Appendix B: GSG Election Guidelines

These Election Guidelines apply to all candidates for GSG Officer positions and GSG Senate seats. Graduate Student Organizations (GSOs) must comply with the sections regarding the endorsement of candidates. GSG Members (meaning all UMA Graduate Students including candidates and GSOs) are entitled to unrestricted freedom of speech. These guidelines shall not be construed to restrict the freedom of expression of any graduate student, but only to regulate the time, place and manner of certain election-related activities. For the purposes of these guidelines, misrepresentation will refer to intentional deception or to communication that is likely to result in misunderstanding by an average graduate student possessing common sense.

The members of the Elections Committee, in accepting a nomination to the committee, agree to all the rights, duties, and responsibilities of the position as outlined in the GSG Constitution and Bylaws.

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I. General Guidelines

A. Compliance

1. All candidates/prospective nominees for GSG Officer positions shall attend at least one of the candidate information sessions hosted by the Elections Committee once the nomination period begins. If the candidate(s) fail to attend, their nomination will be canceled.
2. Each prospective nominee shall receive an email of these guidelines and shall attend an in-person information session, hosted by the Elections Committee, and sign an “Agreement of Understanding”. Signing the agreement shall certify that they have read the guidelines; promised to abide by them; agreed to immediately report any violations to the Elections Committee; and agreed to notify and try to correct any supporter upon learning of an actual or potential deviation.
3. No person shall be a candidate/qualified nominee until they have read, agreed, physically signed, and submitted the Agreement of Understanding to uphold these guidelines. When candidates or their supporters are unclear about whether an intended

campaign action is permitted, they shall seek the opinion of the Elections Committee before action. The Elections Committee shall respond with a ruling (within 48 hours) concerning the proper interpretation of the guidelines and inform all candidates in order to maintain a level playing field.

4. The Student Legal Services Office shall train the Elections Committee on the procedures of an election and be considered an ex-officio member of the Elections Committee.

B. Endorsements

1. **GSG Officers, Staff Members and Senators**
    a) Current GSG Officers, Staff Members and Senators may endorse candidates subject to the following rules:
        (1) The endorsement may not be represented by a candidate or the endorser as an official endorsement by GSG or the GSG Senate as a body
        (2) The endorser is strictly forbidden from using any resources available to them in their official capacity to help a candidate
        (3) The endorser must recuse themselves from all election related matters
    b) Violations of this section shall be referred by the Elections Committee to the GSG Senate
2. **Graduate Student Organizations**
    a) GSOs may endorse candidates only upon approval by the general membership of the GSO
    b) Prior to making an endorsement, the GSO must:
        (1) Communicate a time and place of the general membership meeting for the purpose of approving an endorsement to all GSO members
        (2) Keep a record of minutes and roll call votes of those present at the meeting. The meeting will be governed by the GSO's regular Bylaws regarding quorum and voting procedures.
        (3) Provide records of communications with members, meeting attendance and the results of votes cast to the GSG Elections Committee
    c) GSOs may not appropriate any funds for the purpose of helping a candidate
    d) The Elections Committee is empowered to sanction GSOs for violating this section, including the forfeiture of all GSG funds for the current fiscal period and revocation of GSO status
3. **GSO Officers:** GSO Officers or E-board members may endorse candidates in their personal capacity, including use of their official title, as long as the

endorsement is not represented as being made by their GSO as a body

4. **Candidates:** Candidates may endorse other candidates without restriction, including distributing joint campaign materials
5. **Violations**
    a) Misrepresenting or falsely claiming an endorsement will be regarded by the Elections Committee as a serious conduct violation
    b) Candidates may be sanctioned for receiving endorsements which violate this section. Upon reasonable suspicion that a candidate instigated or solicited an endorsement which violates section I. B, the Elections Committee may apply sanctions.

C. Guidelines for Candidate Communications

1. **E-mail:**
    a) There are no limits on the number of campaign messages sent by e-mail during the official campaigning period. E-mail used for campaign purposes must comply with the intent of the guidelines with regard to content.
    b) Use of mass email communication is prohibited outside the campaigning period (close of "nomination period" to end of "voting period"). All other forms of campaigning are not restricted. This rule is intended to protect the reputation of GSG.
    c) Candidates are to refrain from spamming, meaning frequent, repetitive messages to the same or overlapping listservs.
    d) The use of e-mail listservs is allowed and subject to approval by the owner of the listserv. The GSG Elections Committee cannot enforce rules regarding access to non-GSG listservs, but the Committee should communicate with academic departments in advance of elections to advocate for clear policies and equal treatment of all GSG candidates.
    e) All GSG controlled listservs, emails, or any other physical or digital resource shall never be used by or for any candidate to solicit votes or distribute support to any candidate.
2. **GSG Website:** GSG shall post information about all candidates (the photos, biographies, and statements) and on the election itself (campaign guidelines, voting information, etc) on its website. Candidates are encouraged to take full advantage of communicating with members through statements to be published by the GSG. Candidates are reminded that most forms of communications are in the public domain. Therefore, in all discussions and communications, a professional tone will reflect positively on the GSG and on the candidate.
3. **Social media:** Social Media content must adhere to the candidate code of conduct. No candidate may use the logo of the GSG or speak in the capacity of an official officer of the GSG in any social media content. Candidates are reminded that social media

content is in the public domain and a professional tone will reflect positively on the GSG and on the candidate. Any violations of the code of conduct on social media shall be subject to disciplinary action based on Article IV B. Violations of Bylaws or Guidelines of these Elections Guidelines.

4. **Campaign Flyers and Signs**
    - **a)** Flyers and signs shall only be placed in authorized posting places based on individual building policies (example: student bulletin boards). Each candidate is responsible for the removal and disposal of all signs. No campaign materials are to be affixed to bus kiosks, trees, telephone poles, or lamp posts.
    - **b)** Candidates shall not tamper with or deface the signs of any other candidate. Offenses of this nature are considered serious and may result in disqualification as a candidate in the election.

II. Voting and Ballot Counting

A. Voting: Voting procedures for the election shall be stated on the GSG website prior to the beginning of the election. Voting shall occur through online ballots and administered by the Elections Committee.

B. The Count: Ballots shall be counted electronically, and the results reported to the Elections Committee.

C. Tie Vote

1. In the event of a tie vote for an office in a general election, the following procedure shall be used to fill the position.
    a) The election report shall be submitted to the Senate. Once the report has been submitted, a special run-off election shall be held for the general voter population within two weeks of the end of the voting period. This procedure shall continue to follow the Election Guidelines.
    b) Should the run-off election be tied; the current Senate shall be called into an emergency meeting and follow the procedure for the Senate Run-Off election.
2. Procedure for Senate Run-Off Election:
    a) All officer candidates involved in the tie shall be the only candidates in the run-off election.
    b) Each candidate may give a "reminder" speech limited to five minutes in length. A friendly reminder shall be given once one minute is remaining.
    c) All current senators present at the meeting shall be eligible to vote in the run-off election.
    d) The voting shall be by secret ballot, counted and verified, at least twice, by

the designated authorities.

e) The Chair of the Elections Committee shall preside over the runoff election and announce the verified results.
f) The count shall happen during the meeting and be approved by the Senate.
g) Should the Senate vote be a tie, the outcome shall be determined by the flip of a U.S. quarter-dollar coin, conducted in the presence of all attendees.

D. **The Election Report**

1. Upon receipt of the results, the person receiving a plurality of the votes cast shall be declared the winner(s), pending ratification by the GSG Senate. The Chair of the Elections Committee shall send an informal notification to all the candidates in the election telling them of the election results, as soon as possible following the end of the voting period.

2. The Elections committee shall provide a 24-hour grace period from the time the candidates are informed of the election results for candidates to raise complaints of any irregularities in the election. Irregularities may include but are not limited:
    a) Eligible voters not being able to access ballots
    b) Incorrect candidate listings for Senate districts
    c) Eligible voters not receiving any official election emails
    d) Violations of Election Guidelines not previously adjudicated
3. Candidates are not limited to raising complaints within the 24-hour grace period and may do so at any time during the election. Complaints received after the grace period has expired will not be included in the official Election Report and must be addressed to the GSG Senate.
4. Available remedies to voting irregularities include vote recount, nullification of election results or referral to the Senate.
5. The Elections Committee shall promptly adjudicate any complaints raised by the candidates.

6. After the end of the recount grace period, the Elections Committee shall promptly submit to the Steering Committee the Election Report, which shall appear as a Special Order on the agenda of the next scheduled Senate meeting, and shall include the information prescribed herein:
    a) The complete numerical tabulation of the results.
    b) Any formal complaints made to the Elections Committee and the act taken thereupon.
    c) The signatures of the members of the Elections Committee.

7. Should a Senate meeting not be scheduled or called for a period of fourteen (14) calendar days the Elections Committee shall be empowered to call a special meeting of the Senate where the only business shall be the ratification of the Elections Report. The Chair of the Elections Committee shall be the Chair of the Senate for

this special meeting.

8. If the Senate shall have failed to ratify a General or Special Election within 30 days of said Election, the Elections Committee shall consider the result ratified by non-action of the Senate.

III. Candidate Code of Conduct

A. All candidates must abide by the following code of conduct:

1. Candidates shall not pay anyone to campaign on their behalf and/or vote for them.
2. No candidate shall wrongfully represent any campaign material as being the material of any other candidate or the official communications of GSG. The Elections Committee will have the power to thoroughly investigate the actions to assure against any deceitful actions against any candidate.
3. No candidate shall violate the University Code of Student Conduct; for more information please see https://www.umass.edu/dean-students/student-conduct/code-of-conduct
4. No candidate shall corruptly give, offer or promise to any GSG member any pecuniary or other benefit not authorized by the Campaign Guidelines, Candidate Code of Conduct, which is intended to influence the vote(s) of voters.
5. No candidate shall be physically present nor shall influence GSG voters' choice when he/she is voting online. Candidates shall not harass, linger near, or intimidate voters in any way when asking them to vote or provide them with devices for voting unless asked for by the voter themselves.
6. Under no circumstances should a candidate attempt to use any GSG physical or digital resources. This includes, but is not limited to, GSG office space, printer, paper or Facebook Groups.
7. Candidates may have their own campaign staff and may have people campaign with them; however, they are to be considered extensions of that candidate and candidates will be held responsible for the actions of those they have campaigning on their behalf.

IV. Additional Rulings

A. Duties of the Elections Committee

1. The GSG Elections Committee is charged with formulating the elections guidelines and elections related content within the Bylaws. Campaigning and election issues that are not explicitly covered within these documents are within the purview of the GSG Elections Committee to decide.
2. All communications of the Elections Committee shall only occur through the GSG media and all emails shall only occur through the official GSG Elections Committee email address. Should any member of the Elections Committee receive or conduct business relevant to the Elections Committee, they shall include or forward the

business to the Elections Committee email.

3. Violations of this policy will be first met with a warning by the designated authorities in the Bylaws and result in removal from the Elections Committee if it continues.
4. Should the Elections Committee change the Elections Guidelines in any way, the Elections Guidelines shall follow the bylaw amendment procedure. The Elections Guidelines will not be altered once the nominations period has begun until after the voting period ends.
5. The Elections Committee shall host at least 3 in-person & on campus information sessions to explain the Bylaws, elections guidelines, and responsibilities of each office to all the candidates in the election(s), as described in the Bylaws.
6. The Elections Committee shall create an "Agreement of Understanding" that all candidates shall read, sign, and physically return to the Elections Committee to signify their understanding of the current interpretations of Bylaws, guidelines, and the ramifications of violations.
7. Agreements of Understanding shall be physically available at all of the information sessions, in accordance with procedures described in the Bylaws.

B. Violations of Bylaws or guidelines

1. The Elections Committee may, upon a majority vote of its membership in attendance at a meeting, and up to (30) calendar days following an election, take any of the actions prescribed herein for violations of the GSG Elections Guidelines:
    a) *Order to cease* - A written statement to a candidate ordering the cessation of any activity which is in violation of the Guidelines, or their candidacy shall be suspended or invalidated.
    b) *Suspension* - A written statement to a candidate ordering the suspension of all campaigning for a prescribed period of calendar time.
    c) *Invalidation* - A written statement to a candidate declaring their candidacy to be invalid and stricken from the ballot (if before the election). After the election, a candidate may still be invalidated.
    d) *Nullification* - A public announcement to the GSG membership declaring an Election nullified and calling a Special Election to re-cast the ballot.