

# CSU General Election and Referenda 2018

## Chief Returning Officers Final Report

The 2018 CSU elections and referenda were a general success. This was the first election/referenda conducted using internet voting. The elections and referenda can be highlighted by a turnout not seen in years with 1457 voters in total. A number of positions remain vacant as no candidates were nominated for them while the majority of positions filled were uncontested ballots. I believe that much of the success of the election is a result of the efforts of the candidates themselves, but given the change to internet voting this year, much appreciation must be paid to the CSU staff members, the Capilano IT staff as well as the Capilano Registrars Office. The following pages provide a general overview of the electoral process and include some recommendations moving forward, many of which remain from previous election cycles.

It was again a real pleasure and honour to work with the Capilano University community, the CSU and all of its staff and members. Should you have any questions regarding the following commentary, please don't hesitate to contact me at anytime for further discussion.

A total of 1457 students voted, made up of 600 Business and Professional Studies students, 411 Arts and Science students, 159 Fine and Applied Arts Students, 133 Global and Community Studies students and 154 Education, Health and Human Development Students.

### Rules and procedures

While the rules and procedures governing the CSU elections are generally conducive to the conduct of fair elections, a number of clarifications and amendments are in order to further smooth the process, improve clarity and minimize potential disputes.

Given this was the first-time elections were held online, I believe feedback should be sought from members who voted, members who didn't, outgoing board members and those incoming to learn what kind of amendments could be made to strengthen the voting process. I will expand on my thoughts on this throughout the report.

It would be advisable to expand on the rule prohibiting "the distribution of food and drink" to encompass a wider array of "gifts". Amending the rule to prohibit "treating" would remove any doubt and alleviate any concern about all "gifts" a candidate may wish to provide prospective voters during the campaign, not just food and drink.

Treating: "A person is guilty of treating if either before, during or after an election they directly or indirectly give or provide any food, drink, entertainment or provision to corruptly influence any voter to vote or refrain from voting. Treating requires a corrupt intent – it does not apply to ordinary hospitality."

Additions to the rules stating that candidates may campaign by posting messages within CSU email groups or Facebook or other social media pages would provide greater clarity to candidates. Furthermore, should there be any desired limitations on this of any kind, such consideration would be welcome as well.

Amending the procedures to provide clarity on how materials made prior to the campaign period or for previous elections cycles are declared on expense statements should be created. In general, any campaign material used in the current election cycle should be a declarable item on the current expense statement, whether it was paid for in that cycle or not.

During this election, we had 3 candidates withdraw from the election. As stated previously, consideration should be given to adding a regulation on how candidates may withdraw from the elections. A potential recommendation could allow candidate withdrawals at any time prior to election day. If ballots are not already printed, the candidates name would simply be removed from the ballot, while if the ballots are already printed, the rule could state that all votes cast for that candidate would simply not be counted and posters advising voters that a candidate had withdrawn could be made available.

Some housecleaning of the rules and procedures should be carried out. It would be helpful to combine articles 4 & 9 regarding complaints and violations. Furthermore, a rule should be established clarifying what is published regarding complaints. 2 complaints were submitted during this election, but I believe a number more would have been filed if I hadn't insisted that the names of those filing complaints would be published along with their complaints. This was my ruling and absolutely something that could be altered and codified. There are pro's and con's both ways.

Bylaw VII(2) states that a candidate elected into a vacant position shall take office upon ratification at the next board meeting. As noted previously, there may be cases where we have one vacancy – but two successful candidates elected. If there are two successful candidates and one vacant position, a formula for allotting that position should be codified, such as allocating such a position by lottery between the two successful candidates.

### Referenda

For the second year in a row, a series of referenda questions were posed to the CSU membership. Carrying this out was entirely manageable, however, as previously noted some thought should go into refining the rules to distinguish differences in conducting referenda versus an election, as they are distinct. This would allow for more practical implementation of referendum rules that naturally differ, especially from a campaign perspective. Greater clarity must be made regarding yes/no committees, so they are better informed and enabled by the rules. No doubt however, I as the CRO, could do a better job of informing referenda committees on how to engage in the electoral process and perhaps an all candidates meeting should be created for referenda entities.

It would be wise to explicitly add to the procedures that when the CSU is authorized to take a position in a referendum, they may use CSU logos and slogans, as distinct from candidates.

### Voter Register (Member List)

This is the first year where I was not required to be in touch with the Capilano Registrars office as the CSU staff liaised with the Registrars Office and Capilano IT office to coordinate lists and data. All the data was appropriately segmented which was crucial for the election, however, there were some discrepancies on the total number of voters on the membership lists. Ultimately, we used the list with the most students on it, but gaining greater certainty on membership lists is crucial in future elections.

## Nominations

The nominations process ran reasonably smoothly, with all candidates fulfilling their nomination requirements. As suggested previously, in order to simplify the process for prospective candidates and the CRO, the nomination forms should be simplified so errors commonly made by prospective candidates are minimized. Such changes would be easy to implement, including altering the areas required to be filled in so it is immensely clear what must be completed, rather than the current slightly confusing table format. This is especially required for the “Personal Information Release Form” at the back of the package. The optional “Candidate Statement” submission deadline was the same as the rest of the nomination package. Many candidates did not realize this deadline and as such, only a few candidates submitted candidate statements. Efforts should be made to highlight the candidate statement submission process to increase submissions and perhaps the deadline should be made later than the rest of the nomination package again to gain greater participation in the statements. Finally, consideration to remove the requirement to include the candidates name and positions from the statement would be appreciated as these pieces of information are always listed by the CRO by default.

Candidate recruitment was reasonable and 2 positions that are rarely filled were this time around (Sunshine Coast Campus and the Faculty of Education, Health and Human Development). Nevertheless, a number of seats were not contested and I remain a believer that the incumbent board members are in the best position to seek out potential new candidates and these efforts should continue in the future, including specific efforts in attempting to engage students at the. The board should be attracting potential new board members, not just before an election, but also throughout the year, simply planting the idea with other members and following up with them just prior to nominations opening.

As in previous election, some candidates made requests to have their name listed on the ballot differently than how the rules state they must be noted. I did not allow for deviations from the rules during this electoral cycle. Consideration of this should be contemplated and some flexibility should be sought.

A pre-check deadline has been used in the past and is an effective way of getting candidates to submit nomination packages early to ensure their packages meet the required criteria to be nominated allowing time for any corrections. Unfortunately, on a few packages were submitted prior to the pre-check deadline, so it was of limited value. Pre-checks should be used in the future, or to capture more students and allow for more flexibility, the CSU could consider providing a submission deadline for all and allowing a few days for all prospective candidates to resolve any errors or omissions found by the CRO.

Again, if the nomination process could be altered to be completed by students entirely online, it would greatly reduce difficulty in reading and “interpreting” written packages. While this is not a priority, it could be added to a wish list.

## Candidate Orientation Meeting

The Candidate Orientation meeting is an excellent opportunity for candidates to meet the CRO and learn about the important process they are embarking on. It is also helpful for the CRO to meet the candidates. However, as noted previously, it is extremely difficult for all candidates to be available for one such meeting. The current rules state that candidates cannot begin their campaign

until they complete such a meeting with the CRO. Rather than require subsequent in person meetings, I organized several online video meetings for candidates unable to meet with me at the initial Candidate Orientation meeting. This reduced inconvenience on both the CRO and students and worked relatively well, though a number of meetings were required to capture all the candidates.

As stated above, the CRO should expand this meeting to referenda campaigns, though this should be completed as a different meeting.

To encourage students to make an effort to attend the actual Candidate Orientation meeting, some incentives should be noted, including the fact that their campaign cannot begin until this meeting is complete.

Consideration could be made to making the candidate orientation meeting non-mandatory and allowing the candidates to choose whether this is something they require or not. They would still be responsible to follow all stated rules, though its certainly noteworthy that the candidates that come to the in-person meeting seems to have a better record of having less questions through the election process.

### Advertising

A good amount of advertising was provided regarding this electoral process and certainly election days were further highlighted by the effective campaign of candidates and referendum campaigners. For the 2016 election, many of the most important preparations for the election were determined well in advance of the election, providing the ability to include the dates and locations of electoral events which were noted in the printed CSU student handbook & day planner. It would be ideal if such planning could take place in the future and other elements of the advertising process could be laid out well in advance as well. Certainly, a massive driver of turnout for internet voting procedures are the emails sent out by the CRO providing information on how to cast a ballot.

### All Candidates Forum

An all candidates forum is a great opportunity for candidates to speak to members, but also for members to learn about the candidates. For such forums to be effective, getting greater participation from both candidates and members is essential. Greater advertising may be effective in drawing more people to such events. This year the Capilano Courier carried out the process. This was a very positive change and I understand very thoughtful questions were put forward, nevertheless, greater outreach and advertising could be implemented in the future.

### Polling

The polling process was held over 3 days, starting at 8 am on March 20<sup>th</sup> and ending at 5 pm on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. Two information booths were set up at the North Vancouver campus to advertise the election, provide information and allow for a location that students could vote at. As well, an information booth was opened at the Sunshine Coast campus just before classes started on the afternoon of the 22<sup>nd</sup>. I note that 16 of the 17 voters that cast ballots on the Sunshine Coast did so at the information booth. As well, while this seems like a small number of voters, this a huge increase from previous elections and is actually a reasonable turnout (the campus has very few students).

I would recommend retaining information booths on all three campuses as they provided an important layer of advertising and in person information for the election and actually attracted a good number of voters (132).

Ideally, the internet voting vendor would allow for members to cast ballots as many times as they wanted, with each subsequent ballot cast cancelling their previous ballot. This would go to some lengths in addressing concerns with candidates or other students putting pressure on individual members to vote for them while hovering over their computer.

Previously, requests were made for assistance in finding a way for members that were out of town or overseas to cast a ballot. Obviously, this year, any student that was away from campus could vote from any location they were in which is a huge advantage.

### Ballot

The ballot was created on the Simply Voting template for ballot production and suited our purposes nicely. One nice feature we used from Simply Voting was the randomization of the order candidates were listed in on the ballots, so each time a different voter opened a ballot, the candidates were in a different order, negating any concerns about the order candidates were listed on the ballot from being a factor in the results of the election.

### Voter Turnout

Voter turnout was relatively high and nearly double the turnout from 2017. There is no question that much of this can be attributed to the fact that the voting process was conducted online.

### Complaints and Appeals

Two official complaints were filed during the 2018 electoral process, with official decisions written up and posted on the CSU website, as per requirements. The first complaint submitted was eventually decided as moot given the candidate that was being accused of electoral malfeasance decided to withdraw from the election prior to a decision being initially published. While the second complaint sought to have one candidate penalized, based on the evidence submitted with the complaint, at least 2 other candidates were also guilty of breaking poster regulations and as such were also required to move posters they affixed that were done contrary to the rules. No appeals were made to any of my decisions.

In order to simplify the election complaints process, the creation of a simple complaints form, which could be available online and/or at the CSU service desk, outlining any required information would make the complaints process more official and easier for complainants. This would also provide an outline of necessary details for the CRO and appeals committee to handle complaints and appeals more efficiently.

### CRO Involvement

The CSU elections are consistently held at the same time of year, allowing for a great deal of lead time to prepare for the elections. As such, providing the CRO with large amounts of lead time with regard to the initiation of the process would be helpful for both the CRO and I believe the CSU.

Completing the planning process well in advance allows for all involved to carry out the administration of the elections properly and allow for the mitigation of any unforeseen staffing issues.

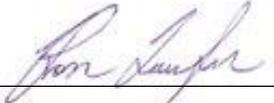
As previously suggested, in order to reduce pressure on staff and transfer institutional knowledge from staff and the CRO to a hard document, a Chief Returning Officer Manual, as envisaged in the CSU Procedures Manual should be created to provide a document which is standardized, comprehensive and one the CRO can refer back to over the course of the process. This would also reduce the learning curve for new CROs dealing with an unfamiliar process. Once this document is created, future CROs should take the time to update this living document and reduces reliance on CSU staff to carry forward the institutional memory.

#### Future Online Elections

I believe the first iteration of internet voting for the Capilano Student Union was very successful and should be replicated in the future. As stated previously, the concerns with this process were heavily outweighed by the benefits of casting votes online.

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Ron Laufer  
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Capilano Students' Union

Signature: 

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