

**Election Code
of the
Student Government Association**



Definitions

Referendum Parties: Opponents/Proponents for any referenda on the ballot.

Election Board Meetings: Election Board meetings are held between Election Board members and the Election Advisor only, not to be opened to the public.

Election Code Meetings: Election Code meetings are open to candidates who have applied and been approved as eligible to participate in SGA Elections. These meetings will be used to educate candidates on Election Code procedures and regulations.

Election Code Hearings: Election Code hearings are open to the Election Board, the Election Advisor, and any invited parties regarding Election Code violations.

Potential Candidate Informational Meetings: These meetings will be open to and created for the general undergraduate student body in order to increase interest in and knowledge of SGA elections.

Disqualification: Disqualification is the process of a candidate or SGA official no longer being considered eligible for their position as determined by the Election Advisor. The disqualified person in question will be stripped of their title and/or privileges but should not be considered “removed” only “ineligible”.

Removal: Removal is the process of a candidate or SGA official being held accountable for engaging in negligence concerning responsibilities for their role. The person in question will be removed by the SGA President in the event that their duties in their positions are not being fulfilled. This person will be considered “removed” not “ineligible”.

Social Media: any web-based or mobile-based applications that use highly accessible communication techniques for social interaction.

Campaigning: any activity by a candidate or Referendum Party that is intended or likely to affect how a voter casts a ballot. This includes the placement of any signs or the like on display and the solicitation of the vote of any student at the University of North Texas.

ARTICLE I: Purpose and Intent

Section 1. Purpose

- A. This code shall provide for the rules and conduct of all University of North Texas (UNT) Student Government Elections.
- B. This shall apply to all aspects of the electoral process for the Student Government Association (SGA) of The University of North Texas.

Section 2. Equal Protection

- A. This code is intended to ensure that each candidate is afforded an opportunity for election equal to that of any other candidate for such office.
- B. The Election Code is intended to provide for the fairness, equity, and efficiency of all SGA elections with respect to the candidates, Referendum Parties, and voters. In the absence of established guidelines, rulings concerning elections should be made with this principle in mind.
- C. These regulations for Referendum Parties and candidates are subject to interpretation only by the Election Board, interpretation of which is subject to review only by the SGA Supreme Court.
 - a. Any liberties of interpretation given specifically to the Election Commissioner are subject to review by the SGA Supreme Court. No other member of SGA or the Election Board is authorized to provide interpretations of Election Code regulations.
- D. Candidates and Referendum Parties may contact the Election Commissioner for the purpose of consultation pertaining to the election. The Election Commissioner shall be contacted via UNT E-mail, and the Election Commissioner will make reasonable attempts to respond to queries within one (1) business day.

Section 3. Accountability of the Election Code

- A. All interested, potential, and filed-candidates, their affiliated staff, and volunteers shall be held responsible to the contents of this code.
- B. Candidates for any election, Referendum Parties, and members of the Election Board shall be responsible for the regulations provided herein.
 - a. Ignorance of these regulations shall not be an acceptable defense in response to any violation in any election, either by the candidates or Referendum Parties themselves or by individuals campaigning on behalf of a candidate or Referendum Party.

ARTICLE II: The Election Board

Section 1. Governing Body

- A. Student Government Elections shall be governed and facilitated by the Election Board.

Section 2. Appointments to the Election Board

- A. In case of a vacancy in the Election Board, the SGA President must immediately appoint a replacement. This replacement must be present at the next Senate meeting to be confirmed, unless the appointee has class or work during this time, as verified by the Election Advisor.

Section 3. Membership on the Election Board

- A. Election Board members must meet the active member eligibility requirements as stated in article XII of the Student Government Association bylaws. No member of the Election Board shall be an active member of any branch of SGA or the Intern Program, nor an elective candidate, while serving on the Election Board.
- B. Members are expected to attend all Election Board meetings;
 - a. Three (3) unexcused absences from the Election Board meetings shall result in automatic removal from the Election Board.
 - b. Meeting times, dates, and locations will be chosen at the discretion of the Election Board Commissioner and approved by the Election Advisor. The Commissioner will decide how and when to disseminate meeting information, providing Election Board members ample time to schedule accordingly.
 - c. All Election Board meetings will be open only to Election Board members and the Advisor over elections. The Board shall keep written minutes of all meetings including hearings.
- C. Members of the Election Board shall not be involved in any other capacity within Student Government.
 - a. Election Board members wishing to seek another office within Student Government must resign immediately before seeking the new office.

Section 4. Responsibilities of the Election Board

- A. To govern and facilitate all Student Government elections;
 - a. The Election Board shall have the power to rule in matters pertaining to elections including but not limited to, interpretations and violations of the Election Code, questions of candidate eligibility not covered in Article XII of the Student Government Association bylaws, candidate and Referendum Party complaints and concerns, questions of referendum eligibility, filing dates and deadlines, and the certification of any election results.
- B. To remain neutral and unbiased in all elections;
 - a. No member of the Election Board shall help, assist, serve on, endorse, or campaign for any Student Government campaign or candidate.
- C. To be responsible for educating candidates;
 - a. Hosting a minimum of five (5) Election Code meetings to inform all potential candidates of their structure, function, and responsibilities before the first week of the election timeline.
 - b. All candidates that wish to apply or run in SGA Elections are mandated to attend one Election Code meeting.
- D. To disqualify any candidate if they meet any of the criteria for automatic disqualification;
- E. To remain in constant contact with the Election Advisor;
- F. To reach out to students to raise awareness on potential candidacy and elections.

Section 5. Responsibilities of the Election Commissioner

- A. To serve as the chairman of the Election Board, supervise all election personnel, and uphold the Election Code by executing all decisions of the Election Board;
- B. To remain impartial to any candidates or Referendum Parties participating in any election;

- C. To execute the provisions of the Student Government Constitution relative to elections and all provisions of this Election Code;
- D. To be a liaison between the Election Board and other entities on campus, representing the Election Board in any public situation;
- E. To plan Election Board-sponsored events, maintain contact with electoral candidates, and coordinate other duties that may arise, as directed by the SGA President;
 - a. The Election Commissioner has the authority to expend funds appropriated to the Board with their approval by a simple majority vote;
- F. To draft the final election report;
 - a. At the close of polling, the Election Commissioner will create a final election report. The report shall be certified by the signatures of the Election Commissioner, every member of the Election Board present at the election certification meeting, and the SGA Advisor. The final election report shall be considered official 24 hours after being certified. The report shall include:
 - i. The total number of votes cast for each candidate;
 - ii. The total number of consenting and dissenting votes in any referenda and whether they passed or failed;
 - iii. Any written rulings issued by the Election Commissioner;
 - iv. The minutes of any Election Board hearings;
 - v. Information about any election irregularities or problems reported to date; and
 - vi. Any other appropriate information deemed necessary by the Election Commissioner
- G. Unofficial results shall not be released to any party, under any conditions.
- H. In the event that no Presidential/Vice-Presidential candidate team receives a simple majority of votes, or in the event that two or more Senatorial candidates tie for a seat, a run-off election will be held.
- I. Candidates in a run-off election will be given at least 72 hours to campaign.
- J. To ensure that the Board presents a defense if any of their decisions are appealed or if a complaint is filed against the Board.
- K. To oversee Election board Meetings;
- L. The Election Commissioner has the right to solicit the names of all members of a campaign from the affiliated candidate or Referendum Party.

Section 6. Quorum

- A. The Election Board shall not conduct business without the presence of a quorum.
- B. A quorum of all Election Board meetings, including election certification meetings, shall be defined as **three (3)** ~~four (4)~~ Board members plus the Election Commissioner. In the absence of the Election Commissioner, a quorum shall be **four (4)** ~~five (5)~~ members.

ARTICLE III: Election Calendar

Section 1. Order of Events

- A. The Election Board shall be in charge of setting all dates for any election-related events.

- B. The Election Commissioner will hold at least three (3) Potential Candidate Informational Meetings for any and all interested students before the filing period opens. These meetings must be advertised to the Student Body.
 - a. The purpose of these meetings is to give an explanation of Student Government, the responsibilities of each branch, an overview of campaigning practices, and a general election timeline in order to increase interest for positions in Student Government and reach out to more potential candidates.
 - b. These meetings do not substitute for mandatory Election Code meetings.
- C. Other rules pertaining to the Election Calendar can be found in Article V section 3 of the SGA Bylaws.

ARTICLE IV: Qualifying for Candidacy

Section 1. Rules on Candidacy

- A. Individuals must file for candidacy via the designated application. At the close of the application, the Election Commissioner will notify applicants, by email, of their eligibility for candidacy.
 - a. Completing the application will bind candidates to election regulations and subject the candidates to disciplinary actions in accordance with said regulations.
- B. Only in the event that a position is running unopposed should a write-in candidate be allowed.
- C. After the application closes, write-in candidates may file a Voluntary Compliance notice with the Election Board in order to be considered for candidacy.
- D. This notice shall bind write-in candidates to election regulations and subject the candidate to disciplinary actions in accordance with said regulations.
- E. The required content of the notice shall be determined by the Election Commissioner. A write-in candidate shall never be placed on an official ballot by means of this notice.
- F. Once their eligibility is confirmed all candidates shall be able to participate in forums, debates, election guides, or other events and activities deemed appropriate by the Election Commissioner.
- G. Any candidate may withdraw their name from the ballot any time prior to 5:00 p.m. on the business day before the election by submitting written notification to the Election Commissioner. The Election Commissioner shall verify said notification and provide notice to the Election Advisor.

Section 2. Candidate Eligibility

- A. To be eligible for candidacy, an individual must meet the active member eligibility requirements as stated in the SGA Constitution and Article XII of the Student Government Association bylaws. An individual must meet these requirements prior to the beginning of campaigning. These requirements shall only be confirmed by the Election Advisor.
 - a. This rule also applies to individuals running as write-in candidates. Eligibility will be determined after the filing of the Voluntary Compliance notice.
- B. Each candidate is required to meet with the Election Board Commissioner to receive Election Code information. Candidates are required to attend one (1)

Election Code information meeting in order to be considered eligible for participation in any SGA elections.

ARTICLE V: Rules on Campaigns

Section 1. Definition of Campaigning

- A. Campaigning is any activity by a candidate or ticket member that is intended or likely to affect how a voter casts a ballot. This includes the placement of any signs or the like on display and the solicitation of the vote of any UNT student. Campaigning includes but is not limited to:
 - a. Distributing campaign materials (other than private distribution to campaign team members and affiliated staff) to potential voters;
 - b. Seeking endorsement (excluding financial contributions) or voter support for a campaign at an official meeting of a registered student organization;
 - c. Announcing or discussing potential candidacy and/or ticket names in print, broadcast, public forum, or any other media;
 - d. Wearing accessories such as buttons, stickers, and/or similar items explicitly reflecting an affiliation with a candidate or ticket;
 - e. Posting signage;
 - f. Disseminating any campaign material via social media.

Section 2. General Campaigning

- A. Candidates and Referendum Parties shall take reasonable measures to ensure that every individual campaigning on behalf of or volunteering for the candidate/Referendum Party is aware of campaign regulations and guidelines. Candidates/Referendum Parties may be liable for any Election Code infractions made by their campaign team members and volunteers even if the candidates/Referendum Parties themselves did not specifically direct the offending action.
- B. Candidates may only begin publicizing their campaigns after all of the Election Code Meetings scheduled on the Election Calendar have been held. Referendum Parties may only begin publicizing their campaigns on the date set forth by the Election Calendar. If candidates or Referendum Parties are found publicizing their campaigns in any way before the above dates, it is grounds for disqualification.
- C. Candidates and Referendum Parties shall abide by all University policies, which supersede Election Board mandates and Election Code regulations.
- D. Candidates and Referendum Parties shall not damage any University property and shall be responsible for any damage caused by their campaign materials or by members of their campaign team or referendum party.
- E. Candidates and Referendum Parties shall not unduly disrupt the normal activities of the University or interfere with students' education. This includes but is not limited to the posting of campaign signs and/or posters in classrooms, and writing on chalkboards or similar devices.
- F. Candidates and Referendum Parties shall assume responsibility for the accuracy and truthfulness of their statements and campaign materials.
- G. No University, State, or public funds may be used by Candidates. For candidate campaigns, this includes the utilization of employee work time. No candidate may solicit campaign assistance from an employee during the employee's work hours. Referendum Parties shall be limited to spending no more than \$650 in state or student fee funds for campaign purposes.

- H. Candidates and Referendum Parties **must** ~~should~~ prepare the names of members on their campaign teams or Referendum Parties in the event that the Election Commissioner or Election Board requests such information.

Section 3. Restrictions of Campaign Materials

- A. All posters and signs must be placed in accordance with University policy and may not exceed 18x24 inches.
- a. No more than 20 ground signs may be placed on campus, but other promotional items are not limited in quantity.
- B. No candidate or Referendum Party may make, wear, or distribute T-shirts that promote themselves or their campaign.
- C. Each candidate and Referendum Party shall be responsible for the removal of their campaign materials from public areas and buildings by the Monday following the final election report. Failure to remove their materials may result in a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Section 4. Restrictions on Special Buildings and Areas

- A. Candidates and Referendum Parties shall not campaign or display in any manner campaign material within fifty (50) feet of restricted zones. The following areas and buildings are off limits to during campaigning;
- a. The SGA Office--any materials that are campaign related may not be stored or left in the SGA Office.
 - b. Campus Housing--all campaigning or campaign material in or on the property of UNT Housing requires the expressed consent of the Director of UNT Housing & Residence life or designee, and must abide by UNT Housing policies. Door-to-door campaigning shall not be permitted under any circumstances.
 - c. All UNT Libraries
 - d. The 4th floor of the Union
 - e. Any UNT Restroom
 - f. Off Campus Bars
- B. The Election Board reserves the right to add any other restricted zones they see fit during any given election period. Any additional areas must be presented to all Candidates and Referendum Parties along with the aforementioned areas and buildings.

Section 5. Digital Campaigning Regulations

- A. Campaigning does not include reporting by any media outlets of any referendum, petition, recall, or constitutional amendment.
- B. LISTSERVs and E-Mails
- a. Before and during campaigning members of a private campaign LISTSERV run by candidates or campaign staff, including and limited to staff, volunteers, and candidates, are considered willful participants and therefore may receive any email concerning candidacy or other election information.
 - b. During campaigning presidents of any registered student organization, not considered Student Government, may be contacted by any candidate for the sole purpose of requesting to speak at that organization's meeting to seek its endorsement.
- C. No candidate or Referendum Party may send out eagle-mail to any UNT student.

D. Social media may be used by any campaign.

Section 6. Rules on Presidential Campaigns

- A. President/Vice-President, including Presidential write-in, candidate teams may spend up to \$1000 on their campaign.
- B. A type's expense report must be filed with the Election Board at close of polling. These reports must include itemized receipts of all purchases made pertaining to the candidate team's campaign

Section 7. Rules on Senatorial Campaigns

- A. Senatorial, write-in Senatorial, candidates may spend up to \$300 on their campaign.
- B. In the event of a dispute, candidates must be able to provide a typed expense report, to include itemized receipts of all purchases made pertaining to the candidate's campaign.

Section 8. Rules on Election Board-Sponsored Campaigns

- A. In the interest of increasing undergraduate student engagement and voter turnout, the Election Board may produce campaign materials or host campaign events to be promoted via SGA marketing channels.
 - a. Such materials or events shall not endorse any one candidate or item on the ballot, but shall give unbiased information about the election, candidates, and referenda.
 - b. Such events and materials may include, but are not limited to debates, town halls, forums, and election guides.

ARTICLE VI: Rules on Oversight

- A. Any candidate or Referendum Party in an SGA election seeking clarification may request a ruling on any part of the Election Code by submitting a request in writing to the Election Commissioner.
- B. The Election Commissioner shall honor all requests within one (1) business day and post rulings on the SGA web page and distribute them to all candidates by email.
- C. Failure to comply with the regulations of the Election Code may result in punitive action being taken by the Election Board. Any alleged Election Code violation could also be a University policy violation and may result in disciplinary action being taken by the Dean of Students office.
- D. All complaints regarding violations of election regulations shall be submitted in writing to the Election Board within 24 hours of the close of polling. Complaints shall include details of the presumed violation such as date, time, and name(s) of involves individuals. Evidence should be provided when appropriate.
- E. Upon receiving a complaint, the Election Board shall have 72 hours to conduct a hearing. Each involved party will be given a reasonable amount of time to state their case, during this period any Election Board member may ask questions.
 - a. If the complaint is regarding a violation of University policy, the student(s) will be sent to the Dean of Students rather than the Election Board.
- F. After hearing all applicable evidence, the Election Board will deliberate on a ruling of violation. A majority vote of Election Board members present, assuming quorum is met, is required to render any decision. The Election Commissioner may vote only in the event of a tie. Any decision of the Election Board shall be made public immediately.

- G. If a hearing cannot be scheduled before the release of the final election report, the election results affected by the complaint will be withheld until after the Election Board ruling. All other election results shall be published according to the approved Election Calendar.