

NORTHERN IOWA STUDENT GOVERNMENT ELECTION RULES

Section 1. Introduction and Definitions

A. Title

1. This document shall be titled the Northern Iowa Student Government Election Rules, hereafter referred to as the Election Rules.

B. Purpose

1. These Election Rules and the group of students who oversee the elections, the Supreme Court, exist to monitor elections and assist candidates in the understanding of election rules to represent students through election to the branches of the Northern Iowa Student Government, or NISG. This document and the Supreme Court shall determine the rules under which NISG will operate during the General (Spring), Fall, and Special Elections.

C. Definitions

1. Formal campaigning

i. Formal campaigning is defined as:

1. The distribution, publication, or exhibition of any material advocating the candidacy of any individual or group of individuals; and
2. Communicating to a formal group of students or making a public announcement identifying oneself as a candidate or candidacy.

ii. Actions of formal campaigning include but are not limited to, making buttons and t-shirts generally available; posting flyers; holding press conferences or rallies; communicating to a group of students; creating publicly available electronic social networking groups; posting the location of or information on a campaign website; issuing/allowing the dissemination of information through email, text message, postal or campus mail; etc.

2. Informal campaigning

i. Informal campaigning is defined as:

1. Creating student organizations and holding meetings to conduct business related to one's campaign.
2. Answering questions about one's campaign
 - a. Candidates and their teams shall not solicit votes verbally until the period of formal campaigning. Soliciting votes shall be considered formal campaigning.

3. Election Documents

i. Election Documents are:

1. Applications, petitions, vote tally sheets, completed ballots, and any notes kept from Supreme Court meetings.

4. Campaign team
 - i. A campaign team shall be defined as persons who act on the behalf of a candidate/ campaign with formal consent from the candidate. Campaign staff must be declared to the Supreme Court Chief Justice.
 - ii. Formal Declarations must be submitted with the election packet, and can be edited as needed during the length of formal campaigning.
5. Candidate
 - i. A candidate shall be defined as any individual who is seeking elected office within Northern Iowa Student Government and who has met all filing criteria as outlined in the Election Rules.
6. Candidacy
 - i. Candidacy shall be defined as the candidate and their campaign team.

Section 2. Supreme Court Role as the Election Commission

- A. Title
 1. The group of students who oversee elections shall be the NISG Supreme Court.
 2. The NISG Supreme Court shall make up the Election Commission.
- B. Purpose
 1. The Supreme Court is to monitor elections and campaigning, answer questions about the Election Rules, enforce Election Rules, modify the Election Rules, as needed, and set the election calendar.
- C. Membership
 1. The following scenarios shall prohibit a justice from fulfilling the Supreme Court's election duties. The scenarios are:
 - i. An individual who is preparing to or currently seeking an elected NISG position.
 - ii. An individual who is a spouse or immediate relative of candidate(s).
 - iii. An individual who is not a student of the University of Northern Iowa as determined by the University Registrar.
 2. Justices who are unable to fulfil the election duties may remain on the Supreme Court but they shall have no vote or involvement with the Supreme Court's jurisdiction over the elections.
 3. If a Justice chooses not to serve on the Election Commission, they may nominate someone to serve in their place. The nomination ,must then be confirmed by a majority vote of the court.
- D. Conduct
 1. Commissioners shall not formally campaign, support, ally with, or endorse a candidate or candidacy.
 2. Commissioners shall not encourage voters to vote for a particular candidate or candidacy.

3. Associate commissioners shall demonstrate a working knowledge of the Election Rules.
 4. Associate commissioners shall not advise a candidate or candidacy on policy, platform, or procedure. They may provide copies of the Election Rules and contact information for the Election Commissioner in the event that a campaign or candidacy has questions.
- E. Duties of the Commission
1. Meet regularly as determined by the Election Commissioner and at least once within the first two weeks of the Spring semester
 2. The Election Commission shall remove and report all literature which violates the Election Rules.
 3. Modify the election calendar as needed.
 4. Hear and rule on complaints and appeals from the Student Body and University.
 5. Determine the number of Senate seats for the following year based on the Fall 10-Day Census Enrollment numbers.
 6. Other duties as assigned by NISG and the NISG Advisors.
- F. Election Duties of the Election Commissioner
1. Oversee the Election Commission in its election functions.
 2. Be available, upon request, to meet with any candidate or candidacy regarding election rules, campaigning, or other questions regarding NISG related concerns.
 3. Accept candidate petitions.
 4. Ensure the Election Commission is full at least 4 members who are eligible to vote in election matters as determined by Section 2, letter B.
 5. Schedule and lead meetings of the Election Commission regarding the election.
- G. Election Commission Meetings
1. Meetings of the Election Commission shall be open to the public unless the Commission votes to close the meeting to the public. The Commission should not solicit public ideas during a meeting, unless otherwise voted upon by the Commission.
 2. The meeting at which the Election Commission convenes to count the completed ballots shall be closed to the public.

Section 3. General (Spring) Election

A. Duration of Campaigning

1. Campaigning shall start at 8:00 AM fifteen days before the date of the General Election.

B. Campaigning shall cease and candidates shall remove their materials after the results are released to the students and press.

Date of Election

2. The General Election shall be held each year on the last Tuesday and Wednesday of February.
3. The Polls shall be open for 36 contiguous hours or from 7:00 AM on Tuesday until 7:00 PM on Wednesday.

C. In the case that no President and Vice President Candidate obtains a simple majority of the votes, there will be a runoff election held the following Tuesday and Wednesday at the same time of the General Election.

Section 4. Special Elections

A. Purpose of Special Elections

1. The Supreme Court may hold Special Elections for purposes stated in the Constitution. In the event a Special Election must be held, any senators previously appointed by the Speaker of the Senate must run to retain their seats, as stated in the NISG Constitution.

B. Duration of Campaigning and Date of the Election

4. The Supreme Court shall determine the length of the campaigning. Generally, fifteen days before open of polls for the special election, which is modeled after the General Election calendar, but the duration and date of election are at the discretion of the Supreme Court. Dates of campaigning should avoid week long university holidays (e.g. Thanksgiving Break and Spring Break). Week-long university holidays shall not constitute as one of the two weeks.
5. The Supreme Court shall determine the date the Election is to be held. The Election shall choose a contiguous Tuesday and Wednesday and shall attempt to avoid major campus events including Homecoming and midterms. The Polls shall be open for 36 contiguous hours or from 7:00 AM on Tuesday until 7:00 PM on Wednesday. The Election should be scheduled before October 31st if possible.

Section 5. Advertisement of Election – Publicity and Promotion

A. With the NISG Director of Public Relations, the following are minimum requirements for publicity and promotion:

1. Election dates, petition material availability, dates and times of informational election meetings and a form of contact for the Supreme Court shall be announced during a Senate meeting. Following the meeting, a news release shall be provided to the Northern Iowan. This release may also be provided to other local media news outlets at the discretion of the Supreme Court.

2. Advertising and promotions shall be carried out by the student-related media venues including but not limited to: KULT-LP, the Northern Iowan, and UNI-TV. Content of these promotions shall serve to advocate the general interest of the election forthcoming.
3. The Election Commission shall have the option to organize and/or advertise public President/Vice President Candidate debates in conjunction with interested student organizations. All President/Vice President Candidacies are to be invited to participate.
4. The Election Commission shall provide the official results of the elections to the student-related and local media venues

Section 6. Requirements for Candidacy

A. Minimum GPA and Student Status

1. Candidates for elected positions must be students of the University of Northern Iowa and must have a minimum Cumulative GPA of 2.0. The candidate must take his or her petition to the Office of the University Registrar for verification.

B. Petition for listing on official ballot

1. Students who wish to be listed on the General Election ballot for an elected NISG position must complete a petition form and submit this form to the Election Commissioner no later than 5:00 PM eleven days before the date of the General Election.
2. Students who wish to be listed on the ballot for other elections must contact the Election Commissioner to receive official election dates.
3. The Election Commissioner will not accept petitions submitted after the posted date and time.
4. Petitions shall be distributed with an informational cover sheet, brief questionnaire, copy of the current Election Rules governing the Election, and multiple signature sheets.
5. Students running for election may request, and the Election Commission must provide, copies of the NISG Constitution, By-Laws, Maucker Union Monitor Guidelines, Department of Residence Posting Guidelines, and University Posting Policy.
6. Petitions shall not be photocopied, duplicated, or electronically modified. All petitions submitted to the Election Commissioner shall be original petitions provided by the Election Commission.
7. Candidates shall obtain student signatures of endorsement for their candidacy in order to have their name placed on the ballot.
8. Petition forms will be available at no fewer than four meetings held by the Election Commission.

9. The Election Commission shall hold at least two meetings the week before campaigning starts and at least two after the start of campaigning. Petition forms shall also be available by appointment with the Election Commission.
10. No petition form shall be available and a candidate shall not campaign until he/she has read and signed a statement guaranteeing his/her understanding of, and compliance with, all Election Rules and restrictions therein.
11. The Election Commission shall hold informational meetings about the election process and election rules at least once per election cycle.
 - i. The Election Commissioner shall be available to answer questions upon request.
12. Students seeking election shall obtain the following number of signatures before submitting their petition:
 - i. College Senators
 1. College of Business Administration -25 signatures
 2. College of Education -25 signatures
 3. Colleges of Humanities, Arts and Sciences -25 signatures
 4. College of Social and Behavioral Sciences -25 signatures
 5. Graduate College -25 signatures
 6. Undecided/Interdisciplinary/General Studies -10 signatures
 - ii. President/Vice President Candidacy -150 signatures
 1. At least 25 signatures should be from the first five categories listed in Section 6, letter 6, subsection 6, subsection vi
 2. At least 10 signatures should be from category 6 (Undecided/Interdisciplinary/General Studies) listed in Section 6, letter 6, subsection 6, subsection.
13. All signatures must be from the constituency in which the candidate is running.
14. Students may write their name on more than one petition, but may only write their name on each petition once. Signers must be registered students of the University of Northern Iowa, as defined by the University Registrar. The

signer must print his or her name, major, and phone number for verification purposes.

15. The Election Commission may contact any person who writes their name on a petition to confirm that they knowingly and willingly wrote their name on the petition. It is recommended that the Election Commission select and contact at least 5 persons from each petition.
16. Petitions shall be available for controlled viewing in the NISG office by appointment with the Election Commissioner.
17. In the event of discrepancies concerning petitions, the Election Commission shall convene to evaluate the nature of the concern and decide on the appropriate action.

Section 7. Campaigning and Campaign Finances

A. Campaigning

1. Candidates and their teams are prohibited from formal campaigning until the campaigning time period has begun. Candidates may informally campaign before the campaigning time period. It is imperative that candidates with questions or concerns about campaigning rules and definitions must submit questions to the Supreme Court for clarification.
2. No campaigning or campaign materials will be allowed within the following places:
 - i. Any university owned computers during polling hours except for announcements from the Supreme Court.
 - ii. Offices housing student-managed and operated services receiving Student Activity funds, through line item or Contingency allotment.
 - iii. These restrictions shall not be construed to deny candidates access to advertising through student media outlets, nor deny those media the right to endorse candidates and candidacies within their normal printed or broadcasted material. However, Supreme Court members shall retain the power to enforce other restrictions so as to maintain the integrity of the Election.
3. No candidate or their campaign teams may remove, deface, obscure, or destroy any posted campaign material prior to or during an election.
4. Candidates shall be responsible for following solicitation policies within any buildings where they may be campaigning. (Maucker Union, Dorms, etc.)
5. Candidates must follow posting guidelines set forth by the Department of Residence, Maucker Union, Academic Departments and Colleges, and UNI Facility Services.
6. Candidates shall be responsible for following all Federal, State laws and local laws that may impact the election.

7. Candidates shall be responsible for following all campus policies, and student conduct code during the course of campaigning.
8. Violations of above policies will result in sanctions from the election commission.
9. No candidate or supporter shall use NISG resources for the benefit of a campaign. This includes but is not limited to the NISG office, office supplies, equipment; equipment maintained in the Student Involvement Center is subject to the rules set forth by the Student Involvement Center.

B. Campaign Finance

1. Campaigns for President/Vice President must not raise and spend more than \$1,000 on campaign expenses. Campaigns for Senate seats must not spend more than \$250 on campaign expenses.
2. *Campaigns for President/Vice President* are allowed an additional \$500 in in-kind donations (e.g. goods and services, such as posters) or campaign expenses of any sort from outside groups. This will not count toward the spending cap, but candidates must submit receipts or estimates of the expenses to the Supreme Court.
3. Campaigns for Senate Seats are allowed an additional \$250 in in-kind donations (e.g. goods and services, such as posters) or campaign expenses of any sort from outside groups. This will not count toward the spending cap, but candidates must submit receipts or estimates of the expenses to the Supreme Court.
4. All candidacies and candidates must submit expense reports and receipts for all purchases. Supreme Court members shall note any campaign advertising or publicity not included on these reports. Campaigns and Candidates must provide documentation for any items not included on these reports if asked by the Supreme Court.
5. All President/Vice President Candidacies shall submit expense reports complete with receipts and samples by 5:00 PM CST on Friday's during the period of formal campaigning to the NISG office to the Election Commissioner. A final comprehensive expense report and any additional receipts shall be submitted to the NISG office to the Election Commissioner by 5 P.M. on the final day of polling.
6. All College Senator Candidates shall submit a final comprehensive expense report and any additional receipts to Election Commissioner within five hours of the close of the polls on Election Day.

7. The Election Commission shall re-evaluate the spending cap at the end of each election cycle and shall amend these rules as needed to prevent unnecessary and excessive spending.
8. In the case of a runoff election for President and Vice President, each of the candidacies will be able to spend an additional \$250 and receive \$250 of in-kind donations. A final, comprehensive expense report and additional receipts will be due to the NISG office or the Supreme Court Chief Justice within five hours of the close of the polls on Election Day.

Section 8. Student Voters

A. Voter Eligibility

1. All registered University students shall have the right to vote. No student will be denied the opportunity to vote.
2. Voters needing assistance due to a disability may request the assistance of a person of their choice.

B. Polling Location and Hours

1. All UNI Students shall vote using an electronic ballot at a website designated by the Supreme Court. The website shall be available on and off campus.
2. Polling Hours: 7:00 AM on the preceding day until 7:00 PM on Election Day, as determined in Sections 3 and 4 of the Election Rules. Thus, the Polls shall be open for 36 contiguous hours or from 7:00 AM on Tuesday until 7:00 PM on Wednesday.

Section 9. Ballots, Ballot Counting, and Announcement of Results

A. Ballots

1. When voters log in to the electronic ballot, they will be asked to authenticate themselves using a standard University login. Voters will be validated against University Records to determine that they are current students and they have not already voted in the current election.
2. Each student shall be presented with a personalized electronic ballot. This ballot shall list each position to be elected and all official candidates for each office for which the voter is eligible to vote in, according to University records. The ballot shall also contain a textbox for each office for write-in candidates.
 - i. Write-in candidacies are permitted, with the number of write-in candidates being equal to the number of positions available from one constituency.
 - ii. If a name on a ballot is incorrectly spelled, the Supreme Court may determine the validity of the ballot.
 - iii. All write-in candidates need their name to appear in at least 5 ballots to be eligible for a Senate Seat.

3. After filling out the voter's custom ballot, the ballot must be submitted in order for it to count. A voter may stop voting and void their current ballot at any time prior to final submission. Students shall be allowed to return at a later time and vote while the polls are still open. Once a ballot has been submitted, a voter may not change his or her ballot.
4. Each voter may only vote once in each election and may only use the custom ballot given to them.
5. Voters may request and complete an absentee ballot.
 - i. Casting period shall begin one week prior to the election and shall end when the polls regularly close.
 - ii. Students shall cast a written ballot containing name, all majors, phone number, email address, and constituency. In the event that a Member of the Supreme Court is unavailable, an NISG Office Manager is empowered to act on behalf of the Supreme Court.
 - iii. Absentee ballots shall be completed in the NISG office. Once completed the ballot will be placed within an envelope and sealed by the voter.
 - iv. In all cases, the Supreme Court Chief Justice shall be responsible for ensuring ballot security and integrity. The Supreme Court shall ensure that no voter completes both a paper and electronic ballot. The Supreme Court is instructed to prepare absentee and paper ballots in case of technical difficulties.
6. Should two or more candidates for the same position share the same first and last name, middle names shall be added to the ballot.

B. Challenged Ballots

1. If a student discovers an error on his or her ballot, the student has the option to challenge the ballot by notifying the Election Commissioner by going to the NISG office and telling the Election Commission or a Commission Member about the error.
2. Voters challenging their ballots will then fill out a separate written ballot identical to others in their jurisdiction.
3. Once a student challenges a ballot, his or her votes will be held in a separate file while the Election Commissioner verifies their challenge.
4. A student may be asked to meet with the Election Commission within 24 hours of the closing of the polls to provide proof of enrollment for verification.
9. If the voter's challenge is eligible, all identification information will be removed from the challenged ballot and placed with the rest of the ballots prior to final tabulation.
10. If the voter's challenge is ineligible, the ballot from that voter will remain in the separate pool of ballots with the votes remaining confidential from all persons outside the Supreme Court. Ineligible voters will be notified in

writing concerning the disposition of their ballots. The Supreme Court will have final authority over the acceptance or rejection of challenged ballots.

C. Ballot Counting

1. The Election Commissioner is responsible for coordinating with Information Technology Services & the Office of the Registrar and verifying all votes.
2. At least 2/3 of members are required for ballot counting for each election. If 2/3 of members cannot be reached, the Clerk of Court can serve as a substitute for one member.
3. Should the Election Commissioner determine that a discrepancy exists, either due to a discovery of his or her own or due to information received from another person or office, a record of this fact should be noted to later determine materiality of the discrepancy. The Election Commission shall resolve all discrepancies prior to the conclusion of ballot counting
4. Ballots shall come under the full control of the Election Commissioner.
5. All Election Documents shall be available for public viewing upon appointment with the Election Commissioner. The Election Commissioner shall store Election Documents for at least one year. All official ballots shall be archived at the University Archive along with a report containing all candidates on the ballot, all candidates written in, all candidates that won, and the amount of money each candidate spent.
6. An option of No-Vote (Ballot will not be counted) shall be added to presidential election ballots for students who wish to not vote.
7. All write-in votes for presidential elections shall be counted in the vote total when counting towards a majority.
8. Only write in votes for eligible students shall have the ability to win an election.

D. Announcement of Results

1. Once the Supreme Court has verified the results of an election, an announcement shall be made in the Maucker Union at the bottom of the grand staircase as soon as possible. This announcement shall include the results of all positions, Executive and Legislative, and referendums.
2. The Commission shall notify student-related media venues about the results of the election via a press release. This release may be provided to local media news outlets at the discretion of the Supreme Court.
3. If a problem arises, the Supreme Court reserves the right to delay the announcement of the results until the next day at noon in Maucker Union at the bottom of the grand staircase.

E. Elections Resulting in a Tie

1. If there are only two (2) candidates in a contest and the election results in a tie, then the election shall be rerun in the Run-off Election.
2. If there are more than two (2) candidates in a contest and there is a tie for second place and if a run-off is otherwise needed, then the first place

candidate and the candidates tied for second shall all run in the run-off. The candidate who receives the most votes in the run-off shall be the winner, regardless of whether he/she receives a majority of the votes cast.

3. For Senate seats, in the event that the last position eligible for the runoff is tied, then both candidates tied shall be in the run-off.
4. For the runoff election, if either candidate is a write in candidate, the election commission will inform them that they have until the following Friday at 5:00 p.m. after the election to fill-out an official petition to be eligible for the run-off election.
5. If a runoff election results in a tie, then the tied candidate who received the most votes in the General Election shall be the winner.
6. Candidates who cannot attend the election results will be contacted by the election commission within 24 hours of the announcement.

Section 10. Violations, Grievances, and Appeals

A. Original Jurisdiction

1. The Election Commission shall have original jurisdiction in all matters concerning elections and grievances.

B. Challenging Results or Procedures

1. Any student may challenge the results or procedures of any election by submitting his or her written grievance to the Supreme Court Chief Justice no later than 5 PM on the fifth class day following the election being challenged.
2. Counter grievances will be taken until 5 PM. on the fifth class day after notification of the filed grievance(s).
3. Candidates objecting with the decision of the Supreme Court may appeal according to the NISG Constitution, Article VI, Section 2.
4. After the grievance period has been observed, the Supreme Court will consider certification of the election and forward its conclusions to the Senate.

C. Violations

1. The Election Commission shall orderly and fairly impose sanctions against campaigns and candidates which violate the Election Rules. All sanctions imposed will be at the discretion of the Election Commission.
2. Sanctions available to the Election Commission include but are not limited to:
 - i. Warning
 - ii. Warning with probation
 - iii. Public censure
 - iv. Purchase replacement banners/flyers/posters for opponent
 - v. Prohibit campaigning to student groups
 - vi. Stop actively handing out campaign material
 - vii. Stop active campaigning for rest of election

- viii. Remove posters from a specific location
 - ix. Stop campaigning for a specific number of days
 - x. Remove candidate from ballot
 - xi. Remove candidate from ballot and bar them from winning
 - xii. Nullification of the Election
3. Specific infractions and suggested minimum (not required minimum) sanctions include but are not limited to:
- i. Early campaigning
 - 1. Warning with Probation
 - 2. Take down posters/banners/materials until campaigning starts
 - 3. Delay campaign start date for campaign by the number of days election rules violated
 - ii. Early campaigning with an intent to solicit votes
 - 1. Warning with Probation
 - 2. Stop candidate from talking to people until campaigning starts
 - 3. Delay campaign start date for campaign by the number of days election rules violated
 - iii. Vandalism
 - 1. Public Censure
 - 2. Restitution toward other campaigns
 - 3. Additional sanctions as decided by the Supreme Court
 - iv. Election Commission member misconduct
 - 1. Removal of member from Election Commission
 - v. Spending Violation/Overspending
 - 1. Candidate not allowed to use materials for which extra money was spent
 - 2. Warning with Probation
 - vi. Failure to Submit Spending Paperwork
 - 1. Removal of name from the ballot
 - vii. Fraudulent Documents (petitions or spending documents)
 - 1. Removal of name from the ballot

Section 11. Suspension and Amendments

- A. The NISG Election Rules may be suspended by the Election Commission by a 2/3 vote. The Commission may seek the opinion of the NISG Advisor and/or University President or his/her designee.
- B. The NISG Election Rules may be amended by a 2/3 vote of the Supreme Court, subject to approval by a 2/3 vote of the NISG Senate. Any amendments to this document must be made six weeks prior to the next election.

Date of Enactment: February 8, 1998

Amendments:

February 16, 2000 – Electronic Balloting

January 17, 2001 – Total Revision

November 13, 2002 – Petition requirements and grievance procedures

February 5, 2003 – Revision of campaigning procedures

March 10, 2004 – Revision to Election Agents

April 11, 2007 – Removal of Special Elections (et al)

January 14, 2009 – Multiple Revisions, explanations, and grammatical changes,
Reinstantiation of special elections

November 11, 2009 – Total Revision and Reorganization

October 17, 2011 – Revision of Campaign Finance, Election Commission

Composition, Petition Composition, Removal of Fall Elections, Publicity Guidelines,
Length of Campaigning Time

March 20, 2012 – Revision of Campaign Finance, Publicity Guidelines, Time the
Election is Held, College Signature Requirement, Requirement to Archive Election
Material, Clarified which enrollment figures to use in determining number of
Senate seats, Write-In Candidate Eligibility.

March 30, 2015 – Revision of Supreme Court Duties, Campaigning, Ballots, and
Ballot Counting

December 20, 2016 – Unification of wording (changing “Supreme Court” to “Election
Commission” and “Supreme Court Chief Justice” to “Election Commissioner”).
Added definition of Candidates, Candidacy, and Campaign team. Added a clause
about delaying election rules. Added sanctions available to the court.