



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 Election Commission, exist to monitor elections and assist candidates in their campaign to represent students through election to the branches of the Northern Iowa Student Government, or NISG. This document and the Election Commission determine the rules under which NISG will operate General (Spring), Fall, and Special Election.

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 groups of students 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 e-mail, 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 shall not attempt to solicit votes verbally until the period of campaigning. Soliciting votes shall be considered formal campaigning.

3. Election Documents

i. Election Documents are

1. Applications, petitions, tally sheets, completed ballots, and any notes kept from Election Commission meetings.
4. Northern Iowa Student Government Office Manager
 - i. Northern Iowa Student Government Office Manager is defined as:
 1. Any member of the Executive Branch-Upper Cabinet as defined in the Northern Iowa Student Government Constitution.
 2. The Speaker of the Northern Iowa Student Government Senate

Section 2. Election Commission

A. Title

1. The group of students who oversee elections is called the NISG Election Commission or the Election Commission.

B. Purpose

1. The Election Commission exists 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 Election Commission shall consist of at least four members and one Election Commissioner. At least 2 members shall have previous NISG experience e.g. NISG Senators, former NISG Senators, and former members of other branches.
2. The NISG President shall appoint the Election Commissioner with concurrence of 2/3 of the NISG Senate, no later than the second regular NISG Senate meeting of the Fall semester.
3. The Election Commissioner shall recommend potential Election Commission Agents to the President. The President shall appoint Election Commission agents, based off of these recommendations, with 2/3 concurrence of the NISG Senate
4. All Election Commission members shall serve for the remainder of the Legislative Session in which they are appointed.
5. The following scenarios shall prohibit someone from serving as a Commission member:
 - i. An individual who is preparing to or currently seeking an elected NISG position.
 - ii. An individual who is NISG President, Vice-President, member of the NISG Executive Branch, NISG Speaker, Deputy Speaker, NISG Chief Justice, or Associate Justice.
 - iii. An individual who is a spouse or immediate relative of candidate(s).
 - iv. An individual who is not a student of the University of Northern Iowa as determined by the University Registrar.

D. Conduct

1. Election Commission members shall not formally campaign, support, ally with, or endorse a candidate or candidacy.
2. Election Commission members shall not encourage voters to vote for a particular candidate or candidacy while working at a polling site.
3. Election Commission members shall demonstrate a working knowledge of the Election Rules.

4. Election Commission members shall not advise a candidate or candidacy on policy, platform, or procedure. Members 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. Ensure that all campaign materials are properly approved and posted in approved locations. This includes ensuring campaign materials in the residence halls and Maucker Union have proper approval. Commission members should 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. Other duties as assigned by NISG, NISG Advisors, or the Election Commission

F. Duties of the Election Commissioner

1. Oversee the Election Commission
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
5. Schedule and lead meetings of the Election Commission
6. Other duties as assigned by the President or the Election Commission

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 should remove their materials after the results are released to the students and press.

C. Date of Election

1. The General Election shall be held each year on the last Tuesday and Wednesday of February.

Section 4. Special Elections

A. Purpose of Special Elections

1. The Election Commission 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

D. Duration of Campaigning and Date of the Election

1. The Election Commission shall determine the length of the campaigning. Generally, the length of campaigning should be between two and three weeks, and the election calendar should be modeled after the General Election calendar, but the duration and date of election are at the discretion of the Election Commission. Dates of campaigning should avoid week long university holidays (e.g. Thanksgiving Break and Spring Break).
2. The Election Commission 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 6:00 AM on Tuesday until 6:00 PM on Wednesday. The Election should be scheduled before October 31st if possible.
3. The Election Commissioner must inform ITS and the Registrar of the election dates at least two weeks prior to voting. Week-long university holidays shall not constitute one of the two weeks.

Section 5. Advertisement of Election – Publicity and Promotion

A. 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 Election Commission shall be announced during a Senate meeting. Following the meeting, a news release shall be provided to KULT-LP, the Northern Iowan, and UNI-TV. This release may be provided to local media news outlets at the discretion of the Election Commission.
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 or advertise public President/Vice President Candidacy 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 mentioned elsewhere in this document.

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. Students who wish to be listed on the ballot for other elections must contact the Election Commissioner to receive official election dates. The Election Commissioner will not accept petitions submitted after the posted date and time.

2. Petitions shall be distributed with an informational cover sheet, brief questionnaire, copy of the current Election Rules governing the Election, and multiple signature sheets. Students running for election may request and the Election Commissioner must provide copies of the NISG Constitution, By-Laws, Maucker Union Monitor Guidelines, Department of Residence Posting Guidelines, and University Posting Policy.
3. Petitions shall not be photocopied, duplicated, or electronically modified. All petitions submitted to the Commissioner shall be original petitions provided by the Election Commission.
4. Candidates shall obtain student signatures of endorsement for their candidacy in order to have their name placed on the ballot. Petition forms will be available at no fewer than four meetings held by the Election Commission. 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 Commissioner. 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.
5. The Election Commission shall hold informational meetings about the election process, election rules, and shall be available to answer questions.
6. 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. Undecided/General Studies -25 signatures
 - ii. President/Vice President Candidacy -150 signatures
 1. At least 30 should be from each of the categories listed in Section 6, subsection 6, subsection v.
7. All signatures must be from the constituency in which the candidate is running.
8. 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, current address, and phone number for verification purposes.

9. 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
10. Petitions shall be available for controlled viewing in the NISG office by appointment with the Election Commissioner.
11. 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 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 Election Commission for clarification.
2. No campaigning or campaign materials will be allowed within the following places:
 - i. Any University computer labs during polling hours except for announcements from the Election Commission.
 - 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, Election Commission members shall retain the power to enforce other restrictions so as to maintain the integrity of the Election
3. No candidate or their designated representative(s) may remove, deface, obscure, or destroy any posted campaign material prior to or during an election.
4. Candidates must follow posting guidelines set forth by the Department of Residence, Maucker Union, Academic Departments and Colleges, and UNI Facility Services.
5. No candidate may use the NISG office, office supplies, or equipment; equipment maintained in the Student Organization Center is also prohibited.

B. Campaign Finance

1. Campaigns for President/Vice President must not raise and spend more than \$1,500 on campaign expenses. Campaigns for Senate seats must not spend more than \$1,000 on campaign expenses.
2. All candidates seeking election are allowed an additional \$500 in in-kind donations (e.g. 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 Election Commission.
3. All candidacies and candidates must submit expense reports and receipts for all purchases. Election Commission 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 Election Commission.
 4. All President/Vice President Candidacies shall submit expense reports complete with receipts and samples by 5:00 PM CST every Friday to the NISG office. A final comprehensive expense report and any additional receipts shall be submitted to the NISG office within five hours of the close of the polls on Election Day.
 5. All College Senator Candidates shall submit a final comprehensive expense report and any additional receipts to the NISG office within five hours of the close of the polls on Election Day.
 4. 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.

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 on the World Wide Web at a website designated by the Election Commission. The website shall be available on and off campus.
2. Polling Hours: 6:00 AM on the preceding day until 6:00 PM on Election Day, as determined in Sections 3 and 4 of the Election Rules.

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

A. Ballots

1. When voters log in to the World Wide Web, 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 Election Commission may determine the validity of the ballot.

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, student ID, and constituency. In the event that a Member of the Election Commission is unavailable, an NISG Office Manager is empowered to act on behalf of the Election Commission.
 - 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 Election Commissioner shall be responsible for ensuring ballot security and integrity. The Election Commission shall ensure that no voter completes both a paper and electronic ballot. The Election Commission is instructed to prepare absentee and paper ballots in case of technical difficulties.

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 Commissioner, a Commission Member, or an NISG Office Manager 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 residence for verification.
5. 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.
6. 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 Election Commission. Ineligible voters will be notified in writing concerning the disposition of their ballots. The Election Commission 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. 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
3. Ballots shall come under the full control of the Election Commissioner.
4. All Election Documents shall be available for public viewing upon appointment with the Election Commissioner. The Commissioner shall store Election Documents for at least two months or until the end of the semester, whichever comes first.

D. Announcement of Results

1. Once the Election Commission has verified the results of an election, an announcement shall be made in the Maucker Union. 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 Election Commission.
3. The Commission shall make an announcement as quickly as possible. In general, the Commission should not release the results more than 4 hours after the polls close.

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 Election Commissioner no later than 5 PM on the fifth class day following the election being challenged.
2. Counter grievances will be taken until 5 p.m. on the fifth class day after notification of the filed grievance(s).
3. Candidates objecting with the decision of the Election Commission may appeal according to the NISG Constitution, Article VI, Section 2.
4. After the grievance period has been observed, the Election Commission 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. Penalties available to the Election Commission
 - i. Warning
 - ii. Warning w/ 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
3. Specific infractions and suggested minimum (not required minimum) penalties
- i. Early campaigning
 - 1. Warning w/ 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 w/ 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 penalties as decided by the Election Commission
 - 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 w/ 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
 - 2. The candidate has the potential to reinstate their name once the proper documents have been turned in.

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 Election Commission, 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