Section I. General Guidelines

A. This Election Code is created, maintained, and enforced by the Judicial Branch as described in the Constitution of the Student Government Association (SGA) and the Bylaws of the Student Government Association.

B. Documented affiliates are also bound and will abide by this Code. Therefore, each candidate will be held accountable for their actions and of those individuals working for their campaign.
   1. A documented affiliate is defined as an individual working with the consent of the candidate and who is listed by the candidate when they submit the Candidate Packet.

C. The Chief Justice holds the sole authority to make emergency written decisions regarding the election if they determine that such action is necessary.

D. A student will be considered a candidate starting from attendance at a Candidate Information Session through inauguration.

E. The candidate must remain as an enrolled student at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg for both the fall and spring semesters; unless prohibited by COVID-19 or another pandemic.

F. If a candidate is found to be in violation of the SGA Constitution; SGA Bylaws; SGA Election Code; Principles of Community; university policy; local; state; and/or federal laws. The Judicial Branch reserves the right to issue election violations, disqualify them from the race, and/or refer them for judicial action to the university Office of Student Conduct.

G. In the event of temporary absence of the Chief Justice, the Head Associate Justice will take their place.
   1. In the event a vote is required, a unanimous vote of the Associate Justices is required. If there is not a unanimous vote, the decision shall be postponed until the Chief Justice returns or the vacancy is deemed permanent and the office is filled by the Head Associate Justice as described in the Constitution.
H. Any information released to the public regarding Elections must be approved by the Chief Justice and follow all the SGA governing documents, university policy, and state and federal laws.

Section II. Eligibility

A. To be eligible to run for SGA President and Vice President, the candidates must meet the following requirements:
   1. The candidate must be a currently enrolled undergraduate student, with a minimum GPA of 2.5/4.0.
   2. The candidate must have completed at least one full (1) semester of experience holding an office in the Executive, Legislative, or Judicial Branch of SGA.
   3. The ticket must have a petition signed by three hundred (300) currently enrolled undergraduate students of any college.
      a. The Judicial Branch will provide guidelines on obtaining virtual signatures at the information sessions.
   4. The candidate must physically remain as a full-time student in Blacksburg in both the fall and spring semesters, unless prohibited by COVID-19 or another pandemic.
      a. The President must remain in Blacksburg during the Summer semester after the start of their term.
      b. If they are unable to fulfill this requirement, they must work with the other Executive Officers (Vice President, Secretary, or Treasurer) to fulfill this duty.
   5. The candidate must have completed at least two (2) full semesters at Virginia Tech as of the beginning of the upcoming academic year/term.
   6. All candidates running as a ticket must be eligible. If any individual candidate is no longer eligible, the entire ticket will be removed from the election process.
   7. The candidate must be in good academic, honor, and judicial standing throughout the term in office and during the election process.
      a. Good academic standing is defined as not being on probation and must meet the minimum GPA requirements, as stated above.
      b. Good honor and judicial standing is defined as having no active sanctions where a student has been found to be in violation.
   ii. Executive and legislative candidates must attend the mandatory information session.
      1. An exception to the mandatory candidate information session will be given if there is a conflict previously expressed to and approved by the Chief Justice.
      2. Twenty-four (24) hour notice must be given and submitted in writing to sgaelections@vt.edu.
         a. Email alone does not constitute approval of missing the session, the Chief Justice must give approval.
         b. In the event of a conflict, the candidate(s) will need to meet with the Chief Justice.
   iii. Each Executive ticket must schedule a meeting with the Chief Justice (or designee) and an additional meeting with a SGA Advisor prior to turning in the candidate information packet.
      1. Candidates must reach out to Chief Justice and SGA Advisor with at least one (1) week in advance to deadline. Last minute meetings will not be accommodated and may result in disqualification.

B. To be placed on the ballot for SGA Representative, the candidate must meet the following requirements:
   1. The candidate must be a currently enrolled undergraduate student, in good academic, honor, and judicial standing (as defined above), with a minimum 2.5/4.0 GPA, throughout the term in office and during the election process.
   2. The candidate must have a petition signed by fifty (50) currently enrolled undergraduate students.
      a. Candidates running for a College representative position, must obtain fifty (50) signatures from constituents majoring in the representing College.
Section III. Candidate Information Packets

A. Executive tickets and Legislative candidates will be provided and required to complete a Candidate Information Packet by the Judicial Branch. The candidate packet will be available via GobblerConnect on the day of the last candidate information session.

B. The candidate will submit their completed packet, as well as, their comprehensive campaign plan. This is due to the Chief Justice via GobblerConnect by the date specified by the General Election Timeline. Candidates must submit these items by the deadline to be eligible for review and placement on the ballot. The Candidate Information Packet will include:
   1. General Election Timeline.
   2. Election Code.
   3. A link to the petition requesting signatures from the undergraduate student body.
      a. The Executive Ticket will ask those signing to provide their name, VT PID, and signature. Each Executive Ticket must collect three hundred (300) signatures from currently enrolled undergraduate students.
      b. The Legislative Representative Petition will ask those signing to provide their name, VT PID, College, and signature; each candidate for Representative must collect fifty (50) signatures from currently enrolled undergraduate students.
         i. Candidates running for a College Representative position, must obtain fifty (50) signatures from constituents majoring in the representing College.
   4. Candidate Contract.
      a. Requires a signature from the candidate, agreeing to the Election Code, SGA Constitution and Bylaws, and the Principles of Community
   5. Candidate Information Sheet.
      a. Includes questions about the candidate such as name, major, year, platform, etc. Answers to the Candidate Information Sheet will be displayed on the SGA website for students to access information about the candidates.
   6. Media Release Form.
      a. Signature on the form indicates that the candidate consents to the release of any photos or information about the candidate to the media (SGA Website, SGA Social Media accounts, local papers, etc.)
   7. Intent to Run/Platform Statement.
      a. Comprehensive statement of platform that the candidate will be running on.
   8. SGA Student Information
      a. Sheet for permission to verify academic, honor, and judicial standing in order to determine eligibility to hold a position within SGA.
   9. Affiliate List
      a. List all persons affiliated with the campaign.
      a. Outlined in Section V.
   11. Any other documents as deemed necessary by the Judicial Branch.

C. Candidates will be notified when respective Candidate Information Packets are approved or denied.
   a. The Judicial Branch may approve a Candidate Information Packet in its entirety, in only some portions, or may deny the packet in its entirety.
   b. If any portion of the packet is denied, the candidates will be notified and will have seventy-two (72) hours to resubmit or appeal a review of the respective portions. If the candidate does not resubmit or appeal within 72 hours, they will be removed as a candidate. If the resubmissions are denied after a second review, they will be removed as a candidate.
   c. If the entirety of the packet is denied, the candidate will have seventy-two (72) hours to submit an appeal for a review of the packet. If the candidate does not appeal within 72 hours or their packet is denied after a second review, they will be removed as a candidate.
   d. Appeals can be submitted via GobblerConnect.
Section IV. Pre-Campaigning Guidelines

A. The Pre-Campaigning Period is the time during which candidates are collecting signatures for their petition and completing their candidate packet. This period begins the day Candidate Information Packets are available online and ends on the date these packets are due, as specified by the General Election Timeline.

B. Candidates may discuss their platform with students when obtaining signatures, but no official campaigning on their behalf, or persuasion/request to be voted for may be made by the candidate during this time.

1. If a candidate is found to be campaigning beyond the discussion of platform items during this period, they will be subject to the violations process and potential removal from the ballot.

Section V. Campaigning

A. Campaign Plan

1. All executive tickets and legislative candidates must submit a comprehensive campaign plan as part of the Candidate Information Packet to the Judicial Branch by the deadline as specified in the General Election Timeline. The Judicial Branch will review each plan and provide written approval or disapproval and will allow for appeals and resubmissions for seventy-two (72) hours after notification.

2. The Campaign Plan should include:
   a. List of contacts (name, email address, and phone number), for each sponsor or organization you will be speaking to. Documented permission from each organization, class, business or third party previously mentioned giving authorization to campaign via the consent form provided in the Candidate Information Packet.
   b. Samples of all applicable marketing materials, including but not limited to:
      a. Flyers
      b. Table cards
      c. Buttons/apparel designs
      d. Pictures used (Facebook, posters, website, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)
      e. Videos or sounds with transcripts
      f. Screenshot of website, including URL
      g. Banner designs
      h. Links to any social media pages/groups
      i. Sample Collegiate Times Ad
      j. Logo
   c. Space allocation request form
   d. A budget containing all planned campaign expenses

3. Any changes or additions to campaign plans, including the contact sheet and budget must be approved before implementation. These must be submitted for additional approval to the Chief Justice, via email. A written response will be given within 24 hours.

4. Any materials, contacts, or expenses used during campaigning that are not included in the campaigning plan will be subject to violations.

B. Residence Hall Campaigning

1. Due to restrictions and necessary safety precautions with COVID-19, candidates are not allowed to campaign in residence halls.

C. General Campaigning

1. Defacing or vandalizing university property in any medium is prohibited.
   a. Including but not limited to spray paint, chalk, paint, etc.
2. Campaigning in private places (i.e. local businesses), using trademarked logos or symbols, and individual or organizational endorsement is prohibited unless permission is granted by submitting a consent form, provided in the Candidate Information Packet, signed by a person authorized to give such consent (i.e. owner of the business, trademark office official, or president of an organization).
   a. A signed consent form by the business or organization is due with the campaign plan.

3. No trademarked logo or symbol of Virginia Tech may be used during campaigning or on campaign materials.

4. No use of smear tactics by the candidate, or affiliated persons.
   a. A smear tactic is defined as a deliberate attempt to injure another individual or group’s reputation and/or campaign.

5. No more than a combination of two (2) banners or two (2) a-frames may be displayed by any individual candidate at one time, allowing for a total of 2 items.

6. No candidate for a SGA election may place a flyer or banner over that of another candidate. No candidate may remove or tamper with a flyer or banner of another candidate.

7. Any and all potential campaign materials should be submitted in the candidate’s campaign plan.

8. All space allocation requests for banners, A-frames, display cases, table cards, and public space must go through the Judicial Branch for approval before campaign material may be used in those locations.
   a. Candidates may not create a new student organization or use an existing one to reserve additional space.

9. The Judicial Branch will distribute space in an unbiased manner to each candidate.

10. SGA’s website; listserv; logos; office space; sponsored events and meetings; all other materials; and the 1st floor of Squires Student Center are to remain non-partisan.

11. Current members of SGA may endorse candidates but are not allowed to use their position within SGA for promotion; both verbally and in writing.
   a. For example: Renee Smith can endorse Candidate A. But Renee Smith, President of Student Government, cannot endorse Candidate A.

12. All printed and online marketing materials must explicitly mention the “Student Government Association”, or “SGA”, or use the SGA logo.

13. The Collegiate Times may be used for campaigning if, and only if, ad space is purchased. Ad space cannot be donated nor can an article or contributor to the Times promote a campaign.
   a. This must be specified in the campaign plan prior to the beginning of the campaign.
   b. Absolutely no ad space will be approved after the start of campaigning as specified by the General Election Timeline.

14. All campaign material must be taken down by 5PM two (2) business days after the final day of voting as specified by the General Election Timeline with the ONLY exception being candidate websites and social media accounts.

15. Breaking any of these policies will make a candidate subject to the violation process by the Judicial Branch.

D. Election Campaigning

1. Email is an acceptable medium of campaigning. However, altering internet browser settings, chain letters, or spam mail on or off university property is prohibited.

2. The use of student organization listservs or private groups on social media are allowed, however, permission must be granted by the administrator of the organization.
   a. Permission must be documented using the consent form provided in the Candidate Information Packet.
   b. All listservs or private groups on social media that candidates use must be specified in the campaign plan and are subject to approval by the Judicial Branch.

3. Campaigning on social networking sites, including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter is permissible, as long as no violations of the website or its policies occur. All campaign websites may not go live until the campaigning begins as specified by the General Election Timeline if they were previously approved by the Judicial Branch.
4. Breaking any of these policies will make a candidate subject to the violation process by the Judicial Branch.

E. Finances
1. Each candidate is responsible for keeping accurate records of expenses and must submit a final itemized budget and receipts/proof of purchase detailing every resource purchased, used, or donated to the Judicial Branch as specified by the General Election Timeline.
2. Each candidate will be held strictly to a budget of $200.
   a. Items must be campaign specific.
   b. Apparel for candidates may be funded at up to $40 maximum for any and all apparel.
3. SGA will reimburse campaign spending.
   a. SGA will not reimburse donated items.
4. Donated campaign material will be charged full market price regardless of situations or discounts and must be factored into the respective budget. Those using donated materials will be responsible for obtaining the market price of the materials they use from a retailer.
5. All previously owned or used campaign material will be considered at a value of one-third (1/3) of the market price. Those using used materials will be responsible for obtaining the market price from a retailer.
6. Any contracted labor, whether affiliates of the candidate or not, shall be factored into the budget valued at no less than minimum wage.
7. Breaking any of these policies will make a candidate subject to the violation process by the Judicial Branch.

Section VI. Voting

A. Winning candidates will be determined by a plurality of votes, which is defined as the receiving of more votes than other candidates, not an outright majority.
B. The winners of the two Executive offices is the ticket who receive a plurality of votes.
   a. Once winners are confirmed and announced, the individuals are considered the President and Vice President Elect.
   b. Given this unique role, the President-Elect and Vice President-Elect are held to all outlined requirements and guidelines in the Election Code until Inauguration.
C. The number of winners of at-large Representatives will depend on the amount of seats that are allotted by the size of the undergraduate student body. The Representatives who get a plurality of the votes for the allotted seats shall be declared the winners.
D. The number of winners of the Representatives for each College will depend on the number of seats that College is allotted. The Representatives who get a plurality of the votes for the allotted seats for their College shall be declared the winners.
E. All voting will be done as determined in this Election Code.

Section VII. Ballots

A. The ballots shall be split up by each Executive candidate of President and Vice President, by the voter’s College, and will include a separate ballot for at-large members.
   a. Constitutional amendments will be added as their own ballots.
B. All Executive and Representative ballots must include an “Abstain” vote option.
C. All Executive and Representative ballots must include a /write-in/” option.
   a. Write-in votes will only be counted if they are a currently enrolled undergraduate student.
D. Ballots will include the candidate name and platform information as indicated in the candidate packet. Information shall be transcribed exactly as it is listed in the packet.
Section VIII. Write-In Candidates

A. All write-in candidates must notify the Chief Justice via email forty-eight (48) hours prior to the end of voting to confirm their interest. The Chief Justice will then provide the write-in candidate with their petition.

B. All write-in candidates must deliver a petition with the number of necessary signatures to run for that respective position within seventy-two (72) hours of the end of voting to the Chief Justice.
   a. Three hundred (300) signatures for Executive tickets
   b. Fifty (50) signatures for Representative positions

C. In the event that a write-in candidate receives a plurality of the votes needed to attain office, the candidates must go before the Judicial Branch for a hearing to consider the candidate’s compliance with the election.

D. If compliance is met, the prerequisites to be on the ballot as a candidate including campaign plans, meetings, and Candidate Information Packets will be waived.

E. If compliance is not met, the candidate will not be able to accept the position they have received the plurality for, and the next-largest plurality shall be elected.

Section IX. Polling System and Procedures

A. The Student Government Association will provide a voting system that will incorporate the following requirements:
   a. No registered undergraduate student shall be denied the opportunity to vote in the Elections.
   b. Each eligible voter shall have the following areas of voting eligibility: Executive Tickets, College Representatives, At-Large Representatives, and Constitutional Amendments.
   c. Polling shall occur on GobblerConnect.
   d. The voter shall be required to enter their valid PID and password. If the PID and password does not work, the voter must contact the Clerk(s) of Court (via email at sgaelections@vt.edu) before the close of Elections.
   e. To better ensure the fairness of the Elections procedure, randomizing computer technology will be used to list the candidates in an unbiased manner in order to maximize the effectiveness of the electronic balloting system.
   f. Upon logging into the GobblerConnect, voters will be presented with a customized ballot displaying only those candidates they are eligible to vote for.
   g. If a voter should stop voting for any reason during their voting session, they shall be allowed to return at a later time and vote.
      i. Voting that is stalled part way through can be re-started via GobblerConnect.
   h. A verification of final submission will be sent to the voter upon completion.

B. The Student Government Association will provide a voting system that will incorporate the following procedures:
   a. Voters shall be verified as current undergraduate students upon logging into GobblerConnect.
   b. By logging in, voters are stating that:
      i. They are an eligible undergraduate student voter.
      ii. They have not yet voted in the Elections.
      iii. They have used their personal PID and password.
      iv. They realize under University Policy, knowingly providing false information to a student organization is a violation of Section 17 of the Student Code of Conduct in the Hokie Handbook.
   1. Should a student discover an error in the custom ballot presented to them, they should contact the SGA Advisor.

Section X. Apportionment
A. Apportionment of seats in the General Assembly is outlined within the SGA Bylaws.
B. The Chief Justice shall determine the number of seats based on enrollment at the beginning of the academic year.

Section XI. Debate

A. There will be one debate held before the Elections as specified on the Election Timeline. This debate will consist of two portions; one for Presidential candidates and one for Vice Presidential candidates.
B. The debate is open to Executive tickets. All candidates may choose to decline participation.
C. The debate will be moderated by the Chief Justice or a designee from the Judicial Branch.

Section XII. Election Results

A. Election results will be released to the Student Body as soon as the results can be verified, subject to change in the event a claim is filed with the Clerk(s) of Court.
B. Elected candidates must accept their nomination within forty-eight (48) hours of written notification.
   a. If the winning candidate does not accept their nomination in writing within this timeframe, the candidate with the subsequent plurality will be offered the position.
C. The SGA Inauguration will be held in a timely manner in relation to Elections as specified by the Election Timeline, pending extenuating circumstances.

Section XIII. Elections Violations

A. An election violation is defined as a candidate, or an affiliate, violating the SGA Constitution, SGA Bylaws, SGA Election Code, the Principles of Community, and any documented university policies, or local, state, and federal laws.
B. All claims of campaign violations are to be filed with the Clerk(s) of Court.
   a. Claims can be filed via the 2021-2022 SGA Elections Violations Form on GobblerConnect.
C. The Elections Commission will review all filed claims to determine their validity and which Class the violation is.
   a. If it is determined the claim is valid, it will process as follows:
      i. Class A and B violations go to a hearing with the Judicial Branch.
      ii. Class C violations will be reviewed and decided upon by the Chief Justice and Clerks of Courts.
      iii. If clear evidence is presented and the candidate wishes to forego a hearing or review, they may.
      iv. If the Class of the claim is not clear based on the Elections Commission review, they will refer it to a hearing regardless.
D. Candidates accused of Class A and B campaign violations will report to the Judicial Branch for a hearing.
E. Violations are categorized as follows:
   a. Class A violations include, but are not limited to, purposeful damage of another candidate’s materials, purposeful defamation of another candidate or student, violations of the Virginia Tech Student Code of Conduct or acts that go against the Virginia Tech Principles of Community; egregious unethical behavior; violation of local, state, or federal law; election fraud; and purposeful falsification of campaign documents.
      i. Class A violations will result in immediate disqualification of candidacy.
   b. Class B violations include, but are not limited to, attempting to utilize their future position to assert authority over others, speaking on behalf of the organization, and exceeding campaign spending limits.
i. Class B violations may result in campaign suspension at the discretion of the Chief Justice and candidate must meet with an Advisor of SGA to discuss the violation.

c. Class C violations include, but are not limited to, failure to follow instructions as indicated at the mandatory candidate information sessions.

i. Class C violations will result in a written warning from the Chief Justice. Further Class C violations will result in 24-hour campaign suspensions.

F. The Chief Justice has authority to increase the violation class sanction when individual or extenuating circumstances exist.

G. Violations are able to be filed via GobblerConnect at any time throughout the election process, which shall run from the Candidate Information Sessions to Inauguration.

a. Claims are able to be filed for any actions that have occurred within this period.

b. Claims are to be filed no later than forty-eight (48) hours after the inauguration.

H. All decisions by the Judicial Branch and Elections Commission may be appealed.

a. Appeals can be filed via GobblerConnect.

b. Appeals will be reviewed and heard by the Elections Violations Appeal Committee.

c. The Elections Violations Appeal Committee will consist of three student leaders external to SGA appointed by the SGA Advising Team.

I. If a member of the Judicial Branch would like to personally file a claim, they must recuse themselves from their duties related to the Violations process.

Section XIV. Special Elections

A. Special Elections shall occur to fill the offices of President and Vice President if there is a permanent vacancy in the position any time prior to fifty (50) days before the Inauguration, at the discretion of the Judicial Branch.

a. If the vacancy occurs during the fifty (50) days prior to the Inauguration the position will be left vacant.

B. Special Elections shall be held in a manner similar to other Virginia Tech Student Government Association elections with a condensed timeline, with key exceptions being:

a. In place of Candidate Information Sessions interested candidates must meet with the Chief Justice to discuss the election process and role.

b. Candidates shall present their platforms and take questions during a General Assembly meeting in lieu of a debate.

Section XV. Responsibilities

A. The outgoing President and Vice President shall be responsible for training the President-Elect and Vice President-Elect.

B. The President-Elect and Vice President-Elect shall be responsible for the timely selection of members of the Executive Branch and Chief Justice, in accordance with the Constitution.

C. The President-Elect, Vice President-Elect, and Representatives-Elect must remain in good academic, conduct, and judicial standing.

D. The President-Elect, Vice President-Elect, and Representatives-Elect must abide by the SGA Constitution, Bylaws, the Principles of Community, and Election Code.

a. If they are suspected to be in violation of any of the above, and a claim is filed, they will be subject to a hearing as outlined above in the Elections Violations section.

E. Candidates are responsible for maintaining a level of ethical behavior and conduct during the election until inauguration.

a. Behavior that is found to be egregious and unethical shall be sentenced the appropriate violation.
i. For unethical behavior to be egregious, it is to be decidedly hurtful towards others. As such, if unethical behavior is continuous, involving several incidents, then it is certainly egregious.
   1. Although, a single instance of unethical conduct may be deemed egregious, depending on the nature of the action.

ii. Intent is an important factor in determining if unethical behavior is egregious—malevolent intent for both the subsequent outcome of the action and for the action itself.

F. Candidates are responsible for working with the Treasurer to reimburse their campaign expenditures.
G. Candidates are responsible for being in communication with the Chief Justice if any violations occur.
H. Candidates are accountable for their affiliates.