



# **Eastern Michigan University Student Government Election Handbook**

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- I. Introduction**
- II. Overview of EMU Student Government**
- III. Election Calendar**
- IV. Getting Started**
- V. Campaigning**
- VI. Complaints & Appeals**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This Handbook provides an overview of Eastern Michigan University (EMU) Student Government (SG) and the process for running for SG office.

As outlined below, students interesting in serving on SG may run for the position of President, Vice President, or Senator. Candidates for President and Vice President must file, campaign, and be elected as a ticket.

Students who are not interested (or who are unsuccessful) in running for office may nonetheless participate in SG by serving as a Delegate or applying for a paid staff position within SG. This Handbook does not outline the process for becoming a Delegate or obtaining a paid staff position. Please contact the Student Government office at 734-487-1471 to learn more about these opportunities.

In order to hold any position in SG, a student must at all times be in good academic standing and judicial standing, both of which are defined by the University.

## II. OVERVIEW OF STUDENT GOVERNMENT

SG plays an important role in EMU's day-to-day operations. For example:

- ✓ SG has the power to approve resolutions expressing the sentiment of the student body regarding important issues affecting the campus, and those resolutions are carefully considered by the University's Board of Regents and administrators.
- ✓ SG receives over \$200,000 per year from the University to support various student programs.
- ✓ SG coordinates events around campus for students.

SG elections are therefore important: they provide the student body the opportunity to select their student leaders for the following academic year. This is a serious process and candidates for SG must therefore take the election process seriously.

### A. SG Constitution

The broad parameters for student governance at EMU is established in the SG Constitution, which is approved by the student body. **All candidates for SG office should read the Constitution.** A copy of the Constitution can be found here:

<http://www.emusg.com/documents>

### B. SG Bylaws

The SG Constitution permits SG to establish Bylaws which provide more details about the functioning of SG, including finances, elections, and committees. **All candidates for SG office should read the Bylaws.** A copy of the Bylaws can be found here:

<http://www.emusg.com/documents>

Under the Constitution and Bylaws, SG consists of two branches of government: (1) the executive branch (which consists of a President and Vice President), and (2) the legislative branch.

### C. Executive Branch: The President

The executive branch of SG consists of a President and Vice President, who are elected by the student body each year. The President and Vice President are elected as a ticket, meaning they must file for candidacy together, must campaign as a "ticket", and must be elected together.

The SG President is an important position; candidates for President must take the process seriously. It requires a significant time commitment, and thus only individuals with good time management skills should consider running for President.

The President's duties are outlined in Article III of the SG Constitution and Chapter 3 of the SG Bylaws. Generally speaking, the President's duties include:

- ✓ The President hires and supervises the SG staff.
- ✓ The President proposes an annual SG budget for review and approval by the Senate.
- ✓ The President appoints students to various campus committees.
- ✓ The President gives speeches at various events, including meetings of the Board of Regents.
- ✓ The President meets regularly with the University's President and senior leadership.

As outlined in this Handbook and in the SG Bylaws, candidates for President must collect petition signatures to appear on the election ballot as a ticket with a candidate for Vice President. Candidates for President must follow the election rules outlined in the Bylaws, in this Handbook, and as prescribed by the Election Commission.

#### **D. Executive Branch: Vice President**

The SG Vice President is also an important position. Candidates for Vice President must take the process seriously. It requires a significant time commitment, and thus only individuals with good time management skills should consider running for Vice President.

The Vice President's duties are outlined in Article III of the SG Constitution and Chapter 3 of the SG Bylaws. Generally speaking, the Vice President's duties include:

- ✓ The Vice President presides over meetings of the Student Senate.
- ✓ The Vice President assists the President in hiring and supervising the SG staff.
- ✓ The Vice President may serve on important campus committees in lieu of the President.

As outlined in this Handbook and in the SG Bylaws, candidates for Vice President must collect petition signatures to appear on the election ballot as a ticket with a candidate for President. Candidates for Vice President must follow the election rules outlined in the Bylaws, in this Handbook, and as prescribed by the Election Commission.

## **E. Student Senate**

The legislative branch of SG consists of a Student Senate. The size of the Senate depends on the student population at EMU, but generally consists of 20-25 Senators.

Senators are elected each year in the same election as the election for President and Vice President.

The duties of the Senate and individual Senators are outlined in Article II of the SG Constitution and Chapters 2 and 4 of the SG Bylaws. Generally speaking, the duties of the Senate, and individual Senators, include:

- ✓ The Senate drafts, debates, and votes on resolutions on a variety of matters affecting students. Senators must vote on every issue before the Senate unless the Senator has a conflict of interest, which is narrowly defined in the Bylaws.
- ✓ Senators must attend meetings of the Senate (generally held every two weeks during the school year) and meetings of a Senate committee (generally held every two weeks during the school year).
- ✓ Senators must attend other events sponsored by SG.
- ✓ Senators must work collaboratively with other members of SG, students, faculty, and staff to develop solutions to perceived challenges on campus.

As outlined in this Handbook and in the SG Bylaws, candidates for Senator must collect petition signatures to appear on the election ballot. Candidates for Senator must follow the election rules outlined in the Bylaws, in this Handbook, and as prescribed by the Election Commission.

### III. ELECTION CALENDAR

The following is a calendar of important dates related to the SG election process:

- **Election packets are available:** Monday, February 3, 2020
- **Candidate meeting:** Thursday, February 20, 2020  
All candidates for any SG office should attend this meeting to learn more about the election process. The time and location will be announced.
- **Filing deadline:** Wednesday, February 19, 2020  
All candidates for SG office must submit a completed (1) Declaration of Intent, (2) Candidate Affidavit; and (3) petition form(s) to the Election Commissioner no later than 5:00 p.m. ET to the SG Office in 324 Student Center.
- **Active Campaigning Begins:** Wednesday, February 26, 2020  
“Active campaigning” is defined in Chapter 6 of the SG Bylaws and explained in more detail in this Handbook. “Active campaigning” may not begin until this date.
- **Write-in Deadline:** Friday, March 13, 2020  
If you miss the filing deadline, you may still run for SG office as a write-in candidate. Note, however, that write-in candidates must submit a completed (1) Declaration of Intent, (2) Candidate Affidavit; and (3) petition form(s) to the Election Commissioner no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on this date. Completed documents may be emailed to the Speaker at [jtayl140@emich.edu](mailto:jtayl140@emich.edu) or delivered to the SG Office in 324 Student Center. Otherwise, none of the write-in candidate’s votes will be counted. Moreover, a write-in candidate must receive at least fifty (50) votes to win an election. Students interested in running as a write-in candidate should carefully review Chapter 6.8 of the SG Bylaws.
- **Deadline to submit receipts:** Tuesday, March 24, 2020  
All candidates are subject to campaign spending limits as outlined in Chapter 6 of the SG Bylaws and in more detail in this Handbook. Receipts showing all expenses incurred by a campaign must be submitted to the Election Commissioner no later than 5:00 p.m. to the SG Office in 324 Student Center on this date.
- **Election:** Wednesday, March 25, 2020 and Thursday, March 26, 2020  
Voting for President/Vice President and Senators begins at 8:00 a.m. ET on Wednesday, March 25, 2020 and ends at 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 26, 2020. All registered students are eligible to cast one vote for President/Vice President and as many votes for Senator as there are seats available. All voting occurs online; students must log in to the emich.edu system and cast their vote(s) through the secure on-line system.
- **Deadline for Filing Appeals:** Saturday, March 28, 2020, at 8PM.

## IV. GETTING STARTED

If you want to run for SG President/Vice President or Senator, you should follow these steps:

➔ **Step 1: Read the SG Constitution:**

<http://www.emusg.com/documents>

➔ **Step 2: Read the SG Bylaws:**

<http://www.emusg.com/documents>

➔ **Step 3: Read the 2020 Election Packet for the office you are seeking.**

You may obtain a copy of the election packet(s) outside the student government office or on the student government website, [www.emusg.com](http://www.emusg.com)

➔ **Step 4: Choose the office(s) for which you will run.**

An individual who wishes to run for SG President may also run for Senator in the same election. Similarly, an individual who wishes to run for SG Vice President may also run for Senator in the same election. But, an individual wishing to run for President must run as a ticket with a candidate for Vice President, and an individual wishing to run for Vice President must run as a ticket with a candidate for President.

➔ **Step 5: Begin collecting petition signatures.**

Signatures must be collected on the form(s) included in the Election Packet.

Only individuals registered as an EMU student at the time they sign the petition are eligible to sign a petition.

Ensure that each student who signs your petition also **legibly prints** their EID number and name.

You should collect more signatures than the minimum required for the office you seek.

*Example: If you are running for President or Vice President, your ticket is required to submit 300 valid signatures. To ensure that you meet this threshold, you should collect at least 330 signatures to increase your chances of securing a place on the ballot.*

*Example: If you are running for Senator, you are required to submit 50 valid signatures. To ensure that you submit enough valid signatures, you should collect at least 60 signatures to increase your chances of securing a place on the ballot.*

If you are running for both President and Senator or for both Vice President and Senator, you must collect signatures for both offices on the appropriate forms. In other words, your ticket for President/Vice President must submit at least 300 valid signatures, and you must submit separate petitions with at least 50 valid signatures for your Senator candidacy. A student may sign your petition for President/Vice President **and** your petition for Senator.

Candidates for SG office and any person collecting petition signatures on behalf of a candidate for SG office may not pay a student to sign a petition.

➔ **Step 6: Complete the Declaration of Intent form included in the Election Packet.**

➔ **Step 7: Complete the Candidate Affidavit included in the Election Packet.**

➔ **Step 8: Submit the completed materials.**

You must submit the completed Election Packet, Candidate Affidavit, and all petition signatures to the Election Commissioner before the deadline.

➔ **Step 9: Begin “active campaigning” after the authorized date.**

You may not engage in “active campaigning” before the prescribed date.

## V. CAMPAIGNING

### A. The Election Commission

The SG elections are managed by an Election Commission consisting of six students, plus the non-voting non-student adviser(s).

The Election Commission has authority to interpret and enforce the election rules outlined in the SG Bylaws, develop rules regarding the election process, and hear and decide complaints about the election process.

Please see Chapter 6.2 of the SG Bylaws for further information about the Election Commission.

### B. Types of campaigning

Under Chapter 6 of the SG Bylaws, there are three forms of campaigning:

1. **“Verbal campaigning”** is defined as any spoken campaigning and is allowed at any time during the year. Examples include talking to students about your candidacy, verbally asking students to vote for you, etc.
2. **“Electronic campaigning”** is defined as “utilizing email, texts, websites, or social media and shall be allowed starting the first day of the Winter Semester.” For example, after the start of the winter semester, a candidate may solicit votes via e-mail, may establish a website or Facebook page promoting their candidacy, etc. But neither a candidate nor a person acting on behalf of a candidate may engage in “electronic campaigning” before the authorized date.
3. **“Active campaigning”** is defined as “campaigning utilizing printed materials and/or written materials.” This includes flyers to be posted on bulletin boards or handed out to students, written advertisements, etc. Please see the Election Calendar (Section III, above) for the date when “active campaigning” may begin.

Chapter 6.3 of the SG Bylaws contain numerous restrictions about campaigning. **You and all individuals associated with your campaign must read, understand, and adhere to these restrictions.**

### C. Common mistakes to avoid

Below are examples of common mistakes that candidates make during the campaign and on election day(s):

- A candidate and people acting on behalf of a candidate may not post printed campaign materials (e.g., flyers) on top of other candidate's printed materials.
- A candidate and people acting on behalf of a candidate may not distribute campaign materials (e.g., flyers, candy, etc.) inside the Student Center unless the campaign has reserved a table through the Student Center Events Planning Office, and the materials are distributed from behind the table consistent with Student Center policies.
- Similarly, campaign literature may be posted in plastic "table tents" on tables in the Student Center Food Court, but only if such use is pre-authorized by the Student Center Events Planning Office.
- Candidates and candidate's supporters cannot campaign in any building that contains a official polling place, and cannot stand within 5 feet of all buildings.
- Campaign may not be posted on trees, telephone poles, wires, fire hydrants, parking meters, trash cans, public signs or benches on campus, or automobiles unless the owner of the automobile expressly authorizes such posting.
- Campaign materials may not be posted in residence halls without the express permission of the appropriate Area Complex Director or Office Manager.
- No Student Government resources, including the Student Government offices, may be used to advocate for the election of any candidate.
- Candidates must have building approval to campaign in buildings
- Candidates/campaigns may not hold campaign events that promote or refer to alcoholic beverages.
- On election day(s), a candidate and people acting on behalf of a candidate **should not** offer a laptop computer or other electronic device to a student voter to encourage or assist the student to vote. If such activity occurs, the candidate (or the candidate's supporter) offering the electronic device must be at least five (5) feet away from the student while the student votes. This rule is designed to discourage candidates and their supporters from pressuring students to vote and/or observing while students vote.

#### **D. Spending limits**

As outlined in Chapter 6.3.11 of the SG Bylaws, a candidate or ticket may not spend more than \$500 in support of their campaign.

The \$500 spending limit applies to a collective ticket for President/Vice President. In other words, the candidate for President, candidate for Vice President, and all people acting on their behalf may not, collectively, spend more than \$500 in support of their campaign.

As outlined in the calendar, campaigns are required to submit receipts itemizing their expenses, including “in-kind” expenses.

“In-kind” expenses may count toward the \$500 spending limit depending on the circumstances. Generally speaking, if a person who spends their own money on behalf of a campaign, that expenditure constitutes an “in-kind” contribution to that campaign which counts against the \$500 spending limit.

*Example: Bill is running for Senate. Jenny is not running for any SG office. Jenny spends \$75 of her own money to buy candy to give to students while promoting Bill’s candidacy. Jenny’s expense of \$75 is an “in-kind” expense which counts toward the spending limit and must be reported as an expense pursuant to Chapter 6.3.11 of the SG Bylaws.*

*Example: Kathleen is running for President. Tom is not running for any SG office. He is skilled at designing websites and often charges \$700 to design websites. Tom spends \$40 of his own money to register a website through godaddy.com to advertise Kathleen’s candidacy. Tom’s expense of \$40 is an “in-kind” expense which counts toward the spending limit and must be reported as an expense pursuant to Chapter 6.3.11 of the SG Bylaws. Tom also designs Jenny’s website but does not charge Jenny any money, thus waiving his standard \$700 fee. Tom’s work designing the website is not an in-kind expense, and therefore does not count against the \$500 spending limit and does not need to be reported, because Tom did not spend any money (beyond the \$40 website registration fee) to design the website.*

## VI. WRITE-IN VOTES

Eligible students may run for any office as a write-in candidate as outlined Section 6.8 of the SG Bylaws.

SG analyzes write-in votes using the voter intent standard. The goal is to verify and count all votes cast. If the intent of the voter can be discerned based on the circumstances, the vote shall be counted.

Article III(4) of the SG Constitution requires the SG President and Vice President to be elected as a ticket, and Section 6.5 of the SG Bylaws require the SG President and Vice President to campaign as a ticket. Accordingly, write-in votes for individuals running for President & Vice President will only be counted if a reasonable variation of both candidates' names are written in on the ballot. Depending on the circumstances, mis-spelled names, first names only, or last names only may be counted as long as a reasonable variation of both candidates names is entered.

As outlined in the examples below, this formula may lead to different outcomes depending on the facts of the particular election.

*Example: William Jones and Henry Jackson are running as a ticket for President & Vice President and will appear on the ballot. Bethany Smith and Susan Richards are running as a ticket for President & Vice President but will not appear on the ballot; instead, they are running as a pre-certified write-in ticket pursuant to Section 6.8 of the SG Bylaws. No other tickets have been pre-certified for President & Vice President.*

*In this scenario, the following is a non-exhaustive list of write-in votes that would be counted because, based on the circumstances, it is clear that the voter intended to vote for a particular ticket:*

- *Bethany Smith & Susan Richards*
- *Smith & Richards*
- *Bethany & Susan*
- *Beth S. & Susan R.*
- *Bethhani Smith & Susie Richards*
- *William Jones & Henry Jackson*
- *Jones & Jackson*
- *William & Henry*
- *Will J. and Henry*
- *William Jonnes & Henri Jackson*

*Example: Anthony Briggs and Anthony Bradford are running as a ticket for President & Vice President and will appear on the ballot. Anthony Biscane and Anthony Bixby are running as a ticket for President & Vice President but will not appear on the ballot; instead, they are running as a pre-certified write-in ticket pursuant to Section 6.8 of the SG Bylaws. No other tickets have been pre-certified for President & Vice President.*

*In this scenario, the following is a non-exhaustive list of write-in votes that would be counted because, based on the circumstances, it is clear that the voter intended to vote for a particular ticket:*

- *Anthony Briggs & Anthony Bradford*
- *Briggs and Bradford*
- *Tony Briggs and Antoni Bradford*
- *Anthony Biscane & Anthony Bixby*
- *Biscane & Bixby*
- *Tony Biskane & Antoni Biksby*

*In this scenario, the following is a non-exhaustive list of write-in votes that would not be counted:*

- *Anthony & Anthony*
- *Anthony B. and Anthony B.*
- *Tony B. and Tony B.*

## **VII. COMPLAINTS & APPEALS**

### **A. Complaints about candidates, campaigns, or the election process**

Complaints about the election process or the conduct of other candidates/campaigns may be submitted to the Election Commission. Specifically, all complaints must be submitted via e-mail to the Election Commissioner as quickly as possible after the alleged violation occurs or is discovered. Verbal complaints will not be reviewed or addressed.

The Election Commission has authority to establish its own rules for reviewing complaints. An individual who files a complaint may or may not have the opportunity to meet in person with the Commission. In some cases, the Commissioner will determine that a complaint can be resolved without review by the full Commission.

The Election Commissioner will notify a complainant in writing of the Commission's decision regarding all complaints.

### **B. Appeals**

Only three types of decisions by the Election Commission are subject to appeal:

1. **Bans from active campaigning.** A candidate/campaign that is banned by the Election Commission from active campaigning for any time period may appeal that ban to the University's Ombuds. Please see Chapter 6.13.1 of the SG Bylaws for information about such appeals, including the strict deadline for submitting such appeals.
2. **Disqualification.** A candidate/campaign that is disqualified from the election by the Election Commission may appeal that decision to the University's Ombuds. Please see

Chapter 6.13.1 of the SG Bylaws for information about such appeals, including the strict deadline for submitting such appeals.

3. **Election results.** The Election results are certified by the Election Commissioner and SG Adviser(s). A candidate/campaign may appeal the certified results to the University Ombuds. Please see Chapter 6.13.2 of the SG Bylaws for information about such appeals, including the strict deadline for submitting such appeals.