

STUDENT ORGANIZATION ELECTION GUIDE



**Leadership and
Service Center**

University of South Carolina

OVERVIEW

Introduction

This election guide is meant to help your student organization run a successful election at the University of South Carolina. Elections are important to get members into leadership roles that best suit them and the organization. Additionally, well-run elections can help your members feel that they have a voice in the decision-making process.

Additionally, did you know that you can run elections in Garnet Gate? The “Elections” tool in Garnet Gate allows you to keep your elections confidential while making it easy for your members to access! Click [here](#) to access the instructions for how to run an election on Garnet Gate.

Whether you need resources on different types of elections, how to prepare and run them or how to utilize Garnet Gate, this guide is for you! You can also always contact the Leadership and Service Center for more resources on running elections.

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Definitions

The following terms will be referenced multiple times throughout the guide.

Election Facilitator(s)

The Election Facilitator(s) is a person or committee that will run the election. They will be in charge of planning the schedule, preparing for the election, facilitating the voting and informing members of the results. More information on the Election Facilitator(s) can be found on pages 5, 6 and 8.

Nominations

The process of determining who will run for what position/who is interested in running for leadership positions. More information on how to do nominations can be found on pages 5 and 8.

Interest Meeting

An Interest Meeting is a great way for members that may not have held leadership positions to learn more about what specific positions do. At an Interest Meeting, you could have current members of your leadership team come and give a brief presentation of their positions or let people ask them questions. More information on Interest Meetings can be found on pages 5 and 8.

Candidate Statements

Candidate Statements are when candidates can make a short statement or speech about why they are running for a position. More information on Candidate Statements can be found on pages 5 and 8.

Types of Voting Systems

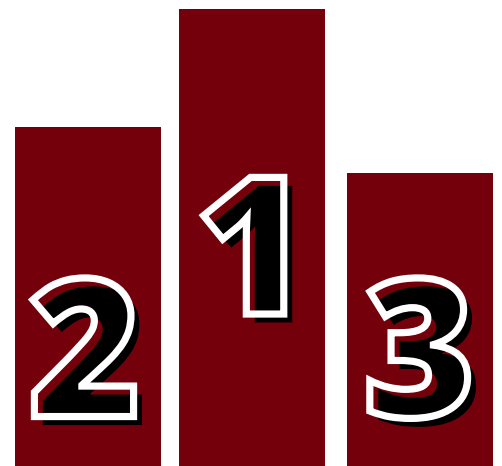
One Vote

In a One-Vote Election, each member is allowed one vote per each position and the candidate with the highest number of votes wins. In the event of a tie, whoever is facilitating the election could be the tie breaker.



Ranking

In a “Ranking” Election, members rank each candidate for a position in order of preference. For example, if there are three people running for president, a member would rank their first choice as “1,” second choice as “2” and so on. The candidate who receives the most number “1s” would receive the position. If there is a tie for the first number, the election facilitator would then see which candidate received the most “2s” and so on to determine the winner. In the event of a tie, the Election Facilitator would make the final decision.



Process/Preparing for an Election

1. Consider why you are holding the election and how you will elect the next leadership team.

- a. When preparing for an election, there are multiple things to consider. To begin, your organization should ask the following questions:
 - i. Why are we holding an election?
 - ii. How will we elect our next leadership team?

2. Figure out who will be the Election Facilitator(s).

- a. Next, your organization should consider how the election will be facilitated. Some common methods are forming a committee that will oversee the elections or delegating the responsibility to one of your outgoing Executive members.

3. Determine Election Rules and Processes

- a. Determine what the rules of the Election are and what the consequences will be if these rules are not followed. Below are some things that you'll want to consider in regards to the Election Rules and Process:
 - i. Which type of Voting System will your organization use?
 - ii. How many positions will members be able to run for?
 - iii. What qualifications will members need to meet in order to run for a leadership position? What are things that would disqualify someone from running?
 - iv. Will you hold an Interest Meeting for members to learn more about various leadership positions and opportunities?
 - v. How will the Nominations process be conducted? You could have members verbally nominate themselves or others in a meeting. Or, you can have people send in nominations of people that they think would be good fits in certain positions. You can also have members simply reach out to express interest in running for a position.
 - vi. How will Candidate Statements be facilitated? Will there be time during a meeting for candidates to make a short speech or statement?
 - vii. What are the consequences for breaking any of the rules of the election?
 - viii. Will any sort of campaigning be allowed?
 - ix. How will the Election Facilitator(s) inform the candidates and organization of the results?

Process/Preparing for an Election

- 4. Set up the Election Schedule and communicate this and the rules to members**
 - a. Set meeting dates and times for explaining the process, an Interest Meeting, Nominations, Candidate Statements and the actual Election. Note that these can all be during different meetings or you can combine parts of the process together! You can also choose to facilitate parts of the process through whatever channels of communication your organization utilizes. (See page 6 for different ideas on how to facilitate the process!)
 - b. When you present the schedule to the organization, you'll want to make sure that everyone in your organization has full knowledge of the elections process and set aside time during a meeting for members to ask questions.
- 5. Prepare a ballot and figure out how you will collect votes.**
 - a. Once you have a full list of candidates, prepare a ballot and figure out how you will collect votes. A list of some techniques you could use for this is below:
 - i. "Elections" feature on Garnet Gate
 - ii. Paper Voting
 - iv. Online platform to collect votes
- 6. Ensure that all members of the organization have access to the full list of all candidates and what positions they are running for before the Election.**
 - a. Providing everyone with the full list of candidates and positions they are running for will allow your organization to be fully informed coming into the Election, so that they are not surprised during voting.
- 7. Hold your election meeting and vote.**
 - a. You Election Facilitator(s) can this meeting and the voting process. They should also review the rules of voting and explain to members how the voting will work, depending on the type of election your organization is utilizing.
- 8. Inform your organization and those who ran for positions of the results.**
 - a. After the votes have been collected, have your Election Facilitator(s) have a process for informing your organization about the results of the election.

Checklist

- Choose an Election Facilitator
- Interest Meeting or communication to members about open positions
- Meeting Time and Date (or plan) for:
 - Explaining the Election Process
 - Interest Meeting
 - Candidate Statements
 - Nominations
 - Election
- Decide on Voting System will be used
- Decide if the election will be in-person or virtual
- If using Garnet Gate or other virtual option, get the online system ready for elections
- If doing in-person/paper voting, prepare materials
- Collect Nominations or candidate interest
- Collect Candidate Statements
- Prepare a ballot
- Set up or discuss your system for collecting votes
- Send full list of all candidates and the positions they are running for to members
- Inform organization and candidates of the results



Running a Virtual Election

It may be better for your organization to run your election virtually. If this is the case, many parts of the process above can be facilitated online. All of the meetings mentioned in Step 4 can be conducted over the video conference platform of your choice. Additionally, many parts of the process can be reworked to fit the virtual process and are listed below:

- In place of an Interest Meeting, send out a document to everyone with information on open positions. Or, have leadership team members record quick videos of themselves talking about their positions and send that out to your organization.
- For nominations, have members send in nominations or interest to the election facilitators. You could also set up an online survey.
- For candidate statements, send out written statements from candidates or videos of candidates talking.
- For the Election itself, utilize an online resource or the “Elections” feature on Garnet Gate to ensure confidentiality and security.

When running a virtual election, you will want to be sure that all parts of the process are clearly communicated to members. Additionally, you will want to consider how the results will be communicated to your organization and to interested candidates.





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