

December 05, 2011

## Direct elections policies manual

Student Government Association, Northeastern University

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## X. Direct Elections

APPROVAL AUTHORITY: Elections Committee

REQUIRED VOTE: Simple Majority

SECONDARY APPROVAL AUTHORITY: Senate

REQUIRED VOTE: Simple Majority

CHANGES TAKE EFFECT: January 1<sup>st</sup> of the following year

The purpose of the Direct Elections Manual (herein the "Manual"), is to enumerate the processes, rules, and procedures for directly electing officers of the Student Government Association of Northeastern University (herein the "Association"). Every candidate for direct election, as prescribed in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Association, must adhere to this manual. This Manual shall be available to the University community.

A direct election is the process in which all full-time undergraduate students, herein "the student body" elect their SGA leadership. This serves to reinforce the mission of the Association, which is to be the general advocate on behalf of the student body and serve as the liaison between the student body and University Faculty, Staff, Administration, and the general public.

The Elections Committee (herein the "Committee") is a standing Association committee, and is responsible for overseeing, regulating, and conducting the Association's elections.

The Senate may override rules prescribed in this manual by a two-thirds vote.

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### 1. Nominations

1. Intent to Run Forms shall be made available three full academic weeks prior to the Full Body Senate at which candidates are nominated.
  1. Intent to Run forms shall require signatures of two percent of the undergraduate student body at the time that the forms are released.
  2. Each candidate for office must submit his or her own Intent to Run form to be qualified for nomination.
2. At the time of a Full Body Senate called by the Executive Cabinet, each candidate will be nominated independently. The Elections Committee must be notified within 24 hours if a Presidential candidate and EVP candidate want to run on the same slate.
3. Should any candidate be removed or remove his or herself from the campaign during the campaign period, the Committee will vote on whether to accept emergency nominations by simple majority within twenty-four hours. If approved, emergency nominations shall be accepted for a period of twenty-four additional hours. After all nominations have been received, the Senate shall be notified of the nominations.

### 2. Slates

1. A slate consists of up to one presidential candidate and one executive vice president candidate running on the same platform. Each candidate is given the option, but is not required, to share a slate with a candidate for a different office.
2. Voters are given the option to choose one candidate per position, regardless of slate.
3. Each slate must fill out the "Slate Declaration Form" with their slate name to be approved by a simple majority of the Elections Committee. Slate Declaration Forms are due to the Chair prior to the Candidates' Briefing.

### 3. Candidates' Briefing

1. Within seventy-two hours of the close of nominations, but not less than 24 hours after, the Committee must meet with all of the candidates for directly elected offices, and a worker from their respective campaigns, at a single meeting.
2. The purpose of the Briefing is to educate the candidates in election and campaigning policies. Candidates are required to advise all individuals assisting with the campaign to adhere to this manual. The

Candidates' Briefing will act as an informative session for all candidates. During the Briefing, this Manual shall be introduced, and all applicable information pertaining to elections shall be presented.

3. The Committee may excuse a candidate under extenuating circumstances by a simple majority vote.
4. The Chair shall notify all candidates of the place and times of all voting stations and any other regions that are off-limits for campaigning.

#### **4. Election Timetable**

1. The Campaign Period will commence at midnight or four hours following the Candidates' Briefing, whichever occurs first.
  1. This period, including the voting period, shall be no longer than three weeks.
  2. No campaign-related activities are permitted before this date.
    1. Campaign related activities include, but are not limited to any activity directly relating to obtaining votes in the election. Disseminating biographical information, qualifications and goals, upon request, or procurement of campaign-related materials does not constitute a campaign related activity.
    2. No campaign-related materials (including digital media) may be released to the public before the commencement of the campaign period.
2. Online voting will occur during the last seven full days of the campaign period. Online voting will end on the last day of the campaign period.

#### **5. Campaign Finance**

1. The Direct Election Fund will provide each qualified slate with a sum of \$500 for campaign purposes.
2. Slates may spend no more than the amount prescribed by the Elections Committee.
3. All campaign material must identify the slate sponsoring the material. It shall read, "Paid for by the [slate's name]." Candidates running on different slates are not allowed to share campaign-related material.
4. All candidates must disclose all campaign spending and receipts with applicable forms, according to the financial disclosure timeline determined by the Elections Committee. Failure to report spending is considered a violation of the manual.
  1. The cumulative summary report is due at noon on each Monday during the campaign period.
  2. The final report is due at noon the day following the close of the election.
5. The Committee shall review and approve or disapprove slates' financial disclosure forms within five business days.
6. Viewing of and deliberation on pending reports shall be held in executive session. Financial disclosure forms shall be kept confidential between each slate and the Committee members until the Committee's final report on the election.

#### **6. Campaign Rules**

1. A "Campaign Worker" is defined as a person who performs work, supplies services, or dedicates energy for the goal of electing a particular candidate, at the behest or knowledge of the candidate or their designee. A campaign worker cannot be a voting member of the Elections Committee.
2. Candidates and campaign workers are subject to University policies at all times. Violations of University policy should be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.
3. Candidates shall respect other candidates' right to campaign and advertise.
4. Candidates and campaign workers shall not enter students' rooms or suites for the purpose of campaigning or encouraging students to vote, unless expressly invited by the student.
5. Candidates and campaign workers will not enter classes in session for the purpose of campaigning or encouraging students to vote, unless permitted by the professor or instructor.
6. Candidates and campaign workers are prohibited from intimidating voters or directly facilitating voting.
7. Candidates and campaign workers are prohibited from campaigning in the presence of a student casting a vote.

#### **7. Election Promotion**

1. Any prizes used for voting incentives shall be determined and distributed by the Committee. All prizes shall be awarded after the close of voting on a random basis.

2. Candidates shall submit their personal information to the Committee by noon the day following their nomination for posting on the myNEU portal and the Association's website.
  1. Candidate information may also be distributed in other Association publications at the discretion of the Executive Cabinet.
  2. Information provided for voters will include each slate's name, nominees' names, graduation years, major(s), minor(s), and descriptions of their Association experience (including committee membership, positions held, awards received, how long they have been involved in the Association, and a platform/personal statement no longer than 500 words).
  3. Candidates may submit a headshot of themselves for the ballot and various elections promotion.
  4. The Committee shall be responsible for reviewing the submitted information and editing said information if deemed necessary.
3. Candidates are allowed and encouraged to participate in public debates during the campaign period.
  1. The Committee shall be responsible for coordinating Association-sanctioned public debate(s) and/or town hall meeting(s) with Northeastern student media, student organizations, and students at-large to be held following nominations and before the first day of voting.
  2. Student groups may invite candidates to public debates anytime during the campaign period.
    1. Public debates must consist of all presidential candidates, all EVP candidates, or all candidates for both positions.
    2. Public debates must be scheduled on the Student Life calendar via OrgSync no less than one week prior to the event.
4. The committee may set up voting stations to encourage students to vote.
  1. The committee must administer the voting station and cannot give any assistance as to what candidate to vote for, nor can they show bias in any way.
  2. Computer screens in voting stations must be concealed.
  3. The Committee will provide candidate information at the election booth. No candidate shall be given preferential treatment.
  4. Candidates and campaign workers may not campaign in the vicinity of the voting station, as determined by the Committee.

## 8. Voting Procedure

1. Each full-time undergraduate student enrolled at the beginning of the campaign period has one vote.
2. Each eligible student may cast his or her vote for all directly elected positions via the myNEU portal.
3. All votes cast are final.
4. Instant Runoff Voting (IRV), a derivative of preferential voting, will be used. The association utilizes a variation of IRV in which the "No Confidence" option is ranked.
5. The Committee, at a time up to 12 hours before the end of the scheduled voting period, may extend the voting period by not more than five days, with a maximum of one possible extension, by a simple majority vote.
6. A minimum of twenty percent of the student body must cast ballots in order to validate the results of the election. If this threshold is not met, the Full Body Senate determines the results of the election by a simple majority vote.
7. If there is a tie, the Full Body Senate determines the results of the election by a simple majority vote.

## 9. Election Results

1. Election results shall be confidential to a designee within the Information Services Department, with the exception of a total number of votes cast released publicly on the Association's website.
2. At the close of the voting period, a meeting shall take place for the purpose of verifying the results of the election. At this meeting all records shall be turned over to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee. In attendance shall also be a Senior Leadership Team Member, or designee, and the University Vice President for Information Services, or designee.
3. The Chair of the Committee will work with the Executive Cabinet to coordinate the announcement of the results of the election, upon verification of the candidates' campaign financial disclosure materials and verification of the election results.
4. All vote count information shall be made public upon announcement of the elections results.

## **10. Grievances**

1. A grievance is an allegation a slate or his or her campaign workers have violated the manual.
2. A grievance may be filed by any student and shall be submitted to the Committee via a grievance form (available on the Association's website or in the SGA office) within four days of the alleged violation, and not after the certification of election results. This limitation may be overturned by a two-thirds vote of the Committee.
3. If a grievance is filed, the Chair of the Committee shall inform the slate in question of the grievance within twenty-four hours with at least one additional voting member of the committee as a witness.
4. Provided the Chair of the Committee finds the grievance complete and with merit, the Committee will convene a hearing within no less than 24 hours, and no more than 72 hours of notification, at a date, time, and place and with an agenda specified by the Chair.
5. The Committee shall not certify any election if a meritorious grievance is pending against any slate.
6. The hearing will be held in accordance to the Grievance Hearing Script outlined in Appendix A of this Manual.
7. Should candidates fail to adhere to the Manual, the candidates will be subject to sanctions. The Committee will have the following sanctions at its disposal during the election period:
  1. Assignment of demerit points to one or more candidates. Demerit points are only assigned on a per-candidate basis.
    1. Each candidate is limited to three demerit points. Any subsequent demerit points will result in disqualification of the candidate.
    2. Whole demerit points will be awarded based on the Committee's interpretation of the infraction's severity.
  2. Placing holds on reimbursements to the slate from the Election Fund.
  3. Mandating the removal or alteration of slate's campaign material in any medium.
  4. Adjusting of applicable tainted votes for each candidate.
  5. Disqualifying one or more candidates.
8. The Committee will address each violation independently of all other violations.
9. The Committee will immediately announce a decision, with sanctions if applicable, at the conclusion of the deliberation.
10. All sanctions will immediately be made public.

## **11. Appeals**

1. The Operational Appeals Board shall have jurisdiction over the appeals process of Direct Elections, according to the Operational Appeals Policies Manual.
2. The Operational Appeals Board will notify the candidate and the Elections Committee of their decision within one day following the close of the appeals process.

## **12. Post-Election Report**

1. The Committee shall prepare a report evaluating elections performance, and policies within this Manual, following each Direct Election. The report may also include any recommendations for amendments to this Manual. The initial report shall be submitted to the Senate no later than June 30th. Any addenda to the report shall be submitted no later than August 15th.

## **Appendix A: Grievance Hearing Procedure**

### **1. Definitions**

1. The Complainant is the party filing grievance charges against a campaign, limited to two representatives, one of which shall be delegated as speaker.
2. The Campaign is the campaign accused of violating the Manual, limited to two representatives, one of which shall be delegated as speaker.
3. Witnesses are individuals who are not members of the Complainant or the Campaign.

### **2. Inherent Rights**

- A.2.1 The Committee reserves the right to require a party to restate, change, or terminate a given question if it is deemed irrelevant, argumentative, or otherwise inappropriate.
- A.2.2 The Committee shall reserve the right to declare a party in contempt should an action warrant such reprimand. If so, a party may be subject to a loss of right to participate in the hearing process.
- A.2.3 Parties shall have only the right to call points of inquiry (i.e. to ask the Chair a question regarding the parliamentary rules governing the hearing), and points of personal privilege (i.e. a request related to personal comfort or safety).

### **3. Procedure**

- A.3.1 The Chair shall state the charges brought against the Campaign.
- A.3.2 The Complainant, then Campaign, shall present opening statements, and declare all witnesses.
  - A.3.2.1 The statements shall be considered testimony and their respective sides of the story.
  - A.3.2.2 Any evidentiary materials must be disclosed during testimony of parties.
  - A.3.2.3 No new evidence shall be allowed after this point unless at the request or permission of the Committee.
- A.3.3 Each witness shall give testimony and be examined exclusive of all other witnesses.
  - A.3.3.1 Witnesses may only address evidentiary materials that were disclosed in opening testimony.
  - A.3.3.2 A witness is excused from the hearing after the conclusion of his examination. Should a witness wish to be present, he may not in any capacity interact with either party.
  - A.3.3.3 The Complainant shall call their witnesses first, followed by the witnesses of the Campaign.
  - A.3.3.4 For each witness, the party calling the witness shall first question their witness.
  - A.3.3.5 The remaining party shall question the witness.
  - A.3.3.6 The Committee shall question the witness.
- A.3.4 Complainant and Campaign Examination
  - A.3.4.1 The Complainant may question the Campaign.
  - A.3.4.2 The Committee may question the Campaign.
  - A.3.4.3 The Campaign may question the Complainant.
  - A.3.4.4 The Committee may question the Complainant.
  - A.3.4.5 The Committee may question both parties.
- A.3.5 The Complainant and Campaign shall each have two minutes for a closing statement.
- A.3.6 The Committee shall deliberate in executive session.

## Appendix B: Glossary

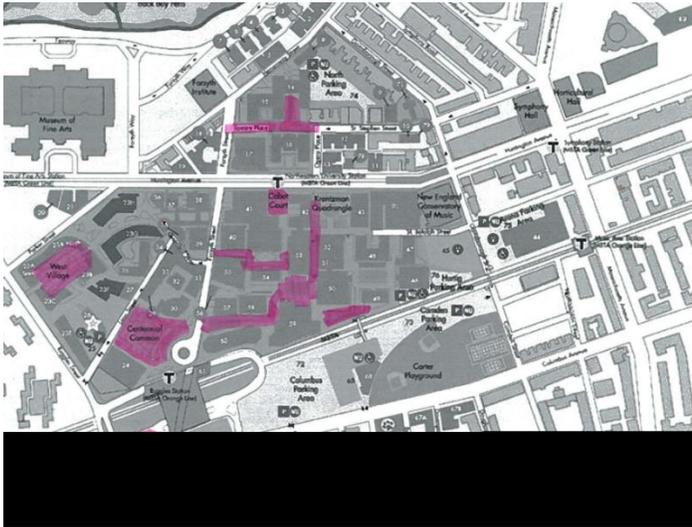
1. **This glossary is a comprehensive set of definitions for terms used in the DEPM and throughout the elections process. The Elections Committee reserves the right to define any term not listed below.**
  1. **Campaign Period:** The time between the Candidates' Briefing and the close of voting.
  2. **Campaign-Related Activities:** Any activity relating to obtaining votes in the election for certain candidates or slates.
  3. **Campaign-Related Material:** Websites, chalking, posters, club cards or anything that promotes one campaign over another, including digital media.
  4. **Campaigning:** Creating or distributing posters and promotional material, speeches, or advocating for any candidates or slates.
  5. **Candidates:** Those running for President and Executive Vice President. They are nominated by Senators and affirmed by two percent of the undergraduate student body.
  6. **Demerit Points:** Sanctions for minor violations of the manual. Each grievance that is sustained will be assessed demerit points that will be added to the total of that candidate. If there are more than three demerit points, a campaign will be disqualified.
  7. **Direct Elections Fund:** The money donated and set aside for the use of candidates on their campaign.
  8. **Directly Facilitating Voting:** Providing the means and opportunity for students to vote.
  9. **Disqualifying a Campaign:** Not allowing a campaign to run due to lack of adherence to the rules.
  10. **Emergency Nominations:** Occur when a presidential or vice presidential candidate is removed or removes themselves from the campaign. Members of the Senate can present emergency nominations within a 24-hour period determined by the committee. The committee will notify the Senate when all emergency nominations are approved.
  11. **Extenuating Circumstances:** Illness, death in the family, serious prior academic engagement; all verified with a note.
  12. **Instant Runoff Voting (IRV):** Voters are told to rank the candidates in order. If the first candidate the voter voted for does not win their vote gets cast for the second candidate, and so on. This is only used when there are more than two candidates.
  13. **Intent to Run Forms:** Forms filled out by each candidate that include the names, NUID numbers, email addresses, and written signatures of two percent of the undergraduate student body.
  14. **Intimidating Voters:** Forcing voters to vote a certain way, or persuading them to vote for a particular candidate at the time the vote is cast.
  15. **No Confidence:** When a voter does not like any of the candidates running, they may select no confidence.
  16. **Public Debate:** Any event in which two or more candidates engage in the process of answering questions, and where the event has been publicized through any form or media or where the audience consists primarily of affiliates of any specific group (for example, student organizations).
  17. **Respect:** Not defacing any of the other campaign's campaign material or producing any negative material about another candidate or slate.
  18. **Sanctions:** Levels of punishment according to the offense committed.
  19. **With Merit:** Grievances that have been filled out completely and present significant evidence that a violation has occurred.
  20. **Worker:** A person is a campaign worker if they perform work, supply services, or dedicate energy for the goal of electing a particular candidate.

## **Appendix C: Campus Activities Office Chalking Policy**

The policy below is the most updated chalking policy approved by the Office of Campus Activities (4/2011). The Office of Campus Activities can update this policy at any time. Candidates are responsible for the most updated version at the time of the campaign. All violations of this policy should not be reported as a grievance, and should be reported to the Office of Campus Activities.

Candidates can purchase sidewalk chalk using money from the elections fund to be approved by the Director of Campus Activities, or a designee. Candidates may not use chalk provided by the Campus Activities Office, purchased with the Student Activity Fee.

1. **Who can chalk**
  1. People or groups sponsored by recognized student organizations and university department
  2. These people or groups must promote and pertain to the general Northeastern community and interest
2. **Content**
  1. 15 words maximum
  2. Name of Event
  3. Place of Event
  4. Date of Event
  5. Time of Event
  6. Sponsor(s) of Event
3. **Where chalking is prohibited**
  1. Any step, stoop or vertical surface
  2. Pillars, risers, windows, steps
4. **Where chalking is allowed**
  1. Snell Library Quad
  2. Snell Engineering walkway, leading toward Forsyth Street
  3. Centennial Common (between Shillman and Ryder Halls, and Forsyth and Leon Streets)
  4. Sculpture Park and Robinson Quad to the Steps of Columbus Garage Bridge
  5. Stetson Quad from Speare Common to Opera Place and Forsyth Street
  6. World Series Way (between Forsyth Street and Hayden Hall)
  7. West Village Quad
  8. Bulfinch Pathway from Krentzman Quad to Snell Library Quad
  9. Walkway's surrounding International Village (not to include Ruggles MBTA station steps and landings)
  10. Cabot Court Quadrangle
  11. Walkway from Hayden Hall to the steps of Snell Library/Snell Engineering
5. **What chalk may be used**
  1. Chalk made available by the Campus Activities Office
  2. Any other chalk or writing done with other chalk will be considered vandalism and is subject to referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. Any cleaning charges as a result of using non-approved chalk will be billed to the student organization and individual.



**Appendix D: Sample Intent to Run Form**

Intent to Run forms will be made available on the Association Website.

Intent to Run Form for Student Body President or Executive Vice President

This nomination form requires:

Signatures from 2% of the undergraduate student body at Northeastern University

A candidate profile to be posted on the myNEU website during the voting period, in accordance with Direct Elections Policies Manual, Section 7.2: include name, graduation year, major(s), minor(s), and a description of your Association experience (including committee membership, positions held, awards received, how long you have been involved in the Association, and a platform/personal statement no longer than 500 words)

This form is due to the Chair of the Elections Committee prior to the Full Body Senate for Nominations.

Candidate Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

NUID #: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below, I attest that I meet the following requirement as prescribed by the Association’s Bylaws:

President: Participating Association membership for 25 weeks (not including intercessions or time spent on the inactive roster)

Executive Vice President: Senatorial membership for 25 weeks (not including intercessions or time spent on the inactive roster)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sample Signature Form:

All signatures support (candidate) for directly elected office. A signature is not a vote.			
Name	E-Mail Address	Signature	Last 4 Digits of NUID#
	@husky.neu.edu		

**Appendix E: Grievance Report Form**

Grievance Report Forms will be available in the Association office and on the Association website.

**GRIEVANCE REPORT FORM**

This form is to be used to file a grievance against a candidate for office based on violation(s) you have personally witnessed during the course of the campaign period. The Direct Elections Policies Manual defines a grievance as an "allegation that a candidate and/or his or her campaign workers have knowingly violated the Association's governing documents (including this manual)."

For any grievance report to be found with merit and/or considered, it must be submitted prior to the certification of election results.

**Submitter's Information**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Email(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to file this grievance anonymously? Circle: Yes or No

Please Note: The Association aims to protect the identity of anyone submitting a grievance for any reason. If in the case that insufficient evidence exists, we may request that you provide any additional evidence, witnesses, or personal testimony, through which your identity may be revealed.

**Violation Information**

Name of Candidate/Slate: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Violation: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Violation: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Violation: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a full description of the violation(s) you witnessed, including any and all relevant evidence. You may attach additional sheets of paper, documents, photographs, etc.

By signing and dating below, I confirm that all information written on this form and/or attached to this form is accurate and truthful.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please return (in a sealed envelope) to the SGA office, addressed:

**GRIEVANCE CLAIM**

**ATTN: Elections Committee, Chair**

--- or ---

Email a scanned copy to the Chair of Elections Committee.

**Appendix F: Slate Declaration Form**

Slate Declaration Forms will be available in the Association office and on the Association website.

**Slate Declaration Form**

This form is to be filled out by each slate, including slates that only have one candidate, and turned in to the Chair of Elections Committee at the time of the Candidates' Briefing.

Name of Slate \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate for President \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate for Executive Vice President \_\_\_\_\_

Signed,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate for President, Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate for Executive Vice President, Date