



# Seneca Student Federation Incorporated

## **Election Policy and Procedures**

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This Policy applies to all Seneca Student Federation Incorporated (SSF) Elections and By-elections. It exists to ensure the fair and unbiased administration of all Elections. The intent of this Policy is to provide additional direction and information to that contained in the SSF By-Laws.

**\*\*\*Please note that in person, on-campus campaigning during the SSF By-Election is NOT permitted. This decision was made by the Board of Directors due to the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic\*\*\***

## **1. NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION**

- a) The Seneca Student Federation (SSF) Board of Directors shall establish the nomination period, campaign period, and polling dates for all SSF Elections.
- b) The SSF, in cooperation with the Chief Electoral Officer, shall advertise the nomination period, positions available, and the polling dates to the membership of the SSF.

## **2. THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER**

- a) The SSF Board of Directors shall appoint a Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) annually to administer and ensure the integrity of Elections.
- b) In cooperation with the SSF's Executive Director, the CEO will assign election operational duties and responsibilities to SSF managers as needed.
- c) The CEO has the authority to disqualify a candidate found in violation of this Policy.
- d) Written and or/verbal notifications issued to a candidate by the CEO to cease any activity must be complied with immediately. Notifications may include activities not specified in this Policy.

## **3. EARLY NOMINATION PERIOD FOR INTERNAL MEMBERS**

Internal Members are those currently serving as Board Members, President, or on a Local Branch Council.

Qualified Internal Members seeking to run for the President or Vice President positions must advise the CEO of their intention to run within the timeframe specified by the Internal Nominations Period. The Executive Director will advise Internal Members of the Internal Nomination Period timelines.

If there are no qualified internal candidates by the end of the Internal Nomination Period, the relevant qualifications listed in Section 5, "Candidate Qualifications and Eligibility Criteria", B (iii) (i) and Section C (ii) (i) and (ii) are suspended, and the position(s) will be opened to the general student population who meet the other requirements during the General Nomination Period. Internal Members will be eligible during the General Nomination Period if they did not declare during the Internal Nomination Period; if they meet the other eligibility criteria. However, Section B (iii) (i) and/or Section C (ii) (i) and (ii) will remain suspended.

#### 4. NOMINATION REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL POSITIONS

- a) Candidates for all positions must live in Ontario and must be available in-person to fulfill their positions.
- b) All candidates for President, Vice President and Coordinator positions must be legally eligible to work in Canada and have a valid Social Insurance Number (or are in the process of acquiring one) by the time their term of office commences.
- c) A full-time fee-paying student in good standing with Seneca College and the SSF may run in any election for the Seneca Student Federation Incorporated, provided they are eligible as defined in SSF By-laws.
- d) Candidates must meet all the eligibility criteria outlined in the Nomination Package.
- e) Candidates must be available for a complete term of office.
- f) Qualified candidates must fully complete and submit all required sections from the prescribed Nomination Package to the SSF Campus Manager. Candidates must adhere to published dates for nominations.
- g) A sealed and dated submitted package will NOT be returned to the candidate.
- h) A member may not submit a Nomination Package for more than one position.
- i) Any change in the position applied for after submitting a package will require a new package and withdrawal from the original position.
- j) A Nomination Package shall only be valid if the required nomination forms are accurately completed and submitted before the closing of nominations.
- k) Nominees may withdraw from the election by informing the CEO in writing.
- l) The CEO will verify the eligibility of the nominees.
- m) Where only one candidate is officially nominated, the CEO shall declare that candidate elected by acclamation.
- n) Candidates running for the student representative position on Seneca's Board of Governors may not run for any Seneca Student Federation positions.
- o) The current student representative on Seneca's Board of Governors may not run for any SSF position unless they resign from the Board of Governors first.
- p) Candidates may not be serving on any other student government/representative board (e.g. Seneca Athletics Association or other post-secondary student unions).

## **5. CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

### **A. BOARD OF DIRECTOR STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE POSITIONS**

- i. Must be 18 years of age by the first day of their Term of Office.
- ii. Candidates must be in no less than their second semester at the College and be willing and able to serve a complete term of office while at the College.
- iii. All nominees must have met a cumulative or program Grade Point Average (GPA) of no less than 3.0. Candidates will be required to sign a release form allowing the CEO to check their GPA at the time of submission. Successful candidates will have their GPA checked additional times throughout the academic year.
- iv. No SSF member shall be elected as a Director for more than two terms.

### **B. PRESIDENT POSITION**

- i. Any candidates for this elected office must be in no less than their second semester at the College and able to serve a complete term of office while at the College.
- ii. All nominees have met a cumulative or program Grade Point Average (GPA) of no less than 3.0. Candidates are required to sign a release form allowing the CEO to check their GPA at the time of submission. Successful candidates will have their GPA checked additional times throughout the academic year. A President seeking a second term of office shall be exempt from the cumulative or program GPA requirement if they do not take any courses during their term as President.
- iii. In addition to the above qualifications, candidates for the President position must have served in at least one of the following positions:
  - i. Council member on any Local Branch Council for a minimum of 2 semesters within the past 18 months (including the current semester)
- iv. All nominees must reduce their course load to a maximum of 2 Seneca courses to accommodate a 40 hour workweek during business hours (8 am – 6 pm). (These hours exclude mandatory Board of Director and SSF Central meetings). While serving their term in office, a President is not required to be enrolled in any courses.
- v. All nominees must be a fee-paying member upon being successful in the election.
- vi. No SSF member shall be elected as President for more than two terms.

## C. LOCAL BRANCH COUNCIL POSITIONS

### Candidate Qualifications for the positions of Campus Vice President and Coordinators

- i. Candidates must meet the required Grade Point Average (GPA) of the program they are currently in. Any member with a cumulative or program GPA of less than 2.5 for the Vice President and Coordinator Position shall not be deemed a candidate. Candidates will be required to sign a release form allowing the CEO to check their GPA at the time of submission. Successful candidates will have their GPA checked additional times throughout the academic year.
- ii. In addition to the above qualifications, candidates for the Vice-President position must have served in at least one of the following positions:
  - i. Council member on any Local Branch Council for a minimum of 2 semesters (including the current semester)
  - ii. SSF Board of Directors for a minimum of 2 semesters within the past 18 months
- vii. All nominees must be full-time students and able to work:
  - i. Vice President: 20 hour work week during business hours (8 am – 6 pm) Monday to Friday (These hours exclude mandatory Board of Director and SSF Central meetings).
  - ii. Coordinator: 12 hours/week during business hours (8 am – 6 pm) Monday to Friday.

## 6. CAMPAIGN PROCEDURES

Campaigning is defined as **an activity that promotes a candidate through any means of communication, including but not limited to verbal, written, or electronic.** A candidate may use any number of methods of campaigning, as long as the financial parameters, policy guidelines, and time limits are observed. Candidates should consult with the CEO for guidance with respect to any campaign material that might be in question or considered offensive to others and/or against an SSF or College policy.

Candidates are not permitted to make unreasonable campaign promises at any time during the Election period. Candidates making promises considered unreasonable by the CEO will be subject to disciplinary action at the CEO's discretion.

If a candidate or their campaign team is found to be in violation of the Election Policy, such action deemed reasonable to ensure compliance with this Policy will be taken by the CEO.

Candidates are required to comply with the subsections below. **Failure to do so will result in disqualification.**

- a) All qualified candidates **MUST** attend the candidates briefing with the CEO to receive, review and agree in writing to abide by the policies, procedures and guidelines for the election of members to the SSF. If a candidate fails to attend the all-candidates briefing,

they **will be disqualified**. If the candidate cannot attend, they should inform the CEO in writing no less than 24 hours before the briefing.

- b) When the election process takes place electronically in its entirety, any candidate found to be campaigning in person and on campus be disqualified from the election.
- c) Materials may be posted within the College, providing the Poster Guidelines and all policies, including those applicable to electronic communications, are adhered to. Candidates will be provided with a list of the permitted locations.
- d) The use of the email list-serve for Seneca College and SSF list serves, including those used for SSF clubs, is not allowed for campaigning; however, candidates will be provided with the opportunity to post-campaign information on the Seneca student portal and SSF websites.
- e) All campaigning materials (electronic and printed) must comply with the College's policies and procedures. All election campaign websites must be approved by the CEO, be public and have open access.
- f) Candidates will be permitted to submit claims, supported by original receipts (internal/external), for reimbursement of the cost of campaign materials up to:
  - \$400 for Board of Directors member-at-large positions
  - \$300 for Board of Directors member campus-specific positions
  - \$600 for the President position
  - \$300 for LBC positions

**Electronic equipment such as cameras, microphones, speakers, and the like, ARE NOT eligible election expenses and will not be reimbursed.**

**If the expense limit is exceeded, the candidate will be disqualified.**

- g) Within (5) business days after the close of the campaign period, all candidates must submit to the CEO either:
  - i) All election expense claims, or
  - ii) A declaration of no expenses

**Candidates who do not submit one of the above, or make a false declaration will be disqualified.**

- h) The CEO will determine the fair market value of goods and services that are donated to candidates for their campaign. The fair market value will be used as the actual election expense for those goods and services.
- i) Posters and electronic promotion materials will be allowed to remain in place until they are required to be removed following the end of voting on Election Day(s) as outlined in this Policy.
- j) Candidates and their team members are not permitted to engage voters to solicit votes at or near polling stations on Election Day(s).

- k) Candidates and their campaign team members are NOT permitted to use the SSF logo during the campaign; this includes, but is not limited to, campaign materials.
- l) Candidates must provide a photograph and short profile (maximum 400 words), which will be posted on the SSF and Seneca College communication channels. This information is to be provided electronically by the deadline specified.
- m) Off-campus campaigning is not allowed. (Excluding web campaigns).
- n) Web content must follow all College and Election Guidelines and Policies.

## 7. CANDIDATE AND CAMPAIGN TEAM

- a) **Solicitation of votes:** Solicitation of votes in any form is to be conducted in a professional manner, and any actions to the contrary will be a violation, including any pressure tactic, and could result in disqualification.
- b) **Campaign Team Members:** Campaign team members are governed by the same rules as candidates. Any violation of the Election rules is the responsibility of the candidate. Only current, fee-paying, full-time Seneca students may act as campaign team members for a candidate. Anyone seen to be promoting a candidate may be deemed to be a member of their campaign team.
- c) **Scrutineers:** In the event that a candidate cannot be present for the tabulation of ballots, an authorized scrutineer may act on the candidate's behalf to represent the candidate's interests. A Scrutineer **must attend in person** and bring a completed and signed Scrutineer Form to the meeting, which provides authorization to represent the candidate, and they must be a current, fee-paying, full-time Seneca student.
- d) **SSF Staff:** Individuals working in paid and/or volunteer positions with the SSF are NOT permitted to engage in any campaign activities, including online, during working hours, including but not limited to the office and events. In addition, no clothing or other items bearing the SSF logo are to be worn or used when engaged in any election activity.
- e) **Council Members:** Individuals who are members of the SSF Student Council engaging in any activities, including online, to solicit votes for a specific candidate or candidates on Election Day(s) **WILL BE REMOVED FROM OFFICE** and may risk disqualification of the candidate(s) they are promoting. Individuals running for office are deemed to be a candidate and as such are governed by the same rules as other candidates. Council Members deemed to be using their position to seek preferential treatment and or make demands will be removed from office and may risk disqualification.
- f) **Working while campaigning:** All paid SSF employees and Council Members running as candidates in any SSF election will be required to step down from their position for the duration of the campaign period including voting day(s), by taking an unpaid leave of absence.
- g) **SSF Property:** Any candidates with keys to SSF property will relinquish their keys to their respective Manager, Campus Operations, before the election campaigning begins.



#### h) **SSF Offices:**

- At no time during campaigning are candidates permitted within the SSF office outside business hours.
- Office visits are restricted to election-related matters and for the delivery of SSF services available to all other students.
- Collecting nomination signatures and campaigning are prohibited in all SSF areas (e.g., offices, event spaces, virtual events, businesses) and areas where the SSF delivers programming or services to students.
- SSF resources are restricted to all candidates for election purposes. Any candidate found using SSF resources for election purposes is subject to immediate disqualification.

### **8. VOTER QUALIFICATIONS**

- a) Only full-time students of Seneca College, who have paid their student fee, are eligible to vote in any SSF Election or By-election unless otherwise specified.
- b) All votes are confidential and students may only vote once as designed by the electronic voting system.
- c) Voters may only vote for candidates running at the campus they attend based on their program and school affiliation. All campuses vote on the position of President and Board of Directors member-at-large positions.
- d) In order to vote, Seneca students must log onto learn@seneca and enter their Seneca username and password.

### **9. NOTICE OF ELECTION/BY-ELECTION**

- a) The notice of Election/By-election will be posted in a place where visible at applicable campuses and the SSF website and social media channels.

### **10. VOTING**

- a) The Electronic Voting System (EVS) will open and close as designated by the Board.
- b) Eligible voters may vote through the Electronic Voting System (EVS) from the time the election begins until it ends.
- c) An attempt to influence a voter or giving direction for the purpose of casting a specific vote is not permitted.

### **11. ASSISTED VOTING PROCESS**

Where a voter has reason to believe that he or she will be unable to use a computer to vote electronically, due to medical or physical limitations, the elector may apply in writing, or by a means as deemed appropriate to their limitation, to the CEO, to request assistance with the Electronic Voting System (EVS).

## **12. ACCESS TO THE ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEM (EVS)**

The CEO will promote and advertise to the electorate the applicable voting day(s) of the election. During the voting period, the EVS will include a link enabling the electorate to cast their votes. By engaging this link, the voters will be authenticated for validity and then be shown the electronic ballot form. Voters will complete the electronic ballot as indicated and confirm their vote.

Since the EVS is supported by the Student and Employee Records systems, access will be available to the EVS throughout the entire voting period. Voters may access the EVS through the Seneca student portal. The CEO, in cooperation with SSF full time staff, will be responsible for ensuring the activation of the EVS at the start of the voting period and deactivating the EVS at the conclusion of the voting period. It is the responsibility of voters to ensure that they allow enough time to complete the voting process on the EVS prior to the closing of the voting period. In the event that a voter does not complete the voting process by the stated end of the voting period, their electronic ballot will not be included in the final vote tabulation. The closing time of the voting period is not flexible and will be strictly enforced.

No consideration will be given to students who have not activated their password and ID by the start of the voting period. Students must allow time before the voting period to get help from the IT Help Desk if activation is required.

## **13. FAILURE OF THE ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEM**

- a) In the unlikely event that the EVS is rendered inaccessible by a system failure, the CEO and ITS will determine if the voting period must be rerun or if the voting period will continue without interruption. If the system is determined to be in a state of failure for longer than twenty-five percent (25%) of the total time allotted for the voting period, then the period will be rerun at the time when the CEO is satisfied that the system is restored. When possible, the period for conducting the rerun should be no longer than five (5) business days after the system is restored. Such rescheduling of the vote will be advertised to the College community.
- b) Should it be determined that the EVS is inaccessible due to a failure of the learn@seneca portal for a period of less than twenty-five percent (25%) of the total time allotted for the voting period, the CEO will either extend the voting period or continue with the scheduled voting period.
- c) The professional opinion of College ITS staff will be used to determine if the voters list has been compromised by a system failure. Should the list be determined to have been compromised, the CEO will rerun the voting period as described in paragraph (a) of this section. Should the voter's list not be compromised by the failure, the CEO will be permitted to continue under the terms described in paragraph (a) in this section.

## 14. USE OF PAPER BALLOTS

- a) The CEO reserves the right to conduct Elections using traditional paper ballots for any Election where there is concern for the reliability of the EVS or the system is in a state of prolonged failure.
- b) In the event of a paper ballot vote, the CEO will meet with the candidates to review the balloting and polling station procedures.

## 15. CLOSE OF POLLS

- a) Following the closing of the polls, all candidates (or their scrutineer) **MUST** attend a meeting with the CEO. The CEO will ask if any candidate disputes the validity of the election process up to the time of the polls closing. The time and date of this meeting will be confirmed by email to the candidates by the CEO.
- b) All appeals for incidents occurring before the closing of polls must be officially lodged before Election results are reported. If however, it is discovered later that the Election Policy was broken by the successful candidate, the CEO must launch an investigation into the allegation and report the findings to the Board of Directors.
- c) When the candidate (or their scrutineer) signs off on the electoral process they are no longer permitted to file an appeal based on something that happened before the close of the polls. If no candidate disputes the validity of the Election process up to the close of the polls, the CEO shall present the Release Form to be signed by each candidate. The Release Form shall state that the candidate agrees that the Election process up to the close of polls was acceptable and that the candidate does not dispute the validity of the Election process. A candidate's signature on the Release Form bars the candidate from appealing the results of the election based on the process up to and including the close of the polls, unless substantial new information comes to light subsequent to the close of the polls.
- d) If at least one candidate disputes the validity of the Election process up to the close of polls and refuses to sign the Release Form, the candidate shall be given the opportunity to explain their concern to the CEO in front of the other candidates. The other candidates will be given the opportunity to respond, either in favour or opposed to the expressed concern. The CEO will then make a decision regarding the candidate's concern. If any candidate does not agree with the CEO's decision, they have the right to appeal to the Elections Appeal Committee as described later in this Policy and Procedures document. The CEO will then proceed to announce the Election results.
- e) In situations where it is not possible to conduct a face-to-face Results Meeting, candidates are required to submit a completed, signed and dated Release Form by email to the CEO no later than the closing of the Voting Module. If a candidate has not provided their Release Form or stated a formal objection at the close of the polls, the candidate will be deemed to not dispute the validity of the Election Process, and the candidate will not be permitted to file an appeal.

## **16. ELECTION RESULTS**

- a) The CEO will oversee the process of totalling the electronic votes and paper ballots if necessary.
- b) Each candidate or their scrutineer present for the count will be informed of the total number of ballots cast per candidate.
- c) The candidate with the most number of votes shall be declared the winner.
- d) In the event of a tie between two candidates a decision will be made whether or not to hold an election to break the tie.
- e) The CEO shall provide a list of all candidates elected/acclaimed to the Executive Director of the Seneca Student Federation and the SSF Board of Directors. The SSF will post the results of the election on their website.
- f) The SSF Board of Directors reserves the right to delay the announcement of the election results.

## **17. DISPOSITION OF THE ELECTION DOCUMENTS**

The CEO shall arrange to have all pertinent Election print and electronic materials stored for one month. In the event of an appeal, pertinent Election materials will be retained until the appeal process's final disposition and destroyed after that.

## **18. ELECTION APPEAL COMMITTEE**

- a) The SSF Board of Directors will strike an Election Appeal Committee comprised of three (3) Board members appointed before each election.
- b) All Election Appeal Committee members must be completely impartial. Members of the Election Appeal Committee will not be involved in any election campaign. Involvement includes any activities that could be understood as endorsing a candidate (i.e., putting up posters, wearing campaign paraphernalia, etc.).

## 19. ELECTION APPEAL PROCESS

- a) Any appeal to the Election Appeal Committee must be filed with the SSF's Board Secretary within three (3) business days of the decision in dispute. The appeal must be in writing and contain reasons for the appeal. A Notice of Appeal form will be provided for this purpose.
- b) Failure to meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the Election Policy is NOT appealable.
- c) Appeals will not be accepted after the closing of the polls on the final voting day.
- d) In the event of a scheduled appeal hearing, all parties shall be entitled to, and be provided, full disclosure of all information to be presented in the Hearing.
- e) The Election Appeal Committee shall hear any appeal within five (5) working days of the appeal being filed.
- f) The Election Appeal Committee shall notify the appellant, the CEO, and any other person with information or knowledge relevant to the appeal of the date, time, and place of the Hearing. The notice of the Hearing shall include a statement that if any party does not attend, the Hearing may proceed in their absence, and they will not be entitled to any further notice of the proceedings.
- g) If any evidence is a personal testimony, then it must be submitted to the CEO in writing, and the CEO must know the identity of the person giving the testimony. The CEO may withhold the identity of the person giving the testimony from any other party including the Election Committee and Hearing Panel, if requested.
- h) The appellant and CEO shall be invited to attend the Election Appeal Committee Hearing to address the contents of the letter of appeal and present any other relevant information.
- i) Anyone with information or knowledge relevant to the appeal may be invited to attend the Election Appeal Committee Hearing to present information about the matters at issue.
- j) The Election Appeal Committee shall give its decision in writing to the parties within five (5) working days from the completion of the Hearing. The decision of the Election Appeal Committee shall be final and binding on all parties.