STAFF SENATE
ELECTION GUIDELINES

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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/Alternates: 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 Collab 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 Collab 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.

I. ELECTION OF SENATORS/ALTERNATES

Centralized Voting System
As of 2017, the Staff Senate moved to a centralized voting system administered by the Election Coordinator.

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 and alternates, 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 alternates 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 Election Coordinator is responsible for:**

    a. Identifying ONE point person in each unit holding elections to serve as the election manager for that unit. The election point person will be the off-boarding senator or alternate. If a unit has more than one off-boarding Senate member, then the election coordinator will randomly select someone to serve as the point-person for that unit.

    b. Sending a call for nominations email template to the point person 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 point person in each unit holding elections.

        iii. Sending ballot link along with a template email to the point person 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 unit point person will be copied on each of these emails.
            ▪ Membership Coordinator and Membership Chair

2. **The Election Point Person 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. One or two weeks before the call for nominations closes, sending a list of nominees to constituents so that staff in that unit/school know who is running and can nominate themselves or help to recruit others if they are not satisfied with the list of candidates.

   d. 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.

   e. 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.

   f. Sending out ballot link in an email to constituency (template email will be provided by the Election Coordinator)

   g. 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.

3. **Membership Coordinator is responsible for:**

   a. Working with UHR to generate a list of names and computing ids divided by organizational unit and then reviewing the total number of staff members in each unit holding elections to ensure the number of Staff Senate representatives is accurate.

   b. Sending email lists to any point person who needs contact information for their constituency.

4. **Membership Committee is responsible for:**

   a. Contacting the newly elected members to introduce them to the Senate and notify them of the upcoming new member orientation.

   b. Collaborating with UHR to send emails to the supervisors of ALL Staff Senate members. The email is signed by the Chief Human Resources Officer and explains the importance of Senate work and that Senate work counts as time worked (meaning a staff member does not have to make up work missed when attending to Staff Senate business).

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 and alternates must be final by June 30 and reported to the Staff Senate's Membership Coordinator and Membership Committee no more than one week later.

II. UNCONTESTED SENATOR/ALTERNATE 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 or alternate 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 or alternate 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.

4. Added a second choice on an uncontested ballot. Our greatest concern is that a staff member will assume a seat on the Senate without the support of his/her constituency. To help mitigate this concern, we developed a ballot that, in addition to having the candidate's name, will have a second choice, "I abstain from voting." The intent, primarily, is to provide the voter a choice and, secondly, to collect data on how often uncontested candidates are not actually supported by their constituency. Once we have collected enough data, we can determine how to move forward with uncontested elections.

II. MIDTERM ELECTIONS FOR SENATORS/ALTERNATES

1. If a senator or alternate vacates her seat before her 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 or alternate is elected in a midterm election, that senator or alternate does not serve the full three-year term, but instead completes the term of the vacating senator or alternate.
3. A senator or alternate elected in a midterm election may run for that seat during regular elections and serve a maximum of two three-year consecutive terms (in addition to time served in fulfillment of the vacated seat). At the conclusion of consecutive full terms, the senator or alternate 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. MID-YEAR ELECTIONS FOR SENATORS/ALTERNATES

These guidelines are really a subset of midterm elections as ALL mid-year elections will also be midterm elections. We developed these guidelines to minimize the number of mid-year elections.

A. Guiding Principle:

A unit should always have at least one senator and one alternate or two senators. It is important for each unit/school to be represented at all Staff Senate meetings. If a unit has only one representative and that individual cannot attend a meeting, then the unit/school is not fairly represented.

B. An Immediate Mid-Year Election is Required:

1. If a senator resigns mid-year in a school/unit with only one senator and one alternate, the alternate should assume the senator's seat until an official election can be held in June and the unit will hold an election for a new alternate immediately. If the alternate is unable to assume the senator's seat, then the unit must hold an election for a senator immediately.

2. If an alternate resigns mid-year in a school/unit with only one senator and alternate, the unit holds an election for a new alternate immediately.

3. **EXCEPTION**: If the senator or alternate resigns mid-year **AND** only has 6 months or less left in his/her three-year term, the senator or alternate can *appoint* someone from his/her unit to serve as either the senator (if the alternate cannot step into the senator role) or an alternate until an official election can be held in June. The purpose of this is to avoid holding two elections in a very short period of time.

C. A Mid-Year Election Is not Required:

If a senator or alternate resigns mid-year in a school/unit with more than one senator and alternate so that the unit will still have at least one senator and one alternate or two senators. In this case, the election can be postponed until June.

D. On-boarding of Senate Members Elected Mid-Year:

Members elected mid-year will not have the privilege of attending the orientation session in August. It is our recommendation that the Membership Committee develop a system for on-boarding newly elected members during mid-year. 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, Membership can determine the best way to handle this.

IV. ELECTION OF STAFF SENATE CO-CHAIRS

1. The Election Coordinator is responsible for soliciting names for the Staff Senate co-chair positions and ensuring all potential candidates are willing to serve as co-chairs.
2. The names of the co-chair candidates will be announced at the June Staff Senate meeting.
3. The ballot will be designed using the same parameters as outlined in Section I > B >1 >c>i
4. The Election Coordinator will create the co-chair election ballot in the Qualtrics survey system and will distribute to all senators immediately following the June meeting.
5. Senators should be given ten business days to vote in the co-chair election.
6. Co-chair election voting should close 7-10 business days prior to the July Staff Senate meeting.

V. MIDTERM ELECTIONS FOR STAFF SENATE CO-CHAIRS

1. Should a co-chair become unable to complete his/her term, then a mid-year officer election is held to fill the vacancy.
2. Midterm co-chair elections will follow the same guidelines outlined in Section IV.
3. Upon completing a partial term, an interim co-chair may be reelected with a majority vote from the Staff Senate and serve another term.

VI. IN THE EVENT OF TIES

In the event of a tie, whether in officer or senator/alternate 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 Collab 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 Collab site.

March

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

April

- Point person will continue to actively recruit.
- Point person 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 Election Coordinator.

June

- Election coordinator will create ballots and send ballot link and email template to point person in each unit.
- Point person will send out ballot to organizational unit, giving the unit 10 business days to vote.
- Senator/Alternate elections will conclude by June 30.
- Co-chair candidates will be announced at Staff Senate meeting and the ballot will be sent immediately after the June meeting.

July

- Election coordinator will send election results to staff who ran in election (copying point person in each unit) and to the Membership Coordinator and Chair.
- Point person 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 will be announced.

August

- New member orientation will be held sometime in August.