



# Valdosta State University

Student Government Association

Code of Elections

*This code shall be the governing document in regard to all aspects of the elections process for the Student Government Association of Valdosta State University.*

**Passed February 17, 2020**

**Signed February 18, 2020**



## **Section 1: Elections**

- A. First Year Senator Program
  - a. The SGA Executive Board will establish an application, selection and training process for First Year Students to join the Student Government Association.
  - b. First Year Senators will have the same rights and privileges as all other members of the Student Government Association
- B. Graduate Student Senators
  - a. VSU Graduate Students shall be able to apply to run in regular Senate and Executive Elections.
  - b. VSU Graduate Students may apply for any vacant Senate Seats.
  - c. In order to ensure Graduate Student Representation in the SGA Senate, if there are less than five graduate students in the Senate, the SGA President may appoint up to five Graduate Students to become Senators. These Senators must be confirmed by a majority vote.
- C. Senate Vacancies
  - a. The SGA Executive Board must provide an application, selection, and training process to fill vacancies when determined necessary by the SGA Vice-President. The process must be approved by the Executive Council and selected individuals must be confirmed by a majority vote of the Senate.
- D. Spring Elections
  - a. Spring elections shall exist to elect Senators and Executive Board Members for the upcoming school year.
  - b. Shall be overseen by the SGA Election Administrators and SGA Elections Committee.
  - c. The Election Administrators shall exist to oversee the election process and the SGA Elections Committee shall exist to rule on sanctions, disqualifications, and irregularities.

## **Section 2: Election Oversight**

- A. Election Administrators
  - a. The Election Administrators shall be the Vice-President for Student Affairs or hi/her designee (who shall be referred to as the Elections Commissioner), a faculty, staff, or Graduate Assistant appointed by the Vice-President for Student Affairs, and an SGA Liaison who should be an outgoing SGA Member designated by the SGA President.
  - b. Shall approve an appropriate application process for both executive and senate candidates in line with the requirements of the SGA Governing Documents.
  - c. Shall certify eligibility of applicants and election results.
  - d. Shall coordinate the voting process for all students.
  - e. Shall interpret, execute, and enforce all election rules and guidelines provided in the Election Code.

- f. Shall disseminate rules and regulations to the extent that they are necessary in providing an equal opportunity to all candidates during the entire election process.
  - g. Shall coordinate all logistical and organizational efforts of the elections and campaign period.
  - h. Shall coordinate with the SGA Executive Board when necessary for the drafting of documents, use of supplies, space reservations or other needs.
  - i. Shall ensure all relevant information are communicated to the Vice President for Student Affairs, SGA President, and the SGA President Pro-Tempore.
  - j. The Administrators may choose to host a candidate seminar to explain elections rules to candidates
- B. Elections Committee
- a. The SGA Elections Committee, hereinafter referred to as “the committee” or “the elections committee,” shall be the SGA Elections Administrators the Chief Justice of the Student Conduct Council, and the Associate Chief Justice of the Student Conduct Council.
  - b. The Committee shall be chaired by the Elections Commissioner who shall vote only in the case of a tie. The SGA Liaison shall be an ex-officio member of the committee All other members are voting members.
  - c. No Elections Administrator or member of the Elections Committee shall assist, endorse, or support with a campaign for office in the Student Government Association while serving in these roles.
  - d. May adjudicate decisions by majority vote of the committee.
  - e. The elections committee holds the sole power to disqualify candidates, suspend campaigning or issue other sanctions against candidates.
  - f. Shall ensure all candidates are treated fairly in any adjudication of sanctions.
  - g. Shall ensure all relevant information and minutes of committee meetings are communicated to the Vice President for Student Affairs, SGA President, and the SGA President Pro-Tempore.
- B. Duties of the Commissioner
- a. Shall verify the GPA and conduct eligibility of applicants.
  - b. Shall communicate with the student body regarding election information or delegate this to the SGA Liaison to be sent out from sga@valdosta.edu
  - c. Shall report to the SGA on all elections issues when appropriate.
  - d. Shall be responsible for ensuring the enforcement of relevant rules outlined in the SGA Governing Documents.
  - e. Shall explain any ambiguities or inquiries that the candidates may have.
  - f. Shall be responsible for deciding allowable information to be used in the committee deliberation for disqualification or other sanctions.

### **Section 3: Candidate Eligibility**

#### **A. Executive Candidates**

- a. Must be registered as a full-time student in good standing with the university and must have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.7 on a 4.0 scale prior to the start of the campaign period and throughout the elected term.
  - b. Candidates for President and Vice President must serve a year in SGA to be eligible for candidacy. This includes all individuals added to the SGA before midterm of the Fall Semester.
  - c. Candidates for Treasurer and Secretary must have served at least one semester in SGA to be eligible for candidacy. This includes individuals who began their tenure in January and will complete the current semester in SGA
  - d. Must be able to fulfill the obligations of the position during the term as listed in the SGA Constitution.
  - e. Must submit one letter of recommendation from VSU Faculty/Staff to be eligible for candidacy.
  - f. Each candidate shall file an elections packet including a statement of intent and grade release statement.
  - g. Any person elected as a part of the Executive Branch may not hold more than two Executive Board positions in other student organization, including SGA on campus during their term. This excludes appointed members of the executive branch.
  - h. Must meet all requirements for VSU Student Employment and may not hold other on campus jobs that will interfere with one's ability to complete mandatory office hour requirements. Current on campus jobs candidates plan to maintain should be disclosed in the elections packet.
- B. Senate Candidates
- a. Must be registered as a full-time, VSU student in good standing with the university and must have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale prior to the start of the campaign period and throughout the elected term.
  - b. Must be able to fulfill the obligations of the office during the term as listed in the SGA Constitution
  - c. Each candidate shall file an elections packet including a statement of intent and grade release statement.

#### **Section 4: Election Timeline and Campaigning**

##### **A. Election Timeline**

- a. The date of the spring election shall be approved by Senate thirty days prior to the election date, but shall occur before the third week of April
- b. The elections timeline shall include the due date of the application, any relevant meeting dates, the campaign period, and the election date and time.
- c. Campaigning may begin from the time candidates are certified as eligible by the elections committee unless otherwise stated in the elections timeline.

- d. The Senate may, in the essence of timeliness, pass the elections timeline without consultation with the elections committee, but the elections committee may adjust the timeline when necessary by majority vote of the committee. Changes must be immediately communicated to all candidates and all members of SGA.
- B. Campaigning
- a. The period of campaigning shall be set by the SGA Elections Committee and included in the timeline.
  - b. Campaigns may utilize posters, chalking, sheet signs, t-shirts, buttons, handbills, cards or other items of nominal value but may not campaign in such a way that disrupts campus life or violates any university policy.
  - c. No campaign materials should be placed on student vehicles.
  - d. All materials shall be removed by 12PM the day following the election.
  - e. Door-to-door campaigning is prohibited in the residence halls (signage must follow the residence hall protocol). Candidates can reserve space in the residence halls to table with permission from Housing and Residence Life.
- C. Tickets
- a. Executive Board Candidates may choose to run together as a ticket.
  - b. Ticket names will be included on the ballot as long as the ticket affiliation form is signed by all candidates and turned in with the packet.
  - c. Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates shall be elected together on the ballot. Presidential/Vice Presidential candidate affiliation forms should be submitted with the elections packet.
- D. Organizational Endorsements
- a. Registered Student Organizations in good standing with the Office of Student Life and Office of Student Conduct may endorse and assist executive board candidates,” tickets,” and senate candidates in campaigning.

## **Section 5: Election Conduct**

- A. Campaign Violations and Consequences
- a. Any violation of the student Code of Conduct shall result in a thorough investigation and potential disqualification of a candidate or other disciplinary action by the elections committee. The Elections Committee may disqualify a candidate or member-elect due to conduct violations until such time as the individual is sworn into office. If a candidate is disqualified the candidate with the next highest number of votes shall be declared the winner.
  - b. Destruction of another candidate’s campaign material by a member of another candidate’s campaign staff, or endorsing organization, may result in the suspension of campaigning by a particular candidate for a specifically defined period of time designated by the election committee.
  - c. It is expected that all candidates will act in a way that reflects the values of the Blazer Creed. The elections committee will not tolerate grossly disrespectful,

slanderous, gender/ racially charged tactics, including on social media, will not be permitted within the SGA elections time period and campaign events. and may result in the suspension of the campaign of a candidate or “ticket” for a specifically defined amount of time as a result of such actions,

- d. All admissible evidence shall be presented as supporting documentation and verified by the Elections Commissioner, first before any disciplinary action can be recommended. Any other non-verified evidence cannot be considered valid.
- e. The elections committee shall investigate and adjudicate all campaign violations and inform the Assistant Dean of Students for Conduct of any violations of the Student Code of Conduct.
- f. Candidates should be notified via email of any sanctions imposed.

## **Section 6: Voting, Results, Run-Off, and Irregularities**

### **A. Voting**

- a. It is the right of all Valdosta State students to cast a ballot in the SGA Elections.
- b. Each student shall select their executive candidates of choice and be limited to five senators.

### **B. Results**

- a. Senate Candidates shall receive at least fifty votes to be certified.
- b. The top thirty Senate candidates shall be allowed into the Senate.
- c. Results of the election shall be released within two business days of the close of voting.
- d. Candidates who fail to win in executive elections may be admitted to the SGA Senate granted that they meet all requirements for admission to the Senate and have indicated their interest in remaining in SGA within the elections packet.

### **C. Runoff for Executive Candidates**

- a. A runoff between the top two candidates will be required in the event that majority (50%+1 of votes) is not obtained by any candidate.
- b. Runoff elections must be held within 10 days following the announcement of results. The Elections administrators shall set the timeline for the runoff.
- c. A simple majority (50%+1 of votes) will determine the winner.
- d. Any candidate may decide not to run in the run-off election by submitting a statement of such to the Elections Commissioner, and by doing so the remaining run-off candidate would then be declared the winner of the office.

### **D. Irregularities**

- a. The Elections Committee shall have the power to withhold the certification and results of an election in which it finds substantial evidence that irregularities and/or fraud and alleged or suspected violations of the Elections Code and regulations have occurred and may have influenced the outcome or results of the election.

- b. Notice of withholding results must be communicated to all members of the Student Government Association, outlining investigation focuses prior to the announcement of withholding results to the Student Body and candidates.
- c. The Elections Committee shall investigate and rule on the irregularities within one week of the election. This time may be extended with notice to candidates and the SGA
- d. The Elections Committee may call a new election if it finds the original election to lack sufficient legitimacy.

Section 6: Definitions:

- A. "Candidate" is an individual seeking an elected office of Student Government Association.
- B. "Campaign" is any public activity or attempt to influence votes for or against a candidate.
- C. "Campaign agent, assistant, or staff" is an individual assisting or acting on behalf of a candidate.
- D. "Campaign materials or paraphernalia" is any advertisement, flyer, t-shirt, handbill, button, sticker, handout, or other item produced or on behalf of a candidate.
- E. "Ticket is an affiliation of individuals seeking the position of President, Vice President, Secretary, and/or Treasurer soliciting votes collectively.