



# Undergraduate Student Government Association **Election Manual**

Prepared by 2026-2027 Election Commission



Undergraduate Student Government Association  
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# Purpose of Election Manual

An organized manual, listing rules and regulations for the election process. If any problems or doubts arise, this Election Manual, Title VI of the USGA Code of Laws, and the USGA Constitution can be referred back to for confirmation and used for future elections for the Undergraduate Student Government Association. To ensure this manual remains relevant, it can be reviewed annually by the current Election Commission and USGA President. This will allow for updates that reflect new policies and changes in election guidelines, providing adaptability to evolving student needs and campus standards.

## Jurisdiction of Election Commission

- Regulate elections of the USGA President, Executive Vice President, Vice President of Finance, Vice President of Student Services, Vice President of Communications, and Senators
- Establish and enforce election procedures according to the Election Manual and Code of Laws
- Ensure that the Spring General Election and Run-Off Election are successfully completed
- Verify potential candidates' qualifications for their respective positions with all verifications of enrollment and GPA based upon reports from the Registrar's Office
- Shall certify the ballot (or ballots in the event a run-off election is needed) and the election results
- Shall organize and coordinate mandatory candidate meetings
- Provide official election guidelines to candidates via UAB email
- Receive complaints of election violations and determine the validity of said complaints. If the complaint is valid, the commission shall instruct the candidate to correct any issues, issue sanctions, or disqualify the candidate. Candidates who filed a complaint and are the subject of a complaint have the right to request counsel from the Student Advocate
- Work with the USGA Communications Division to provide publicity for the elections
- Shall ensure that the voting system opens and closes at the appropriate times
- Shall uphold all Rules and Regulations concerning elections established in the USGA Constitution, Title VI of the Code of Laws, and other legislation pertaining to Elections.
- Election Commission members, including alternates, shall not endorse any candidate seeking office.

## Election Commission Composition

- The Elections Commission shall be composed of the Election Coordinator (USGA Advisor or their designee), Election Chair, four commissioners, and two alternate commissioners
- The USGA President shall appoint the Election Chair who will choose the Election Commissioners. Election Commissioners will be appointed by the President on advice from the Election Chair
- No members of the Elections Commission may be active candidates or assist any active candidates in the General Election

## Qualification of Candidates

1. To be eligible for election or to be appointed to any USGA office or position, the student must be enrolled at UAB as a full-time student during the term in which the election or appointment takes place and term in office, excluding the summer term.
2. The President and Executive Vice President:
  - a. Must be of at least sophomore standing to enter the race.
  - b. Is limited to two (2) terms in each office.
  - c. Must have at least a GPA of 2.5 to be eligible to run.
  - d. Must maintain at least a 2.5 GPA (of 4.0) while in office, with no grace period.
  - e. Must have attended UAB for one (1) of the two (2) previous regular terms prior to election.
  - f. Must have been involved within the Undergraduate Student Government Association, either as a senator, a committee member, a Judicial member, or a member of the Executive Cabinet for at least eight weeks.
3. The Vice President of Communications, Vice President of Student Services, and Vice President of Finance:
  - a. Must maintain at least a 2.5 GPA (of 4.0) while in office, with no grace period.
  - b. Must be enrolled as a full-time student during the fall and spring semesters while in office. Summer enrollment is optional.
- 4) For all other positions, elected and appointed student officials:
  - a. Must maintain at least a 2.0 GPA (of 4.0) while in office with a one (1) semester grace period.
  - b. Must be enrolled as a full-time student during the fall and spring semesters while in office. Summer enrollment is optional.

**Candidates are prohibited from running for office (whether Executive Council or Senate) if they plan to graduate in the fall term of the following school year. Elected**

**positions are yearlong commitments: they run from when officials are inaugurated in April of the first school year until the terms end in the April of the next school year (e.g. April of 2027 to April of 2028).**

## Withdrawal of Campaign

If a candidate wishes to withdraw from the election, they may do so by notifying an Election Commission Member. If the candidate's name is inadvertently placed on the ballot, they shall be considered to have withdrawn and thus ineligible to win the election. Votes placed for this candidate will not be counted for the candidate.

## Voting Process

Voting Eligibility:

1. Any student currently enrolled as an Undergraduate at the University of Alabama at Birmingham with the right to representation on USGA as defined by the Code of Laws shall be eligible to vote in USGA elections.
2. Eligible voters shall be able to vote for senators in the school they are enrolled in. They are ineligible to vote for senators in any other school.

Ballot:

3. All USGA elections shall be conducted by secret ballot, via an online ballot distributed by the USGA Election Commission. The ballot will be accessible through the regularly utilized campus-wide voting link.
4. There shall be no write-in candidates in any USGA election
5. Absentee ballots shall not be permitted in any USGA election

Voting:

6. Voting shall be available for a 36-hour period starting at 8 am and ending at 8 pm on the following day.
7. Eligible voters shall be allowed one vote per executive position when voting for executive candidates. An abstain option will be available for each executive position and Senate seats.
8. When eligible voters are voting for Senators, they shall be allowed as many votes as Senate seats exist for their school, see USGA Constitution Article IV, Section 2. Composition.

## Determination of Winner

Executive Candidates:

1. Winners of Executive positions shall be determined by majority, 50% of the total votes plus one.
2. If no majority is achieved, a run-off election shall be held.
  - a. Run-off campaigning will begin at 8am the day following the announcement of voting results and will last 24 hours.
  - b. Run-off elections shall be held through a secret, online ballot distributed by the USGA Election Commission. The run-off election shall be open for 36 hours from 8 am to 8 pm the day after the run-off campaigning period.

#### Senate Candidates

1. Candidates for Senate in each college will be ranked by votes from highest to lowest.
2. Winners will be chosen based on the ranking
3. The number of chosen senators shall be equal to the apportioned Senate seats for each college as defined by the USGA Constitution Article IV, Section 2. Composition.
4. In the event of a tie in the number of votes received by candidates for Senate seats that results in a college surpassing the apportioned seats for that college, the tie will be broken by a run-off election.
5. The run-off election shall be managed and announced by the USGA Election Commission and held on a set date determined by the USGA Election Commission.

## Contesting Election

In the event that a candidate or their campaign team has reason to believe that the election results were inaccurate or that election protocols were violated, the following process should be followed to formally contest the results:

#### Grounds for Contesting Results

- There was a significant error in the counting of votes
- Voting regulations or procedures were not properly followed, affecting the outcome
- Another candidate engaged in prohibited campaign activities
- Any other action that can be deemed to be a cause of election fraud

#### Steps to Contest the Election Results

1. Submission of Formal Complaint
  - A candidate must submit a written complaint via an electronic form to the Elections Commission within 24 hours of the alleged violation.
2. Review by the Elections Commission
3. Hearing (if deemed appropriate)
  - The complaint will be sent to the USGA Judicial Branch, who will oversee the hearing and trial
4. Decision

- After reviewing the evidence, the Election Commission will make a decision that may include upholding the original results, ordering a recount, or calling for a new election if violations are deemed significant.
5. Final Ruling
- The Election Commission's decision will be final. The candidates involved will be notified in writing of the outcome.

#### Appeals

- If disqualified, candidates may appeal the commission's decision. Appeals must be submitted within 24 hours of the final ruling to the USGA Student Court and will be considered only if new evidence or procedural concerns arise. A clear majority vote is needed to overturn or uphold the Election Commission's decision in the case of an appeal of this level.

## Candidate Meetings

**Mandatory Candidate Meeting:** After candidates are approved to run, a mandatory meeting will be held to brief them on election rules, campaign guidelines, and important deadlines. Attendance is required for all candidates, and failure to attend may result in disqualification unless prior arrangements are made.

**Follow-up Meetings:** Additional meetings may be scheduled to provide updates on the election process, address any issues that arise during the campaign, and answer questions.

**Debate Briefings:** Executive Council candidates are required to attend the debate briefing meeting, which will explain the debate format, rules, and expectations of conduct.

**One-on-One Meetings:** Candidates may request individual meetings with the Election Commission for personalized guidance or clarification on specific issues.

## Campaigning Guidelines

The Election Commission will set a specific period for campaigning. No campaigning is allowed before or after this period.

All campaigning finances and expenses must be tracked throughout the entirety of the election period. Any items donated for free or reduced-cost to candidates for their campaigning use must be listed at fair market value.

- Fair market value is defined as the price an item would sell for on an open market
- To establish fair market value on an item, the candidate must seek out two price estimates for the exact item being used. The name and contact information for the sources of these

price estimates must be provided. The average of these price points will be taken for fair market value.

Candidates will enter their spendings into a form provided by the Election Commission. The form must be completed within two business days after distribution of those campaign materials.

#### Permissible Campaign Methods:

1. Poster and Flyers: Campaign materials can be displayed in designated areas. All materials must not deface school property.
  - a. Size cannot exceed 11” by 17”
2. Social Media: Candidates may use personal and official campaign accounts to promote their candidacy.
3. Digital Signage: Candidates may utilize digital signage in UAB buildings. Candidates must receive official permission from a building’s administrators for digital signage. Confirmation must be kept by candidates if requested by the Election Commission.
4. Debates and Speeches: All Executive Council candidates must participate in the official USGA Debate, which the USGA Election Commission will moderate
5. Meet the Candidates Event: All Executive Council candidates and Senate candidates must participate in the official Meet the Candidates Event, hosted by the Election Commission
6. Email Campaigning: Campaign emails may only be sent via an official UAB email.

#### Prohibited Campaigning Methods

1. Negative Campaigning, slander, or defamation, even if such speech is made anonymously
2. Bribing or incentivizing students to vote (e.g., offering money, free or reduced-price items, or positions in a candidate’s potential cabinet. Items and incentives can be tangible or intangible).

## Campaign Ethics

Candidates are expected to conduct themselves in an ethically appropriate manner in accordance with the USGA Elections Manual, the USGA Code of Laws, and other USGA documents. A violation of these documents could lead to repercussions. Any communication to the Election Commission regarding the elections must be sent through an official UAB communication method (i.e., UAB email).

Candidates or volunteers may under no circumstances intentionally interfere with the campaign of another candidate in any way.

Tampering or interfering with campus elections or an individual's right to vote includes: asking or requiring evidence of voting for a particular candidate or issue; the use of coercion or valuable incentives to persuade the voting for a particular candidate or issue; taking extreme and or harmful actions against an individual who refuses to vote for a particular candidate or issue is strictly prohibited. Sanctions for incentive violations on candidates, students, and/or student registered organizations can be placed at the discretion of the Election Commission. These sanctions may be sent to the Office of Community Standards and Student Accountability for further review.

Candidates, excluding Presidential and Executive Vice President pairs, are prohibited from running and/or campaigning together. Campaigning together, as defined by this Election Manual is when candidates share platforms and actively encourage the voting for specific candidates. In the event of a run-off election, only participating candidates can campaign. Furthermore, active candidates not participating in the run-off election are prohibited from participating in any endorsements during the run-off campaigning or voting period, with the exception of President and Executive Vice President pairs. The members of the Election Commission, including alternate commissioners, are disallowed from endorsing or supporting candidates. This includes, but not limited to, public endorsements of any candidate, participating in a candidate's campaign efforts, and/or unofficial election guidance. If a Commissioner has a conflict of interest with a candidate, that Commissioner will not participate in any matters involving that candidate. Outgoing Executive Councilors and members of the Judicial Branch are also disallowed from endorsing or supporting candidates unless the outgoing executive councilor or judicial branch member is running for President or Executive Vice President (where they can support their running mate) or if they run for Senate (where they can support other Senate candidates).

## Election Fraud

Election fraud will be defined as any act or conspiracy that violates the integrity of the election prior to, during, or after voting occurs. Election fraud includes, but is not limited to, the following acts:

1. Attempting to, with or without success, vote or voting in place of another
2. Attempting to, with or without success, coerce or procure votes by the payment, delivery, or promise of money or other article of value.
3. Attempting to, with or without success, coerce or procure votes by the use of threats or intimidation
4. Attempting to, with or without success, bribe other candidates with incentives to persuade them to give up their campaign

- Incentives could include but are not limited to: the promise of a position within USGA, promise/payment of money, promise of fulfilling one's platform goals in return for stepping out of the election
- 5. Retaliation for reporting election violations
- 6. Making disparaging assertions with the intent to defame other candidates or campaigns.
- 7. Tampering or interfering with an election or a student's right to vote in the same, including, but not limited to, requiring someone to provide evidence of voting in an election.

## Filing a Complaint

1. Only a candidate may file a complaint against another candidate for a violation of an election law
  - a. A candidate must submit a written complaint via an electronic form to the Elections Commission within 24 hours of the alleged violation.
2. Complaints should be filed to the Election Commission via the current Election Chair
3. Only written complaints will be reviewed, oral complaints will not be accepted
4. The Election Commission will review the complaint and respond within 12-24 hours of the submission time. The Election Commission will also require a response back within 12-24 hours, otherwise the complaint will be dismissed.
  - a. Complaints must contain the following information to be accepted
    - i. Name of the candidate and/or individual(s) who committed the alleged violation
    - ii. Brief description of the alleged violation, including date and time of the incident and reference to the relevant provisions of the Elections Manual
    - iii. Any applicable evidence
    - iv. Printed name of the person filing the complaint
    - v. Signature of the person filing the complaint

## Classification of Violations

- Minimal violations (1 point per infraction): Violations of rules in Election Manual, but do not affect the outcomes of the election
  - Examples of this include, but are not limited to:
    1. Posting campaign materials on trees, light posts, or any other area that would be deemed defacing university property

2. Posting campaign materials on department bulletin boards
  3. Posting campaign materials on windows, doors, walls, and poles that are not usually used for advertising and posting purposes.
  4. Posting more than one campaign item on a single bulletin board
  5. Not removing campaign materials within 48 hours following the close of the polls
  6. Not updating financial expenditure form in a timely manner (i.e. within two business days after distribution of those campaign materials)
- Minor Violations (2 points per infraction): Clear violations of rules in Election Manual but do not affect the outcomes of the election
    - Examples of this include, but are not limited to:
      1. Posting campaign materials larger than eleven by seventeen inches (11" x 17") on walls or guardrails of the university without receiving permission. The Election Commission may request for documentation regarding the approval of campaign materials posted in residence halls and bulletin boards.
      2. Making speeches in class without the instructor's permission
      3. Disturbing educational process
  - Intermediate Violations (3 points per infraction): Violations of Election Manual and Code of which intentions may not be determinable, but could potentially impact the outcome of the election.
    - Examples of this include, but are not limited to:
      1. Distribution of campaign materials prior to the start of the election period
      2. Arranging talks with student organizations that include campaign discussions prior to the start of the election period.
      3. Misrepresenting (deliberately or not) the amount of money spent on campaigning materials
      4. Campaigning while polls are open
        - a. Including and not limited to, making public speeches, endorsements, and posting on social media in a non-general way of promoting the election

Major Violations (6 points per infraction): Violations of Code and Election Manual that are intentional and clearly impact that outcome of the election

- Examples of this include, but are not limited to:
  1. Deliberately removing or vandalizing another candidates' campaign materials

2. Making false or malicious statements (written or verbal, anonymous or not) about another candidate.
3. Interfering with the campaign of another candidate
4. Election Fraud, see above.
5. Failure to adhere to campaign ethics

Accumulation of 6 points permits the Election Commission to consider disqualification of the candidate.