

ELECTION GUIDELINES

Table of Contents

Overview	2
I. Election of Senators	3
II. Uncontested Senator Elections.....	5
II. Midterm Elections for Senators.....	6
III. MidYear Elections for Senators.....	6
IV. Election of Staff Senate Co-Chairs and Directors.....	7
V. Midterm Elections for Staff Senate Co-chairs & Directors.....	8
VI. In the Event of Ties.....	9
VII. Elections Timeline (Abbreviated).....	9
VII. Additional Election considerations	10
Senator's Org Unit Changes.....	10
Ensuring Only 1/3 of Senators Roll Off in a Given Year.....	10
Term Limits/Length of Service	11

OVERVIEW

Purpose

The purpose of the Election Guidelines document is to serve as a supplement to the Staff Senate Bylaws and to provide more detailed information regarding Staff Senate elections and best practices. The intended audience is the Staff Senate Election Coordinator who serves as the election expert and manages all Staff Senate elections.

Additional Election Resources

For Senators: The **Election Recruitment Guide** was developed in 2017 for Senate units that are holding elections. It contains information on how to recruit, a detailed timeline, and resources, such as template emails. This guide can be found in the Staff Senate Teams site.

For Election Coordinator: The Election Coordinator Guide, developed in 2017, is a comprehensive set of resources, including a document that describes the Election Coordinator responsibilities and provides a detailed timeline for all election activities; a document with template emails to send to units throughout the election process; and PowerPoint presentations to use at Staff Senate meetings. This guide can be found in the Staff Senate Teams site.

Revisions

In January 2017, an election working group was formed to review the election guidelines and propose recommendations to the executive committee. On February 6, 2017, these guidelines were updated to reflect those recommendations.

In January 2018, revisions were made as a result of the Senate's decision to phase out the alternate role. In October 2018, revisions were made to clarify specific circumstances related to the re-org of a Senate member and determining when mid-year elections are needed.

In June 2023, this document was revised when the Senate updated its bylaws. Most of the changes occurred in the midterm elections sections.

I. ELECTION OF SENATORS

Centralized Voting System

As of 2017, the Staff Senate moved to a centralized voting system administered by the Election Coordinators.

A. Rationale:

In moving to a centralized voting system, we 1) ensure that every unit/school experiences the same unbiased voting experience, 2) remove the burden of running an election from the senators, so they can spend their time recruiting, not developing and administering ballots 3) simplify the process; it is easier to train one person to develop and administer a voting survey rather than multiple senators and because we have simplified the process, running an election, even mid-year, is much less burdensome 4) are able to gather data on elections that could help inform our election process.

B. How the Centralized Voting System Works:

1. The Membership Directors are responsible for overseeing the following:

- a. Identifying ONE point person in each unit holding elections to serve as the Election Manager for that unit. Ideally, the Election Manager should be a senator in the unit who is not off-boarding or an off-boarding senator who is not running for re-election.
- b. Sending a call for nominations email template to the Election Manager in each unit holding elections.
- c. Creating all ballots and compiling all results in Qualtrics (UVA has a site-wide license) and sending out election results. This entails
 - i. Setting up Qualtrics to require netbadge authentication to ensure only UVA employees participate and activating a "prevent ballot stuffing" feature to ensure each staff member casts only one vote. Note that even though staff members authenticate through netbadge, the survey does NOT collect personal information, so the vote is still anonymous. This will be explained at the top of the ballot. While these measures may seem extreme, it lets our constituency know that we take great care to ensure members are elected in a fair and transparent system.
 - ii. Collecting names and statements of nominees from the Election Manager in each unit holding elections.
 - iii. Sending ballot link along with a template email to the Election Manager in each unit who then sends out to constituency.
 - iv. Sending out election results to:
 - All staff members who ran in the elections to announce the results and to thank everyone for participating. The Election Manager for each unit will be copied on each of these emails.
 - Membership Coordinator

2. The Election Manger for each unit is responsible for:

- a. Actively recruiting staff in his/her unit/school.
- b. Sending out an email to entire constituency asking for nominations (Election Coordinator will provide a template email).
- c. Once the call for nominations closes, contacting nominees to confirm nominations and requesting a short statement: One sentence that describes the candidate's position at UVA and a few sentences that articulate why he/she is running for a seat on the Senate.
- d. Sending names and statements (bio and explanation of why the person is running) to Election Coordinator. If election is uncontested, Election Coordinator may postpone the election to see if he/she can assist the unit in identifying additional candidates.
- e. Sending out ballot link in an email to constituency (template email will be provided by the Election Coordinator)
- f. Sending an email to the newly elected Senate members to welcome them to the Senate and an email to entire constituency announcing the newly elected Senate members.

C. Important Dates

1. March: Elections are announced at March Staff Senate Meeting
2. March-April: Election units recruit and send out a call for nominations
3. May: Nominations are confirmed; ballots are created
4. June 30: All elections for senators must be final by June 30 and reported to the Staff Senate's Membership Coordinators no more than one week later.

II. UNCONTESTED SENATOR ELECTIONS

A. Background Information

The election working group developed these recommendations to address concerns about uncontested elections. The problem as it was presented to us is that holding an uncontested election may feel like an unnecessary burden to the senator who has to take the time to hold the election and also to the constituents who are asked to vote in an uncontested election. The Senate wants to ensure that when we ask staff to take time to participate in a Senate activity, that their time is well spent.

B. Holding Uncontested Elections:

The working group believes that voting in an uncontested election is important and, therefore, it is recommended that uncontested elections should still be held. We are a body of elected members and we need to ensure that the constituency supports the election of the senator who will be representing them on the Senate. Without an election, a member is simply appointed to the Senate, not elected by his/her constituency. However, we have taken the following steps to better support uncontested elections:

1. Added language to the ballot email which explains the importance of voting in an uncontested election.
2. Established a protocol that the Election Coordinator may postpone a unit election for a week (if the unit presents an uncontested ballot) to see if he/she can assist the unit in identifying additional candidates.
3. Developed the Election Recruitment Guide to help strengthen the Senate recruiting campaign and minimize uncontested elections.

II. MIDTERM ELECTIONS FOR SENATORS

1. If a senator seat is vacated before the term is completed, then an election to fill that seat is required. If the seat is vacated outside the regular election cycle (June), then the recommendations outlined in midyear elections (Section III) should be followed.
2. When a senator is elected in a midterm election, that senator does not serve the full three-year term, but instead completes the term of the vacating senator.
3. A senator elected in a midterm election may run for that seat during regular elections and serve a maximum of two three-year consecutive terms or up to eight consecutive years. Once the term limit has been reached, the senator may run for reelection after a one-year absence from the Senate.
4. Midterm elections will follow the same guidelines as regular Staff Senate elections. See Section I.

III. MIDYEAR ELECTIONS FOR SENATORS

We developed these guidelines to minimize the number of midyear elections.

A. Guiding Principle:

Reasonable effort should be made to ensure all units have at least one senator. It is important for each unit/school to be represented at Staff Senate meetings. However, due to the time and effort it takes to hold an election, midyear elections should only be a last resort.

B. Process:

1. If the seat is vacated between June 30 and September 30 in a unit that recently held an election:
 - i. The runner-up will be contacted to serve. If the runner-up declines and there were 6+ candidates on the ballot, the second runner-up will be asked to serve.
 - ii. If there is no runner-up, or the runner-up and the second runner-up decline, the seat will not be filled until the next election cycle.
2. Except for in cases described under #1 (above), the seat will not be filled unless one of the following applies:
 - i. A unit no longer has representation on the Senate and the following applies
 - a. The seat was vacated between June 30 and March 15 and the term of the vacated seat is greater than one year. In this scenario, the Senate will request volunteers to run for the open position. If there is only one volunteer, that person will serve as an interim senator until the June elections. If there are multiple volunteers, the Senate will hold an election and the senator will complete the full term of the vacated seat.
 - b. The seat was vacated between June 30 and March 15 and the term of the vacated seat is less than one year. In this scenario, the Senate will appoint

someone from the unit to fill the position as an interim senator until the June elections. A former senator would likely be the best candidate.

- ii. The total number of senators decreases by 15% in a year (if we have 68 senators, 15% would be approximately 10 senators). In this scenario, the Executive Committee will determine a course of action to increase the number of senators to an acceptable level.

Please note that even in a unit that no longer has representation, if the seat was vacated after March 15, the seat will not be filled unless we can appoint a recent former senator. The rationale for this is that there are only three more months of Staff Senate business before the June elections. Unless we could appoint a former senator, filling the role for three months with someone who doesn't know anything about the Senate doesn't seem like it would serve the appointed person or the Senate very well.

C. On-boarding of Interim-Senators or Senators Elected Midyear:

Members elected midyear will not have the privilege of attending the orientation session in August. It is our recommendation that the Membership Director develop a system for on-boarding newly elected members during midyear. This election working group thought it would be beneficial if someone could serve as a mentor to the new Senate member and meet with him/her at least once at the beginning of his/her tenure to explain how the Senate works. However, ultimately, the Director can determine the best way to handle this.

IV. ELECTION OF STAFF SENATE CO-CHAIRS AND DIRECTORS

Eligibility to run for an Executive Committee position

1. A senator must be in good standing, which means that individual, at the very least, has adhered to the current Senate meeting attendance policy.
2. A senator must have served on the Senate for at least six months. If someone has served on the Senate previously but took a break and has returned to the Senate, that person is eligible immediately.
3. The Membership Directors are responsible for soliciting names for the Staff Senate co-chair and director positions and ensuring all potential candidates are willing to serve as co-chairs or directors. If both Membership Directors are running in the election, the co-chair who is not running or an appointed senator will run the elections.
4. The names of the co-chair and director candidates will be announced no later than mid-July.
5. The ballot will be designed using the same parameters as outlined in Section I > B > 1 > c > i
6. The Membership Directors or an appointed Senate member will create the co-chair/director election ballot in the Qualtrics survey system and will distribute to all senators immediately following the June meeting.
7. Senators should be given at least five business days to vote in the co-chair/director election.
8. Executive Committee elections should occur after the senator elections, so that senators who are running for their seat have the opportunity to also run in the executive committee election. A week

between the two elections is ideal as it gives the Senate time to tally votes and notify current senators if they were re-elected. It also gives those re-elected senators time to draft a purpose statement for the ballot should they choose to run in the Executive Committee elections.

9. A director may opt out after serving one year of the two-year term. A senator may run for a director position even if that senator only has one more year to serve on the Senate.

V. MIDTERM ELECTIONS FOR STAFF SENATE CO-CHAIRS & DIRECTORS

Co-Chairs

1. Co-chairs elected into the position must be in good standing.
2. In 2020, the Senate moved from one-year to two-year terms for co-chairs. Both co-chairs are elected to serve two years, staggered, so that their time together overlaps by one year, ensuring there is one experienced co-chair in office who can mentor the onboarding co-chair. If a co-chair vacates the position prior to the end of the two-year term, the Senate will elect a new co-chair to complete the vacated term. If the other co-chair's term has also ended, meaning that the Senate will need to elect two co-chairs in the same year, then the co-chair with the most votes will serve for two years and the co-chair with the second most votes will serve for one year.

Caveat: If for some reason, the person designated to serve two years decides to step down, then the co-chair designated to serve one year will assume the two-year co-chair position.

3. If a co-chair vacates midyear, the Executive Committee can either
 - a. appoint a current senator in good standing to fill the position until the Senate holds its annual Executive Committee elections whereupon a new co-chair will be elected or
 - b. put a call out for nominations to fill the vacant co-chair seat. Nominees must be senators in good standing. If there is more than one nomination, the Executive Committee will vote to fill the vacated seat.
4. Upon completing a partial term, an interim co-chair may be reelected with a majority vote from the Staff Senate and serve an additional two-year term.

Directors

1. If a director vacates midyear, the Executive Committee can either
 - a. appoint a current senator in good standing to fill the position until the Senate holds its annual Executive Committee elections whereupon a new director will be elected or
 - b. put a call out for nominations to fill the vacant co-chair seat. Nominees must be senators in good standing. If there is more than one nomination, the Executive Committee will vote to fill the vacated seat.
2. Upon completing a partial term, an interim director may be reelected with a majority vote from the Staff Senate and serve an additional two-year term.

VI. IN THE EVENT OF TIES

In the event of a tie, whether in co-chair/director or senator elections, the candidate with the longest period of service with the University shall be chosen. If this procedure does not break the tie, then the candidate with the longest period of service in his/her organizational unit shall be chosen.

VII. ELECTIONS TIMELINE (ABBREVIATED)

An unabridged timeline can be found in the Election Coordinator Guide in the Staff Senate Teams site. In addition, a more specific timeline for the units holding elections can be found in the Election Recruitment Guide located in the Staff Senate Teams site.

March

- During Senate meeting, Membership Directors will give an overview of the election process, and will announce which units will need to hold elections and the names of the election managers for each unit.
- The Election Manager in each election unit will begin actively talking with coworkers about serving on the Senate.

April

- Election Managers will continue to actively recruit.
- Election Managers will send a formal call for nominations email at the beginning of the second week (email template will be provided by Election Coordinator).

May

- Point person will confirm nominations, collect names and bios/statements, and send to Membership Directors.

June

- Membership Directors or appointed election coordinators will create ballots and send ballot link and email template to election manager in each unit.
- Election Managers will send out ballot to organizational unit, giving the unit at least five business days to vote.
- Senator elections will conclude by June 30.
- Co-chair/director candidates will be announced at Staff Senate meeting and the ballot will be sent immediately after the June meeting.

July

- Membership Directors will send election results to staff who ran in election (copying election manager in each unit).
- Election Managers will send out email to newly elected members to welcome them and to organizational unit to announce new Senate members.
- At the Staff Senate meeting new co-chairs/directors will be announced.

August

- New member orientation will be held sometime in August.

VII. ADDITIONAL ELECTION CONSIDERATIONS

Senator's Org Unit Changes

It may occur that a senator is elected by one org unit but then, through a University reorganization effort or through a job change, is moved to a different org unit – one in which they were not elected. In this case,

- the senator will become an ex-officio representative of the Senate and will retain voting rights.
Rationale: the senator should not be punished for a job change or reorganization effort by having their voting rights removed. Senators serve the greater good for all staff, not just their current organization, and can continue to do so after a re-org.
- the senator will still be able to fully participate in the work of the Senate, including holding a position on the executive committee.
Rationale: The senator was elected and should be permitted to fully serve on the Senate. In fact, it could be the case that the ex-officio member was already serving as a co-chair or director before he/she was moved from one org unit to another and so he/she should be allowed to continue in that role.
- if a seat becomes available in the org unit in which he/she has moved, the ex-officio representative will be invited to run for the seat. The ex-officio representative will not lose their ex-officio standing if they run for the seat and do not win. In this case the ex-officio member will continue to serve the remainder of their three-year term.
Rationale: Allowing the ex-officio representative to assume the vacated seat without an election is unfair to the constituency as they did not elect this person to represent them.
- If a senator in that org unit vacates mid-year, the ex-officio senator should serve as the interim-senator until an election can be held in June.
Rationale: As this person is already actively involved in the Senate, it seems an obvious solution if a mid-year vacancy occurs.

Note that the Org unit from which that senator has been moved will need to follow the mid-year election policy explained earlier in this document.

Ensuring Only 1/3 of Senators Roll Off in a Given Year

Overview

According to the Senate Bylaws, "Terms are structured in such a way that no more than one-third of the total Staff Senate membership will renew each year. To achieve this, the Senate may occasionally need to reduce the length of some senator terms for an election cycle. Reduced terms will only be applied to senator positions that are up for election; the terms of current senators will not be affected. Every effort will be made to ensure term rebalancing is done in a fair and equitable manner."

The Membership folder in Teams contains detailed information about how to ensure only 1/3 roll off each year.

The following criteria should be used to rebalance terms:

- Only the terms of vacating senator or new senator seats should be shortened. The terms of current senators should NOT be adjusted.

- Terms for senators in the same unit should be staggered in such a way to avoid having all of the senators roll off in the same year and to ensure that a unit will not have to hold an election every year as was the case for Facilities Management.
- One-year terms should not be implemented to rebalance the numbers as such a short term does not allow new senators enough time to get acclimated and involved in the Senate. Instead, two-year terms should be implemented and, if necessary, over multiple election cycles to rebalance the numbers.

Elections

- If a unit has a two-year seat, this should be clearly communicated to the constituency.
- If a unit is holding an election with more than 1 open seat and one seat is a two-year term and the other seat is a three-year term, then the candidate with the most votes wins the three-year seat and the runner up will serve in the two-year seat. If there is tie, then the person with the most seniority at UVA will win the three-year seat.

Unit Changes

- If the number of constituents in a unit increases or decreases during the year, the number of senators should only be added or removed during the June election cycle. There should be no midyear changes to the number of senators representing a unit.

Term Limits/Length of Service

- If a senator is elected to serve a one-year or two-year term in order to fill a seat that was vacated midterm, for example, that senator can serve for two additional three-year consecutive terms or for a total of no more than eight consecutive years. At the conclusion of consecutive full terms, the senator may run for reelection after a one-year absence from the Senate.
- A one-year absence from the Senate requires that the senator no longer serve in any official capacity, including in an ex-officio capacity. If a senate member continues to serve on the Senate in an ex-officio role (meaning they have reached their term limit and are no longer a senator), such as a co-chair or past co-chair, this does NOT count as an absence from the Senate.