

University Senate Guidelines Regarding Special Student Organizations

I. Introduction

In March 1972, the University Board of Governors adopted a policy to provide an alternative to the general student activity fee committees for funding educationally valuable student organizations ("Funding Mechanism Policy Statement"). In June 1986 the University Board of Governors approved amendments to the policy statement which revised the funding procedures available to special student organizations ("Funding Procedures for Special Student Programs Policy Statement"). These Guidelines, and the procedures described herein, are to be used by student organizations, student governments, student affairs administrators, and the University Senate in implementing the revised Board of Governors policy.

II. Funding Procedures for Special Student Programs

The Board of Governors policy authorized two alternatives for funding educationally valuable student sponsored programs and organizations at divisions of the university. Student organizations or programs may qualify for funding through the following procedures:

1. Alternative Procedure I

Alternative Procedure I is available to nonpartisan student organizations, such as the campus newspaper, student government associations or guest speaker programs that provide a forum for expression of differing views. Alternative Funding Procedure I operates as follows:

- A. Each petitioning student organization is required to present its program and plans for concept review to the University Senate for recommendation to the President.
- B. If approved, the petitioning student organization shall seek college, campus, or divisional referenda on the issue of student funding for its program following procedures described in Section VI of these guidelines. At least twenty-five percent of the eligible voters, plus one individual within the college, campus, or division must vote in the affirmative for implementation of alternative funding within that college, campus or division.
- C. If the required affirmative vote is achieved at one or more divisions, the approved fee for the organization shall then be listed as a separate item on the term bill for payment by those students attending the division(s). A form to request a refund shall be included along with the term bill, which shall be sent to the individual student to the organization. After verifying with the University that the student has actually paid the fee, the organization shall send a full refund to the student.
- D. Each organization so funded shall be expected to defray the University cost of administration of the fee collection and refund.

E. Each organization shall be required every three years to meet the tests defined under items "A" and "B" above in order to continue to receive funds under this policy and procedure.

2. Alternative Procedure II

Alternative Procedure II is available to all other educationally valuable, nonpartisan student programs and organizations. The funding systems will outline the proposed fee amount, duration of fee, voting mechanisms, and other specific conditions which may govern the collection of the voluntary fee. Alternative Procedure II operates as follows:

A. Each petitioning student organization is required to present its program and plans for concept review to the University Senate for recommendation to the President following procedures described in Section III of these Guidelines.

B. If approved, the petitioning student organization shall seek college, campus, and/or divisional referenda on the issues of student voluntary support for its program. At least twenty-five percent of the eligible voters, plus one individual, within the college, campus, or division must vote in the affirmative for implementation of alternative funding within that college, campus or division.

C. If the required affirmative vote is achieved at one or more divisions, the organization shall be listed on the University term bill of students attending the division(s), with a statement indicating that the voluntary contribution may be, but need not be, included with the term bill payment. In addition, a notice of right to refund similar to that described in Alternative I shall be included for students who initially make the contribution.

D. Each organization so funded shall be expected to defray the university cost of administration of the voluntary funding procedure.

E. Each organization so funded shall be required every three years to meet the tests defined under items "A" and "B" above in order to continue to receive funds under this policy and procedure.

III. Concept Plan Review

1. All petitioning student organizations which seek authorization to conduct a student body referendum under either of the alternative procedures described in the Board funding policy must first submit a "Concept Plan" for review by the University Senate and approval by the University President. The Concept Plan must be submitted to the Executive Committee of the University Senate by the first week of the semester prior to referenda.

2. The Concept Plan should describe the structure, aims, general policies, and intended programs

of the petitioning student organization, along with an explanation of the educational value of its activity. The University Senate or the Senate Executive Committee shall review each Concept Plan with the sole criterion of determining the educational value of the organization or program. The University Senate or the Senate Executive Committee shall make a recommendation to the University President within six weeks of receiving the petitioning student organization's Concept Plan.

3. All student programs and organizations which are authorized to receive funding under Alternative Procedures I and II shall conduct an independent annual audit. Evidence of annual independent audits shall be submitted to the University Senate as part of its Concept Plan review. Upon approval by the University President, a designated representative from the administration shall notify all appropriate Rutgers University student governments in writing of such approval. Furthermore, two weeks prior to the scheduled start of the referendum, the petitioning student organization shall notify, in writing, the Secretary of the Senate and the Vice President for Student Affairs, who shall be responsible for notifying each division where a referendum is to be held.

IV. Referendum Guidelines

1. Due to the turnout requirements of the Policy for Funding Special Student Organizations, the referenda conducted under this policy are distinct from other campus elections. Student referenda conducted under the Policy are to be held separately from other campus elections and are to be governed by these guidelines which supersede all existing campus election procedures.

2. Approval or rejection of the ballot question is based on the yes/no vote as recorded in the referenda. The turnout requirements are intended to ensure that the approval of the student organization or program occurs with wide participation of the student body. It is the responsibility of all parties involved in the referenda process, primarily the petitioning student organization, but also including student governments, the University Senate and referendum staff, to ensure the widest possible student participation. Furthermore, no party shall take action which might tend to restrict voting options.

3. Oversight Committee

A. At each regional campus (New Brunswick, Camden, and Newark) at which referenda are scheduled, the student government of each division where a referendum will be held shall appoint one representative to an Oversight Committee after receiving the written notification from the Administration outlined in Section III and within an appropriate time frame as designated and notified by the petitioning student organization. There may be an independent Oversight Committee formed for each regional campus where referenda are scheduled. In the event of a single division referendum, the student government shall appoint three members to an Oversight Committee. In instances of referenda at two divisions, the student government of the larger of the two divisions shall appoint two members of the Oversight Committee and the student government of the smaller of the two divisions shall appoint one member to the Committee.

B. The petitioning student organization shall be responsible for forwarding the names and letters of certification from the respective student governments of the members of the Oversight Committee as soon as the appointments are made to the Secretary of the University Senate who shall send the information to the Chair of the Senate Student Affairs Committee.

C. The members of the Oversight Committee serve as representatives to their respective government associations and are responsible for communicating and reporting the decisions made and actions taken by the Oversight Committee to their respective government associations.

D. The Oversight Committee shall convene at least 3 weeks before the start of balloting by the petitioning student organization. A Chairperson shall be elected who will call and conduct all future meetings. The Oversight Committee shall review and adopt specific referenda procedures within two weeks of its first meeting. The Oversight Committee shall be responsible for the orderly conduct of the referenda including review of specific referenda procedures proposed by the petitioning student organization, approval of a Referenda Coordinator, oversight of balloting, tabulation and counting of the ballots, and certification of the results. All decisions and actions of the Oversight Committee shall comport with the provisions of these Referendum Guidelines.

E. Minutes of the attendance list shall be forwarded by the chair of the oversight committee to the Secretary of the University Senate, who shall forward them to each appropriate student governing association.

4. Voter Eligibility

Eligible student voters are defined as full-time or part-time undergraduate and graduate students who would be assessed the fee and who have a reasonable expectation of being enrolled in the second semester following the referendum in instances is where the referendum is being held one semester earlier than required.

5. Determination of Turnout Requirements

The Office of the University Registrar shall provide to the student organization a tabulation by division of enrolled students excluding graduating seniors and, in the case of graduate students, students whose programs are not terminating in the year in which the referendum is held, for each division for which a referendum is scheduled, as of the last scheduled day of the referendum. In those instances where the Registrar is unable to provide accurate enrollment figures, the petitioning student organization shall request from the campus Provost or the Vice President for Student Affairs or division an estimation of the eligible student voting population, based on the previous year's student populations and current enrollment figures. In those years in which referenda are to take place, the Secretary of the Senate shall send a letter to the Registrar,

the deans of the affected residential colleges, campuses, and divisions, and to the Vice President for Student Affairs, clarifying the accepted definition of "non-graduating" senior.

6. Wording the Ballot

The petitioning student organization shall develop wording of the ballot for review by the Oversight Committee. All ballots shall follow a standardized format, with a one sentence question asking whether the student wishes to approve funding for the proposed program, followed by two boxes labeled "Yes" or "No". The petitioning student organization may provide a "Statement" which shall appear on the ballot. The statement shall describe the structure, function, and goals of the organization and may be no more than one paragraph in length.

7. Referendum Staff & Hiring Procedures

A. Referendum Coordinator

The petitioning student organization shall propose a candidate to the Oversight Committee for the position of Referendum Coordinator, who shall be interviewed and hired at the discretion of the Oversight Committee. The Referendum Coordinator, where necessary, may hire an Assistant with the approval of the Oversight Committee and the petitioning student organization. Salaries of the Referendum Coordinator and all referendum staff shall be determined by the petitioning student organization in consultation with the Oversight Committee.

The Referendum Coordinator's responsibilities include:

- (i) Hiring, training, and overseeing poll workers and ballot counters as is necessary.
- (ii) Distributing materials, including ballots, polling signs, and other material to the poll workers.
- (iii) Distributing, maintaining an accurate count of, and impounding the ballots.
- (iv) Paying all referendum staff and maintaining accurate records of all hours and pay accrued.
- (v) Ensuring that all polling places are staffed at all times.
- (vi) Tabulating and counting the ballots.

B. If the Referendum Coordinator leaves the position, or does not fulfill his/her duties for any reason, the petitioning student organization shall immediately propose a replacement to the Oversight Committee.

8. Poll Workers

Poll workers shall be hired as temporary, part time employees as is necessary to staff the scheduled polling places. Poll workers shall be paid at the minimum wage. Members of the governing boards of the petitioning student organization, its staff, or students enrolled in internship programs conducted by the petitioning student organization may not be hired as referenda poll workers.

9. Statement of Liability

The Referendum Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator, and all referenda staff are not employees of the petitioning student organization, and the petitioning student organization assumes no responsibility or liability for their actions.

10. Voting Procedures

Each polling place shall be equipped with the following materials: ballots, ballot containers, pencils, tabulation sheets, and poll signs.

A. In order to vote, each student must present one form of valid identification to a poll worker. A student identification card, driver's license, meal card, University library card, or other official documents are all valid forms of identification.

B. The poll worker shall copy the following information onto a ballot envelope: student name, last four digits of his/her student number, and the division/college in which the student is enrolled.

i. The poll worker shall then provide the voter with the marked envelope, a pencil, and a paper ballot. The voter shall mark the ballot, seal it inside the envelope, and return it to the poll worker.

ii. Poll workers shall note each completed ballot on a tabulation form, and shall separate all ballots by division/college of enrollment, placing ballots in separate containers provided for the purpose.

C. Poll workers shall not be permitted to wear or distribute campaign materials, nor shall they be allowed to express personal opinions regarding the ballot question. However, poll workers shall consider it their responsibility to encourage eligible students to vote.

D. Petitioning student organizations conducting referendum at University College and/or graduate schools, New Brunswick, Newark or Camden campuses, have two options for conducting the referendum.

i. Petitioning student organizations may use the polling procedure outlined above

ii Conduct the referendum through first class mailings. Mail referendum packages shall contain: the ballot, a ballot envelope, an explanation of the purpose and effects of the referendum items on the ballot and a pre-paid return envelope, either business reply permit or first class postage. The outside of each returned ballot envelope must be signed by the voter and include the appropriate student identification number or birth date.

E. Prior to the beginning of polling, the petitioning student organization must announce, in writing, to the Secretary of the Senate and to the Oversight Committee, the polling timetable, which is the duration for which polling shall continue in each college or division. Any disruption in the duration of the polling timetable must be approved by the Oversight Committee and communicated to the Secretary of the Senate, who shall forward it to the deans and student governing associations of all affected divisions. Changes in location are not subject to this provision.

11. Tabulation Procedures

A. Each polling place shall be provided with an allotment of coded ballots, a record of which shall be kept by the Referendum Coordinator.

i Following each polling session, poll workers shall return all used and unused ballots to the Referendum Coordinator or his/her designee. Poll workers shall keep an accurate record on tabulation forms of the number of votes cast at each polling place in each time period, in each division/college.

ii The Referendum Coordinator or his/her designee shall re-count the sealed ballots returned by each poll worker. The Referendum Coordinator shall maintain a running total of the number of sealed ballots cast at each polling place, during each time period, in each division/college. This information shall be made available to the petitioning student organization.

B. The Referendum Coordinator shall impound all completed ballots in a predetermined, secure location(s) on the university campuses after each day of balloting.

i Counting and tabulation of ballots shall begin within five (5) University calendar days following the last day of the polls closing. The counting and tabulation process shall take place in or near the ballot storage location.

ii. Before the tabulation begins, all ballots for each division/college shall be sorted alphabetically. All duplicates, or any ballot in which both the student name and student identification number are illegible shall be set aside.

iii All remaining ballots shall be checked against a list of registered students provided by the university, and ineligible ballots shall be separated out. The remaining ballot envelopes shall be opened and the results tabulated.

iv The ballots shall be counted in the presence of at least, but not limited to, one member of the Oversight Committee. A member of the petitioning student organization may be present during tabulation as may members of the student governing association of any affected divisions.

C. In the event that the ballot question fails, the student organization may request that the Oversight Committee review all ballots set aside as duplicates, illegible, ineligible, or missing information. The Oversight Committee shall make a reasonable effort to determine the validity of the remaining ballots. Those found eligible shall be added to the tabulation and the results thereafter considered final.

i. If it is determined that the referendum did fail, exiting fees collected will

continue to be collected through the end of the current semester.

ii The student organization may conduct another like referendum within one year. If the scope of the referendum question is vastly different from the most recent question, then a referendum may be conducted the following semester. This determination will be made by the most recent Oversight Committee

D. Counting, tabulation and certification shall be completed within two (2) weeks of the close of the balloting.

i Results of the referendum shall be released to the public and campus news media following tabulation and certification of the results by the Oversight Committee and official notice of the results shall be sent to the President of the University and Chair of the University Senate.

ii In the event that certification of the results should not occur within two (2) weeks of the close of balloting, the Oversight Committee shall immediately provide a statement of the situation to the petitioning student organization, the Secretary of the Senate, and the Vice President for Student Affairs, who shall notify the deans and student governing associations of each affected division. All tabulation and certification must then be completed within ten (10) University calendar days. If tabulation and certification is not completed within this period, the ballots shall remain sealed and then transferred to the Senate offices where the Student Affairs committee will be responsible for counting and certifying the results by the end of the current semester.

12. Referendum Budget

The petitioning student organization shall provide the Oversight Committee with a budget which shall include the direct costs of administering the referendum. The Referendum coordinator shall be responsible for keeping expenditures within the budget approved for running the referendum. The budget may be amended with joint approval by the Oversight committee and the petitioning student organization. The petitioning student organization shall bear the entire cost of running the referendum.

13. Referendum Timetable and Schedule of Polling Places

A The petitioning student organization shall provide the Oversight Committee with a timetable for the referendum and a schedule of polling places and hours.

i The Referendum Coordinator shall be responsible for ensuring that polls are established as provided for in the schedule, and may make no independent decision to amend the schedule of polling.

ii In instances where lack of staff, weather or other instances dictates the closing or relocation of polling places, the Referendum Coordinator shall consult with the petitioning student organization to develop a revised polling schedule which will

provide the greatest opportunity for the largest number of votes to be cast. Written notification of the revised schedule shall be submitted to the Oversight Committee and communicated to the Secretary of the Senate.

B. Neither the hours nor the location of polling places may be restricted by any outside party, except with approval of the petitioning student organization. Polling may continue as long as a reasonable number of students continue to vote and as long as the petitioning student organization is prepared to meet referendum expenses, although in no instance may polling extend past the end of the semester. The Oversight Committee must be informed by the petitioning student organization and/or Referendum Coordinator of any lengthening or shortening of the polling timetable and notice of such a change must be communicated to the Secretary of the Senate, campus news media, and the Vice President for Student Affairs, who shall notify the deans and student governing associations of each affected division.

14. Appeals Procedures

A. Any member of the Rutgers community may challenge a referendum's validity for improprieties at any point during the referendum process.

i All alleged infractions must be reported in writing to the oversight committee within ten school days of when the challenger becomes aware of the alleged infractions. If the challenge occurs while voting is being conducted, the determination of merit must be completed within 24 hours of the Chairperson's of the Oversight Committee receiving the complaint

ii The Chairperson of the Oversight Committee must notify, in writing, the other members of the committee to come together and decide if the grievance, on its face, has merit. If so, and one other member of the Oversight Committee need be present for the original determination of merit, but a quorum of 50%+1 of the oversight committee must be present for a hearing.

B. If a hearing is ordered, it must begin within 5 university calendar days of the written notification of all involved parties, 15 calendar days after certification if voting has already ceased.

i All parties named will be allowed to make a statement and presentation of evidence and witnesses testimony to the committee. Deliberations will be conducted in private.

ii. A decision must be delivered in writing to the parties, the Senate office, and the Vice President of Student Affairs.

C. All decisions of the Oversight Committee, with regard to challenges, may be appealed by either side to the Student Affairs Committee (SAC), who shall follow a similar process. The quorum for a SAC hearing shall be 25% of SAC members who are voting

University Senators, but the number of members present necessary to achieve shall never exceed ten. Only the chair and one other SAC member need be present for the determination of merit, though all members must be notified in writing and given a chance to participate.

D. The Oversight Committee will make a presentation if they are a party to the challenge, and may be asked to do so anyway to clarify the rationale of their decision. If the conduct of the Oversight Committee is being challenged, the first appeal will be directly to the SAC.

i The SAC must make its determination of merit within one week of receiving an appeal from an oversight committee hearing or determination. If SAC is conducting the first challenge, they must follow the timetable applied to challenges brought to the Oversight Committee.

ii SAC hearings, if ordered, must begin no later than 15 University Calendar days after notifying the parties in writing that a hearing has been ordered.

iii All decisions by the SAC may be appealed to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

15. Notice

The successful conduct of a referendum requires the involvement and cooperation of a number of university staff, administrators and student leaders. It is the responsibility of the student organization and the Oversight Committee to ensure that proper notice of all referenda schedules, plans and requirements are communicated to all parties involved or concerned with referenda.

V. Reporting Requirements

1. Financial Reports

All student programs and organizations which have been authorized to receive funding under Alternative Procedures I and II shall conduct an independent annual audit of all student moneys collected under these procedures. Copies of each annual audit shall be sent to the Office of the Associate Vice President for Finance and Associate Treasurer, which shall be the only requirement of financial disclosure. Evidence of annual independent audits shall be submitted to the University Senate as part of its Concept Plan review.

2. Program Reports

When requested, all student programs and organizations which are authorized to receive funding under Alternative Procedures I and II shall make a report of their activities to student governments of campuses and divisions for which funding for the student organization has been approved by the student body.

VI. Office Space

Colleges and divisions at which such programs are authorized shall make every reasonable effort to provide adequate office space for such special programs and activities to accommodate staff and volunteer efforts.

All time limitations will be reset to zero at the start of the following semester if a semester ends before the time limit has tolled. A semester shall be deemed to have ended at 4:30 on the last day of scheduled classes for that semester, according to the university calendar.

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