SGA Elections Council Policies
2016 - 2017

William Weightman, Elections Council Chair
**Mission**

The Elections Council is the body of the Middlebury College Student Government Association that is responsible for administering and certifying all elections and referendums.

The SGA Elections Council strives to promote fair and equitable elections that are transparent, professional, and accessible to all. The SGA Elections Council is entrusted with the responsibility of administering and enforcing all elections rules and regulations and faithfully executing our responsibilities as outlined in the Section VII of the Constitution and Section VI of the Bylaws.

The goal of this document is to provide clear, precise, and consistent language governing election procedures and campaign rules in SGA elections. These policies enable all candidates to understand the Elections Council’s decision-making process and clarify some of the ambiguities left to the Election Council’s discretion by the Constitution and Bylaws.

**Membership**

The Elections Council consists of the Director of Membership who chairs the committee, and at most four other members appointed by the Director of Membership. Two of the committee members must be Senators. By convention, these two Senators have been the two sitting Senior Senators because they will not be eligible to run in future elections. This helps us avoid any bias when implementing elections policies and enforcing rules and procedures.

**Eligibility to Vote in and Run for an Election**

The SGA serves as representatives of the student body and all elected members have a responsibility to their constituencies. The President and Co-Chair are elected by the student body at-large and are thus accountable to all students at Middlebury. The Class, Feb, and Commons Senators are elected by their respective class or commons and are thus mainly accountable to those students.
Voter eligibility is determined as follows.

**President/Co-Chair of Community Council**
All current and enrolled students, including students abroad and graduating seniors may vote for these positions.

**Class Senators**
All current and enrolled students, including students abroad, who have academic standing in the relevant class (but not including Febs).

**Feb Senators**
All current and enrolled students, including students abroad, who have academic standing in a Feb class.

**Commons Senators**
All current and enrolled students, including students abroad, who are members of the relevant Commons.

Candidate eligibility is determined as follows.

**President**
All current and enrolled students, including students abroad but excluding second semester graduating seniors. Candidates must be willing and able to fill the position for the academic year.

**Co-Chair of Community Council**
All current and enrolled students, including students abroad but excluding second semester graduating seniors, may run for the position of Co-Chair. Candidates may run and hold office on a semester basis, and may run for either semester or both. Students are not eligible to be candidates for semesters during which they plan to study off-campus.

**First Year, Sophomore, and Senior Senators**
All current and enrolled students, including students abroad but excluding graduating seniors, who have academic standing in the relevant class (but not including Febs). Candidates for the position must be willing and able to fill the position for the academic year.

**Junior Senators**
All current and enrolled students, including students abroad, who have academic standing in the Junior class (but not including Febs). Candidates may run and hold office on a semester basis, and may run for either semester or both. Students are not eligible to be candidates for semesters during which they plan to study off-campus.

**Feb Senators**
All current and enrolled students, including students abroad, who have academic standing in a Feb class. Candidates for the position of Feb Senator must
be willing and able to hold the position for the spring term, fall term, and January term following their election.

**Commons Senators**
All current and enrolled students, including students abroad, who are members of the relevant Commons may run for the position of Commons Senator. Candidates for the position of Commons Senators must be willing and able to fill the position for the academic year.

**Election Procedures**

The Elections Council Chair, with the support of the Elections Council, is responsible for clearly publicizing and explaining the elections timeline to the student body.

**Notification of Upcoming Elections**
During every election cycle, the Elections Council will send an email to the entire student body providing notification of the upcoming election cycle and details regarding election procedures.

**Mandatory Elections Meeting**
In the email, the Elections Council will specify a time and place for the informational and mandatory elections meeting for all interested candidates. At the meeting, the Elections Council Chair will collect email addresses from all interested candidates and distribute elections material (*i.e.* these policies, petition forms, and the election timeline) to all candidates. The email will be sent promptly after the meeting.

The Elections Council Chair shall arrange an alternative way to give petitions and necessary information to students who are unable to attend; however, students who are unable to attend must contact the Elections Council Chair *prior* to the start of the meeting in order to be eligible to run. Interested students who do not do so are ineligible to run in that election. After the meeting, the campaign period officially begins.

**Uncontested Races**
If, after the meeting is held, no more candidates have expressed interest in a given position than there are seats to fill, the Elections Council Chair shall declare an uncontested race. For each uncontested race, students shall be given an additional 48 hours to meet with the Elections Council Chair to receive candidate petitions. No other election deadlines will be delayed as a result of an uncontested race. The Elections
Council Chair shall send an email to all constituencies for which there is an uncontested race, informing those constituencies of the uncontested nature of the upcoming election and announcing the 48-hour extension. The email will not identify any existing interested candidate(s) in any way.

**Important Forms**
One week after the mandatory elections meeting, candidates seeking election must submit three forms: a petition, a 100 to 400 word statement of intent, and a representational photo (most candidates choose one of themselves). Below you will find the specific information about each of these requirements.

**Petitions**
Following the conclusion of the mandatory elections meeting, candidates will have one week to collect petitions. All candidates running for a Class or Commons Senator seat must collect 25 signatures to be eligible. All candidates running for the position of President or Co-Chair must collect 200 signatures to be eligible.

Please ensure that all names are printed legibly so that the Elections Council can efficiently verify petitions. If the signature is illegible, it will not be counted.

Additionally, the Elections Council strongly recommends collecting more signatures than are minimally required in the event that one of the individuals who signed the petition is not a member of the proper constituency.

All petitions will be verified using the Middlebury College directory to ensure that each candidate received the proper number of signatures from their constituencies to support their candidacy.

**Statement of Intent and Photo**
All candidates must submit a statement of intent between 100 and 400 words to the Election Council. This information will be sent to your constituency in an all student email prior to the election and should explain why you are running for the respective position and why students should vote for you. Some students choose to discuss policy initiatives, past leadership experiences, and other involvements on campus. What you discuss, however, is up to you.

Statements that are below or exceed the word limit will be returned to the candidate—time permitting—to make edits. If the candidate does not return the
edited statement in time to be sent out by the deadline, the candidate’s statement may not be distributed at the discretion of the Elections Council Chair.

The Elections Council requires that all candidates submit their statement of intent and photo in a document format. Please make sure the photo you use to represent yourself is in the document and not attached as a separate file. This enables the Elections Council to format the documents and ensure each candidate is within the word limit.

The Elections Council will distribute statements of intent and photos will be distributed to students via email, along with an explanation of voting procedures.

**Debates**
The Elections Council Chair shall host a candidate debate for those running for the position of President and Co-Chair. By convention, The Elections Council Chair will serve as moderator. The Elections Council Chair may invite one additional person to assist in moderating the debates.

No other positions will have debates and debates for these positions will only occur during the Spring General Election. Debates will not occur in the event of a special election for the positions of President and/or Co-Chair.

**Vacancies**

**No Candidate**
If, after the 48-hour period stipulated under the uncontested races policies, there is still no candidate for a Senate seat, the sitting President will appoint a student as interim senator, subject to Senate ratification, until a special election can be held, at the discretion of the Elections Council Chair. The appointee is eligible to run in this election.

If, after the 48-hour period stipulated under the uncontested races policies, there is still no candidate for President or Co-Chair, the Elections Council Chair shall extend the petition deadline by five days and adjust the elections calendar as necessary.

If there is no candidate for President after the five-day extension, the sitting President shall appoint a student to serve as interim President until a fall special election.
If there is no candidate for Co-Chair after the five-day extension, the President shall serve as interim Co-Chair, until a fall special election.

**Resignation, Impeachment, or Removal**

If the President, the Co-Chair, or a senator resigns, or is removed from office via impeachment or automatic removal, the Elections Council shall hold a special election.

Notwithstanding the above section, if a vacancy occurs due to resignation, impeachment, or automatic removal during or after Week 7 of the spring semester for all offices except Feb senator, or Week 7 of the fall semester for Feb senator, the vacancy shall be filled as follows:

- For senators, the President shall appoint a student to serve in the vacant seat, subject to Senate ratification.
- For the President, the Co-Chair shall serve as President.
- For the Co-Chair, the President shall serve as Co-Chair.

**Elections Timelines**

**Spring General Elections**

The Elections Council Chair, with the support of the Elections Council, shall carry out the following duties prior to the spring general elections:

- During Week 6, notification of upcoming election is sent.
- No later than seven days after that, the mandatory meeting for potential candidates is held.
- No later than five days after the meeting, candidates must submit all important forms detailed above to the Chair of the Elections Council by email.
- At least three days prior to the voting period, statements of intent and the representational photo will be sent of the student body via email, along with an explanation of online voting procedures.
- Within seven days prior to the voting period, the Elections Council Chair shall host the debate for Co-Chair and President.
- No later than seven days after the petitions and statements of intent are submitted, voting online for a twenty-four hour period starting and ending at noon shall begin. This Elections Council may extend the voting period in case of technical difficulties.
First Year and Feb Elections
The Elections Council Chair, with the support of the Elections Council, shall carry out
the following duties prior to the fall first-year elections, spring Feb elections, and
concurrent elections for vacant seats:
- On the first day of classes, notification of upcoming election is sent.
- No later than seven days after that, the mandatory meeting for potential
candidates is held.
- No later than five days after the meeting, candidates must submit all important
forms detailed above to the Chair of the Elections Council by email.
- At least two days prior to the voting period, statements of intent and the
representational photo will be sent to the student body via email, along with an
explanation of online voting procedures.
- No later than two weeks after the first day of classes, the Elections Council shall
hold voting online on a week day for a twenty-four hour period. Whenever
feasible, the voting period shall be set so that newly elected senators can be
seated at the Senate meeting on the Sunday of Week 3.

Voting Procedures

Elections for single-member constituencies shall be conducted such that the candidate
with the highest number of votes shall win.

Elections for multi-member constituencies (class senators) shall be conducted such that
the two candidates with the first and second highest number of votes shall win. In
multi-member constituencies, every voter will have up to two votes that cannot be
applied to the same candidate.

At the opening of polls, the Elections Council Chair shall send an email to the relevant
electorate detailing election procedures.

At the close of polls, the Elections Council Chair shall email vote totals and the
winner(s) to all candidates and The Middlebury Campus as soon as possible but within six
hours.

The Elections Council Chair shall send an email announcing the winners to relevant
student constituencies as soon as possible but no later than twelve hours after the
closing of the polls. If the results are inconclusive by these deadlines, the Elections
Council Chair shall inform the candidates, The Middlebury Campus, and relevant student
constituencies as to the reason of the delay. The Elections Council Chair shall also post results to the SGA website before the beginning of the next SGA meeting.

Candidates for President or Co-Chair may simultaneously be a candidate for one class or Commons senator seat. In the event that the candidate wins the election for President or Co-Chair, they shall be disqualified from the senate election.

**Tie-breaking Procedures**

In the event of a tie in any SGA election, the following procedure shall be used:

The Chair of the Elections Council shall email the tied candidates immediately following the discovery of a tie, giving each candidate 12 hours to submit an additional 100-word statement concerning their candidacy.

The Chair of the Elections Council will also promptly send out an email to all relevant constituencies informing them of the tie and a 24-hour run off election that will occur the following day at noon.

These statements will be sent out to all relevant constituencies with the email announcing the opening of elections.

**Campaign Rules**

Candidates may only campaign during the official campaign period, which begins immediately after the informational and mandatory meeting, and which ends at the close of the voting period.

Campaigning is defined as soliciting votes or support orally, in written form, in graphic form, or on the Internet.

No student may willfully observe any student voting.

Candidates for President and Co-Chair may spend no more than $100 per ticket on any campaign activity, all of which shall come from the Student Activities Fee.

Candidates for Commons or class senator may spend no more than $25 per ticket on any campaign activity, all of which shall come from the Student Activities Fee.
All candidates must submit campaign receipts to the Elections Council Chair by the close of voting for the results to be certified and elected members to be seated. If the receipts are not received by the close of voting, no reimbursement will be given.

From one week prior to the voting period until the end of the voting period, no member of the SGA may use pre-permissioned email lists (all-students, all-class, all-Commons). However, such emails may be sent if their text is approved by the Elections Council Chair.

Candidates may not disrupt or interfere with the campaigning of any other candidate.

**Violations of Rules and Procedures**

In situations where evidence of election procedure and campaign rule violations are immediately apparent, the Elections Council may choose to warn and/or disqualify a candidate. The Council may also cancel or reschedule an election in which a candidate has committed a violation. In the event that a candidate is accused of violating an election rule, candidates have a right to ask the Elections Council to reconsider their ruling and submit evidence to the Council in their defense.

In situations where evidence of election procedure and campaign rule violations are not immediately apparent to the Elections Council, these instances may be referred to the Senate Appeals Committee for further consideration at the discretion of the Elections Council.