



# 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, By-elections and appeal processes. This policy is intended to provide additional direction and information to that contained in the SSF By-laws.

## **1. NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION**

- a) The Seneca Student Federation (SSF) Board of Directors shall establish the time and date for the nomination and campaign periods, and the date(s) of the Election/By-Election.
- b) The SSF, in cooperation with the Chief Electoral Officer, shall advertise the nomination period, positions available and the election dates to the membership of the SSF.

## **2. THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER, DEPUTY CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER, AND ELECTORAL OFFICERS**

- a) The SSF Board of Directors shall appoint a Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) annually for purposes of administering Elections and By-elections. The CEO will in turn appoint a Deputy Chief Electoral Officer (DCEO), Electoral Officers (EO) and Polling Clerks as needed. In the event that the CEO cannot fulfill their duties, the DCEO will assume the duties and responsibilities of the CEO.
- b) The Chief Electoral Officer, the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer and Electoral Officers are responsible for the following tasks:
  - i. Ensure the integrity of the Election/By-election
  - ii. Monitor the campaign of each candidates
  - iii. Conduct candidate briefings
- c) The CEO has the authority to disqualify a candidate found in violation of these Policies and Procedures.
- d) The Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, the Electoral Officers and the Polling Clerks must not engage in campaign activity on behalf of a candidate during any Election or By-election.
- e) Written and or/verbal notifications issued to a candidate by the CEO/DCEO/EO to cease any activity must be complied with immediately. This includes activities that may not be specified in the policy and procedures.

## **3. NOMINATIONS**

- a) Candidates must meet all the eligibility criteria outlined in the Nomination Package.
- b) Qualified candidates must fully complete and submit all required sections from the prescribed Nomination Package to the EO. Published dates for nominations must be strictly adhered to.
- c) The CEO, in cooperation with the DCEO, will verify the eligibility of the nominees.
- d) Where only one candidate has been officially nominated, the CEO shall declare that candidate elected by acclamation.

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

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

- i. Any full-time activity 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 Section 7.04 of the SSF By-laws.
- ii. Any candidates for this elected office 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. A Nomination Package shall only be valid if the required nomination forms have been accurately completed and submitted to the EO prior to the closing of nominations.
- iv. A member may not submit a Nomination Package for more than one position.
- v. All nominees must be SSF members who are full time activity fee paying students and have met a current and 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.
- vi. Candidates running for the student representative position on Seneca's Board of Governors may not run for the SSF Board of Directors position.
- vii. The current student representative on Seneca's Board of Governors may not run for the SSF Board of Directors position unless they resign from the Board of Governors first.
- viii. Candidates may not be serving on any other student government/representative board (e.g. SAA or other post-secondary student union).
- ix. No SSF member shall be elected as a Director for more than two terms.

## **B. PRESIDENT POSITION**

- i. Any full-time activity 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.
- ii. 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.
- iii. All nominees must be SSF members who are full time activity fee paying students and have met a current and program Grade Point Average (GPA) of no less than 2.5. 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. A President seeking a second term of office shall be exempt from the current GPA requirement if they are not taking any courses during their term as President. The current President's most recent current GPA will be used.
- iv. A Nomination Package shall only be valid if the required nomination forms have been accurately completed and submitted to the EO prior to the closing of nominations.
- v. A member may not submit a Nomination Package for more than one position.
- vi. Candidates for the President position will go through a vetting process by the current Board of Directors to be eligible to run for elections.
- vii. 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 LBC for a minimum of 2 semesters within the past 18 months (including the current semester)
- viii. All nominees must reduce their course load to a maximum of 2 Seneca courses to accommodate a 40 hour work week during business hours (8am – 6 pm). (These hours exclude mandatory BoD and SSFC meetings). While serving their term in office, a President is not required to be enrolled in any courses.
- ix. All nominees must be a fee paying member upon being successful in the election.
- x. No SSF member shall be elected as President for more than two terms.
- xi. Candidates running for the student representative position on Seneca's Board of Governors may not run for the SSF President position.
- xii. The current student representative on Seneca's Board of Governors may not run for the SSF President position unless they resign from the Board of Governors first.
- xiii. Candidates may not be serving on any other student government/representative board (e.g. SAA or other post-secondary student union).

## C. LOCAL BRANCH COUNCIL POSITIONS

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

- i. Any full-time activity 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 Section 11.04 of the SSF By-laws.
- ii. A Nomination Package shall only be valid if the required nomination forms have been accurately completed and submitted to the EO prior to the closing of nominations.
- iii. A member may not submit a Nomination Package for more than one position.
- iv. Candidates must meet the required Grade Point Average (GPA) of the program they are currently in. Any member with a current and program GPA of less than 2.5 for 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.
- v. Candidates running for the student representative position on Seneca's Board of Governors may not run for any positions with the Seneca Student Federation.
- vi. The current student representative on Seneca's Board of Governors may not run for the SSF Vice President position unless they resign from the Board of Governors first.
- vii. Candidates must be available for a complete term of office.
- viii. Candidates may not be serving on any other student government/representative board (e.g. SAA or other post-secondary student union).
- ix. 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 LBC for minimum of 2 semesters (including the current semester)
  - ii. SSF Board of Directors for a minimum of 2 semesters within the past 18 months
- xv. All nominees must be full time students and able to work:
  - i. Vice President: 20 hour work week during business hours (8am – 6pm) Monday to Friday (These hours exclude mandatory BoD and SSFC meetings).
  - ii. Coordinator: 10 hours/week during business hours (8am – 6pm) Monday to Friday.

## 5. 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 EO and/or the DCEO 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 discretion of the CEO.

If the DCEO and/or EO finds a candidate or their campaign team to be in violation of the Election Policy, he/she shall take such action as he/she deems reasonable to ensure compliance with this policy, in consultation with the CEO. Any candidate who fails to comply with the subsections below shall be disqualified.

- 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 candidates briefing they **will be disqualified.** In the event that the candidate cannot attend, they should inform the CEO no less than 24 hours prior to the briefing.

At the Candidates Briefing meeting with the CEO/DCEO/EO each candidate will receive

- Guidelines for Campaign Materials
  - Election Appeal Process guidelines
  - Scrutineer Form
- b) Materials may be posted within the College providing the Poster Guidelines are adhered to (a copy of which will be provided to all candidates by the CEO/DCEO/EO).
  - c) The use of the email list-serve for Seneca College is not allowed for campaigning; however, candidates will be provided with the opportunity to post campaign information on the myseneca.ca and SSF websites.
  - d) All campaigning materials (electronic and printed) must be in compliance with the College's policies and procedures. All election campaign websites must be approved by the CEO/EO, be public and have open access.
  - e) Total campaign expenses may not exceed:
    - \$400 for Board of Directors member-at-large positions
    - \$250 for Board of Directors member campus specific positions
    - \$600 for the President position
    - \$250.00 for LBC positions.

In the event that a candidate exceeds his/her expense limit he/she will be disqualified.

- f) Candidates will be permitted to submit claims, supported by original receipts (internal/external), for reimbursement of the cost of campaign materials up to:
- \$200 for Board of Directors member-at-large positions
  - \$150 for Board of Directors member campus specific positions
  - \$400 for the President position
  - \$150.00 for LBC positions
- g) All claims must be submitted within 5 business days after the close of the campaign period to the EO. Failure to claim all expenses will be regarded as a violation and will result in the candidate being disqualified.
- h) Donations of goods and services will be assessed at fair market value for the purpose of determining the actual election expense as determined by the CEO.
- i) Immediately following the end of the specified Campaign Period, candidates will no longer be permitted to display or distribute additional campaign materials. This includes, but is not limited to, posters, brochures, pins and electronic information.
- j) Posters that were put up prior to the end of the Campaign Period 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 the policy.
- k) Candidates and their campaign team members are NOT permitted to put up displays, replace campaign materials and/or distribute election materials (printed or electronic) on Election Day(s) and the wearing of any apparel or buttons with candidate information is not allowed.
- l) Candidates and their team members are not permitted to engage voters for the purpose of soliciting votes on Election Day(s).
- m) 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.
- n) Candidates are required to provide the CEO/DCEO/EO with a photograph and short profile (maximum 400 words) which will be posted on the SSF website and on My.Seneca. This information is to be provided electronically no later than 5:00 p.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> business day after the closing day of nominations.
- o) Off-campus campaigning is not allowed. (Excluding web campaigns).
- p) Web content must follow all College and Election Guidelines and Policies. All social media sites and websites **MUST** be shut down and removed at the end of the campaign period.
- q) The CEO, DCEO and/or EO may remove advertising in proximity to the Polling Stations.



## 6. CANDIDATE AND CAMPAIGN TEAM

**Campaign Team Members:** Candidates and members of their campaign teams **MAY NOT** solicit votes beyond the close of campaigning under any circumstances. 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 his/her campaign team.

**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 form to the meeting authorizing him/her to represent the candidate, and he/she must be a current, fee paying, full-time Seneca student.

**SSF Staff:** Individuals working in paid and/or volunteer positions with the SSF are NOT permitted to engage in any campaign activities 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.

**Council Members:** Individuals who are members of the SSF Student Council engaging in any activities to solicit votes for a specific candidate or candidates on Election Day **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 current title/position to seek preferential treatment and or make demands will be removed from office and may risk disqualification.

**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 the voting day(s), by taking an unpaid leave of absence.

**SSF Property:** Any candidates with keys to SSF property will relinquish their keys to the Manager, Campus Operations before election campaigning begins. At no time during campaigning are candidates permitted within the SSF office without prior consent from the DCEO/EO. SSF resources are restricted to all candidates for election purposes. Any candidate found using SSF resources for election purposes are subject to immediate disqualification.

The SSF strives to ensure that student elections are a positive experience for voters and actions deemed to be in contradiction of the spirit of the act will **NOT** be tolerated.

## **7. VOTER QUALIFICATIONS**

- a) Only full-time students of Seneca College, who have paid their student activity 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 in the election 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) Voters must present their valid Seneca OneCard to the polling clerk prior to voting.
- e) In order to vote, Seneca students must log onto My.Seneca and enter their Seneca username and password.

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

- a) The notice of Election/By-election will be posted in a place where visible at the appropriate campus, such as the notice boards for the students and divisions/departments, on all general campus notice boards, and the SSF website and social media channels.
- b) The DCEO shall have the prescribed Notice of Election communicated electronically via My.Seneca.

## **9. VOTING**

- a) The Electronic Voting System (EVS) will open at a designated time(s) and date(s) as set by the CEO. Those eligible to vote will follow the electronic voting instructions as set out on the My.Seneca on-line system to cast their electronic ballot.
- b) Electors may vote through the Electronic Voting System (EVS) from the time the Election begins until it ends at designated polling stations.
- c) Voting is a personal “choice” and the decision to vote or not vote is up to each student.
- d) An attempt to influence a voter or giving direction for the purpose of casting a specific vote is not permitted.

## **10. 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). Permission can be granted at the polling station on reasonable grounds at the discretion of the polling clerk.

## **11. 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 at designated polling stations at each campus. 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 the voters to ensure that they allow enough time to complete the voting transaction process on the EVS when the voting period will be closing. In the event that a voter does not complete the voting transaction 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.

## **12. 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 My.Seneca 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. Under this scenario, the CEO will only extend the voting period should the system have been inaccessible during a large portion of a business day during the voting period, i.e. inaccessible for 6 hours during a normal business day.
- 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.

## **13. 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. Such Elections will be run under the SSF Election Guidelines in use prior to this policy.
- b) In the event of a paper ballot vote, the CEO will meet with the candidates to review the balloting, polling station procedures etc.

## 14. CLOSE OF POLLS

- a) Following the closing of the polls, all candidates (or their scrutineer) **MUST** attend a meeting with the EO. The Presidential candidates **MUST** attend a meeting with the CEO in person. The CEO/EO 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/EO 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 his/her concern to the CEO/EO 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/EO will then make a decision regarding the candidate's concern. If any candidate does not agree with the CEO/EO's decision, he/she has the right to appeal to the Elections Appeal Committee as described later in this Policy and Procedures document. The CEO/EO will then proceed to announce the Election results.

## **15. ELECTION RESULTS**

- a) The CEO will oversee the process of totalling the electronic votes and paper ballots, if necessary.
- b) Each candidate or his/her scrutineer present for the count will be informed of the total number of ballots cast per elector registered.
- 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 hold an election to break the tie. If time does not allow for or other factors determine that a tie breaking election is not possible, the CEO shall select by lot.
- e) The CEO shall provide a list of the names of all candidates elected/acclaimed to the Executive Director the Seneca Student Federation and the SSF Board of Directors. The results will then be posted on the SSF website and on My.Seneca.
- f) The SSF Board of Directors reserves the right to withhold election results.

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

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

## **17. ELECTION APPEAL COMMITTEE**

- a) The SSF Board of Directors will strike the Election Appeal Committee at their discretion. The composition of this committee would include, a committee chair, and student representation for each of the campuses (where possible and feasible) who are not in conflict of interest.
- b) Members of the Election Appeal Committee will not be involved in any Election campaign. Involvement includes any activities that could be construed as endorsing a candidate (i.e., putting up posters, wearing campaign paraphernalia, etc.). All Election Appeal Committee members must be completely impartial. SSF Executives or Local Branch Members on the Appeal Committee must be from campuses other than the campus involved with any given appeal.

## 18. ELECTION APPEAL PROCESS

- a) Any appeal to the Election Appeal Committee must be filed with the Executive Director of the SSF 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. Failure to meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the Election Policy is NOT appealable.
- b) Parties shall be entitled to full disclosure of all information to be relied upon at the Election Appeal Committee hearing, and upon request, be provided with the same within a reasonable time.
- c) The Election Appeal Committee shall hear any appeal within ten (10) working days of its having been filed.
- d) The Election Appeal Committee shall notify the appellant, the CEO/DCEO/EO, and any other person with information or knowledge relevant to the appeal of the date, time, and place of the Hearing. The notice of hearing shall include a statement that if any party does not attend, the Hearing may proceed in his or her absence and he/she will not be entitled to any further notice of the proceedings.
- e) The appellant shall be invited to attend the Election Appeal Committee Hearing and to address the contents of his/her letter of appeal and present any other information she/he believes is relevant to the matter under appeal.
- f) The CEO/DCEO/EO and any other person 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.
- g) 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.
- h) 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.