

THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION ELECTION CODE

ARTICLE I. Candidacy

- I. All candidates must meet the application requirements.
- II. Each candidate must meet the qualifications for the office, position or title that he or she is seeking by the specified candidacy application deadline.
- III. Each candidate for an SGA office, position, or title must be a full-time University of Southern Mississippi student in good academic standing with the university at the time of application.
- IV. Candidates shall be defined as a candidate immediately following the candidacy meeting hosted by the Director of Campus Elections until election results are finalized. Following, candidates will be defined as candidate-elects.
- V. Newly-elected SGA Executive Officers shall serve as officers-elect from the time of election until inauguration so that outgoing officers can inform and train incoming officers of their duties and responsibilities.
- VI. SGA Elected Executive Offices
 - a. The Elected Executive Offices shall consist of the SGA President, SGA Senior Vice President, SGA Vice President of Judicial Affairs, SGA Vice President of Finance and Administration, and SGA Vice President of Communications.
 - b. All candidates for the offices of SGA President, SGA Senior Vice President, and SGA Vice President of Judicial Affairs, SGA Vice President of Finance and Administration, and SGA Vice President of Communications must have at least one (1) semester of experience in a branch of the SGA prior to application for candidacy. This does not include SGA Varsity.
 - c. Candidates for these offices must have completed at least (1) semester at The University of Southern Mississippi prior to taking office.
 - d. Candidates for SGA Vice President of Finance and Administration must have completed at least three (3) semester hours of finance or accounting in which a cumulative "B" average or higher was acquired.
 - i. Applicable courses include but are not limited to ACC 200 and ACC 220.
 - ii. An excel certification is in addition required for this position. This certification should preferably come from the University of Southern Mississippi, but a subsequent outside certification may suffice.
 - e. All candidates for Executive Office positions must have a cumulative GPA, which includes all USM and transfer credits, of 3.0 or higher at the time of application
- VII. SGA Senate Positions
 - a. Undergraduate student candidates for SGA Senate must run for seats in the academic college of his or her primary major or for the campus at large. Graduate student candidates must run for seats in the graduate school or for the campus at large.
 - b. Senators must be re-elected each term year; positions do not roll over.
 - c. All candidates for Senate positions must be a full time student and have a cumulative GPA, which includes all University of Southern Mississippi and transfer credits, of 2.5 or higher ~~prior to application~~ at the time of application.

VIII. SGA Titles

- a. Homecoming Court
 - i. The Queen, King, Student Body Maid, and Student Body Beau must be seniors as determined by hours completed.
 - ii. The Student Body Maid shall be the runner-up in the Queen election, and the Student Body Beau shall be the runner-up in the King election.
 - iii. There shall be one maid and one beau for each undergraduate class and one graduate maid and one graduate beau.
 - iv. Each maid and each beau must be a member of the class that he/she seeks to represent as determined by the number of hours completed.
 - vi. All candidates for Homecoming Queen and King must be a full time student with a cumulative GPA, which includes all University of Southern Mississippi and transfer credits, of 3.0 or higher prior to application.
 - vii. All candidates for Homecoming Court, with the exception of Homecoming Queen and King, must be a full time student have a cumulative GPA, which includes all University of Southern Mississippi and transfer credits, of 2.5 or higher prior to application.
- b. Mr. and Miss Southern Miss
 - i. All candidates for Mr. and Miss Southern Miss must be a Senior full time student and have a cumulative GPA, which includes all University of Southern Mississippi and transfer credits, of 3.0 or higher at the time of application

ARTICLE II. Election Dates and Notices

I. Election Notices

- a. An election shall be announced via social media 21 days prior to the election date.
- b. The announcement shall include offices, titles and positions open; location of applications; and application deadlines.
- c. A notice of the runoff dates shall be posted online ~~at each polling place~~ on the day of elections.
- d. There shall be at least 48 hours between the start of primary election and the start of a runoff election.
- e. In order to prevent conflicts of interest, the Director of Campus Elections may not participate as a candidate or endorse any candidate in any election that he or she is in charge of.
- f. In order to prevent conflicts of interest, Executive Officers are not allowed to participate as a candidate or endorse any candidate in the Homecoming Elections.

II. Election Dates

- a. The Homecoming Court shall be elected a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to Homecoming Week.
- b. Mr. and Miss Southern Miss shall be elected a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to the Homecoming Week.
- c. SGA Executive Officers shall be elected in the spring semester no later than two weeks prior to the set inauguration date.

ARTICLE III. Candidacy Application Requirements

I. Applications

- a. Applications for SGA Executive Officers and SGA Senate positions shall be made available the first day of the first full week of the spring semester.
- b. Applications for Homecoming Court and Mr. and Miss Southern Miss shall be made available at least two (2) weeks prior to elections.
- c. Applications shall be made available on the SGA website.
- d. The application deadline shall be 4 PM on the deadline day as decided by the SGA Director of Campus Elections. No applications shall be accepted after the deadline.
- e. All online applications shall be printed and placed in a secure file by the SGA Director of Campus Elections. If no candidacy application is received for a specific SGA office, position or title, the application deadline shall be extended for a period of five (5) days under the same guidelines set forth in this Election Code.
- f. If no applications are submitted after the five (5) day extension, the President-elect shall appoint the position before the set inauguration date with two-thirds approval of the Senate.
- g. All candidacy application forms for SGA offices, positions and titles require at least the applicant's name, preferred name, position desired, the candidate's university email address, permanent address, grade point average, and university identification number.
- h. All information on the application must be completed by the candidate.
- i. No person shall simultaneously seek two SGA offices, positions, or titles. If a candidate wishes to seek an office, title, or position other than the one originally applied for, the person must withdraw the first application and then file a new application for the different office sought; the second application must also meet the original deadline date.

II. Interviews

- a. After applications for homecoming court have been submitted, following all guidelines listed in Section I, Article III, applicants will be going through an interview process conducted by a selection committee.
- b. This committee will be comprised of 6 representatives for (2) faculty, (2) staff, and (2) students. They will be chosen under the discretion of the SGA Executive Board, Director of Campus Elections, and the SGA Advisor. These representatives will also undergo Anti-Bias training administered by The Office of Inclusion and Multicultural Engagement. They will also be given a comprehensive rubric to judge applicants by.
- c. This rubric will be broken down and scored into 4 categories. These categories will be Appearance and Interview Etiquette, Leadership and Community Involvement, Goals and Accomplishments, Response to Questions. The scoring will be grouped by Exceeds Standards (4-5 points), Meets Standards (2-3 points), and Does Not Meet Standards (0-1 points).
- d. The interview questions will be created under the discretion of the Interview Committee, and then be approved by the Director of Campus Elections and the SGA Advisor.

- e. The committee will average the totals number of points based on the rubric, the total number of points a candidate can receive to 20. The final score for the candidate is an average of each score given by the 6 representatives; averages will be rounded up to the nearest whole number in case of a decimal. Should a minimum final score of 12 not be met, the candidate will be dismissed.
- f. In the event of the only applicant for a position not meeting the minimum scoring requirement, applications will be extended until a suitable applicant is found.

II. Required Materials for Candidates

- a. Candidates for the Homecoming Court and Mr. and Miss Southern Miss shall be required to submit a position paper.
 - i. Position papers may include, but are not limited to, qualifications, platforms, graphics, photos, or similar material.
 - ii. All position papers must be 8 x 10 inches and shall be in landscape orientation for any SGA-administered elections.
- b. Candidates for SGA Executive Officer positions and Senate positions must submit a position paper to the SGA Director of Campus Elections. These materials shall be placed at each polling place.
 - i. Position papers may include, but are not limited to, qualifications, platforms, graphics, photos, or similar material.
 - ii. SGA Executive Officer position papers must be 8 x 10 inches and shall be in landscape orientation for any SGA-administered elections.
 - iii. SGA Senate position papers must be 5 x 7 inches and shall be in landscape orientation for any SGA-administered elections.
- c. All candidates shall be required to attend a candidates' meeting as designated by the SGA Director of Campus Elections.
 - i. If a candidate is unable to attend the candidate meeting due to class or an emergency, a proxy must be sent.
 - ii. No other exceptions shall be made if a candidate does not attend the candidate's meeting, the candidate's application will be voided.

ARTICLE IV. Campaign Regulations

I. Campaign Materials

- a. Campaign materials shall include, but are not limited to, social media outlets, posters, banners, handbills, handouts, cards and other means that convey a candidate's name and attempt to influence a student's vote.
 - i. Candidates are not allowed to use food items for campaigning purposes. Food items will not be considered campaign material.
 - ii. Handbills shall include any printed, copied or written campaign materials that may be distributed by hand but not affixed to a permanent wall.

- b. All campaign materials must include the date of the election and the phrase “Approved by the Student Government Association” or “Approved by SGA”.
- c. All physical materials, including but not limited to, yard signs, posters, banners, handbills, handouts, and cards must include the SGA online voting QR code link.
- d. For the posting of campaign materials, refer to The University of Southern Mississippi sign policy.
- e. The content ~~and location~~ of all campaign materials must be approved by the SGA Director of Campus Elections before displayed by the candidate.
 - i. Any campaign materials displayed in a residence hall must be approved by the Residence Hall Association before displayed.
- f. Campaign materials may be displayed after midnight on the day of the candidates’ meeting.
- g. All candidates must collect all campaign materials displayed on campus by 5pm the day following elections. Failure to do so will result in materials being discarded.

II. Verbal Campaigning

- a. Verbal campaigning shall be defined as speaking to or appearing before any student or group of students for the purpose of influencing their decisions regarding any election conducted by the SGA.
- b. Verbal campaigning shall not be allowed in any academic buildings throughout the duration of a person’s candidacy, except when presenting to an organizational meeting.
- c. All verbal campaigning shall take place in a dignified, professional manner. Violations of this clause may result in the SGA Director of Campus Elections removing the violator’s right to campaign for the remainder of the election.
- d. Verbal campaigning may not include voice amplification such as the use of a bullhorn, microphone, etc., except for such organized events approved by the SGA Director of Campus Elections.
- e. Verbal campaigning may take place after midnight on the day of the candidates’ meeting
- f. Tabling is not permitted by any candidate.
 - i. Tabling or tabling events of any kind are considered verbal campaigning. Rules concerning verbal campaigning apply to all tabling events.
 - ii. The Office of Leadership and Student Involvement defines tabling.

III. Campaign Fraud

- a. No person shall deliberately remove, destroy or deface any item of campaign materials of another candidate. Violations of this clause may result in the SGA Director of Campus Elections removing the violator’s right to campaign for the remainder of the election.

- b. If any person fraudulently procures or knowingly assists in fraudulently procuring the election of a candidate or group of candidates by any means, the candidate will be removed from the ballot and will be summoned to a Judicial Board hearing if no higher actions are necessary from the Dean of Students Office.
- c. If there is suspicion of fraudulent activity, the person or persons in question shall be summoned to a Judicial Board hearing if no higher action is necessary from the Dean of Students Office.

IV. Candidate Expense Guidelines

- a. Campaign materials shall be limited as follows:
 - i. No Executive Officer campaign shall exceed \$600 in expenses.
 - ii. No Senate campaign shall exceed \$200 in expenses.
 - iii. No Homecoming Court campaign, excluding Queen and King, may exceed \$300 in expenses.
 - iv. No campaign for Homecoming Queen and King or Mr. or Miss Southern Miss may exceed \$400 in expenses.
- b. Any donations to a particular candidate, monetary or otherwise, shall be included in the spending cap.
 - i. A donation shall be defined as any item or service purchased or given by a party other than the candidate and used as campaign material for the candidate. For a definition of campaign material refer to ~~Section~~ Article IV.1.a. of the SGA Election Code.
 - ii. Donations must be valued and receipted at market value.
- c. Discounts received from an organization or business must be recorded at market value regardless of a candidate's purchase price.
- d. Candidates shall be required to complete a Candidate's Expense Report and attach all receipts to the report. Candidates who exceed their budget limit or submit a false expense report shall have their application removed from candidacy. Expense Reports shall be due at 5 PM the day prior to elections.
 - i. If the expense report is not submitted to the Director of Campus Elections by 5 PM the day prior to the election, that candidate will be immediately removed from the ballot.
 - ii. No candidate shall spend any more money or receive donations after 5 PM the day prior to elections.
- e. A \$100 cap extension shall be allowed for any runoff elections. An additional Candidate's Expense Report shall be required for the additional runoff allowance. This report shall be due to the SGA Director of Campus Elections by 9 PM the day prior to the runoff election. No candidate shall spend any more money or receive any donations after 9 PM the day prior to the election.
- f. For violations of the candidate expense guidelines please refer to ~~Section~~ Article IX of the SGA Election Code.

- V. Any candidates for SGA office or Homecoming Court, shall not be allowed to make endorsements in favor of any candidate.
 - a. Endorsement shall be defined as any of the following:
 - i. Pictures taken and posted with other candidates on social media
 - ii. Handing out other candidate's campaign materials
 - iii. Wearing other candidate's stickers
 - iv. Speaking on behalf of another candidate at an organizational meeting
- VI. No campaigning events or activities outlined in the Election Code may be sponsored by any branch of SGA.

ARTICLE V. Online Voting

- I. Dates of elections and access to the voting link shall be set 30 days prior to the date of the election by the SGA Director of Campus Elections.
- II. Online voting shall be open for the election from 7 AM to 7 PM on the day of the election.
- III. Only the SGA Director of Campus Elections or SGA Vice President of Judicial Affairs may officially close the online voting portal at the designated time.
- IV. The online voting link shall be promoted through all avenues, which include but are not limited to, SGA social media, posters, a-frames, and handouts.
- V. Candidates and or general body students will not be allowed to create their own voting stations using any mobile device to urge students to vote from that personal device in front of them for their own personal gain in candidacy. Doing this shall result in loss of campaigning privileges as deemed by the Director of Campus Elections.
- VI. Every student who has qualified for an office, position, or title shall have his or her name appear, in computerized random order, on the electronic ballot for that particular office, position or title.

ARTICLE VI. Physical Ballots

- I. In the event that the electronic voting is not in proper working order, paper ballots as a last resort shall be available for students to cast a valid vote in the SGA office.
- II. The ballots shall be kept intact and locked for 72 hours after the official announcement of the election results. The ballots shall be disposed of if the election is not contested within the 72 hours after the announcement.
- III. Each voter shall be given only one ballot for each office, position, or title to be voted on.
- IV. The number of marked ballots placed in the ballot box and the number of names initialed on the voter list must correspond, or the results from the SGA office ~~particular polling place~~ shall be invalid, unless the discrepancy shall not change the outcome of the election. The SGA Vice President of Judicial Affairs and the SGA Director of Campus Elections shall rule in this case.

V. Invalid Ballots

- a. Those ballots that do not clearly indicate the voter's intention shall be ruled on by the SGA Director of Campus Elections and the SGA Vice President of Judicial Affairs.
- b. Those in which more candidates are marked than are specified on the ballot shall be deemed invalid.

ARTICLE VII. Voting

- I. All students who are enrolled in at least one hour of class on the Hattiesburg campus or are online students involved with the Hattiesburg campus at the time of the election shall be eligible to vote in SGA sponsored elections.
- II. Absentee voting shall be allowed for any student participating in a study abroad program, internship, any other program removing them from the standard voting eligibility, or any other valid reason (as determined by the SGA Director of Campus Elections) by absentee ballot. Absentee ballots may be obtained by contacting the SGA Director of Campus Elections no later than five (5) class days prior to the election. The ballot shall be cast no later than 5 PM the day before the election.
- III. Voting shall be done electronically by secret ballot in all elections. In the event that the electronic voting system is not in proper working order, votes shall be cast by paper ballots.
- IV. All University of Southern Mississippi students at the Hattiesburg campus are eligible to vote for SGA Executive Officer positions. All University of Southern Mississippi students are eligible to vote for the Student Body President, who will serve as President of the Student Government Association on the Hattiesburg campus.
- V. All University of Southern Mississippi students at the Hattiesburg campus shall vote for a Senate candidate in the school of his or her major as designated by the voter list. Double majors shall vote in the school of his or her primary major.
- VI. All University of Southern Mississippi students are eligible to vote for the Homecoming Queen and King and a Homecoming candidate in their respective class as designated by the voter list.
- VII. All University of Southern Mississippi students are eligible to vote for Mr. and Mr. Southern Miss.
- VIII. In the event of an election where the voter may choose several candidates on one ballot, the voter may only vote for the maximum number of candidates to be voted on.
- IX. The voter lists shall be obtained by the SGA Advisor from the Office of the Registrar. Listed shall be all students duly enrolled in The University of Southern Mississippi, organized alphabetically, with their respective student ID numbers, classifications, and colleges.

ARTICLE VIII. Determining the Winner of an Election

- I. Vote Tabulation
 - a. Once the polls have closed, the SGA Director of Campus Elections shall have all votes tabulated.
 - b. All tabulations shall be done electronically, with the exception of the absentee ballots and/or any other ballots authorized by the SGA Director of Campus Elections, which shall be counted by hand and added to the total from the electronic tabulation.
 - c. In the event the electronic voting system is down, and ballots are to be counted by hand:
 - i. The SGA Director of Campus Elections shall choose a place for tabulation.
 - ii. The SGA Director of Campus Elections shall tabulate the votes.
 - iii. The SGA Vice President of Judicial Affairs shall be present at all times during the tabulation.
 - iv. The SGA Advisor and the SGA Graduate Assistant shall be present at all times during the tabulation.
 - d. Any candidate for an office, position or title who receives a majority of the valid votes cast shall be considered duly elected.
 - i. A majority shall be defined as more than 50 percent of the valid votes cast.
 - ii. Valid votes cast shall be defined by the specific position's election, not the votes cast in the election as a whole.
- II. In the event that a majority vote is not cast for any candidate for any office, position or title, a runoff shall be held. Runoff elections shall be held within one week but no earlier than 48 hours after the primary election commences.
 - a. Runoff elections for each office, position or title shall consist of the two (2) candidates from the primary election who received the most valid votes cast.
 - b. In a runoff election, the candidate with the most valid votes cast shall be considered duly elected.
- III. The results of any election are to be considered official only when they are signed by the SGA Vice President of Judicial Affairs and the SGA Director of Campus Elections.
- IV. In the event that two or more candidates in a primary election receive an identical number of votes, and in the event that the vote total is large enough to ordinarily give the candidate the opportunity to participate in a runoff election, then the names of both candidates shall be placed on the runoff ballot.

ARTICLE IX. Violations

- I. Any student, candidate, or SGA official may be charged for each instance of violation of the Election Code.
- II. If a candidate is found in violation of the Election Code by the Director of Campus Elections, he or she may be subject to the following consequences:

- a. First Offense: An official warning via e-mail from the Director of Campus Elections.
 - b. Second-Offense: Removal of the candidate's privilege to utilize any and all nonverbal campaign material. Any pre-existing non-verbal campaign material must be removed.
 - c. Third Offense: Removal of the candidate from the election. The candidate will be stricken from the ballot.
- III. Any candidate can challenge an election offense within 24 hours of receiving the violation.
- IV. The SGA Director of Campus Elections has complete jurisdiction over subjective matters that may arise during a campaign.

ARTICLE X. Election Appeals

- I. Grounds for Appeals
 - a. Any university student may challenge an election results in which he or she is eligible to vote.
 - b. The SGA Director of Campus Elections must be present for all challenges and hear evidence from all parties concerned in an SGA Judicial Board hearing.
 - c. The SGA Director of Campus Elections with the SGA Vice President of Judicial Affairs may disqualify a candidate post election results, order a recount of ballots, or order the reopening of any poll for a second vote.
- II. Appeal Process
 - a. Appeals must be registered within 48 hours following close of polls.
 - b. The SGA Director of Campus Elections and SGA Advisor must be notified by 5 PM of the last day of eligibility to make an appeal. Security of ballots must be maintained during that period.

ARTICLE XI. Recall and Referendum

- I. Petitions
 - a. If a petition signed by at least 20 percent of the student body concerning a specific elected position is presented to the SGA Director of Campus Elections, a recall election shall be held within twenty-eight (28) days of the presentation of the petition. If a majority of the voters express a desire to recall the incumbent or officer-elect, the office shall be vacant, and a new election shall be held.
 - b. If a petition signed by at least 20 percent of the student body is presented to the SGA Director of Campus Elections requesting the consideration of a student body vote on any particular issue, a special election shall be held within twenty-eight (28) days following the presentation of the petition to the SGA Director of

Campus Elections. If the measure is passed by a majority vote, the measure shall become official, pending the approval of the University Administration.

II. Referendum

- a. Referenda can be called at any time by the acting SGA President.
- b. At the time of the referenda being called, the SGA Director of Campus Elections will have twenty-eight (28) days to hold the election.
- c. The content of the referenda must be advertised to the student body through all outlets twenty-one (21) days prior to the date of the election.

Article XII Emergency Procedure

- I. In the event that an emergency incident may occur either a large-scale disorder or a large-scale natural/man-made disaster, refer to the constitution.
- II. The SGA Director of Campus elections, alongside the SGA President and SGA advisor shall have complete authority to adjust timelines in campaigning, voting, or any other matters that affect elections during an emergent situation.

Respectfully submitted on 20 January 2021