

Election Policy
Student Government Association
Towson University

Article I

Election Commission Appointment, Powers, and Responsibilities

Section 1: The Student Government Association elections will be administered by an impartial Election Commission consisting of five or seven undergraduate, fee-paying Towson University students.

Section 2: No person holding or running for any SGA office – elected or appointed – or any member of any SGA board may sit on the Election Commission.

Section 3: No person who accepts an Election Commission appointment will be considered for elected office after the first Election Commission meeting takes place, even if they resign from the Election Commission.

Section 4: The Election Commission is selected by an application and interview process. The interview process is conducted by a member of the Campus Life staff, the Election Commission Advisor and SGA non-returning members. In the case that not all Election Commission positions are filled, the following may take place, an extension of deadlines and/or nominations to apply. In the event that a commissioner(s) resign, vacancies can be pulled from original applications or a new application process may be instated. An Election Commission must be no smaller than 5 students.

Section 5: A Head Commissioner will be chosen by majority vote of Election Commission members, all official Election Commission correspondence will be sent by this person on behalf of the entire Election Commission.

Section 6: Election Commissioners are able to vote in the elections but are not able to endorse candidates.

Section 7: Duties of the Election Commission will include:

- A. Impartially encourage active student involvement in the election process.
- B. Organize the election process and enforce the Election Policy.
- C. Hold mandatory meetings for all candidates, at which all procedures will be discussed.
- D. Hold a minimum of 5 office hours a week for the duration of their duty.
- E. Host a candidate forum/debate.
- F. Address violations of the Election Policy.

- G. Have discretionary powers to interpret election policy.
- H. Facilitate the election, oversee the election voting, be present when the votes are downloaded, and announce voting results.
- I. Develop a schedule for the following election year cycle.
- J. Recommend changes for the following year's election cycle.

Section 8: Quorum for transaction of all Election Commission business will be a simple majority.

Article II
Election Administration

Section 1: The annual election of Executive, Judicial, and Senatorial officers of the SGA will occur in the spring semester.

Section 2: The term "election cycle" shall be defined as the series of elections needed in order to create a complete SGA administration (executive board and senatorial positions). The term "elections" shall be defined as the individual event that students vote to elect SGA officials.

Section 3: In order to be a candidate for the elections, the following qualifications must be met:

- A. Any person seeking an SGA elected office must be a fee- paying undergraduate student who has at least a 2.500 cumulative grade point average at the time of picking up their petition. The status of all petitioners will be verified by the SGA Administrative Assistant.
- B. Any person seeking a position must not be currently on University Probation.
- C. Any person seeking an SGA elected office must be available to attend mandatory SGA responsibilities and duties every Tuesday from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- D. Any person seeking an SGA elected office must be available to attend mandatory premeetings every Friday from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. with exceptions granted by the Vice President (ie. class, work).
- E. Any person seeking an SGA elected office must be able to fulfill all constitutional requirements for the position he/she is seeking. The Student Government Association Constitution and By-laws can be found on the SGA website.
- F. Any person seeking an SGA executive position must have served in an

SGA office, or must meet with the SGA advisor before petitions are due to understand the rights and responsibilities of the position.

- G. Any person seeking a position must be available to attend the summer and winter retreats, barring extenuating circumstances.
- H. Persons are considered petitioners until all paperwork is completed and returned. At which time, they become candidates.

Section 4: Petitions of candidacy may be obtained from the SGA Administrative Assistant. They will be available at least three weeks before the first Election Day. Petitions will be created, numbered and signed in and out only by the SGA Administrative Assistant. Petitions that are not correctly signed in or out will not be accepted. Lost petitions will be invalidated and new petitions issued, without a time extension. Failure to comply with these procedures will result in the petitioner being disqualified from that election.

Section 5: Petitions for candidacy must be submitted to the SGA Administrative Assistant and accompanied by the signatures and Student ID numbers of two hundred (200) fee-paying Towson University students.

Signatures on petitions must be obtained directly by the student who is running for office, barring the exception in Section 20 for students who are studying abroad. Petitions must be returned in proper form by 4:00 p.m. at least 10 calendar days prior to the first Election Day. The due date will be prominently displayed on the Petitions. Failure to comply with these procedures will result in a petitioner being disqualified from that election.

Section 6: Individuals who are petitioning for candidacy can pick up petitions for more than one position but only one petition will be accepted. A candidate's name will only go on the ballot once per election.

Section 7: Individuals seeking an executive board office may run as a Ticket. A Ticket is defined as a group of no less than two candidates and no more than five candidates for the offices of President, Vice President, Treasurer, Attorney General, and Chief of Staff. If a member is removed from a Ticket for any reason, the remaining Ticket members may continue to run as a Ticket. Tickets must notify the Election Commission in writing of the name of their Ticket and all candidates on that Ticket no later than 4:00 p.m. on the petition due date. Ticket names will be granted on a first-come, first-served basis. No two Tickets may have the same name.

Section 8: The Election Commission will conduct a mandatory meeting of all candidates the day petitions are due to impress upon them their rights and responsibilities and to answer candidates' questions regarding the election process. An alternative meeting will be held on the following Monday for candidates that cannot attend the first meeting.

- A. Candidate Information Packets will be distributed.
- B. On the day of the first mandatory meeting for candidates, all candidates will take part in a drawing to determine their positions on the online ballot.
 - 1. Names of candidates will appear on the ballot exactly the way they appear on the candidates' petitions.

2. All names of the candidates will be accompanied by their Ticket name, "Independent" (for executive board members not on a Ticket), "Senator", or "Justice".

Section 9: All campaign rules are applicable to petitioners upon receipt of the Candidate Information Packet. Petitioners will also receive the names and office hours of the Election Commission.

Section 10: The Election Commission will publish SGA petition and elections deadlines as follows:

- A. Ads will appear in *The Towerlight* throughout the two weeks prior to the day petitions become available. Petition deadlines will be prominently displayed in these advertisements
- B. The Election Commission may choose to do additional advertising (posters, flyers, etc.) on a majority vote of the whole Election Commission.

Section 11: If necessary, the Election Commission may draft a committee of volunteer students to assist in its administrative duties. These students will be ex-officio non-voting members and will not influence the decisions of the Election Commission.

- A. No candidates may volunteer to assist with administrative duties.
- B. No person volunteering may actively or passively endorse a candidate or Ticket of candidates.
- C. No person on the volunteer committee will be eligible to accept an SGA position, elected or appointed, during the following year.
- D. No current member of the SGA, elected or appointed, may volunteer.

Section 12: Elections are conducted on the Involved@TU system, where students must login to vote and are only eligible to vote once. All Towson University undergraduate, fee-paying students are eligible to vote and voting can take place at their convenience between the hours of 9 a.m. on the first day of the elections to 4 p.m. the following day. Students can access Involved@TU from any computer on campus or off campus by going to www.towson.edu/involvedtu.

Section 13: Election Commission Sponsored Polling Information

- A. The Election Commission may sponsor polls throughout campus to promote voting. Candidates will be notified of the locations before elections.
- B. No candidates may work at the polls.

- C. No person working at the polls may actively or passively endorse a candidate or Ticket of candidates while working the polls.
- D. No person who works at the polls will be eligible to accept an SGA position, elected or appointed, during the following year.
- E. No current member of the SGA, elected or appointed, may work at the polls, with the exception of graduating SGA Seniors.
- F. If there are not enough volunteers to work the polls, the commission reserves the right to pay students to work the polls.
- G. Polls may be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day at various locations to help promote the election.
- H. Tickets and Candidates may not have students voting at their personal computers or electronic devices.

Section 14: To be elected to the offices of President, Vice President, Treasurer, Attorney General and Chief of Staff, a candidate must receive the majority of the votes cast for that office and at least 10% of the votes cast for that office. In the event of a tie, there will be a second vote conducted within one week unless a second election is required to fill vacant spots. In the event that the majority winner does not have at least 10 % of the total number of votes cast for that office then an additional vote will take place between the top 2 or 3 candidates pending a tie between the candidates with the 2nd highest number of votes for any executive board position. The majority vote wins the election. In order for the election to be valid, ticket names must appear beside each candidate's names on the ballot.

Section 15: The 18 Senatorial candidates receiving the highest number of votes will be declared elected. If two or more candidates have received the same number of votes for the final Senatorial position, there will be a second vote conducted within one week unless a second election is required to fill vacant spots.

Section 16: The 3 Justice candidates receiving the highest number of votes will be declared elected. If two or more candidates have received the same number of votes for the final Justice position, there will be a second vote conducted within one week unless a second election is required to fill vacant spots.

Section 17: Should a winning candidate be in the midst of an official University Judicial Process, the candidate's installation to his or her position shall be delayed until the final outcome of the University Judicial Process.

Section 18: There are no provisions for write-in candidates.

Section 19: Students ~~who are studying abroad during the election season or~~ who will not be on the Towson campus for the entire academic year in which they are seeking office are not eligible to run for office.

Section 20: Students who are studying abroad during the election season are eligible to run for either a Senate or Justice position under the following conditions:

- A. The candidate must be able to have someone run on his/her behalf who will fulfill mandatory requirements (ie. attend mandatory meetings, gather petition signatures). The individual running on the behalf of the candidate cannot also be seeking an SGA position.
- B. The student studying abroad must contact the chair of the Election Commission to express their intent to run.
- C. All meeting requirements and deadlines still apply to the candidate.
- D. While studying abroad all Election Policy rules and regulations still apply to the candidate.

Section 21: The results will be announced within 24 hours of the closing of the elections, allowing the Election Commission to review potential violations that could impact the outcome of the election. Within one hour after the announcements, a copy of the breakdown of votes will be available at the SGA office.

Article III *Campaign Regulations*

Section 1: All candidates are responsible for adhering to election policies.

Section 2: Three avenues of campaigning are allowed and defined to be used as mediums to promote candidates and/or Tickets.

- A. Verbal campaigning may begin on the day petitions are distributed. Verbal campaigning is defined as any non-verbal, non-written, spoken word, or dialogue promoting one's candidacy or political position.
- B. Formal campaigning may begin after 4 p.m. on the day petitions are due. Formal campaigning is defined as any written or printed statement supporting or criticizing any candidate or Tickets of candidates including but not limited to emails, flyers and text messages.
- C. Technological campaigning may begin after 4 p.m. on the day petitions are due. Technological campaigning includes but is not limited to the usage of Facebook, AIM, YouTube, Twitter, the development of websites, and e-mail for the purpose of promoting one's candidacy.

Section 3: Any individual, organization, residence hall, or department endorsing a candidate or Ticket will be subject to all applicable SGA Election Policy rules. If an Election Policy rule is violated, then the responsible party(s) may be responsible for appearing before

University Judicial Affairs or the Student Organization Judicial Process. The Election Commission reserves the right to sanction a candidate or Ticket on behalf of the actions on any individual, organization, residence hall, or department.

Section 4: No spoken campaigning is allowed in the library or any classroom (while class is in progress) without prior consent of professor.

Section 5: Campaign materials cannot be placed anywhere prohibited by University policy. A copy of the University Posting Policy and Chalking Policy will be included in the Candidate Information Packet. Posters up to 8 ½" by 11" are allowed on classroom bulletin boards in accordance with the regulations of each academic building.

Section 6: While elections are being held, there will be no campaigning within the marked 50 feet of Election Commission sponsored polling stations.

Section 7: All candidates are responsible for removing their campaign materials within 24 hours after the election has ended. If the Election Commission is made aware that materials remain posted after the 24 hour timeframe, they will notify the candidate(s). Once notified, the candidate(s) have 24 hours to remove postings before the Election Commission determines a fine based on the degree of the infraction.

Section 8: It is the expectation that all candidates will run a positive campaign in which all candidates are treated with respect.

Section 9: No candidate may abuse the powers of his or her position in any organization including but not limited to financial and physical resources to facilitate his or her campaign.

Section 10: No campaigning, active or passive, may take place in the SGA office at any time.

Section 11: Current SGA members shall not be absent from or leave mandatory and constitutionally bound SGA meetings for purposes of campaigning including Directorial Committee meetings.

Section 12: Finances

A. Expenditures for executive Tickets and independent candidates are limited to \$1000 per campaign.

B. Regardless of amount of expenditures, a Financial Report must be submitted by each candidate and Ticket. Tickets should submit one Financial Report for the entire Ticket. Those candidates who do not submit a financial report will be disqualified. A Financial Report must be submitted by 10 a.m. on the school day before the first day of voting. The report must include the retail value of all goods and services used in the campaign, all income sources, expenditure receipts and other pertinent information as determined by the Election Commission and included in the election packet. Submission of an incomplete or late Financial Report will be subject to disqualification.

- C. If there are no campaign expenses then the candidate must submit a form with the numerical number zero to represent such expenses in each box.
- D. Election Commission Funding Bylaws will be included in the Candidate Information Packet.
- E. Once a Financial Report has been turned in, the SGA Administrative Assistant shall sign and date the report and make a copy for the candidate. It is the candidate's responsibility to retain the copy of the Financial Report.

Article IV

Judicial Powers and Processes

Section 1: Candidates are responsible to uphold election policy from the time they receive their petition.

Section 2: The Election Commission may take action against a candidate or Ticket of candidates for violations including, but not limited to:

- A. Inexcusable absence from the mandatory and constitutionally bound SGA meetings. The Election Commission will determine whether or not an absence is excused.
- B. Failure to respond to an Election Commission inquiry within 12 hours.
- C. Failure to adhere to any other rules applicable to candidates under this election policy.
- D. Placement of campaign materials at unauthorized locations.
- E. Campaigning at prohibited times and/or places.

Section 3: The Election Commission will enforce a "three strikes" policy to ensure the integrity of the election. All candidates are expected to adhere to the election policy. After three confirmed violations, candidates and/or Tickets will be disqualified from the election cycle.

Section 4: In the case of violations of this policy by a ticket where individual perpetrators cannot be identified, but the Election Commission can adequately prove a Ticket to be at fault, the executive candidate of that Ticket or the entire Ticket will be held responsible for the violations.

Section 5: If a candidate or Ticket charges another candidate or Ticket or a member of the Election Commission charges a candidate or Ticket with a violation of this policy, the following procedures will be followed:

- A. Immediately upon notification of the alleged violation(s), the Election Commission will notify the individual candidate or Executive candidate of a Ticket of the charge(s) via email.
- B. Upon receipt of notification from the Election Commission, all alleged actions must cease. The candidate or Presidential candidate of a Ticket then has 12 hours to respond to the Election Commission to admit or deny responsibility via email.
- C. Based upon the communication received, the candidate or executive candidate of a Ticket will be notified by the Election Commission of their decision and possible sanction (s) via email.
- D. The Election Commission reserves the right to publicize if a violation has occurred, but will not provide details regarding the violation. It is up to the discretion of the Election Commission to publicize any or all violation(s) and/or sanctions however, they will not do so until all information has been reviewed and a decision has substantiated the violation. Interested students may ask a member of the Election Commission for information regarding violations.

Section 6: The following sanctions may be administered by the Election Commission:

- A. A written warning may be given to the appropriate person(s).
- B. Campaigning privileges may be suspended or revoked as decided by a majority of the Election Commission.
- C. Candidates or Tickets may be disqualified from the election cycle.
- D. Removal of votes to a specific candidate.

Section 7: The following circumstances, while not all-inclusive, will yield harsher sanctions from the Election Commission:

- A. If any candidate and/or Ticket intentionally or knowingly violates the policy.
- B. If an unintentional violation yields a significant advantage over other tickets or candidates.

Section 8: In the event that the Election Commission removes the candidate and/or Tickets from the ballot or removes votes from a specific candidate, the candidates and/or Ticket may appeal the sanctions given by the Election Commission under one of the following circumstances:

- A. If the candidate believes the Election Commission has sanctioned the candidate too harshly.

- B. If there is any new evidence that suggests the candidate was wrongly punished.
- C. If there is any new evidence that suggests the candidate was wrongly punished.
- D. If the candidate is able to prove they did not violate the policy.

Section 9: Candidates and/or Tickets may formally appeal the sanctions given by the Election Commission to the Committee of Appeals through a typed letter within 48 hours of receiving the sanction. The letter must clearly outline the circumstance of appeal and must be delivered to the Chair of the Election Commission. Appeals can only be granted to a candidate if they meet one of the above criteria.

- A. The committee will consist of the Associate Vice President of Campus Life, the Director of Student Activities, and the Chair of the Election Commission.
- B. In the event that that one of the listed committee members is unavailable, then someone of similar qualification will be chosen to replace him/her.
- C. The Committee of Appeals reserves the right to decide whether or not to hold a hearing regarding the appeal.
- D. The Committee of Appeals will make a decision regarding the appeal based upon majority vote within 48 hours of receiving the appeal.

Section 10: If a candidate violates the Election Policy, the Election Commission is not obligated to grant any exceptions even if the candidate feels he/she is justified.

- A. If no exception is granted by the Election Commission, the decision is final and the candidate cannot choose to appeal it.
- B. In the event of an extenuating circumstance (ie. hospitalization), the Election Commission may ask to be provided with proper documentation.

Article V

Second Elections (if applicable)

Section 1: No more than 2 elections will be conducted in an election cycle. If positions remain unfilled they will be filled by SGA appointment.

Section 2: The same Election Commission will facilitate the second election.

Section 3: If a “run off” is needed it will be included in the second election if a second election is required.

Section 4: Petitioners who are running in the Second Election must fill out a new petition and Candidate Information Form and submit it by the determined due date.

Section 5: Candidates who have either tied or are on the ballot due to a run-off must submit Candidate Information Form and submit it by the determined due date.

Section 6: If the passing of a new SGA constitution in the first election calls for additional positions in the executive board, all candidates are considered "Independent" on the ballot.

Section 7: Candidates will be held to the same financial standards as stated in Article 3 section 11. If candidates are running a second time, their first election amounts are not counted towards their total for the second election.

Section 8: An abbreviated timeline can be used for second elections based upon the academic calendar.

Section 9: The results will be announced within 24 hours of the closing of the elections, allowing the Election Commission to review potential violations that could impact the outcome of the election. Within one hour after the announcements, a copy of the breakdown of votes will be available at the SGA office.

Article VI

Student Government Association, Powers, Duties, and Responsibilities

Section 1: Though the Election Commission is charged with running the election and enforcing election policy the SGA Elections, the Student Government Association is key to the process. Duties of the Student Government Association include:

- A. Promote the Student Government Association, encouraging students to run for positions as well as vote.
- B. Help promote Election Commission Positions.
- C. Review Election Policy.
- D. Fund the Election Cycle.
- E. Be knowledgeable about the Election Policy and uphold the Rules and Regulations of the policy, SGA Code of Ethics, and University Policies.
- F. Remain focused on their elected/appointed duties throughout and after the Election season, remaining dedicated to the student body representing them in a professional manner.

- G. Provide and maintain a neutral SGA Suite. SGA meetings will be free from active campaigning including but not limited to campaign signs, t-shirts, or other paraphernalia endorsing candidates.

Section2: The current SGA President will review the election schedule and provides input.

Section 3: 2 non returning SGA officers will sit on Election Commission interviews.

Article VII
Amendment Policy

Section 1: This election policy shall be approved by the Student Senate with a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote. Once approved this election policy shall remain in effect and unchanged for two (2) election cycles, unless an amendment is proposed to the Student Senate by the Chair of the Election Commission on behalf of the Election Commission. Amendments must also be approved by the Student Senate with a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote.

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