2015 Report of the Chief Returning Officer

Capilano Students' Union

Election Results:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Vice-President of External Relations
Taylor Wilson 147
Jullian Kolstee 143

Vice-President of Internal Development
Zachary Renwick
249 YES
19 NO

Vice-President of Student Life
Kate Phifer 227
Rhita Hassar 71
Heidi Anderson 38

Vice-President of University Relations & Services
Sacha Fabry
250 YES
23 NO

COLLECTIVE LIAISONS/COORDINATORS

Environmental Justice Coordinator
Kaylie Higgs
245 YES
19 NO

Social Justice Coordinator
Taylor Smith 135
Nicole Spencer 127

Queer Students Liaison
Jon Kinsley
211 YES
26 NO

Women Students' Liaison
Catrina McCrae
224 YES
14 NO

FACULTY REPRESENTATIVES
(two for each of the university faculties)

Arts & Sciences (x2)
Jonald Chan
61 YES
13 NO

Business & Professional Studies (x2)
Emily Solomon
104 YES
6 NO

Global & Community Studies (x2)
Sabrina Ouellette 61
Kyle LeGrow 57
Sephia Jeon 34

Positions Vacant:

Status of Colour Liaison

Accessibility Justice Liaison

First Nations Students Liaison

International Students Liaison

Campus Representative- Squamish

Campus Representative- Sunshine Coast

Faculty Representative- Arts & Sciences (1)

Faculty Representative- Business & Professional Studies (1)

Role of Chief Returning Officer

1. Pre-Nomination Period
   -preliminary approval of nomination documentation materials (Call for Nominations, Nomination Package, including review of Bylaws, Democratic Events Procedures, nomination sheets, candidate information, etc.)
   -posting and publication of promotion and information material on CSU website, notice boards, etc.

2. Nomination Period
   -receipt of nomination packages
   -planning and conducting Candidates' Orientation Meeting (s)
   -confirmation and acceptance of nominations
   -post candidate list to CSU website

3. Campaign Period
   -plan and conduct All Candidates' Forums
   -respond to candidates' questions and concerns
   -approve candidates' campaign materials and candidate statements
   -monitor campaign activities

4. Polling Period
   -arrange supplies and polling assistants
   -set up polling station with adequate signage, instructions, candidate information, ballot box and privacy screen
   -train and monitor polling assistants
   -set up adequate signage and non-campaign zones in polling area
   -encourage high voter turnout
   -daily communication with candidates regarding updates and clarification of concerns
   -organize polling at satellite campuses

5. Ballot Counting
   -arrange staff and area for counting
   -monitor scrutineers
   -plan process for counting of ballots and recount totals if appropriate
   -record results and organize counted ballots for safe keeping
   -forward unofficial results to CSU webmaster for posting

6. Post Election Period
   -collect and review Campaign Expense Sheets
   -monitor removal of all campaign material
   -investigate and resolve any complaints or concerns regarding election process

7. Prepare and Deliver CRO Report to Board of Directors

Perspectives on the Role of CRO

My goal in this role was to provide clear communication and direction to the candidates, CSU staff, and student body in order to run a fair and equitable election and to ensure compliance with the rules. My intentions were to be available and responsive to needs of the candidates and staff as they arose and to seek understanding of any questions or concerns in order to provide direction or resolution through interpretation of the Bylaws and Democratic Events Procedures.

I did find it challenging at first to familiarize myself with the culture of the CSU and of the background of the election process there. I came to understand the roles and schedules of the CSU staff and some of the issues of past elections, such as a relatively low number of nominees and of voters, and the difficulty and expense of conducting voting at the two satellite campuses with little apparent interest from the students there.

I feel that it would be helpful in the future to provide a manual for the CRO including the roles and duties, a description of roles and schedules of the CSU staff, copies of the Bylaws, Democratic Events Procedures, examples of the Nomination Package, Call for Nominations, Candidate Expense Statements, and other relevant documents. As well, a calendar or timeline of relevant dates from the past year could be included.

As I came in to this position as a neutral person who is not affiliated with the university, I felt there were both pros and cons. I believe it is advantageous to have a CRO who is completely non-biased and can provide an outside perspective to the electoral process. As well, a background in elections administration is helpful in addressing processes and issues being mindful to first ensure compliance with the rules as they are stated and then to apply them as situations arise. I did find, though, that it took me quite a while to become familiar with the culture of the Students' Union at Capilano and of issues that need to be addressed to maximize efficiency and effectiveness of the election.

Throughout many electoral jurisdictions, the topic of online voting comes up often. I understand that some local universities have recently been running their elections using internet voting. I strongly recommend that Capilano University consult with these universities to investigate issues such as security, available software, and cost in order to consider changing to an online voting system, especially if it would increase voter turnout and participation by students in the satellite campuses.

Issues Brought Forward and Recommendations

1. **Low Number of Nominations**
   I sensed an unfortunate lack of interest by the students in becoming involved in the CSU. After considering the roots of this disengagement, I took into consideration the difficulty in creating a sense of community at Capilano University due to the fact that most students commute to the campus for their classes and do not become involved in campus activities, often spending the majority of their time with other students in their programmes.
   Recommendations:
   Develop a plan for raising the profile of the CSU throughout the year so more students value the benefit of participating in CSU events and campaigns leading to a higher interest in becoming leaders. Keep in mind: Who are we? What have we accomplished? What are our goals?, What are the needs of the students?
   Invite more students to help out in events and campaigns to gain experience and to see the benefits of becoming involved.
   Profile relevant issues; even "create a controversy" to promote awareness and involvement.
   Set up an information centre earlier in the year to provide information about the CSU and offer opportunities for more students to become involved in upcoming activities.
   Prior to the nomination period, set up an information booth with representatives of the CSU to provide information to encourage students to seek nomination.

2. **Low Voter Turnout**
   Promote upcoming elections throughout the campus through posters, social media, websites, campus publications, library monitors, etc...
   Make the upcoming election the cover story on the CSU webpage and Campus Courier.
   Contact the North Shore News about including an article on the CSU and student elections.
   Encourage current Board members to speak to a variety of students to encourage voter turnout.
   Actively promote All Candidate Forums so students will attend to become informed of relevant issues.
   Give voters "I Voted" stickers after voting.
   Keep periodic running tally of voters at polling station to track voter turnout.
   **Investigate the feasibility of conducting online voting.

3. **Lack of Interest at Satellite Campuses**
   Ask Board members to make periodic visits to satellite campuses to promote interest in and understanding of the role of the CSU.
   Consider staging events or campaigns annually on satellite campuses.
   *** Investigate the feasibility of conducting online voting.

4. **Readiness of Nomination Materials**
   Begin process of reviewing election documents two weeks before the campus closes for Winter Vacation.
   Ensure that all material is ready to be posted immediately upon return from vacation.

5. **Schedule of Post Election Responsibilities**
   Change due dates for Candidate Expense Statements and removal of campaign material to wither the last day of voting or the day after the election so that all is completed prior to Reading Break.

6. **Language Revision in Bylaws and Democratic Events Procedures for Clarification**

   -Bylaw VII (2.): change language to include a member who currently holds a position on the Board and who is elected to a different position for the following year that is vacant in the current year shall continue in the current position for the remainder of the term.

   -Democratic Events Procedures (8.) The upper limits...: Include language indicating that campaign expenses will not be reimbursed

   -Democratic Events Procedures (9.) Electoral expenses...: Define whether or not candidates may provide remuneration to campaign assistants or managers which would then be included as campaign expenses.

CRO Work Report

I made approximately 14 visits to Capilano University campus totalling about 34 hours. Activities included:
- Meetings with CSU Organizer
- Discussing and Receiving Nomination Packages
- Voters List Issues
- Candidate Orientation Meetings (3)
- All Candidates Forums (2)
- Voting setup and observation (3)
- Ballot Counting
- Collection of Expense Statements
- Monitoring removal of campaign materials on campus
- Meeting with Candidates (2)
- Attending Board Meeting

At home, my work involved approximately 60 hours. Activities included:
- Over 400 emails
- Approximately 25 phone calls
- Pre-nomination period review of documents
- Nomination period emails and review of Nomination Packages
- Verification of qualification of nominees and nominators
- Posting list of candidates
- Preparation for Candidates' Orientation Meetings
- Preparation for All Candidates' Forums
- Approval of campaign materials
- Approval and forwarding of candidate statements
- Documenting campaign assistants
- Ensuring setup of polling assistants and supplies
- Daily updates to candidates of clarifications during voting
- Post-election reminders to candidates about expense statements and removal of campaign materials
- Correspondence regarding removal of campaign materials
- Preparation of CRO Final Report

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Smeal
Chief Returning Officer
25 February, 2015