

CSU By-Election 2022

Election Administrator Final Report

The 2022 CSU by-election was reasonably successful, but was still marred by a large amount of distrust and a significant number of complaints. The allegations made in some of the complaints were serious, but none of the complaints included sufficient evidence for me to take action on. I am certain that many candidates and voters are dissatisfied with these elections and I can only hope that elections in the future are free of the kind of incidents that occurred this year. Some kind of serious action and rule changes must be made to reduce the incentive for the kind of pressure campaigning taking place in these recent elections.

The 2022 by-election voting process was conducted online and the administration of the election process prior to election day in primarily an online manner (with some in person services as well) is efficient and accessible for voters, candidates and the election administration. The further use of online forms for the submission of the Candidate Statement and Expense Report were extremely helpful to reduce burden on administering the election. We also used an online complaint form which was useful.

Turnout was reasonably high, with a near identical number of voters compared to the 2022 general election. A total of 935 voters (12.6%), while the 2022 general election saw 937 voters. A remarkable number of candidates ran VP Equity and Sustainability with 12 choosing to stand for that position, with a few other positions contested as well. As noted however, there were several official complaints made during this election process, which is now two elections in a row. The following pages provide a general overview of the electoral process and include some recommendations moving forward.

While it is always a pleasure to work with the CSU staff and members, this again was a trying election process that should be avoided in the future. Should you have any questions regarding the following commentary, please don't hesitate to contact me at any time for further discussion.

A total of 935 students voted, made up of 338 Arts and Science students, 397 Business and Professional Studies students, 39 Education, Health and Human Development Students, 75 Fine and Applied Arts Students and 86 Global and Community Studies students. The total membership is 7,396, making turnout 12.6%.

Rules and Procedures

During this election, I became aware of the fact that CSU policy and CSU election procedures are not in sync. The CSU Policy says (rightly) that the accessibility justice coordinator position is for all members to vote on, but the election procedures state that all collective liaisons except international student liaison are voted by self-identification. The fact that international student liaisons are voted on by only that membership should be stipulated in CSU policy and on the other hand the fact that the accessibility justice coordinator can be voted on by anyone should be stipulated in election procedures.

Nominations

The nominations portion of this election process is now back to paper nominations, but we allow for the electronic submission of such forms. We worked to clarify that signatures that were made digitally (though not simple typed names) would be accepted, though the majority submitted were regular signatures and the full nomination forms were scanned and submitted. Via email.

For this election, there were 34 candidates standing for 13 positions, though as mentioned we had 12 candidates running for one position. Each of the candidates on the ballot fulfilled their nomination requirements. The early nomination package review deadline was used again and was an effective way of getting candidates to submit nomination packages early to ensure their packages met the required criteria to be nominated allowing time for any corrections. Several packages were submitted prior to the early nomination package review deadline, so it did have added value.

During this election we had one candidate withdraw from the election while the voting process was underway. A concrete withdraw deadline and procedure should be implemented so there is no question what happens in such a situation. The candidate that withdrew this election still had their results listed as we could not remove them from the online system part way through the process and we could have been left with the dilemma if that candidate had one as the other candidate would have thought they were entitled to the position. In this scenario, I believe we would not have filled the position because the 2nd place candidate would not have been declared elected. Perhaps a deadline for withdrawing a few days before the election should be implemented, otherwise you remain on the ballot and your only choice is to resign the position if you win rather than the next candidate getting the position automatically.

Finally, there was some concern raised from the Capilano University Marketing Association regarding the qualifications of the Capilano University Marketing Association President candidates. After the election was complete, the CSU received concern that the election President is not a member of the American Marketing Association. They stated that in order for Capilano to maintain their AMA Collegiate Chapter status, the President must be an active member in the AMA. However, this qualification was never communicated to the Electoral Administrator or the CSU to my knowledge. Should this kind of requirement be needed in the future, this must be communicated to the CSU and/or the Elections Administrator.

Candidate Orientation Meeting

The Candidate Orientation meeting is an excellent opportunity for candidates to meet the Elections Administrator and learn about the important process they are embarking on. Again, likely given the online nature of the meeting, the vast majority of candidates were able to attend the initial meeting. Unfortunately, I still needed to accommodate other candidates via 4 further meetings online. more meeting to accommodate a few candidates that could not attend that first meeting.

This year visuals were added to the presentation which surely didn't hurt and hopefully had a positive impact on candidates understanding the electoral process.

Advertising

A good amount of advertising was provided regarding this electoral process and certainly election days were further highlighted by the campaign of candidates. The biggest driver of turnout for internet voting is likely the bulk emails that are sent out via Simply Voting that provide information on how to cast a ballot. For this election, we removed the possibility for candidates to campaign and provide easy access to the ballots by walking around with posters that included QR codes that took voters straight to the voting page. While this can seem to be a positive offering from candidates, it also very much puts the candidate at risk of violating CSU procedures that restrict candidates from being in the vicinity of members when they are voting.

All Candidates Forum

The all-candidates' forums are always a great opportunity for candidates to speak to members, but also for members to learn about the candidates. For this election, good participation was seen at the forums. Again, the Capilano Courier carried out the process, which has been a positive development.

Membership

For the past number of years there has been some difficulty determining which members at Ká lax-ay campus were CSU members and questions loomed about whether the registrar's office had them tagged correctly or not. This has been slightly exacerbated by the pandemic and many courses moving online. As such they are not necessarily courses tagged as Ká lax-ay. The CSU, elections administrator and CapU had extensive discussions about this and other registration issues and hope to have resolved most of these issues, but continued dialog with CapU registrars office is required to ensure the CSU membership list is accurate.

Polling

The polling process was held over 3 days, starting at 9 am on October 4th and ending at 5 pm on October 6th. Information booths were set up on both campuses in order to provide greater visibility for the election and a place for members to both ask questions about the election or even vote if they wanted to do so on our laptop. The reality however is that there is very limited interest in the information booths and voting on the CSU provided laptop is now very difficult as members must access their email account to access the ballot. Consideration should be made into whether it is worth maintaining the info booth as a requirement in the elections process.

Last year the regulations were amended to allow for members to cast ballots as many times as they wanted, with each subsequent ballot cast cancelling their previous ballot. This is a very good security feature that reduces incentive to pressure individual members to vote for them while hovering over their computer or phone, given that voter can simply cast another vote in private later. It's positive to know that this feature is more widely known to exist and for this election 207 re-votes were logged by simply voting, though some of these were the same voter on more than one occasion. The continued use of this feature is advised.

Ballot

The ballot was created on the Simply Voting template for ballot production and suited our purposes nicely. The CSU has now implemented the STV voting process many times, though only one position had enough candidates vying for it to use the STV system this year. Impressively, this position with 12 candidates ended in a draw after all redistribution of ballots was done and the winner of the position was determined based on the highest number of 1st preference ballots cast between the 2 candidates.

Complaints and Appeals

This round of elections included numerous complaints and appeals. It is incredibly taxing handling these complaints and investigating them and then the possible appeals. Obviously, this is an integral part of the process, but I do believe it would be best if the Elections Administrator had a means of delegating the complaints portion of the process and was separated from the appeals portion of the process in its entirety.

There were 6 decisions taken on 10 complaints submitted during this election. For this election, no appeals were made on the initial decisions, but this is likely due to the fact that no candidates were disqualified. This is a very difficult element of the process to administer, requiring a lot of time to investigate and write up decisions. These investigations and decisions will never be up to the standard of everyone's liking, as at the end of the day, I do not have the resources to investigate matters to the same degree as government level elections.

Regarding the actual complaints, there were a few that alleged serious misconduct. It is very possible the allegations raised in fact occurred and I have strong concerns that some winning candidates did so after breaking the rules of the election, however I simply didn't have strong enough evidence to disqualify them from the process. If you read this sentence, send me an email and the first 2 to do so will receive an odd gift from me. Every effort should be made to disincentivize the kind of cheating taking place in these elections rather than leave the decision making to an election administrator that does not have the resources to properly investigate the conduct of these elections.

Expense Statements

For this election, expense statements were filed online and any documentation that was needed to be filed was emailed to me. For this element of the process, both myself and the CSU need these filings as I must ensure statements and expenses regulations were adhered to and the CSU must reimburse candidates for any eligible expenses filed.

One thing to be aware of with regard to expense statements is the fact that most candidates are not going to expense sunk costs into subscription services for software or other services that they may use for the elections. In theory these should be noted on their expenses, but where is the reasonable line drawn. We surely shouldn't worry about MS Word or Photoshop, but should we for specific poster design programs or other more clearly election related subscriptions? This is a difficult element to manage.

While most elected candidates submitted their expense statements on time, several submitted their statements late and others failed at submitting their receipts in a timely manner.

Ron Laufer
Elections Administrator
Capilano Students' Union



Signature: _____

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