

Additions to Report I

RECOMMENDATIONS FOLLOWING THE 2014 SGA ELECTIONS

The Spring 2014 SGA Elections raised unexpected issues and concerns that we felt our Task Force might address in order to help support the Elections Board (EB) in fulfilling its charge to oversee and regulate SGA elections. Inaccurate accounts about the operation of the EB were rampant and unjustifiably victimized Student Affairs staff members, EB members, and the credibility of the elections. However, we also recognize that the rumors and accusations of conspiracies were symptomatic of some problems that could and should be addressed. Most fundamentally, we learned that the activities of the EB were perceived as either too opaque or too slowly broadcasted to satisfy the numerous groups that were interested in the 2014 SGA election. Working closely with Kelli Knox-Hall, the Office of Student Conduct staff person over the Elections Board, we arrived at the following recommendations:

I. Recommendations to Enhance the Transparency and Efficiency of the Elections Board

1. **Open the Elections Board meetings to interested constituents** and then move into executive session when discussing the good name and character of students or when the Board deliberations might violate student FERPA rights.
2. **Tape Record the deliberations of Election Board meeting.** If the recordings are requested, provide the recorded content in the form of text with any information violating a student's FERPA rights redacted.
3. **Expand the Size of the Elections Board.** To allow more students and members of interested organizations an understanding of the operations of the Elections Board, expand the number of members and/or possibly increase the number of ex officio (non-voting) members.
4. **Assign the staff member in charge of the Elections Board a staff assistant or graduate assistant during the SGA election season.** Other than protecting student FERPA rights that were not waived, we learned that the 2013-2014 Election Board was *never* trying to hide any information from the students and interested public. The staff member in charge of the Board was too overwhelmed with job responsibilities associated with and beyond her EB responsibilities to (1) meet with interested parties without an appointment and (2) have Board minutes and SGA candidates' financial statements uploaded to the web in a timely manner. The business of the EB has become too large for one staff person in preparation for, during, and immediately after the SGA elections.
5. **Have SGA candidates upload their financial expenditure reports directly onto the web.** To ensure that SGA candidates' financial statements are open to the public promptly, have them submitted directly onto a website that is available for public viewing. That is, remove the responsibility of a staff person in the Office of Student Conduct to receive and post the candidates' financial statements.

6. **Assign the more serious and complex election code violation allegations to the Office of Student Conduct.** Scheduling EB hearings and deliberations that have sufficient attendance to achieve quorum often prevents the EB from meeting immediately after the reporting of an election violation. Complex cases of elections violations also require additional time that can further delay official election results. Passing on the more serious and complex cases to the Office of Student Conduct should increase the efficiency of their resolution, as well as benefit from the expertise of the Office of Student Conduct staff.

II. Additional SGA Election-Related Recommendations

7. **Amend the SGA Constitution to allow for election-day expenditures and establish a date by which election-day expenditures must be reported.** Disclosure of campaign spending is due the day before the SGA elections. However, candidates periodically expend campaign funds on the day of elections, thus leading to confusion concerning whether election codes have been violated. Allowing election-day expenditures and establishing a deadline for reporting those expenditures will reduce the number of campaign violation allegations and provide the EB greater clarity in discerning whether violations have occurred.
8. **Clarify in the Elections Code and during the orientation of candidates and campaign staffs that winning candidates may be denied office if election code violations are reported later than 48 hours after the violation occurred.**
9. **Amend the SGA Constitution in order to clarify what happens if a winning candidate is disqualified from office.** The SGA Constitution is currently unclear as to whether the second leading vote getter wins the office or whether a run-off is necessary when a winning candidate is disqualified from office.
10. **Clarify in the SGA Elections Manual, in candidate and campaign staff orientation, and in dealing with interested parties on the evening of SGA elections that election results are not official until certified by the Election Board.** While *unofficial* results can be announced the night of the elections, interested parties—candidates, the media, the student body—should be informed that the results are unofficial until the EB has certified the results.
11. **Require candidates or a campaign staff member to request and have approved the locations on campus in which candidates and supporters will be campaigning on the day of the election.** Reports of harassment and intimidating behavior on election day are officially and unofficially reported to the EB with frequency. Knowing where candidates and supporters are supposed to be campaigning will help provide witnesses to corroborate the validity of such reports, as well as help determine whether election codes have been violated.
 - a. **Deploy campaign monitors to observe and ensure that candidates are campaigning where they are given permission to campaign.**