the Office of the Assemblies.

#### **5. 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 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 consider candidates for endorsements.

### **D. Election Guidelines**

#### **1. Early Campaigning Prohibition**

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

1. Distribution of online campaign materials to the public.
2. Making speeches or statements to student organizations.
3. Promoting their candidacy through email, social networking tools, or other digital media

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 that are meant to fulfill an outreach requirement from the deadline for election materials through the last day of voting.

### **3. Compliance with University Policies and Student Code of Conduct**

Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf must be aware of and comply with all applicable policies and provisions of the Student Code of Conduct, including but not limited to:

1. Use of Cornell Name, Logo & Artwork policy
2. Event Registration policies
3. Facilities reservation policies, including Willard Straight Hall area reservation policies
4. University Postering & Chalking policies
5. Residential & New Students Programs' policy for postering 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 Student Code of Conduct.
  - a. Please note that it is against the University Postering and Chalking Policy to chalk on any vertical surface, regardless of the location.
7. Intimidation tactics and cyber-bullying online is strictly prohibited.

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 Student Conduct and Community Standards (OSCCS) or any other appropriate office, which may impose disciplinary remedies and penalties according to its own rules and procedures.

### **4. Campus Mail**

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

### **5. Electronic Communications and Social Media**

Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf:

1. Cannot receive campaign support through a Cornell Administered list-serv. E.g. The Cornell Athletics Department
2. Must comply with Cornell University IT policies

### **6. Campaign Finance**

Candidates or supporters acting on their behalf must submit all receipts and/or proof of fair market value with the signed expense report to the Office of the Assemblies by the deadline specified in the election 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 \$25 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. If there is a supporting receipt for goods used in a candidate's campaign, then the value of that good is the dollar value on the supporting receipt as long as the transaction was conducted at arm's length.
  - 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. Professional services will be defined as any work for which the given individual/donor is typically compensated. Volunteer time donated by full-time students, who are not professionals (have received payment for service) in the area of their volunteer effort, will not be considered professional services.
  - d. Paid advertisements and related costs on social networking sites or other websites must also be accounted for at fair market value.
2. Candidates will be eligible for up to \$25 in reimbursements to cover out-of-pocket expenses from the campaigning period that can be used towards the following expenses: website expenses (web hosting, domain names, and online advertising) or any other promotional materials approved by the Director of Elections that are not a violation of these election rules.
3. Candidates may use any platforms at their disposal, granted they are free. If these platforms require purchasing, candidates are required to report this in their expense report form.

## **7. Endorsements**

All registered student organizations receiving funds from the Student Assembly are encouraged to endorse candidates. If an organization chooses to endorse a candidate, it is expected to abide by the guidelines below.

1. Student Activities Funding Commission (SAFC) funded and Student Activity Fee (SAF) byline funded organizations may endorse candidates. All groups must act in a way that is fair and balanced when deciding on the endorsement of candidates.
2. The Elections Committee may recommend that the SA impose fines on or revoke allocated funds from organizations failing to comply.
3. If a member of the Elections Committee sits on the Executive Board or governing body of an organization, that organization is prohibited from endorsing candidates.

All registered students, except candidates, are encouraged to individually endorse candidates once the campaign period officially begins.

## **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 Cornell community to further themselves in the election or to promote their candidacy.
3. May not compel any person to endorse their candidacy, assist their campaign, or act as supporter as an explicit or implicit condition for initiation to, admission into, affiliation with, or continued membership in a group or organization.

## **E. 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.
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 President races.
4. 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 or Executive Vice President races.

### **2. Special circumstance for the President and Executive Vice President elections**

Candidates in any race, besides those running for the position of President or Executive Vice President, will be given the freedom to distribute promotional material, send electronic communications, campaign on behalf of, and speak for candidates in the President or Executive Vice President races. Candidates who choose 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 Executive Vice President candidates are strictly prohibited from coordinating activities. Candidates are strictly prohibited from performing the actions above for candidates not in the President or Executive Vice President 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. Materials distributed by the Director of Elections, Elections Committee, and the Office of the Assemblies may be used as templates.

## **Article II: Direct Election of President and Executive Vice President**



## **A. President and Executive Vice President (EVP) Designation and eligibility**

1. Two of the six Undesignated At-Large Representative seats are for the directly elected seats of President and Executive Vice-President.
2. Candidates running for President and Executive Vice President who do not win their race will automatically be entered into two races for two Undesignated At Large seats, separate from the Undesignated At Large race. The candidates in each race, one for Presidential candidates and a separate one for Executive Vice Presidential candidates, will run for one available seat per race. In the event that there are no other candidates for a particular race, regardless of reason as to why, the seat shall go to the next highest voted candidate in the original Undesignated At Large race. No voting shall occur for these two races and the votes shall be tallied from the original counts for President and Executive Vice President.

## **Article III: Election Procedures**

### **A. The Election Calendar**

1. The Director of Elections, in consultation with the Office of the Assemblies, will draft the election calendar prior to the semester of the election, and will be approved by the Elections Committee at a meeting in the prior semester if possible<sup>1</sup>.
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. The Director of Elections shall publish a list of Assembly seats to be filled, in accordance with Student Assembly Charter.
3. During a Challenge Review Meeting, the interpretation of the Elections Rules will lie with the sitting Elections Committee.
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 take part in a campaign. Therefore, members should not be involved in the campaigning process. All conflicts should be considered and resolved before the election cycle begins. Elections Committee members may not sit on the Executive Board of an organization that endorses candidates in an SA election. If an Elections Committee member sits on the Executive Board of an organization or sat on that Executive Board at any time during the same semester of a particular SA election,

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<sup>1</sup> The Director of Elections should coordinate the schedule of the Student Assembly elections with other campus elections, such as those of the Student-Elected Trustee and Class Councils.

that organization may not endorse candidates in that SA election, or that Elections Committee member must resign from the Elections Committee.

5. The Elections Committee should be prepared to meet immediately following the challenge deadline to rule on all pertinent challenges. The Elections Committee shall use Robert's Rules of Order to consider challenges, in addition to the election rules. In the event of conflict, these election rules supersede Robert's Rules of Order. The Elections Committee has no power to overrule the election rules under any circumstances.
6. The Director of Elections shall give a final report on the results of the election when there are no remaining unresolved matters.

## **C. Independence of the Elections Committee**

1. 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 their official capacity.
2. Subject to the determination of the Elections Committee, any violation of this section can result in temporary or permanent disqualification from contesting elections to the SA or UA.
3. Members of the Elections Committee cannot personally endorse any candidates. However, members of the Committee may still privately vote in the elections themselves.

## **D. Voting and Tabulation**

1. The order in which names appear on the ballot shall be randomly selected.
2. Uncontested candidates will not be listed for a vote on the ballot and will be deemed victorious pending the resolution of challenges.
3. Results for challenged races will be posted after the Elections Committee has ruled on those challenges and all challenges have been fully resolved.
4. The Elections Committee will not have access to the results prior to and during challenge deliberations. The Office of Assemblies will release election results after the Director of Elections or the Elections Committee has validated the election results.
5. A printout of election results for qualifying candidates shall be posted on line on the relevant webpages of 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. Election challenges must be submitted by the election challenge deadline specified in the elections calendar.
2. The Director of Elections or the Elections Committee by a majority vote can submit a challenge at any time before the declaration of results.
3. No challenges will be accepted after these deadlines.
4. Once submitted, a challenge becomes part of the formal record, and may not be withdrawn for any reason or by any person.

### **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

Challenges that fail to provide all required documentation will not be reviewed by the Elections Committee.

### **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 request to review challenges to which they are a party in the Office of the Assemblies, 109 Day Hall, who will share the challenges in a confidential setting. The challenged candidate may then address written statements in response to the Committee. The challenged candidate may request a hearing ~~in person~~ with the Committee.

### **6. Challenge Review Meeting**

The Committee will schedule a meeting to review challenges in Executive Session. The Committee, less temporarily recused members, will provide an opportunity for the challenged candidate to respond in person if requested by the challenged candidate or a member of the Committee. The Director of Elections reserves the right to recuse any member of the Committee in the event of a conflict of interest. Members may either recuse themselves prior to challenge hearings or at the discretion of the Director of Elections. For each challenge, the Committee will determine:

1. Whether each alleged violation can be substantiated, beyond a reasonable doubt. This vote will be taken for each violation individually, and a majority of the members present of the Elections Committee is required to declare that a preponderance of evidence substantiates each violation;

2. Which, if any, substantiated violations or combination thereof compromised the fairness of the election and constituted a material advantage to the extent the challenged candidate should be disqualified. If the Committee finds either that a single substantiated violation or that a combination of substantiated violations should, beyond a reasonable doubt, require the disqualification of a candidate, with at least two-thirds of the members present of the Elections Committee in the affirmative, may disqualify the candidate. The Elections Committee reserves the right to impose lesser sanctions on a candidate as it sees fit.

## **7. Written 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 thoroughly detailing the challenge(s), listing the tallies of all votes taken by the Committee including the bifurcated voting process, the decision made, and how the decision was reached.
2. The report is kept confidential and only released to the challenged candidate and the challenger(s).
3. A copy, with all names other than the challenged candidate redacted, 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/found, any violations substantiated, and any decisions to disqualify the challenged candidate.

## **8. Reconsideration**

1. If the Committee determines a candidate should be disqualified, the candidate may request reconsideration within twenty-four hours of receiving the written 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), and the Director of Elections within twenty-four hours of receiving the disqualification email from the Director of Elections. The statement should address the specific findings in the written report to be reconsidered and should detail the specific points where the Elections Committee failed to correctly enforce the challenge procedure outlined in the Elections Rules Failure to submit all necessary documentation within twenty-four hours will restrict the seeking for reconsideration and the Elections Committee's decision will be final.
2. 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. Email voting may be used by Committee members.

## **9. Confidentiality**

1. Members of the Elections 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 Director of

Elections. When publicly releasing confidential information, the Director of Elections must redact the names of all individuals who are not the challenged candidate.

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