GSS ELECTIONS GUIDELINES

The intent of the guidelines is to encourage fair and open campaigning on a level playing field by; (1) specifying permitted and prohibited election related activities, (2) fostering opportunities for candidates to educate their colleagues about the issues, (3) informing voters about candidate experiences and views, and (4) maintaining dignified and courteous conduct appropriate to the image of a profession. Candidates are to state their own positions on issues and their own plans for the Graduate Student Senate directly and positively but may not make personal attacks against their opponents. Third party endorsements in campaign communications are not allowed.

Campaigning (written or email solicitation of votes or support) is not permitted until after the close of the nomination period. Members should withhold commitments of their final support or votes until after all candidates are announced. Candidate information will be posted on the GSS website at www.umass.edu/gss.

The members of the Elections Committee, in accepting a nomination to the committee, agree to all the rights, duties, and responsibilities of the position as outlined in the GSS Constitution and Bylaws.

I. GENERAL GUIDELINES:

A. Compliance:

Each candidate will receive an email of these guidelines and must reply to this email in order to: certify that he/she has read the guidelines; promise to abide by them; agree to immediately report any deviations of which he/she becomes aware to the Elections Committee; and agree to notify and try to correct any supporter upon learning of an actual or potential deviation. Candidates are to inform members they ask for support about the guidelines by sending a copy or calling attention to the guidelines posted on GSS website. No person will be a candidate unless they have read and agreed to uphold these guidelines.

When candidates or their supporters are unclear about whether an intended taking campaign action is permitted, they should seek the opinion of the Elections Committee before action. The Elections Committee will respond with a ruling (usually within 48 hours) concerning the proper interpretation of the guidelines and inform all candidates in order to maintain a level playing field.

B. Guidelines for Use of Electronic Media

1. E-mail:
There are no limits on the number of campaign messages sent by e-mail. E-mail used for campaign purposes must comply with the intent of the guidelines with regard to content and must start with the words GSS Campaigning in the subject line.

2. GSS Website:

GSS will post information about all candidates (the photos, biographies, and statements) and on the election itself (campaign guidelines, voting information, etc) on its website. This election information can be accessed through the election tag and linked to other information as appropriate. Candidates are encouraged to take full advantage of communicating with members through statements to be published by the GSS. Candidates are reminded that most forms of communications are in the public domain. Therefore, in all discussions and communications, a professional tone will reflect positively on the GSS and on the candidate.

3. Newsletter:

GSS will release a special edition of The Voice for the election, which will be sent via mass email and posted online. Election information and candidates’ statements will be included in this special edition. Candidates are encouraged to showcase their strengths and qualifications for the position.

C. Guidelines for Use of Campaign Flyers and Signs

All flyers and signs should be submitted via email to the Election Committee for approval (see Candidate Code of Conduct below). The Committee will respond to the candidate regarding submitted materials usually within 48 hours.

Flyers and signs must be placed on authorized posting places (i.e. student bulletin boards or inside/outside certain buildings). No flyers or signs may be placed on University windows and buildings. Please be reminded that flyers can’t be posted anywhere in Campus Center. No writing, painting, or chalking on walls or sidewalks will be permitted. Each candidate is responsible for the removal and disposal of all signs. No campaign materials are to be affixed to bus kiosks, trees, telephone poles, or lamp posts.

Candidates may not tamper with or deface the signs of any other candidate. Offenses of this nature are considered serious and may result in disqualification as a candidate in the election.

D. Guidelines for Use of Campaign Pages

Each candidate has the ability to submit a campaign page which the voter can access before voting. The pages should not exceed 1000 words. Campaign pages must be submitted to the Elections committee, within 72 hours of the Election. These pages must be approved by the Elections Committee based upon these guidelines. All pages shall be available to each candidate, and should any candidate believe that another candidate’s page incorrectly represents them, they
shall have the ability to appeal to the Elections Committee. All pages shall be made available to all competitors within 24 hours of the election.

II. VOTING AND BALLOT COUNTING

A. The Elections Committee shall open and close voting at the designated time and conduct the voting in the manner prescribed herein:

1. The voter shall log into the SGOV System.
2. The voter shall verify his/her identity.
3. The voter shall mark his/her ballot according to the instructions prescribed therein.
4. The voter shall submit his/her ballot according to the instructions prescribed therein.
5. The voter shall acknowledge that the ballot has been marked according to his/her wishes and that by proceeding he/she forfeits the opportunity to change his/her vote.

B. Absentee Ballot

1. If a GSS member is unable or unwilling to vote using the SGOV System on the days of a General or Special Election, s/he may vote by absentee ballot at the absentee polling place(s), which shall be open for at least one day.
2. The Absentee polling places shall be staffed at all times by two (2) persons designated by the Elections Committee.

C. The Count

1. Within twenty-four (24) hours of the end of voting, the chair of the Elections Committee shall generate a report containing the election results from the SGOV system. Only the chair of the Elections Committee shall have access to this report during the election herein defined as the record of the number of people who voted, that is generated by the SGOV system. The Elections Committee shall also conduct the counting of the absentee ballots.
2. Each candidate may send one (1) designee, who shall not be a candidate, to the room in which the count is taking place, and upon arrival, shall not leave the room until the completion of the count except to perform natural acts.
3. No person other than the Elections Committee and the candidates' designees shall be present at the counting of the ballots.
4. Re-count Procedures: Candidates may contest the election up to 48 hours following the closing of the polls. Ballots will automatically be re-counted, in the event of a margin of twenty votes or less. Results of the election will not be officially made public until the re-count grace period has passed.
D. Tie Vote

1. In the event of a tie vote for an office in a general election, the following procedure shall be used to fill the position.
   a. Unless one of the candidates objects, a run-off election will be held at the Senate meeting immediately following the election.
   b. If one candidate objects, and there is an additional scheduled Senate meeting the same semester, then the run-off election will be delayed until that additional meeting.

2. Procedure for Run-Off:
   a. All candidates involved in the tie shall be the only candidates in the run-off election.
   b. Each candidate may give a "reminder" speech limited to two minutes in length.
   c. All senators present at the meeting will be eligible to vote in the run-off election.
   d. The voting shall be by closed ballot.

E. The Election Report

1. Upon completion of the count, the person receiving a majority or plurality of the votes cast shall be declared the winner(s), pending ratification by the GSS. The Chair of the Elections Committee shall send an informal notification to all the candidates in the election telling them of the election results, as soon as possible following the end of the counting period.

2. Within twenty-four (24) hours of the end of the recount grade period, the Elections Committee shall submit to the Executive Committee the Election Report, which shall appear as a Special Order on the agenda of the next scheduled Senate meeting, and shall include the information prescribed herein:
   a. The complete numerical tabulation of the results.
   b. Any formal complaints made to the Elections Committee and the act taken thereupon.
   c. The signatures of the members of the Elections Committee.

3. If the Senate shall have failed to ratify a General or Special Election within thirty (30) days of said Election, the Elections Committee shall call a Special Election and re-cast the ballots, provided the Senate shall have failed to ratify the Election by the re-casting of the ballots.

III. CANDIDATE CODE OF CONDUCT

All candidates must abide by the following code of conduct:

1. No person who is not a candidate, as defined above, shall campaign.

2. No person(s) shall appropriate funds for the purpose of campaigning. Candidates may not pay anyone to campaign on their behalf and/or vote for them.
3. No candidate shall wrongfully represent any campaign material as being the material of any other candidate.

4. No candidate shall violate the University Code of Student Conduct; for more information please see [http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/)

5. No candidate shall corruptly give, offer or promise to any GSS member any pecuniary or other benefit not authorized by the Campaign Guidelines, Candidate Code of Conduct, which is intended to influence the vote(s) of GSS member.

6. No candidate shall be physically present nor shall influence GSS members’ choice when he/she is voting online. Also, no candidate should campaign within fifty (50) feet of balloting place on during the election.

IV. ADDITIONAL RULINGS / INTERPRETATIONS

While the Candidate Code of Conduct answers certain questions regarding the campaigning process, there are several issues that are not covered. It is the responsibility of the GSS Election Committee to develop additional regulations, through interpretation of Candidate Code of Conduct and Campaign Guidelines, to cover these issues.

Q: Can I send emails to my friends before the close of nominations telling them that I intend to run for a position?

A: This depends on the context of the email. If the email is being sent to a small number of people asking them to join your campaign, this is quite obviously legal. If the email is being sent to 50 people asking them to get ready to go out and vote for you, this is blatantly campaigning and is not legal. Good advice is to contact the Elections Committee before doing anything you are unsure of.

Q: May a candidate use a website to promote his/her campaign?

A: Yes. The Elections Committee allows candidates to create and design their own websites. However, candidates are only allowed to use their university provided domain/hosting. For more information on setting up website using university proved domain/hosting please visit the Office of Information Technologies Website.

Q: May a candidate use Facebook to promote his/her campaign?

A: Yes. Since all candidates have reasonable access to Facebook, any and all features of the networking site are fair to use as campaign tools.

Q: May a candidate use GSS resources during his/her campaign?
A: No. Under no circumstances should a candidate attempt to use any unauthorized GSS resources. This includes, but is not limited to, GSS office space, printer, paper or Facebook Groups.

Q: May a candidate use a mass email list that he/she has access to or that an endorsing on-campus organization has offered to utilize on his/her behalf?

A: Yes, but in order to promote reasonable access for all candidates, all emails sent through mass email lists must include the following disclaimer: "This email represents the campaign of one candidate running for a Graduate Student Senate position. For information on the full list of candidates, please go to the GSS elections page at www.umass.edu/gss"

V. FAILURE TO COMPLY

The Elections Committee may, upon a two-thirds vote of its membership in attendance at a scheduled meeting, and up to thirty (30) calendar days following an election, take any one of the actions prescribed herein for violations of the GSS Elections Guidelines:

1. **Warning** - A written statement to a candidate ordering the cessation of any activity which is in violation of the Guidelines, or her/his candidacy shall be suspended or invalidated.

2. **Suspension** - A written statement to a candidate ordering the suspension of all campaigning for a prescribed period of calendar time.

3. **Invalidation** - A written statement to a candidate declaring her/his candidacy to be invalid and stricken from the ballot (if before the election). After the election, a candidate may still be invalidated.

4. **Nullification** - A public announcement to the GSS membership declaring an Election nullified and calling a Special Election to re-cast the ballots.