



Cornell University Student Assembly

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1 S.A. Resolution #32
2 Amendments to Election Rules for Spring 2021
3

4 **ABSTRACT:** This resolution updates the Student Assembly Election Rules for the Spring 2021
5 Election. This is necessitated by the ongoing public health restrictions related to COVID-19, and the
6 need to be inclusive of all students, whether they are on campus or attending remotely.
7

8 **Sponsored by:** Patrick J. Mehler '23, Director of Elections
9

10 **Whereas,** the Student Assembly Bylaws (§IV, 3, F, line 409) task the Elections Committee with
11 coordinating and implementing the regular and special elections of the Student Assembly,
12 and
13

14 **Whereas,** to appropriately coordinate and implement the Student Assembly Elections, the Election
15 Rules must be updated, and
16

17 **Whereas,** the campus is still under restrictions for in-person gathering, petitioning and campaigning
18 related to COVID-19, and
19

20 **Whereas,** there are many students who are not physically on campus due to the COVID-19
21 pandemic and travel restrictions, and
22

23 **Whereas,** members of the Elections Committee do not typically represent a genuine reflection of
24 Cornell's diversity in background, colleges and schools, class years, and other characteristics
25 that are necessary to execute fair and equitable elections.
26

27 **Be it therefore resolved,** the Student Assembly approves the Spring 2021 Student Assembly
28 Election Rules attached as Appendix A to this resolution.
29
30

31 **Respectfully Submitted,**
32

33 Patrick J. Mehler '23
34 *Director of Elections, Student Assembly*
35

36 Dana Karami '23
37 *Member, Elections Committee*
38

39 *(Reviewed by: Elections Committee, 6-0-3, 03/09/2021)*



1

Student Assembly Election Rules

2

Adopted on Thursday, December 3, 2009. Amended on Friday, December 3, 2010, Friday, December 2, 2011, Thursday, November 29, 2012, Friday, December 6, 2013, Thursday, May 1, 2014, Thursday, November 20, 2014, Thursday, March 26, 2015, Thursday, December 3, 2015, Thursday, May 5, 2016, Thursday, December 1, 2016, Tuesday, August 29, 2017, Friday, December 1, 2017, Monday, May 7, 2018, Thursday, November 29, 2018, Wednesday, September 2, 2020, Thursday, March 11, 2021

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46 Article I: Election Guidelines

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

52 A. Voter Eligibility

53 To vote in an election for a seat in the Student Assembly (SA) or for the directly elected seats on the
54 University Assembly (UA), a person must:

- 55 1. Be a full-time, matriculated undergraduate student enrolled in a degree-granting unit of the Ithaca
56 campus of the University; and,
- 57 2. Be a member of the constituency for which the seat is designated, if it is designated for one of the
58 following:
 - 59 a. Specific to college of enrollment
 - 60 b. Freshman
 - 61 c. Transfer

62 B. Candidate Information

63 1. Eligibility and Requirements

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

- 65 1. Be eligible to vote in the election for the seat and plan to remain seated so for the full term for
66 which they are seeking election¹.
- 67 2. Submit a completed candidate registration form and any associated materials required in that form.
68 You may not register for more than one position on the candidate registration form.

¹ Candidates should not plan to pursue study abroad programs or internships that would require them to not be fully “present” as a student for the term. This would not affect those matriculated students who are enrolled as full-time students and attending “remotely” during the time of campus restrictions due to COVID-19.
~~leave the Ithaca campus for any semester during their tenure.~~



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- 69 3. Submit petitions endorsed by the required number of people who are eligible to vote in the election
70 for that specific position, which is the lesser of 10% of those eligible to vote for that specific
71 position or:
72 a. 300 for President and Executive Vice President
73 b. 150 for all other at-large seats
74 c. 100 for Arts and Sciences seats
75 d. 25 for Transfer seat
76 e. 75 for all other seats
77 4. Not already hold a directly elected voting position on the SA and/or UA for the term for which they
78 are seeking election.
79 5. Have not resigned for a reason other than a Health Leave of Absence or been removed from the SA
80 or from a directly elected UA seat during the Student Assembly term prior to the academic year of
81 the term for the seat being elected.

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

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

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

- 87 1. A sampling method may be used as long as at least 10% of required signatures are validated for all
88 petitions and all required signatures are attempted to be validated for any petition found to be
89 ineligible.
90 2. All petitions will be available for viewing only to members of the Cornell community and may be
91 examined in the Office of the Assemblies, 109 Day Hall after the announcement of candidates.
92 Petitions may not be photocopied once submitted.
93 3. The Office of the Assemblies will notify the Director of Elections, who will notify any candidates
94 who fail to meet petitioning requirements prior to the announcement of candidates.
95 4. Candidates who are listed on the ballot but found to have not fulfilled eligibility requirements prior
96 to tabulation of results will be disqualified with vote counts untallied and discarded.

97 2. Petitioning

98 In order to demonstrate that they will be a respectable representative of the student body at large,
99 candidates are required to collect a certain number of petition signatures. The required number of petition
100 signers is designated above. For the ~~Fall 2020~~ Spring 2021 Election all petitioning will be completed using
101 an online platform. Candidates are expected to maintain the highest standards of integrity when collecting
102 petition signatures. In addition to the Early Campaigning rules detailed in Article 1, Section C(1) of these
103 elections rules, the following restrictions are in place to ensure fairness during the petitioning period.
104 Candidates may not:

- 105 1. Announce their candidacy on social media platforms in order to collect signatures
106 2. Announce their candidacy in front of a classroom during class hours in order to collect signatures



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

110 3. Written Statements

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

117 4. Pictures

118 Photos will be displayed in informational materials published by the Elections Committee. Candidates may
119 submit a photograph of themselves that conforms to the specifications noted in the online candidate
120 registration form.

121 5. Candidate Forum

122 All candidates are encouraged to participate in the Candidates' Forums held by the Elections Committee
123 during the campaign period. The Elections Committee will be responsible for planning, coordinating, and
124 marketing these forums. At the forum, candidates are encouraged to discuss their experience, platforms, and
125 more. Candidates are also encouraged to use the forum as an opportunity specifically to discuss why they are
126 more qualified for the contested position than their opponent(s). The Director of Elections shall reach out
127 to student organizations that receive funding from the Student Assembly, encouraging them to use the
128 candidate forum as an opportunity to consider candidates for endorsements.

129 C. Election Guidelines

130 1. Early Campaigning Prohibition

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

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

136 The Elections Committee may challenge or disqualify a candidate if a violation is found to compromise the
137 fairness of the election.

138 2. Restrictions for Current SA Members

139 Current SA members seeking reelection:



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- 140 1. Must refrain from any form of individual or self-promoting publicity during the petitioning period.
141 2. Must not host constituency outreach events that are meant to fulfill an outreach requirement from
142 the deadline for election materials through the last day of voting.

143 **3. Compliance with University Policies and Campus Code of Conduct**

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

- 146 1. Use of Cornell Name, Logo & Artwork policy
147 2. Event Registration policies
148 3. Facilities reservation policies, including Willard Straight Hall area reservation policies
149 4. University Postering & Chalking policies
150 5. Residential & New Students Programs' policy for postering in residence halls
151 6. Dining hall policies, including a prohibition of distributing printed campaign materials in dining halls
152 without permission from authorized staff, and as designated in the Campus Code of Conduct²
153 7. Intimidation tactics and cyber bullying online is strictly prohibited.

154 A violation of any University policy is a violation of these rules and therefore grounds for a challenge if it
155 compromises the fairness of the election. It is the candidate's responsibility to read the referenced
156 documents and be familiar with the rules and regulations established within them. The Director of Elections
157 may also refer any reported violations to the Office of the Judicial Administrator or any other appropriate
158 office, which may impose disciplinary remedies and penalties according to its own rules and procedures.

159 Note: Because all campaigning will be done virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic and policies
160 related to social distancing and restrictions to campus, there will be no printing of posters or quarter
161 cards for the ~~2020~~ 2021 Spring elections. There will also be no chalking or in-person campaigning
162 activities allowed. This is to maintain a fair and equitable campaigning environment for students who are
163 not physically in Ithaca.
164

165 **4. Campus Mail**

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

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

168 Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf:

- 169 1. Cannot receive campaign support through a Cornell Administered list-serv. E.g. The Cornell
170 Athletics Department
171 2. Must comply with Cornell University IT policies
172 3. Special Rules due to COVID-19
173 i. In order to ensure fair and equal access to all candidates, no in-person

² Please note that it is against the University Postering and Chalking Policy to chalk on any vertical surface, regardless of the location.



174 speeches or statements may be made during the ~~2020~~ Spring 2021
175 election.

176 ii. Any speeches or statements must be made via Zoom or other virtual
177 platforms.
178

179 6. Campaign Finance

180 Candidates or supporters acting on their behalf must submit all receipts and/or proof of fair market value
181 with the signed expense report to the Office of the Assemblies by the deadline specified in the election
182 calendar. Candidates who do not submit receipts and/or proof of fair market value will be presumed to
183 have spent \$0 on their campaign.

- 184 1. Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf may not exceed the \$25 limit for out-of-pocket
185 expenses and fair market value of donations of materials, professional services, and/or money
 - 186 a. Fair market value is the value at which something is to be obtained normally if
187 documentation of its dollar value is not provided.
 - 188 b. If there is a supporting receipt for a good used in a candidate's campaign, then the value of
189 that good is the dollar value on the supporting receipt as long as the transaction was
190 conducted at arm's length.
 - 191 c. For donated materials, professional services, or other goods for which no official receipt is
192 provided, candidates must seek the most plausible assessment of the fair market value of the
193 good. Professional services will be defined as any work for which the given individual/donor
194 is typically compensated. Volunteer time donated by full-time students will not be
195 considered professional services.
 - 196 d. Paid advertisements and related costs on social networking sites or other websites must also
197 be accounted for at fair market value.
- 198 2. Candidates will be eligible for up to \$25 in reimbursements to cover out-of-pocket expenses from
199 the campaigning period that can be used towards the following expenses: website expenses (web
200 hosting, domain names, and online advertising) or any other promotional materials approved by the
201 Director of Elections that are not a violation of these elections rules.
- 202 3. Candidates may use any platforms at their disposable, granted they are free. If these platforms
203 require purchasing, candidates are required to report this in their expense report form.
204

205 7. Endorsements

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

- 209 1. Student Activities Funding Commission (SAFC) funded and Student Activity Fee (SAF) byline
210 funded organizations may endorse candidates. All groups must act in a way that is fair and balanced
211 when deciding on the endorsement of candidates.
- 212 2. The Elections Committee may recommend that the SA impose fines on or revoke allocated funds
213 from organizations failing to comply.



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

216 **8. Campaign Ethics**

217 Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf:

- 218 1. May not, at any time before, during or after the elections, harass, threaten, or coerce others.
- 219 2. May not provide anything of material value to a member of the Cornell community to further
220 themselves in the election or to promote their candidacy.
- 221 3. May not compel any person to endorse their candidacy, assist their campaign, or act as supporter as
222 an explicit or implicit condition for initiation to, admission into, affiliation with, or continued
223 membership in a group or organization.

224 **D. Restrictions on Ticketing and Slates**

225 **1. General Rules**

226 Candidates and supporters acting on their behalf may not:

- 227 1. Include any other candidate's name, a common "ticket" name, or a shared slogan and/or symbol on
228 any promotional materials or within any form of electronic communication and/or media.
- 229 2. Share or pool campaign finances with any other candidates or supporters acting on their behalf.
- 230 3. Distribute any promotional materials, send any electronic communication, or utilize any other form
231 of electronic media on behalf of any other candidate except if the candidate does so for another
232 candidate in the President and/or Executive Vice President races.
- 233 4. Campaign with or on behalf of each other or engage in any coordination of campaigning activities
234 except if the candidate does so for another candidate in the President or Executive Vice President
235 races.

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

237 Candidates in any race, besides those running for the position of President or Executive Vice President, will
238 be given the freedom to distribute promotional material, send electronic communications, campaign on
239 behalf of, and speak for candidates in the President or Executive Vice President races. Candidates who
240 choose to do so are considered supporters and are held accountable to all clauses in these rules that pertain
241 to candidates and their supporters. The President and Executive Vice President candidates are strictly
242 prohibited from coordinating activities. Candidates are strictly prohibited from performing the actions
243 above for candidates not in the President or Executive Vice President races.

244 **3. Plagiarism**

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



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

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

- 250 1. Two of the six Undesignated At-Large Representative seats are for the directly elected seats of
251 President and Executive Vice-President.
252 2. All candidates running for any Undesignated At-Large seat, including those running for President
253 and Executive Vice President, will be listed as Undesignated At-Large candidates on the ballot in the
254 Undesignated At-Large race. Candidates who win President and Executive Vice President will be
255 removed from the Undesignated At-Large seat race and their votes will be transferred to the next
256 highest ranked candidates.

257 **Article III: Election Procedures**

258 **A. The Election Calendar**

- 259 1. The Director of Elections, in consultation with the Office of the Assemblies, will draft the election
260 calendar prior to the semester of the election, and will be approved by the Elections Committee at a
261 meeting in the prior semester if possible³.
262 2. Consideration shall be given to any religious holidays that may fall during the election period,
263 guaranteeing that the right to free religious observance is afforded to all potential candidates.

264 **B. The Elections Committee**

- 265 1. The Director of Elections shall serve as chair and a designated representative of the Office of the
266 Assemblies shall serve as a non-voting ex-officio member of this committee.
267 2. Members of the Elections Committee may not seek SA or UA office for the academic ~~year~~ semester
268 following their term of service on the committee.
269 3. The Director of Elections shall publish as soon as possible at the beginning of each semester a list of
270 Assembly seats to be filled, in accordance with Student Assembly Charter.
271 4. During a Challenge Review Meeting, the interpretation of the Elections Rules will lie with the sitting
272 Elections Committee. The JCC's decision making process may only override the Committee's
273 decision if and only if the Elections Committee did not follow the procedure outlined in the
274 Election Rules.
275 5. Elections Committee members are expected to abide by the highest standards of personal conduct
276 and integrity. Students are mandated to excuse themselves from serving on the Elections Committee
277 if they plan to take part in a campaign. Therefore, members should not be involved in the
278 campaigning process. All conflicts should be considered and resolved before the election cycle
279 begins. Elections Committee members may not sit on the Executive Board of an organization that
280 endorses candidates in an SA election. If an Elections Committee member sits on the Executive
281 Board of an organization or sat on that Executive Board at any time during the same semester of a

³ 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. It may also result in disciplinary referral to the Judicial 330 Administrator.



- 282 particular SA election, that organization may not endorse candidates in that SA election, or that
283 Elections Committee member must resign from the Elections Committee.
- 284 6. The Elections Committee should be prepared to meet immediately following the challenge deadline
285 to rule on all pertinent challenges. The Elections Committee shall use Robert's Rules of Order to
286 consider challenges, in addition to the election rules. In the event of conflict, these election rules
287 supersede Robert's Rules of Order. The Elections Committee has no power to overrule the election
288 rules under any circumstances.
- 289 7. The Director of Elections shall give a final report on the results of the election when there are no
290 remaining unresolved matters.
- 291 ~~8. For the benefit of the students, the Elections Committee shall establish voting booths across
292 campus on the days of the election. Committee members will ensure that no campaigning occurs
293 within 25 feet of a voting booth.~~

294 C. Independence of the Elections Committee

- 295 1. While members of the Elections Committee are expected to abide by the highest standards of
296 integrity, they also enjoy independence from undue interference. Hence, students may not falsely
297 accuse, harass, threaten or coerce any member of the Elections Committee for actions taken in their
298 official capacity.
- 299 2. Subject to the determination of the Elections Committee, any violation of this section can result in
300 temporary or permanent disqualification from contesting elections to the SA or UA.

301 D. Voting and Tabulation

- 302 1. The order in which names appear on the ballot shall be randomly selected.
- 303 2. Uncontested candidates will not be listed for a vote on the ballot and will be deemed victorious
304 pending the resolution of challenges.
- 305 3. Results for challenged races will be posted after the Elections Committee has ruled on those
306 challenges.
- 307 4. The Elections Committee will not have access to the results prior to and during challenge
308 deliberations. The Office of Assemblies will release election results after the Elections Committee
309 has validated the election results.
- 310 5. A printout of election results for qualifying candidates shall be available in the Office of the
311 Assemblies, 109 Day Hall, for one year following the election. Disqualified candidates will not have
312 their vote tallies made available.
- 313 6. The Student Assembly election results will be sent out to the entire student body via email using the
314 Assembly's monthly email.

315 E. Challenges

316 1. Eligibility to Challenge

- 317 1. Any member of the Cornell community may submit a challenge.
- 318 2. The Director of Elections may submit a challenge.
- 319 3. The Elections Committee as a body may submit a challenge by majority vote.
- 320 4. Individual committee members, except the Director of Elections, may not submit a challenge.



321 **2. Challenge Deadlines**

- 322 1. Election challenges must be submitted by the election challenge deadline specified in the elections
323 calendar.
324 2. The Director of Elections or the Elections Committee by a majority vote can submit a challenge at
325 any time before the declaration of results.
326 3. No challenges will be accepted after these deadlines.
327 4. Once submitted, a challenge becomes part of the formal record, and may not be withdrawn except
328 by the explicit permission of the Director of Elections.

329 **3. Format of Challenges**

330 Challenges must be in writing, submitted on the signed Challenge Form, and accompanied by the following
331 supporting documentation:

- 332 1. Challenger's name
333 2. Candidate's name
334 3. Date of challenge
335 4. Reason for challenge and supporting evidence

336 **4. Notification of Election Challenges**

337 The Office of the Assemblies will notify the Director of Elections who will send an email notifying anyone
338 who is named in an election challenge. The email will contain a scanned copy of the challenge.

339 **5. Response to Election Challenges**

340 A challenged candidate may request to review challenges to which they are a party from the Office of the
341 Assemblies, assembly@cornell.edu, who will share the challenges in a confidential setting via Zoom. The
342 challenged candidate may then address written statements in response to the committee. The challenged
343 candidate may request a hearing ~~in person~~ with the committee.

344 **6. Challenge Review Meeting**

345 The committee will schedule a meeting to review challenges in Executive Session. The committee, less
346 temporarily recused members, will provide an opportunity for the challenged candidate to respond in
347 person if requested by the challenged candidate or a member of the committee. For each challenge, the
348 committee will determine:

- 349 1. Whether a preponderance of evidence substantiates each alleged violation. This vote will be taken
350 for each violation individually, and a majority of the seated membership of the Elections Committee
351 is required to declare that a preponderance of evidence substantiates each violation;
352 2. Which, if any, substantiated violations or combination thereof compromised the fairness of the
353 election and constituted a material advantage to the extent the challenged candidate should be
354 disqualified. If the committee finds either that a single substantiated violation or that a combination
355 of substantiated violations should require the disqualification of a candidate, with at least two-thirds
356 of the members present of the Elections Committee in the affirmative, may disqualify the candidate.



357 **7. Written Report**

- 358 1. For each rule violation, the Director of Elections or a member of the Elections Committee as
359 delegated by the Director will create a written report thoroughly detailing the challenge(s), listing the
360 tallies of all votes taken by the committee including the bifurcated voting process, the decision
361 made, and how the decision was reached.
- 362 2. The report is kept confidential and only released to the challenged candidate and the challenger(s).
- 363 3. A copy, with all names other than the challenged candidate redacted, is kept in the Office of the
364 Assemblies, 109 Day Hall.
- 365 4. For each challenge, the committee will report to the challenger(s) and the challenged candidate all
366 evidence received/found, any violations substantiated, and any decisions to disqualify the challenged
367 candidate.

368 **8. Reconsideration**

- 369 1. If the committee determines a candidate should be disqualified, the candidate may request
370 reconsideration within twenty-four hours of receiving the written report. To be reconsidered, the
371 candidate seeking such reconsideration must submit a request in writing to the Office of the
372 Assemblies, via email to assembly@cornell.edu, and the Director of Elections. The statement should
373 address the specific findings in the written report to be reconsidered and should detail the specific
374 points where the Elections Committee failed to correctly enforce these Elections Rules.
- 375 2. The committee will convene in response to such a request. The committee, after evaluating each
376 request for reconsideration, will take a vote requiring a simple majority to determine if the previous
377 decision to disqualify should be overturned.
- 378 3. If a disqualified candidate believes that the Elections Committee failed to correctly follow or enforce
379 these Elections Rules after the Elections Committee's reconsideration, they may request a review by
380 the Judicial Codes Counselor (JCC) within 24 hours after the Election's Committee's
381 Reconsideration vote.
- 382 4. The challenged candidate will submit to the JCC, the Office of the Assemblies, and the Director of
383 Elections all original appeal materials that were previously submitted to the Elections Committee as
384 well as any additional materials that detail failures of the Elections Committee to follow and enforce
385 these Elections Rules.
- 386 5. The Elections Committee will submit all challenge reports pertaining to the candidate's appeal as
387 well as any additional materials refuting or agreeing with claims made by the challenged candidate to
388 the JCC within 24 hours after the candidate appeals to the JCC. If the Elections Committee agrees
389 with the candidate's appeal, a vote with a simple majority of the seated membership of the Elections
390 Committee in the affirmative may overturn their decision before the JCC completes a full review.
- 391 6. After a review of all materials sent by the candidate and the Elections Committee, the JCC will
392 determine whether or not to take the case. If the JCC deems that the appealed case does not merit
393 consideration, then the decision of the Elections Committee will be final. If the JCC takes on the
394 case and finds that the Elections Committee did not correctly follow and enforce the Elections
395 Rules, the JCC has the power to overturn the decision of the Elections Committee.

396 **9. Confidentiality**

- 397 1. Members of the committee and parties to a challenge may not share the contents of challenges,
398 evidence, or decisions submitted to or received from the committee, except when explicitly



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- 399 permitted by these rules or by the Director of Elections. When publicly releasing confidential
400 information, the Director of Elections must redact the names of all individuals who are not the
401 challenged candidate.
- 402 2. A review of the Challenges may take place in coordination with the Office of the Assemblies, ~~409~~
403 ~~Day Hall~~, by any member of the Cornell community. Challenges may not be photocopied, screen-
404 shared, photographed, digitally recorded or removed from the Office of Assemblies.