

Proposal for a new USG Election Procedure

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1 Summary

This proposal suggests three changes to the current procedure:

- Only USG members for at least one semester are allowed to candidate for elected offices in the USG.
- The (vice)-president is elected among the elected members of the parliament.
- The committee (co)-chairs are elected in their committees.

2 Current state

Currently, there are elections at the end of each Spring and each Fall semester during which the Collage representatives and the Focus area representative and the treasurer are elected respectively. The Collage representatives chair the CAC, the focus area representatives chair the AAC and the treasurer the FAC. Additionally, during the Spring/Fall semester the president/vice president of the USG is elected. These elected members of the USG form the USG Parliament.

3 Problems with the current system

The problem of continuity The problem is that often inexperienced students are elected into the USG and secondly, that the experience of the previous members is hardly passed on to the new ones. This, leads to the USG working on the same issues over and over again, without learning from previous attempts. As pointed out in the handbook the student body (including the USG) has a collective memory of at most 18 month.

This was the reason to have the elections at the end of the semesters and to invite the newly elected as a standing guest for the remaining semester, before putting them into office officially. While improving the situation, the problem is still present. Furthermore, the new chair of a committee might be amongst the least experienced members of the committee when elected.

Unfamiliarity with the USG procedures Up until now, a vast majority of elected USG members had no previous experience in the USG and were not familiar with the rules and procedures in the USG when elected. Furthermore, the new chair of committee should be familiar with the procedures and customs of the committee. Particularly, the chairs of a committee should be previous members of that committee and accepted amongst the members of the committee.

The right of the committees to have a say in the choice of their chair Currently, the current members of a committee have no say in the election of their chair. This, is suboptimal for various reasons:

- The chair is not accustomed with the workings of the committee.
- The chair might not know the other members before coming into office, limiting them ability to chair the committee meetings.
- The committee members can judge the strength and weaknesses of the other members they worked with. Their experience is neglected in the process of selecting a new chair.

Equal representation of committees in the parliament It is important that all committee's interests (after all the actors in the USG with most manpower which do most of the work) are well represented in the parliament and to ensure a good cooperation between the parliament and the committees. Also different committees can have different interests and it is important that they are all as equally as possible represented in the parliament.

Inflexibility of the election system Currently, Collage representatives are allowed only to chair the CAC, Focus area representatives are only allowed to chair the AAC and only the treasurer is allowed to chair the FAC. This way if a member of a USG committee wants to run for an elected office to chair them committee, they can only run in the Fall semester to chair the FAC or AAC and only in Spring to chair the CAC. However, forcing committed committee members running in an election to chair a different committee, leads to the above problems. Therefore, committee members running in an election to (co)-chair their committee are currently unnecessarily restricts from running.

4 Suggestion

The idea is to elect the members of parliament from current USG members, to allow the committees to decide on their own chair and to elect the (vice)-president among the parliament members. In practice the Members of Parliament and Committee chairs would be chosen as follows.

At the end of each semester, USG members can run for members of parliament and the $N + 2$ candidates with most votes are elected $N + 2$ (where N denotes the number of committees in the USG, currently 3). The parliament members elect a (vice)-president among themselves.

At the same time each semester the committees elect a (co)-chair among its members with at least one semester membership. If the chair is not themselves a member of parliament, they are invited as a standing guest to the parliament and gains voting rights for matters in the responsibility of their committee.

Each USG member may have at most one (co)-chair position in the USG committees.

5 Discussion

The problem of continuity and unfamiliarity with USG procedures This problem is addressed by the proposal, since all elected members must be previous USG members and committee chairs are previous committee members.

The right of the committees to have a say in the choice of their chair This problem is fully resolved by the proposal.

Equal representation of committees in the parliament This problem is not addressed by the proposal.

Inflexibility of the election system This problem is fixed as well.

Legitimacy of the chair The main drawback¹ of this proposal is the fact that committee chairs no longer need to be elected members. This somewhat impacts the legitimacy of the committee and can also affect the representation of the committee in the parliament (this is also the reason to invite the chair to the parliament).

On behalf of the:
USG Parliament
Undergraduate Student Government

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¹This can also be a strength, as the example of the FAC this semester shows.