

Student Government Association Election Rules and Procedures 2025



This document exists to encourage and facilitate student involvement in the University of Tennessee Student Government election process as both candidates and voters. The Student Government Association is tasked with advancing the needs and desires of the student body and this role must always be at the core of the election process. The Election Commission asks every campaign and candidate to respect one another.

Prepared by the 2025 SGA Election Commission sgaag@utk.edu

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2025 Election Timeline

September 17th, 2024

6:15 pm EDT, SU-169 – The 2024 Election Rules and Procedures are presented in the Undergraduate Student Senate.

After passage – SGA website is updated with Election Rules and Procedures and online forms.

February 18, 2025

6:00 pm EDT, SU-362B/C – Interest Meeting for all interested students that want to learn more about SGA elections, how to get involved, and ask questions regarding the Election Rules and Procedures.

7:00 pm EDT – The Registration Period begins, allowing SBP, SBVP, and SoS candidates to begin submitting Appendices A, B, C and D and allowing candidates for Senate to begin submitting appendices A, B, and D.

March 25, 2025

5:00pm EDT- Appendices A, B, and C due (C applicable only to SBP, SBVP, SoS). All candidates must be registered with the election commission, have their signatures, and have any student assistants registered if applicable. Registration Period is concluded.

By 7:00 pm EDT – Candidates will be informed of discrepancies via email. Valid candidate information is posted on SGA website.

By 8:00 pm EDT – Official ballot is posted to SGA website. Notify the Election Commission immediately if there are any ballot discrepancies.

March 26, 2025

6:00 am EDT – The Campaign Period begins. Candidates may begin to hold speaking engagements, engage in mass communication, launch social media efforts, and participate in other campaign efforts outlined below.

March 31, 2025

7:00 pm EDT, Toyota Auditorium, Baker School 103 – Candidate Debate is held.

April 1, 2025

7:00 pm EDT – Appendix D deadline. Submit via the SGA elections website. Deadline to submit any changes to the ballot or withdraw candidacy (Appendix E).

April 2, 2024

6:00 am EDT – Ballot opens and votes may be cast.

April 3, 2024

5:00 pm EDT – Ballot closes.

7:00 pm EDT, Location TBD – Election Certification Meeting where

results are certified and announced in person. Following the meeting, certified results are posted on the SGA website.

Required Appendices Quick Reference

Appendix	Who must Complete?	What/When/Where/How	Due Date
A – Qualifying statement form	All candidates running	This form registers a candidate to run. Submit anytime after February 18th at 7:00pm via the SGA elections website.	March 25th at 5:00pm EDT
B – Petition Sheet	All candidates running	This sheet requires candidates for Student Body President, Student Body Vice President, and Speaker of the Senate to submit 75 valid student signatures and requires candidates for Senate to submit 25 valid student signatures. Submit anytime after February 18th at 7:00pm via the SGA elections website.	March 25th at 5:00pm EDT
C – Campaign help form	Student Body President, Student Body Vice President, and Speaker of the Senate candidates who wish to have student assistants for their campaign	This form registers a candidate’s assistants. Candidates are allowed to have up to 4 student assistants to assist in campaign efforts. Submit anytime after February 18th at 7:00pm via the SGA elections website.	March 25th at 5:00pm EDT
D – Campaign Value Report	All candidates running	This form records the expenses incurred by a candidate through their campaign. Submit anytime after February 18th at 7:00pm via the SGA elections website.	April 1st at 7:00pm EDT

E – Candidate Withdrawal Form	Any candidate wishing to withdraw from the race	After passage of Election Packet on votesga.utk.edu	April 1st at 7:00pm EDT
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Article I. Candidacy Information and Requirements

Section 1: Positions on the ballot shall include Student Body President, Student Body Vice President, Speaker of the Senate and 60 seats in the Undergraduate Student Senate. An eligible candidate must be a full-time student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in good academic standing with the University of Tennessee at the time of the election, and must submit all applicable appendices on time, per the timeline provided above. All candidates that are current SGA members must be in good standing as defined by their branch’s respective bylaws.

- a. Candidates running for Student Body President, Student Body Vice President, and Speaker of the Senate must:
 - i. Commit to completing the entirety of the elected term, excluding summer and winter terms, immediately following the transition ceremony in person at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, as full-time students upon election
 - ii. Submit appendices A, B, C, and D (information on appendices above)
 - iii. Run independently of one another as individuals
- b. Candidates running for Speaker of the Senate must have at least one year of experience in the Undergraduate Student Senate to be considered eligible for the position.
- c. Candidates running for Undergraduate Student Senate Seats must:
 - i. commit to completing 2 consecutive semesters (excluding summer and winter terms) either on campus or abroad at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville as full-time students following their election.
 - ii. submit appendices A, B, and D (information above)
 - iii. Run independently of one another as individuals
- d. The Election Commission will make all final decisions on candidate eligibility.

Section 2: Undergraduate Student Senate Seats

- a. The Undergraduate Student Senate Seats shall be apportioned as follows:
 - i. Twenty-six (26) Academic Senators shall be apportioned with the constituency size of each Undergraduate College in mind as follows:
 1. Two (2) Herbert College of Agriculture Senators
 2. One (1) College of Architecture and Design Senator
 3. Four (4) College of Arts & Sciences Senators
 4. Four (4) Haslam College of Business Senators
 5. Two (2) College of Communication and Information Senators
 6. Four (4) College of Education, Health & Human Sciences Senators
 7. One (1) College of Emerging and Collaborative Studies Senator
 8. Four (4) Tickle College of Engineering Senators
 9. One (1) Natalie L. Haslam College of Music Senator
 10. One (1) College of Nursing Senator
 11. One (1) Baker School of Public Policy Senator
 12. One (1) College of Social Work Senator
 - ii. Ten (10) Residential Senators
 1. Three (3) On-Campus
 2. Seven (7) Off-Campus
 - iii. Ten (10) special interest group senators
 - iv. Fourteen (14) At-Large Senators
- b. The following special interest groups shall hold a minimum of one (1) senate seat:
 - i. FUTURE
 - ii. Veterans
 - iii. Multicultural Student Life
 - iv. International Students
- c. Special interest group seats are open to any special interest groups registered on Vol Link
- d. Undergraduate College, Residential, and At-Large seats will be filled based on votes while special interest group seats will be appointed

Article II. Registration and Campaigning Period

Section 1: From February 18th at 7:00pm EDT to March 25th at 5:00pm EDT, Registration Period is in place.

- a. Candidates running for Student Body President, Student Body Vice President, and Speaker of the Senate may begin completing and submitting Appendices A, B, C and D. During this time, these candidates may recruit up to 4 full-time University of Tennessee students to assist with their campaign efforts. Candidates **may not** hold speaking engagements, distribute or wear campaign materials, hold campaign stops, create social media accounts for their campaign, or participate in any other candidate specific engagement. This period is strictly for completing and submitting Appendices A, B, C, and D.
- b. Candidates running for the Undergraduate Student Senate may begin completing and submitting Appendices A, B, and D. During this time, these candidates **may not** hold speaking engagements, distribute or wear campaign materials, hold campaign stops, create social media accounts for their campaign, or participate in any other candidate specific engagement. This period is strictly for completing and submitting Appendices A, B, and D.

Section 2: Campaign Period

- a. Candidates may publicly launch their candidacy and begin campaigning beginning March 26th, 2025, at 6:00 am EDT. From this point on, campaign efforts including but not limited to mass communication with eligible voters (including phone numbers, GroupMe, social media, etc.), speaking engagements, campaign stops, and distribution of campaign materials are permitted.
 - i. Campaign stops are any events during the election period that occur in a public space and are freely accessible to the general public. Campaign stops demonstrate involvement in the election process, disseminate the views and platforms of a particular candidate and/or party, and/or actively solicit votes or support from members of the student body.
 - ii. Each candidate must have the time, date, and location of any campaign stops pre-approved by the appropriate university officials, if needed (i.e., 25Live, Facility Services).
 - iii. The hanging or posting of appropriate campaign material must comply with University Policy and Hilltopics. Any material to be distributed must be in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal laws.
 - iv. Litter produced by an individual and/or group as a result of

- leafleting is the responsibility of the individual and/or group.
- b. Prior to this date, candidates are NOT allowed to engage in any of the campaigning efforts mentioned above or any other official displays of candidacy.
 - i. Candidates may use their own personal social media accounts in their campaigning efforts or create separate platforms. If creating a separate platform, any account created before the Campaign Period beginning on March 26th at 6:00am will be in direct violation of the Election Rules and Procedures, even if kept “private” and without followers. Similarly, any personal platform will be found in violation if it is promoting campaign related information before the start of the Campaign Period.
 - ii. Use of anonymous social media or communication platforms is strictly prohibited.
 - c. Obtaining and using contact information including but not limited to phone numbers and email addresses from directories for use for a campaign is a direct violation of the University of Tennessee’s Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy and violating campaigns shall be subject to sanctions. Listservs may never be used.
 - d. Candidates are always prohibited to hold speaking engagements with students gathered for the purposes of an academic class session.
 - e. All SGA spaces and platforms must remain neutral on all election matters. SGA spaces include, but may not be limited to, any SGA event, meeting, other official gathering, the Student Engagement Suite and SGA Suite (Student Union Room 174B). SGA platforms include, but may not be limited to, all SGA social media accounts, group messages, official statements/press releases on behalf of SGA, and the SGA website. No partisan mass communication is allowed on these platforms.
 - f. Campaigning is not allowed inside any residence hall, academic building, computer lab, dining hall, or the Student Union. This includes distributing any campaign materials.
 - i. Campaign materials can be worn or displayed on personal property in these locations, but no material may be distributed.
 - ii. Speaking engagements are not considered a form of campaigning and are therefore allowed in academic buildings and in the Student Union.
 - g. There is zero tolerance for negative campaigning and personal attacks. Any malicious personal attack on another candidate or

campaign representative is prohibited and will result in severe sanctions, up to and including disqualification.

Section 3: Campaign materials include any physical demonstration of candidacy, including but not limited to flyers, buttons, tshirts, social media accounts, flags, etc.

- a. Campaign materials shall:
 - i. not be designed to include or imitate any trademarked logo or copyrighted design held by an individual or organization without the campaign receiving permission.
 - ii. not be placed on automobiles, utility poles, statues, monuments, steps, bike racks, bicycle chain guards, trees, bushes, buildings, sidewalks, windows, or newspaper/magazine stands.
 - iii. not be slid under doors, adhered to the door, or placed on the doorstep of individual residence hall rooms or off-campus residences.
 - iv. not be placed in classrooms regardless of instructor permission.
 - v. not be placed on private property without explicit permission from the owner(s).
 - vi. not be left unattended in any outdoor setting except with permission from the Election Commission.

Section 4: Candidate Endorsements

- a. Candidates are permitted to endorse one another through verbal recommendations or social media interactions, including reposts. However, despite these endorsements, each candidate is required to conduct their own independent campaign. This includes managing individual speaking engagements, campaign stops, social media accounts, campaign materials, graphics, and other related activities. Each candidate must maintain a distinct and separate campaign effort under their own name.

Article III. Campaign Finances

Section 1: Candidates running for Student Body President, Student Body Vice President, and Speaker of the Senate are to have a *maximum* budget of \$300 total for their campaigns. Candidates running for the Undergraduate Student Senate are to have a *maximum* budget of \$100 for their respective campaigns. All monetary expenses and non-monetary donations must be reported on Appendix D. The Student Government Association with assistance from the Division of Student Life will offer campaign materials to candidates to use in collaboration with the Center for Student Engagement Resource Room.

- a. Monetary donations can never be accepted from outside organizations, such as but not limited to special interest groups, and/or student organizations outside of SGA.

- b. Non-monetary donations can never be accepted from any special interest group. Non-monetary donations must still be recorded towards a campaign's total budget, just as purchases would be. This includes any materials given to a candidate or party that they did not purchase, such as materials given to a candidate or party for free by a university office or registered student organization (e.g., Center for Student Engagement)
- c. Any materials previously owned by a campaign member is not a donation. As long as the material is not distributed to potential voters, it does not need to be reported (e.g., grills, tents, tables, and other items of that nature).
- d. Any donation from an immediate family member or household member of any candidate or campaign member shall be considered a monetary donation, regardless of if it could be classified as a non-monetary donation.
- e. All monetary expenses and non-monetary donations count towards the total budget. Monetary expenses plus the amount of non-monetary donations shall not exceed the spending limit of \$300.
- f. Campaign Value Reports must be submitted via the SGA elections website by April 1st by 7:00 pm EDT. All receipts of expenses, statements for non-monetary donations, and other documentation should be recorded in chronological order and assigned an item number. Each CVR will be thoroughly checked and verified by the Election Commission with appropriate measures to maintain the integrity of the financial reporting process.
- g. Basic office supplies, such as pens and notebooks, do not have to be listed in the CVRs. CVRs should, however, include items bought in bulk such as reams of paper, tape (of all kinds), etc.
- h. Candidates submitting budgets may have a grace margin within \$5 above their maximum budget.

Article IV. Voting Period

Section 1: The 2025 Student Government Association (SGA) elections will be conducted from Wednesday, April 2, 2025, at 6:00 AM EDT to Thursday, April 3, 2025, at 5:00 PM EDT. Elections will be conducted using an online ballot accessible at votesga.utk.edu. Election results will be announced in person on April 3, 2025.

- a. An eligible voter is any graduate or undergraduate student currently enrolled at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville who is taking 1 or more credit hours, any student currently enrolled in the Volunteer Bridge Program taking 1 or more credit hours at Pellissippi State Community College, and any student currently enrolled in the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences FUTURE Postsecondary Education Program taking 1 or more credit hours.
- b. The election shall be administered using a secure survey website/election software and can be completed on any personal or university owned devices connected to the internet.
 - i. No candidates may touch another potential voter's voting device.
 - ii. Candidates may not set up personal computers as "ad hoc" polling stations. The setup of a computer, mobile phone, tablet, or other internet-accessible devices in a public or private location by a campaign to solicit voters to vote on said device shall be considered vote tampering and will result in a penalty.
- c. The Election Commission shall oversee the staffing and publicizing of any official polling locations in on-campus facilities during election week. These locations shall be publicized using official SGA platforms in advance and are subject to the SGA neutral space provision. As such, there shall be no campaigning within 100 feet of an Election Commission polling station.
- d. The collecting of NetIDs and passwords or any other fraudulent activity for use in voting is strictly prohibited and will result in immediate disqualification.
- e. In cases where voters wish to cast write-in votes, they will type the name of the candidate into the electronic system. Write-in candidates must comply with all candidate qualifications outlined in the Election Rules

and Procedures and accept the position but are not subject to petition and other form requirements.

- f. For the 2025 SGA Elections to be considered complete, the survey hosting server must be online and functioning the entire duration of the voting period. In the case of technical difficulties, the Election Commissioner may extend voting time.
- g. Any voting irregularities or difficulties should be promptly reported to the Election Commissioner via email (sgaag@utk.edu).

Article V. The Election Commission

Section 1: The Election Commission shall have all executive and regulatory authority pertaining to student elections. The Election Commission is composed of the Attorney General and two Department of Justice Board Associate Members.

- a. Members of the commission shall be prohibited from maintaining an affiliation with candidates or parties.
- b. Membership on the commission may be terminated if the member is no longer a student enrolled at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
- c. The Election Commission shall be dissolved upon swearing in of the new administration at the transition ceremony.
- d. The Election Commission shall be charged with:
 - i. Assisting in the selection of election dates within the SGA Rules and Procedures each year.
 - ii. Clarifying the SGA Rules and Procedures governing student elections to all interested parties.
 - iii. Issuing official recommendations and final sanctions to candidates.
 - iv. Verifying all necessary petitions and forms for the Student Government Association elections. The Election Commission shall verify the good standing of all candidates by March 25, 2025. Any discrepancies must be communicated to the involved parties.
 - v. Marketing and promoting the elections. Promotional materials placed by the Election Commission are not bound by Campaign Material requirements.
 - vi. Certifying, announcing, and publishing the official election results within 24 hours upon the close of voting.
 - vii. Closing online voting if they decide the program can no longer operate fairly and properly.
 - viii. Extending online voting operating hours in extraordinary

- ix. Changing any and all dates, times, and locations when deemed fit.
- x. Removing themselves from any hearings or violations where bias is present.

Article VI: Violations of Election Rules and Procedures

Section 1: Any student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville shall be able to file a complaint that alleges a violation of these rules and procedures against a party or individual candidate.

- a. All complaints shall be filed to the Election Commission via the SGA elections website.
- b. A complaint must include relevant and ethically obtained evidence of the alleged violation and cite the rule of the alleged violation in order for the complaint to be deemed valid.
- c. If deemed valid by the election commission, a formal hearing following the format of Department of Justice Board formal hearings will take place.
- d. The Election Commission will determine final violations and issue final sanctions based on evidence provided.
- e. Any complaints referring to those regarding the rules and procedures outlined in this packet must be filed before 5:00 pm EDT on Thursday, April 3, 2025.
- f. Any complaints filed after 5:00 pm EDT on Thursday, April 3, 2024, must be regarding mechanical or electronic irregularities of the election, i.e., graduate students voting in Undergraduate Student Senate Off-Campus elections, OR must be able to provide direct and substantial evidence that a substantive violation occurred and would have changed the outcome of the election.
- g. The Election Commission reserves the right to dismiss a complaint based on any of the following conditions:
 - i. The complaint has been ruled on previously, i.e., case precedent. In the case of dismissal due to case precedent, the Election Commission may issue a summary judgment.
 - ii. The complaint is deemed invalid due to a lack of evidence.
 - iii. Should a candidate exceed their respective budget, the decision of disqualification shall be at the discretion and judgment of the election commissioner.
- h. Should a candidate exceed their respective budget, the decision of disqualification shall be at the discretion and judgment of the election

commissioner.

Section 2: All sanctions issued by the Election Commission should be proportionate to the severity of the violation found. The following table reflects potential violations and their respective sanctions. Sanctions issued by the Election Commission include but are not limited to the following:

Violation	Sanction
Blatant slander of another candidate via social media, word of mouth, or any other platform	Disqualification
Violation of neutral space	Delay of campaigning
Failure to stay within campaign budget and/or falsifying campaign value report	Disqualification
Failure to turn in Appendix A, B, or D by deadline	Disqualification
Failure to turn in Appendix C by deadline	Delay of campaigning

Article VII: Election Results

Section 1: The candidate receiving the highest number of all votes tabulated for each Student Government Association position will be declared the winner of that election. After the certification of the election, the Election Commission shall announce the official results upon completing a tally of the votes and shall make a release of the results in person and available on the Student Government Association social media and website, as well as make the results available to the Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Beacon. Upon completion of tabulation, the Election Commission shall certify the election results as being final and valid by an affirmative vote of at least a majority of the members present.

- a. Any student wishing to contest the validation of the election results due to procedural error must file an election complaint to the Election Commission within 7 days of the announced results.
 - i. Charges filed contesting the validity of said election shall be reviewed by

- the Election Commission to decide whether there is a substantial irregularity, and if so, the Election Commission shall send those charges to the Center for Student Advocacy to be reviewed.
- ii. Upon receiving charges contesting the validity of said election, the Center for Student Advocacy shall decide whether there is a substantial irregularity, and if so, whether said irregularity could have materially altered the outcome of the election.
 - iii. The Center for Student Advocacy's decision will be limited to those candidates affected by the original question of validity.
- b. In the event of a tie for any position, a runoff will be held on Friday, April 4, 2025, from 6:00 AM - 5:00 pm EDT.
- i. The placement of each candidate's name on the ballot will be identical to the original ballot; however, the names of candidates not involved in the runoff will be deleted.
 - ii. In the event of an election discrepancy, a Special Election for affected candidates shall be held by Wednesday, April 10, 2024, from 6:00 AM - 5:00 pm EDT.
 - iii. All Special Elections or runoff elections shall be publicized through SGA's social media and other available means.

The 2025 SGA Election Rules and Procedures shall be enforced until the 2026 SGA Election Rules and Procedures are published. The Election Rules and Procedures apply to all events related to campaigning, whether on or off campus. All rules and procedures shall remain under the discretion and oversight of the Election Commission, who retains the authority to modify, interpret, and enforce them as deemed appropriate

Glossary of Terms

- a. Campaign Material – Any paraphernalia bearing the name of a candidate, including but not limited to flyers, literature, pamphlets, buttons, apparel, table-tents, and advertisements. Campaign materials must comply with all requirements outlined in Article II section 3. Campaign materials for past campaigns are not considered partisan after the Election Results are certified.

- b. Public Forums – Any electronic platform on which a candidate could display partisan information to a group of people. Public forums include campaign websites and social media websites including but not limited to X (Twitter), Facebook, Snapchat, Tik Tok and Instagram.
- c. Speaking Engagements – A gathering, either scheduled or impromptu, in which a candidate speaks to a group of students on behalf of the candidate or party about campaign issues.
- d. Campaigning – Any partisan statement or display/distribution of campaign materials to one or more people outside speaking engagements, candidate debate, or campaign meetings.
- e. Monetary Donations - Any money, including cash, checks, gift cards, or personal money orders from candidates, parties, campaign members, or other contributors intended to promote a particular candidate or party shall be designated as “Monetary Donations.”
- f. Non-Monetary Donations - Donations, goods, or services from a business or individual intended to promote a particular candidate or party shall be designated as “Non-Monetary Donations.” Non-Monetary Donations must be recorded in Appendix E.
- g. Special interest group senator - Appointed senator who must be a member of a registered Vol Link organization, a FUTURE student, veteran, Multicultural Student Life member, or international student.