

2019 Election Code

Student Government Association of Virginia Tech

Section I. General Guidelines

- A. This Election Code is created, maintained, and enforced by the Judicial Branch as described in the Constitution of the Student Government Association (SGA) and the Bylaws of the Student Government Association.
- B. Documented affiliates are also bound by these rules. Therefore, the candidate or ticket will be held accountable for the actions of those individuals working for the campaign.
 - 1. A documented affiliate is defined as an individual working with the consent of the candidate or ticket and who is listed by the candidate or ticket when he or she submits the Candidate Packet.
- C. The Chief Justice holds the sole authority to make emergency written decisions regarding the rules if he or she determines that such action is necessary.
- D. A student will be considered a candidate from attendance at a Candidate Information Session through inauguration.
- E. The candidate must physically remain as a currently enrolled student on-campus in Blacksburg in both the fall and spring semesters.
- F. If a candidate is found to be in violation of the rules in the SGA Constitution; SGA Bylaws; SGA Election Code; Principles of Community; university policy; local; state; or federal laws; the Judicial Branch reserves the right to issue election violations, disqualify him or her from the race, and refer him or her for judicial action to the university Office of Student Conduct.
- G. In the temporary absence of the Chief Justice, the Head Associate Justice will take his or her place.
 - 1. In the event a vote is required, a unanimous vote of the justices is required. If there is not a unanimous vote, the decision shall be postponed until the Chief Justice returns or the vacancy is deemed permanent and the office is filled by the Head Associate Justice as described in the Constitution.
- H. Any information released to the public regarding Elections must be approved by the Chief Justice.

Section II. Eligibility

- A. To be eligible to run for SGA President and Vice President, the candidates must have the following requirements:
 - 1. The candidate must be a currently enrolled undergraduate student, with a minimum GPA of 2.5/4.0.
 - 2. The candidate must have at least one full (1) semester of experience holding an office in the Executive, Legislative, or Judicial Branch of SGA.
 - 3. The candidate must have a petition signed by two hundred (200) currently enrolled undergraduate students of any college, totaling four hundred (400) students per ticket.
 - 4. The candidate must physically remain as a student in Blacksburg in both the fall and spring semesters.
 - 5. The candidate must have completed at least three (3) full semesters at Virginia Tech. The candidate must be in good academic, honor, and judicial, standing with the throughout the term in office.
 - 6. All candidates running as a ticket must be eligible. If any individual candidate is no longer eligible, the entire ticket will be removed from the election process.

7. Executive candidates must attend the mandatory information meeting, in addition to the individual meeting specified by the General Election Timeline.
 - a. An exception to this rule will be given if there is a conflict previously expressed to and approved by the Chief Justice. In the event of a conflict, the candidate(s) will need to meet with the Chief Justice.
- B. To be placed on the ballot for SGA Representative, the candidate must have the following requirements:
 1. The candidate must be a currently enrolled undergraduate student, in good academic, honor, and judicial standing, with a minimum 2.0/4.0 GPA, throughout the term of office.
 2. The candidate must have a petition signed by fifty (50) currently enrolled undergraduate students.
 - a. Candidates running for a College representative position, must obtain signatures from constituents majoring in the representing College.
- C. Prospective candidates may appeal the aforementioned requirements for each position.
 1. All appeals must be submitted in writing to the Clerk(s) of Court of the Judicial Branch.
 2. A hearing will be scheduled with the Elections Committee Panel. A two thirds (2/3) vote is required to make an exception for the requirements.

Section III. Candidate Information Packets

- A. Executive and Legislative candidates will be issued a Candidate Information Packet by the Judicial Branch Each executive ticket will complete one combined information packet. Executive candidate petitions will be due to the Chief Justice two (2) weeks after the candidate meeting as specified by the General Election Timeline. Representative candidate petitions will be due to the Chief Justice two (2) weeks from the official candidate meeting as specified by the General Election Timeline.
- B. The Candidate Information Packet will include:
 1. A petition requesting signatures from the undergraduate student body
 - a. The Executive Officer Petitions will ask those signing to provide their name, VT PID, and signature. Each candidate for an Executive Office must each collect two hundred (200) signatures from currently enrolled undergraduates, totaling four hundred (400) signatures per ticket.
 - b. The Representative Petition will ask those signing to provide their name, VT PID, College, and signature; each candidate for Representative must collect fifty (50) signatures from currently enrolled undergraduate students.
 - i. Candidates running for a College Representative position, must obtain signatures from constituents majoring in the representing College.
 2. Candidate Contract.
 3. Candidate Information Sheet.
 4. General Election Timeline.
 5. Election Code.
 6. SGA Student Information Sheet for permission to verify academic, honor, and judicial standing in order to determine eligibility to hold a position within SGA.
 - a. This sheet is to be signed and turned in at the candidate information meeting.
 7. A template to list all persons affiliated with the campaign.
 8. A template to obtain consent for campaigning from appropriate authorities.
 9. Campaign Plan Requirements.
 10. Any other documents as deemed necessary by the Judicial Branch.

- C. Candidates must turn in the petition with the required signatures and the candidate contract to be placed on the ballot. Answers to the Candidate Information Sheet will be displayed on the SGA website for students to access and gain more information about the candidates.
- D. Candidates will be notified when respective Candidate Information Packets are approved or denied.

Section IV. Pre-campaigning Guidelines

- A. The Pre-campaigning Period begins when a candidate or ticket receives a petition and ends on the date specified by the General Election Timeline for the start of campaigning.
- B. Each candidate or ticket for Executive office must schedule a meeting with the Chief Justice and the SGA Advisor prior to turning in the campaign plan.
- C. Each candidate must attest by signature that he or she has read, understands, and agrees to abide by the SGA Constitution, SGA Bylaws, Election Code, and Principles of Community.
- D. No discussion of candidate platform is allowed during the pre-campaigning period.
 - 1. Only qualification for position and reason for running may be explained if asked by students signing petition.

Section V. Campaigning

- A. Campaign Plan
 - 1. All executive tickets and legislative candidates must submit a comprehensive campaign plan to the Judicial Branch before campaigning begins as specified in the General Election Timeline. The Judicial Branch will review each plan and provide written approval, if granted, at least forty-eight (48) hours before the beginning of campaigning, as specified in the General Election Timeline.
 - 2. The Campaign Plan will include:
 - a. List of contacts (name, email address, and phone number), for each sponsor or organization you will be speaking to, including copies of correspondence between yourself and the sponsor/organization
 - b. Documented permission from each organization, class, business or third party previously mentioned giving authorization to campaign
 - c. Copies and samples of all marketing materials, including but not limited to:
 - a. Flyers
 - b. Table cards
 - c. Buttons/apparel designs
 - d. Pictures used (Facebook, posters, website, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)
 - e. Screenshot of website, including URL
 - f. Banner designs
 - g. Links to any social media pages/groups
 - h. Sample Collegiate Times Ad (if applicable)
 - i. Logo
 - j. List of persons affiliated with campaign, including email and phone number
 - d. A written summary of your platform
 - e. A budget containing all planned expenses
 - 3. A written summary explaining all aspects of the plan must also be submitted.
 - 4. Any changes or additions to campaign plans must be submitted for additional written approval to the Judicial Branch.

5. Any materials used during campaigning that are not included in the campaigning plan will be subject to violations.
- B. Residence Hall Campaigning
1. Any campaigning in residence halls must abide by all university policies regarding residence hall procedures.
 2. Before candidates or tickets display any information regarding their campaign, they must receive approval from the Residential Learning Coordinator of the particular building they wish to campaign in. A copy of the written approval must be provided with the campaign plan with subsequent confirmation by the Judicial Branch before campaign material may be displayed or will be subject to violations.
 3. Candidates may enter a residence hall with an escort, who is a resident of the particular building and agrees to accompany the candidate at all times, and the candidate or escort may only approach a student if their door is open or they are in a public space.
 4. Candidates may hand out approved campaign material, in accordance with the above policies, in residence halls, but may not request that it be displayed by residents.
 5. All candidates and tickets will be held responsible for breaking university policy by the Chief Justice and the university Office of Student Conduct.
- C. General Campaigning
1. Defacing university property in any medium is prohibited.
 2. Campaigning in private places (i.e. local businesses), using trademarked logos or symbols, and individual or organizational endorsement is prohibited unless permission is granted by submitting a consent form signed by a person authorized to give such consent (i.e. owner of the business, trademark office official, or president of an organization).
 - a. Written consent by the business or organization is due with the campaign plan.
 3. No trademarked logo or symbol of Virginia Tech may be used during campaigning or on campaign materials.
 4. Any use of smear tactics by the candidate, ticket, or affiliated persons will be subject to violations.
 - a. A smear tactic is defined as a deliberate attempt to injure another individual or group's reputation.
 5. No more than two (2) banners and/or two (2) a-frames may be displayed by any individual candidate or ticket at one time.
 6. No candidate or ticket for an SGA election may place a flyer or banner over that of another candidate or ticket. No candidate may remove or tamper with a flyer or banner of another candidate or ticket.
 7. Materials that may be used requiring the approval of the Judicial Branch include but are not limited to: banners, table cards, a-frames, apparel and campus mailers. Any and all potential materials should be submitted in the candidate's campaign plan.
 8. The Student Government Association of Virginia Tech's website; listserv; logos; office space; the 1st floor of Squires Student Center; Student Government Association sponsored events and meetings; and all other materials are to remain non-partisan.
 9. All banner space, A-frame space, display cases, table cards, and public space requests must go through the Judicial Branch for approval before campaign material may be used in those locations.
 - a. Candidates may not create a new student organization or use an existing one to reserve additional space.
 - b. The Judicial Branch will distribute space in an unbiased manner to each candidate.
 10. The Collegiate Times may be used for campaigning if, and only if, ad space is purchased.
 - a. This must be specified in the campaign plan prior to the beginning of the campaign.

- b. Absolutely no ad space will be approved after the start of campaigning as specified by the General Election Timeline.
 11. All campaign material must be taken down by 5 p.m. five (5) business days after the final day of voting as specified by the General Election Timeline with the ONLY exception being candidate websites.
- D. Election Campaigning
1. Email is an acceptable medium of campaigning. However, altering internet browser settings, chain letters, or spam mail on university property is prohibited.
 2. The use of student organizational listservs or private groups on social media are allowed, however, permission must be granted by the administrator of the organization.
 - a. Permission must be documented using the consent form provided in the Candidate Information Packet.
 - b. All listservs or private groups on social media that candidates or tickets use must be specified in the campaign plan and are subject to approval by the Judicial Branch.
 3. Campaigning on social networking sites, including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter is permissible, as long as no violations of the website or its policies occur.
 - a. All websites may not go live until the campaigning begins as specified by the General Election Timeline if they were previously approved by the Judicial Branch.
- E. Finances
1. Each candidate or ticket must submit an itemized budget detailing every resource purchased, used, or donated campaign medium before the start of elections as specified by the General Election Timeline.
 2. Each candidate will be held strictly to a budget of \$200.
 3. Each ticket will be held strictly to a budget of \$350.
 4. SGA will reimburse campaign spending.
 5. Donated campaign material will be charged full market price regardless of situations or discounts and must be factored into the respective budget. Those using donated materials will be responsible for obtaining the market price of the materials they use from a retailer.
 6. All previously owned or used campaign material will be considered at a value of one-third (1/3) of the market price. Those using used materials will be responsible for obtaining the market price from a retailer.
 7. Any contracted labor, whether affiliates of the ticket or not, shall be factored into the budget valued at no less than minimum wage.
 8. Each candidate is responsible for keeping accurate records of expenses, and will turn all receipts to the Judicial Branch 5 p.m. on the final day of official campaigning.

Section VI. Elections Violations

- A. A campaign violation is defined as a candidate or ticket breaking any of the rules in the SGA Constitution, SGA Bylaws, SGA Election Code, and Principles of Community any documented university policies, or local, state, and federal laws.
- B. All claims of campaign violations are to be filed with the Clerk(s) of Court.
- C. Candidates or tickets accused of campaign violations will report to the Judicial Branch for a hearing.
- D. Violation categorization (Class A, Class B, or Class C) will be determined by the Election Commission only after a candidate or ticket is found guilty of a violation.
- E. Violations are categorized as follows:

1. Class A violations include, but are not limited to, violations of the Virginia Tech Student Code of Conduct or acts that go against the Virginia Tech Principles of Community; egregious unethical behavior; violation of local, state, or federal law; election fraud; and purposeful falsification of campaign documents.
 - a. Class A violations will result in immediate disqualification of candidacy.
 2. Class B violations include, but are not limited to, purposeful damage of another candidate's materials, purposeful defamation of another candidate or student, attempting to utilize their future position to assert authority over others, speaking on behalf of the organization, and exceeding campaign spending limits.
 - a. Class B violations will result in campaign suspension at the discretion of the Chief Justice. Campaign suspensions may be appealed to the Legislative Branch.
 3. Class C violations include, but are not limited to, failing to meet required deadlines and failure to follow instructions as indicated at the mandatory candidate information sessions.
 - a. Class C violations will result in a written warning from the Chief Justice. Further Class C violations will result in 24-hour campaign suspensions.
- F. The Chief Justice has authority to increase the violation class sanction when individual or extenuating circumstances exist.
- G. Violations are able to be assessed to candidates or tickets at any time throughout the election process, which shall run from the Candidate Information Sessions to Inauguration.

Section VII. Voting

- A. The winners of the two Executive offices shall be the ticket receiving a plurality of votes.
- B. The winners of the Representative for each College will depend on the number of Representatives that College is allotted. The Representatives who get a plurality of the votes for the allotted spots for their College shall be declared the winners.
- C. All voting will be done as determined in this Election Code.

Section VIII. Ballots

- A. The ballots shall be split up by each Executive ticket of President and Vice President, by the voter's College, and will include a separate ballot for at-large members.
 1. Constitutional amendments will be added as their own ballots.
- B. All executive ticket and Representative ballots must include a "no confidence" vote option.
- C. All executive ticket and Representative ballots must include a "write-in" option.
 1. Write-in votes will only be counted if they are a currently enrolled undergraduate student.
 2. Write-in votes for the Executive ticket, must include both a candidate for President and a candidate for Vice President to be counted.
- D. Ballots will include the candidate name and platform information as indicated in the candidate packet. Information shall be transcribed exactly as it is listed in the packet.

Section IX. Write-In Candidates

- A. In the event that a write-in ticket receives a plurality of the votes needed to attain this office, the candidate must go before the Judicial Branch for the hearing to consider the candidate's compliance with this Election Code.

1. If compliance is met, the qualifications will be waived as described in Article VI, Section II, Paragraph A, Subsection 1-C and Article VI, Section III, Paragraph A, Subsection 2-C of the Bylaws.
 2. If compliance is not met, the Judicial Branch may reject the write in candidate by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the entire branch
 3. The ticket may appeal to the Legislative Branch, where the decision of the Judicial Branch may be overturned by a two-thirds (2/3) vote.
- B. In the event that a write-in candidate for Representative receives a plurality of the vote needed to attain a Representative seat, they shall become a Representative regardless of petition or qualification requirements as described in Article VI, Section 1, Paragraph A, Subsection 1-C of the Bylaws.

Section X. Polling System and Procedures

- A. The Student Government Association will provide a voting system that will incorporate the following requirements:
1. No registered undergraduate student shall be denied the opportunity to vote in the Elections.
 2. Each eligible voter shall have the following areas of voting eligibility: Executive Officers, College Representatives, At-Large Representatives, and Constitutional Amendments.
 3. Polling shall occur on a secure Internet website.
 4. At this website the voter shall be required to enter his or her valid PID and password. If the PID and password does not work, an appeal must be made to the Clerk(s) of Court before the close of Elections.
 5. To better ensure the fairness of the Elections procedure, randomizing computer technology will be used to list the candidates in an unbiased manner in order to maximize the effectiveness of the electronic balloting system.
 6. Upon logging into the polling website, voters will be presented with a customized ballot displaying only those candidates they are eligible to vote for.
 7. If a voter should stop voting for any reason during their voting session, they shall be allowed to return at a later time and vote.
 8. Voters will be warned before the timeout period has been reached.
 9. A verification of final submission will be given to the voter upon completion.
- B. The Student Government Association will provide a voting system that will incorporate the following procedures:
1. Voters shall be verified as current undergraduate students upon logging into the polling website.
 2. By logging in, voters are stating that:
 - a. They are an eligible undergraduate student voter.
 - b. They have not yet voted in the Elections.
 - c. They have used their personal PID and password.
 - d. They realize under University Policy, knowingly providing false information to a student organization is a violation of Section 17 of the Student Code of Conduct in the Hokie Handbook.
- C. Should a student discover an error in the custom ballot presented to them, he or she shall have the option to cast a challenged ballot.
1. After a student submits a challenged ballot they have the right to appear before the Elections Committee Panel, make a written statement, and/or submit evidence supporting their qualifications to vote for the constituencies in which they voted.

2. The student shall be presented with a form in which they can provide additional information to assist the Panel.
3. If a student chooses to file a written statement and/or present evidence, it shall be given to the Clerks of Court, or delivered to the SGA office, within 24 hours of the close of Elections.
4. All challenged ballots shall be individually reviewed by the Judicial Branch in accordance with the standing Election Code.

Section XI. Apportionment

- A. There shall be one College Representative for at least every one thousand (1,000) currently enrolled undergraduate students per College, with the total never falling below twenty-five (25) College Representatives.
- B. Each College will receive a number of Representatives equal to its percentage of the currently enrolled undergraduate student population, with each College never receiving less than two (2) Representatives.
- C. The University Studies Program shall be treated as an Academic College for the purposes of representing students in the program.
- D. There shall be an additional At-Large Representative for every one thousand (1,000) members of the undergraduate student body who are elected at-large and represent the undergraduate student body as a whole.

Section XII. Debate

- A. There will be one debate held before the Elections as specified on the General Election Timeline.
- B. The debate is open to Executive tickets and any other candidate as desired by the Judicial Branch.
- C. The debate will be moderated by the Chief Justice.

Section XIII. Election Results

- A. Election results will be released to the General Student Body as soon as the results can be verified, subject to change in the event a claim is filed with the Clerk(s) of Court.
- B. Candidates must accept their position within forty-eight (48) hours of written notification.
 1. If the winning candidate does not accept their position in writing within this timeframe, the candidate with the subsequent plurality will be given the position.
- C. The SGA Inauguration will be held in a timely manner in relation to Elections as specified by the General Election Timeline, pending extenuating circumstances.

Section XIV. Special Elections

- A. Special Elections shall occur to fill the office of Vice President if there is a permanent vacancy in the position any time prior to fifty (50) days before the Spring Graduation, at the discretion of the Judicial Branch.
 1. If the vacancy occurs during the fifty (50) days prior to the Spring Graduation the position will be left vacant.
- B. Special Elections shall be held in a manner similar to other Virginia Tech Student Government Association elections with a condensed timeline, with key exceptions being:
 1. In place of Candidate Information Sessions interested candidates must meet with the Chief Justice to discuss the election process and role.

2. Candidates shall present their platforms and take questions during a General Assembly meeting in lieu of a debate.