



ELECTIONS BOARD AGENDA

Associated Students

1/8/21, 2:00 PM

Zoom

CALL TO ORDER by Andrew Yan at 2:00 PM

A. ROLL CALL

Name	Note:	Name	Note:
Andrew Yan <i>Chair</i>	Present	Ruth Garcia Guevara <i>Advisor</i>	Present
Wessal Esber <i>Vice Chair</i>	Present	Diana Collins Puente <i>Advisor</i>	
Emma Xing	Present	Ahura Nezhad <i>Senate Liaison</i>	Absent
Shannon Hollingsworth	Present	Dylan Martinez <i>Senate Liaison</i>	Absent (Excused)
Austin Foreman	Present		
Lauren Sullivan	Absent		
Daniel Ong	Present		

Also in attendance:

Tyler Barth, AS Attorney General

Ciara Thrower, Current Senior Advisor to the AS President (arrived at 2:45pm)

Icebreaker:

<https://twitter.com/Atomsk92/status/1334138437126008832>

B. DISCUSSION ITEMS

B.1. Opening

Andrew: Hi everyone, welcome to the first meeting of the quarter.

Andrew: We are actually in an active Election period right now, which has never happened during a Week 1 meeting. First, a quick summary of the AS President election that will start next Monday, Jan 11 at 8am and end Thursday, Jan 14 at 4pm. The voting link is the same as always, vote.as.ucsb.edu. The two candidates are Lea Toubian and Carlos "Andy" Ruiz, both independents. The voter threshold is 4% so the election will need at least 907 total votes to be considered valid. Candidate forums are being edited by AS Creative Media again. The complaints portal is open as of Monday morning as this is currently campaigning week.

Andrew: Also, on the 907 total votes, that's lower than Fall because enrollment actually decreased by 500-800 students, apparently that is normal for Winter?

Ruth: I wanted to say that we usually get the 3rd week census to show we're we at in the Election. That didn't happen this time because the election is Week 2. Sean said he got the current numbers from the registrar and that's what we're using.

Andrew: The Elections season has been smooth so far, nothing much has happened. Does anyone have updates?

Austin: I don't really have an update pertaining to Elections Board but could you remind me does Elections Board has a designated space within AS?

Andrew: No, but could we get one?

Ruth: For Elections Board it's relatively difficult to get space so that is a challenge for Elections. Cause I don't know if y'all saw my email but as part of my other positions in AS such as the Ucen Gov Board something I wanted to tackle was space within Associated students. On other college campuses space is always a limitation. I know we do have within Associated Students the common AS main office although it might not be used very often and even so it only has enough capacity to function only for one group at a time. If one group is meeting in the main space then other groups have meeting on. I'm hoping to get a survey put together so hopefully we can discuss what Elections Board will normally need as far as space.

Andrew: Sure, that's something to think about. Obviously no AS groups have space right now but for those that will be here next year feel free to reach out to Austin since you should be meeting in-person.

Austin: It would be nice to have space so you can collectively team bond. I want to prompt something to have students to think about space in a way their BCU might interact with it. I think as a whole BCU I think we can probably go through the questions.

Andrew: Do we have any new AS fees this year?

Ruth: No. UCOP doesn't really want new fees this year either.

Andrew: Alright. Also, I saw that some other UC Elections Boards decided to completely ban new fees altogether because of COVID and the fact that some are experiencing financial hardship. We could have taken that path but obviously it doesn't matter now since you said we don't have any new fees anyways.

Shannon: Did we decide on a rule for Instagram DMs?

Andrew: We didn't decide anything.

Emma: I think we talked about how easy it is to DM people but that's it.

Andrew: Yeah, campaigning rules have stayed the same since Spring and the guide says that Instagram DMs are allowed. We could revisit this for next Spring.

B.2. Fine Reform

Emma: I'm graduating this quarter so I'll have to teach someone else how to do complaints. I guess I could teach Shannon.

Shannon: That works.

Emma: Also, if we change the complaint rules for Spring we'll have to change the complaint process too, right?

Andrew: Yes, I guess we could talk about that now. It kind of goes into our discussion a while ago about fine reform. Over break I did some research into the fines that we have and how that relates to all the other UCs. Does anyone want to guess how many UC Election Boards do fines?

Austin: Just 1?

Andrew: Yeah, we are the only UC that has fines. The worst part is there is no limit to how much someone could be fined, right now someone could technically be fined thousands for Elections violations which is just not right, especially during COVID.

Tyler: So what would fines be replaced by?

Andrew: Nothing.

Austin: There were so many categories for fines that it seemed like a hassle and what I proposed was to consolidate categories and give 4 or 5 strikes then it's disqualification, instead of having monetary fines.

Ruth: Not everyone has the economic means to pay for all of these fines.

Andrew: Most of the other UC's do a variation of Austin's strike idea. So for example, 3 violations and they get disqualified. I like Berkeley's the best because if you look at their code, it's clearly very well thought out and someone put a ton of time into it. They have a 5 violation system. They have a list of all the possible violations, and they are classified by severity. For example, if someone hacks into the voting system, that's 5 violations and thus a disqualification. If someone puts a banner in the wrong place, that might just be 1 violation.

Wessal: I think we're all on board to remove fines because there's no reason for it. I like the 5 strikes, but also, I think we should reserve the ability to completely disqualify someone which we have. We should also reserve the ability to issue warnings as well. I definitely think a warning should be an option.

Wessal: Point of clarification would the changes in the code would apply to this spring?

Andrew: Yes.

Andrew: I like the 3 violation system with a disqualification on the third. The reason is because historically we usually don't start off with a strike anyways. For example, really minor offenses are the majority of the violations that have happened. The most common is probably people missing deadlines. We usually give a warning or something called a "FYI" which is just telling them about what they did and to not do that again. We've tried our best not to fine people in the past, especially last year when COVID was happening in April. That poses problems because our current system says that if someone doesn't get fined, they also don't get disqualified (the two are together). Obviously we don't try to disqualify anyone either but the option needs to be there for severe infractions.

Austin: It needs to be something stronger than a warning. Even if we just add an additional strike in an Elections Board's mind it's just a warning but even though it's called a strike. But even if calling something a strike vs a warning it's different. But even if you have 4 strikes then the 5th one you're gone, that seems good. The first three are kind of like warnings.

Andrew: The first four.

Austin: When number four hits, it's that the 4th offense you would be disqualified. Obviously I'm sure there's an appeal process and things like that but something like that is a little stronger than having warnings that aren't even written in the code.

Andrew: Anyways we need to all think about this more before we make a decision. This is a major change, easily the largest thing we've done throughout my 4 years on the board.

Ruth: Some folks don't have the means and some folks do and can very easily come up with the right money to pay for any fines. I think you all are going in the right decision. I think it's great to address what has been called for a long time.

Wessal: I don't like letting people violate code without any repercussion. I think it's appropriate to put a penalty in there like you can't make a social media post for 24 hours. I don't want anyone to think they have 5 strikes to "work with" before anything happens to them.

Andrew: That's why I like 3 infractions only. You already have to actively try to get 3 infractions in our current system, you really do. People are generally good at following the rules and reaching 3 infractions isn't something you would do accidentally.

Shannon: What about something like what UCI is doing with the penalties? Like you are restricted from campaigning for a day if you violate the rules.

Andrew: I don't like those because it almost seems Orwellian if people can't go outside only because they broke a school elections rule. It gets worse if you continue reading. One of the UCs makes you write a public apology letter for violating a rule. And another has like a time out for violating Election rules. We're not going to put anyone in time out for this.

Austin: With UCI saying you can't campaign for 24 hours I think those types of actions are really hard to control. If it's social media and they can't post for 24 hours it doesn't mean they can't make new accounts or even have their friends post for them. Controlling people's actions doesn't seem like the right way to go. We can't control actions.

Shannon: I think it can be done. There are already some social media restrictions.

Wessal: Let's think about this for next time everyone.

Andrew: Yea, we have Ciara here to talk about political parties.

B.3. Public Forum

Ciara: Hi everyone, I'm Ciara and I'm here to talk about the role of political parties in Associated Students. I am really passionate about either getting rid or reforming political parties within AS, and I understand that Spring Elections are coming soon so this might not happen this year and that's partially on me but I wanted to share this and see what y'all think, Getting rid of political parties will relieve some barriers of entry within AS and the political parties have scared me and got me to stay away. We want candidates that are not just running because they have a lot of friends in IVP or Greek Life. I know that IVP and CU are very similar, most of the things that Senate has passed has been unanimous, but these parties just give us these barriers that aren't real and provides tension that doesn't really exist. I think a lot of good can come from alleviating that. I think it's important to cultivate responsibility in our student body, we still vote in actual elections and it's important to be involved and know what's going on. They will have to look into each candidate and know what they're about. This would shift accountability from parties to actual people. This is the political consciousness that I've seen and I've seen this every year. Party lines create a false dichotomy.

Ciara: An example I have is AS UCR which does not have political parties. Most of them are in agreement that they're glad that political parties are gone. I believe they are the only UC that doesn't have political parties currently. However, despite being their students being a little more involved and a little more knowledgeable, they are still kind of overwhelmed by Greeks but we are as well. Both Greeks from panhellenic and multicultural Greeks so there's really no difference in that regard. Ciara: Some of the pros: I hope to see is a less tense and cutthroat environment and I think we need to hold staff and faculty accountable as well. I know that some go to Senate meetings and have different positions but I know that staff can shift accountability as well and I know sometimes they like to see the students fight and argue rather than come with agreements. I think creating a party that is more affective in doing things rather than hyperpartisan or tense.

Ciara: Some of the cons is that campaign violation charges are going to have to be regulated by Elections Board. Also, I know that UCR increased the amount of campaigning funds when they abolished political parties because that creates more barriers to entry I think we should either take it the same or lower it. That's just something I observed from UCR.

Ciara: If we ban political parties Spring 2021 may be a little ambitious, we've been doing independent elections with SAG but I understand that there are a lot of senators and I Already addressed that earlier. Personally as a voter I have not seen either IVP or CU have any party platforms. IVP and CU kind of get disbanded if there's not an Election. They don't exist outside of Election season and they don't have a purpose, Another potential solution is full political parties that are actually involved in students lives instead of only being there just for campaigning.

Ciara: Some Senators have talked about a coalition-based system that are based on ideology and your goals, that's also an option but we can stick to our current system. But I definitely think Elections Board and both political parties need to be lot more transparent to folks as for toxicity, I've never seen IVP or CU been penalized for what candidates say. There's been transphobia, homophobia, just so many horrible things and I think the political parties facilitate that.

Ciara: Here's an example of coalitions. I think endorsements and experience should definitely be thought of when you think of candidates. No matter, what our current system needs to change. I'm tired of seeing Greek life from any of the Greeks. I'm tired of seeing toxicity and mental health be rampant in AS. So thank you, thank you for listening.

Andrew: Hi Ciara, thanks for coming in today. I appreciated the presentation, especially the last part about all the potential solutions at the end. I don't think I've ever seen a section like that in this board so I really like how you presented that. I know it's 3pm right now so do you have time to stay for questions or discussion?

Ciara: Yes, I have until 3:20pm.

Austin: Hi Ciara, my name is Austin. I was actually a former Senator last year and I didn't actually run with a party but last year I chose to run as an independent. I definitely see the party toxicity that exists and I think it's actually unnecessary. And yes, when it does come to being in the Senate room, the parties really don't do anything, they are just this false weirdness floating around, so I definitely agree with some of what you said. But I wanted to bring something up, Elections Board, when we present the changes to the Elections Code, it is the current sitting Senate that has to ratify it, it just seems very difficult to me that we could somehow propose abolishing political parties to a Senate that consists of people that ran with political parties. I love the pros and cons you put and some of those solutions were great. The one thing that seems like a huge barrier to getting this through, so even if all of Elections Board decides they want to remove political parties, the sitting Senate is the one that approves Elections Code. This something that not only the entire Elections Board has to get behind but also the current sitting Senate whenever the change gets proposed.

Ciara: I've talked to a couple Senators, obviously I haven't spoken to all of them, they just wanted to make sure it's done equitably. I don't want to politicize the issue that happened with the last president and why we need a special election but I think the tense environment, the Senate would understand more why political parties need to be abolished. I think it might be possible for next year to get this through, with this upcoming spring election potentially being remote again, especially with the presence of the parties not so present and strong next school year.

Andrew: One thing I wanted to bring up is the example you mentioned, UCR. I learned about UCR not having political parties a while ago and I did some research into it at the time. I found out they officially banned political parties in 2018, but they were technically already banned in 2017 because they had only independent candidates that year. There was one news article that had this quote: *"President Pro Tempore Martin Cuenca outlined how ASUCR elections had never fallen below a 30 percent turnout rate until last year's [2017] elections, a race that ran only independent candidates and netted a 21 percent turnout – just one percent above the minimum threshold for referenda to pass"*

Andrew: So of course I tried to look into it and I found the turnout statistics by year for UCR. For example, in 2014 they reached an all time high with 38% voter turnout. 2015 was 35.1% and 2016 was 31.5%. Then in 2017 they had no parties and turnout was 21%. In 2018 they banned political parties and turnout fell to 14.39% which was actually below the 20% UC voter turnout requirement. They rebounded in 2019 with 24.19%, but in 2020 they fell back down to 11.14%. I think they attribute the 11% to COVID and the fact that students might not vote online, but that isn't a pattern we see at many of the UCs. Most UCs had voter turnout that relatively stayed the same. Some UCs, like Berkeley, actually saw higher voter turnout because of the virtual election.

Andrew: So that would be my primary concern if we were to remove political parties. If our voter turnout fell below 20% it would be catastrophic for our AS, especially because the election is not just candidates. This year we have almost all the AS fees on the ballot and a turnout below 20% would cause all of them to fail (including all funding for BCUs)

Andrew: For UCR at least, not only did they not hit the 20% requirement, but their turnout also dropped by more than 20%. So my question is, do you know anything about this and do you think lowered voter turnout would be an issue here with any of the proposed solutions?

Ciara: I attribute a lot of that to the banning of laptopping which happened that same year at UCR. UCR is considerably apolitical compared to our campus, it baffles me to the amount of participation on our campus. As you know, our campus is very involved in politics. So I don't think that is the reason, I get it though because I understand how important it is to meet that threshold.

Ruth: We banned laptopping the same year... both campuses were going through the same issue at the same time.

Austin: Oh, thanks for the info.

Ruth: We were doing the laptopping thing, including banning it, at the exact same time as UCR. I made a presentation about our system at the time and UCR was at the front tasking a lot of questions about how we ran things. Our turnout did not drop.

Ruth: I also wanted to mention the toxicity that happens during Elections, I wanted to speak for myself that I personally do not, as a Career person, who has been doing this for several years, I do not like seeing students fighting or any of that stuff. I don't believe any of my colleagues like to see students going at it, what I do know is that we do know that this is your system, this is the system of the students. Staff does not make any decision as to changes to the Elections Code, all we do is support and give as much information as possible and we work across departments and divisions to work a lot of things out. Some things that you might not see in the front are definitely worked out in the back end. There are some things that students are not aware of, even Andrew, the chair of Elections Board, might not even be aware of, if there are staff concerns with people's safety or mental health. This is a very difficult time, literally now, and we do work with each other, across divisions, across the campus. We do work with students to try to help with the situation, and I appreciate all of the thought and effort that goes into it, and it'll be interesting to see how this

continues and this is the time to introduce a lot of these things because Elections Board is in the process of looking at code right now.

Ciara: I didn't meant to suggest that staff is being malicious or anything, that's something that a lot of elected officials have told me, that the staff they work with has not been helpful, so I just wanted to bring that up.

Ruth: I always say this to everyone. If you feel that someone isn't being helpful, you can always go above their head to their supervisor. Everyone has a supervisor somewhere, including myself. I've been doing Elections for a very long time. If you or anyone else needs help you can always direct them to me. I try to help as much as possible.

Austin: Also before we end, I wanted to bring up that as part of the survey I sent out earlier, there is a piece in there about how elections are run and political parties. There is another box in there about climate and associated students, transparency and things like that.

Ciara: Thank you, Austin and thank you all again. I think something needs to be done because I've seen too much hardship and it's really disappointing.

Ruth: Ciara, if I could just answer the question you had at the beginning of the presentation. The SAG position is the newest position in Associated Students. I don't recall the reason at that time as to why students decided to do that. I want to say at least 10 years or so.

Ruth: Also, I appreciate the thought that went into your presentation. Elections is obviously a very important piece of Associated Students and UCSB, it's obviously a big part of Associated Students and it's how we received our funding from the fees on the ballot.

Ciara: Thank you all.

Andrew: I know we're 20 minutes over so thank you all for staying, that was an important discussion. We'll end on time next time. The next time we meet will be after the Elections period since our tentative meeting time is Friday. Results night will be on Thursday, I'm thinking 6 or 7 pm?

Austin: When was it last time?

Andrew: 9:15.

Austin: Yeah, no. 6 or 7 sounds good.

Wessal: Keep in mind the election may need to be extended pending the threshold.

Andrew: We'll work it out later, I'll update in Slack.

MEETING ADJOURNED by Andrew Yan at 3:22 PM