e-CACTUS MANDATE 2011

A. The 2011 on-line Citizens’ Assembly for Critical Thinking about the United States (e-CACTUS) must study the role of Presidential debate and consider whether to recommend specific changes in the level of government control or involvement, the nature and duties of the oversight commission, and the process and the procedures followed for planning and carrying out the series of debates in the general election campaign.

B. In carrying out this mandate, the Assembly must:
First, become well informed as to the history of Presidential debates in the United States, critiques of past debates, and the effect of the debates on public opinion;

Second, study the use of leadership debates in other democracies or in state gubernatorial races, and of candidates’ debates during the presidential primary season;

Third, consider the relevance of the debates to the duties of the President and Vice-President of the United States;

Fourth, consult with other citizens in the Eastern Kentucky University community of students, faculty, and staff, as well as interested members of the broader community, and provide them the opportunity to make submissions to CACTUS in writing on the CACTUS public discussion board;

Fifth, develop at least two alternative models for change which could involve greater government involvement or control, recommendations for change by extra-governmental entities involved such as the media or the Presidential Debate Commission, or some combination; and then debate and decide between them;

Sixth, re-examine the current status of presidential debates in the U.S. and then deliberate and decide between the status quo and the chosen alternative proposal.

C. If the Assembly recommends adoption of a change in the current policies, formal and informal, governing presidential debates, the new policy must be described clearly and in detail in the final report, to be completed by December 15, 2011. and if a law or laws would be required, proposed language for these must be included.

D. If the Assembly recommends keeping the current policy, the final report must explain the reasons for judging this policy to be preferable to the alternative model most favored by the Assembly.

E. The decision described in section A must
a. be limited to the determination of the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the current control and conduct of Presidential debates; and
b. take into account the potential effects on the Constitution, such as the First Amendment, or laws governing campaigns, and be consistent with the basic principles of representative democracy.

F. Issues that arise in deliberations or on the public discussion board that are beyond the scope of the mandate but that the Assembly may believe to be significant and relevant to the process may be addressed in the final report.

G. Whether or not the Assembly chooses to replace or alter the current laws and policies, it must produce a clearly-worded referendum question to this effect to be voted on by the university community and a clearly-worded explanation to be posted with the referendum question.

H. The Assembly should make its decision and approve a referendum question no later than December 8, 2011, and should complete and approve its final report no later than December 9, 2011.
I. The referendum question must be posted no later than December 8, 2011, and voting will continue through December 14, 2011. The decision of the voters shall be e-mailed to the Assembly as soon as it is completed and announced on the CACTUS web page, EKU Today, and EKU Students Today no later than the first week of classes in January, 2012.