UVSS Electoral Report

Referendum – Fall 2011

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Preamble

The 2011 Fall Referendum was quite an eye opening experience, as it was the first opportunity for the UVSS to try out the online voting system. As a whole, the experience was positive and certainly dispelled a lot of the myths and concerns about the decision to move online.

The electoral report is divided into three major sections – the first is a brief summary of what took place, the second part titled 'Issues' goes into detail of policy and procedural issues, and the third is titled 'Considerations' which uses the experience gained from this election to hopefully provide future Electoral Officers with some insight and knowledge in how they could improve upon our work this year.

SUMMARY

Referendum Questions

Four questions were passed by the UVSS Board of Directors (Board), all of which concerned the establishment of new or an increase in current student fees.

The four questions were:

Do you support an increase in student fees of $0.25 per part-time student per semester and $0.55 per full-time student per semester to be directed to the UVSS Women's Centre to work towards its vision of creating social change through political action, education and support of University of Victoria women students?

Do you support establishing a dedicated fee for the purpose of UVSS campaigns to promote the interests of UVic students in the amount of $0.48 per part-time student per semester and $0.96 per full-time student per semester?

Do you support establishing a fee of $0.15 per full-time student per semester, and $0.08 per part-time student per semester to be directed to the UVSS Travel Pool Fund?

Do you support an increase in student fees of $1.00 per full time student per semester and $0.50 per part time student per semester to fund the Student Refugee Program run by the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) UVic Local Committee?

Nomination Packages

To help minimize costs and waste of paper, all of the nomination forms were converted into PDF forms available for download from the UVSS Elections website. The office did not print out copies of the nomination packages, the Electoral Report (EPM), or the Constitution and Bylaws (C&B). An PDF collection was put online that contained eight

separate nomination forms (two for each referendum question – one for the YES side and one for the NO side), a summary of the rules and important information, a copy of the EPM and a copy of the C&B. One of the downsides was that the office did not know until the nomination period closed whether any question would be contested, or how many candidates we would have running. This, however, wasn't a major concern for us.

Four individuals submitted nomination forms to the Elections Office, one for each question, all of the candidates representing the YES side.

All Candidates Forum

No All Candidates Forum was held this election period. The office consulted all four of the candidates, and it was agreed that it wouldn't be worth the time and effort for them to put together speeches that would only be heard by a handful of individuals.

Polling

The referendum took place from November 2-4 (for most undergraduate students) and November 4-6 (for Law students) – see page 13. Voting was conducted online using the University's WebVote System. Polls opened at 9:00am PST and closed at 4:00pm PST for both elections. There were no blackout periods where students were unable to access the voting system.

Results

A total of 3425 votes were cast between both elections. In the end, only one of the four referendum questions passed, while the other three failed to obtain a majority of votes cast in favour. See Appendix 1 for a copy of the Official Results.

ISSUES

Who Has The Jurisdiction to Set the Wording of the Referendum Question?

Right off the bat, this was quite a major issue for the Elections Office and the individuals involved. In the eyes of the Elections Office, for a referendum, the question itself is the most important aspect of any elections process. We sincerely believe that this election matter should be overseen by the Electoral Officers.

I was hired on Thursday, September 22nd, and had my first day in the Elections Office on September 23rd. At this point, three of the four referendum questions had been passed and approved by the Board of Directors, with the fourth being approved the following Monday, September 26th. That Board meeting was the final opportunity to submit questions for the referenda in order to keep to the timeline laid out in conjunction with the Electoral Policy Manual. The questions also needed to be finalized to give adequate notice of nominations (five business days before the open of nominations was September 27th). I received a copy of the first three referendum questions on Thursday evening, and immediately took issue with the wording of all three questions. My initial read as CEO of the referendum questions made me believe that there was supplemental information contained within all three of the questions that did not keep the wording neutral.

At that point, I ruled the same way as was done for the November 2010 referenda when I was also employed as the Chief Electoral Officer. I reworded the questions in a way that kept the language neutral as to ensure that an outside observer would be free of any potential influence at the ballot box. In 2010 I made the changes to the questions, after which I sent an email to the individuals who had initially submitted the questions to the Board of Directors with the new, neutral version of the question that I had written. I informed the individuals that they are allowed to modify the question I had written, provided it remained impartial and I was content with the neutrality of it. Two of the individuals spoke with me in the elections office and we reworded the question again together as to ensure that all parties were content with the final wording of the referendum question. There were no issues raised or concerns.

This year, I followed the exact same procedure and sent emails to the three individuals who had been working on the three approved referendum questions. Prior to sending any of the emails, I spoke with the chair of the Electoral Committee as well as the Resource Coordinator who, at that point, did not raise any concern regarding my jurisdiction over the rewording of the referendum questions.

On Monday September 26th, I met with Gina Starblanket (Women's Centre) who had expressed concern over my unilateral decision to reword the following referendum question that was posed by the Women's Centre:

> *Do you support an increase in student fees of $0.25 per part-time student per semester and $0.55 per full-time student per semester to be directed to the UVSS Women's Centre to work towards its vision of creating social change through political action, education and support of University of Victoria women students?*

Gina's other concerns were that there is nothing in policy regarding the language that is allowed to be used in the referendum question, there had been two prior referendum questions posed by Access UVic worded similarly that hadn't been an issue, and that she believed I was overstepping my boundary as the Chief Electoral Officer. Gina noted

that nowhere in policy or my job description does it state that I have the control to change the wording of a referendum question. There is no denying that I agreed almost entirely with Gina's concerns – the EPM and Constitution and Bylaws do not provide adequate guidance or rules to govern every possible scenario that would arise in either an Election or a Referendum. The only aspect of the arguments raised that I did not agree with was my power and role in governing, administering and overseeing the referendum process.

In my eyes, the ideal scenario was to create a question that both parties would be happy with. I had expressed to her that a portion of the referendum question that was initially approved contained information that I would deem as being "campaigning" – the content was not clear or concrete. I had expressed to her that I would be satisfied with a referendum question that clearly stated a tangible location or item(s) that the money was going to fund (i.e.: to pay wages, advocacy campaigns, etc.), or the money could go into an titled fund (i.e.: Women's Centre Advocacy and Education Fund), as opposed to a question that would say the money would fund a mandate, vision or goal of an organization. Gina and I did sit down to work on a question, and failed to arrive at a satisfactory resolve. Early in the afternoon on Monday September 26, Gina brought to me a question that I was fully satisfied with. She had expressed to me that she was content with the question, though she was not speaking on behalf of the entire Women's Collective and said she wanted to consult them first (she also still preferred the wording of the initial question more). Later in the afternoon, she had returned after consulting with other members of the collective, and informed me that as a whole, they were not satisfied with the alternate wording that she had brought forth and did not want to change the initial wording that had been approved by the Board. At this point we were at a standstill - the chair of the Electoral Committee was out of the office for the day, as was the Resource Coordinator, the Chair of the UVSS and the SUB General Manager (the individual that I report to). I wanted to consult with them to decide upon a best course of action. I spoke with several Electoral Officers who had governed the UVSS Elections in the past, and asked whether they had any concern with the wording of the question and every one of them agreed that the question was extremely leading as it was currently written.

The Resource Coordinator returned shortly after 4:00pm and had the opportunity to meet with Gina and me to help provide some insight and guidance into the matter. After consulting the EPM and Constitution and Bylaws he came to the same conclusion that we were in: nothing is in policy. After he had the opportunity to speak with the chair of the Electoral Committee, he had suggested one of two alternatives, to present to the Board of Directors and let them decide, or for Gina to appeal my decision to reword the question to the Elections Adjudicator (who was not hired). He had suggested going for the former of the two options as the Electoral Committee had no intention of hiring an Elections Adjudicator or Arbitration Panel for the referenda (as a means to save money). Gina and I spoke and both agreed that the best course of action would be to consult the Electoral Committee together, and give them the opportunity to direct us in the appropriate course of action. We believed that this would be the best option as tempers and emotions had elevated for some parties at this point, and I certainly felt it would be in the best interest to deal with this manner when emotion was not going to be of concern. However, after speaking to the Chair of the UVSS as well as the Resource Coordinator who again had talked to the chair of the Electoral Committee, they suggested that we address the Board of Directors at that evening's meeting.

Upon addressing the Board of Directors, the Resource Coordinator briefly filled in all Board members present of the issue that had arisen, after which I spoke, expressing my rationale for having deemed it to be my responsibility to ensure that the question itself is fair – I did not speak specifically to my concerns with the actual referendum

question. Mandee McDonald (Women's Center Representative on the Board of Directors) relayed the concerns of the Women's Centre (specifically regarding the Women's Centre referendum question), and Jaraad Maraani (representative for another one of the referendum questions that I had reworded) expressed similar concerns regarding the lack of policy. The Board members spoke to the issue and the following is a list of the concerns raised by those present:

- There is currently nothing in policy regarding the language of the referendum questions
- The is nothing in policy specifically regarding the jurisdiction of the Chief Electoral Officer and whether he or she can overrule the decision of the Board of Directors
- The unilateral nature of my rewording the question was exclusive, whereas having the Board look at the question brings many more opinions and views to the table
- The initial wording was decided upon by a group on individuals who couldn't all be consulted, and was overruled by a single individual
- The individual(s) who submitted the initial question may feel that the reworded question had been altered to the point where they no longer supported the question being posed
- Individuals had approached the Board with a particular question (**POLICY)
- The Board had already discussed the question, and approved it
- Past precedent:
  - No Chief Electoral Officer changed the wording of a referendum question approved by the Board of Directors until I had done so in 2010
  - Two questions posed by Access UVic! (2005 and 2009) were written in a similar format and no issues were raised
    - (2005) Do you support a fee increase, beginning September 2005, of $1.00 for each full time student and $.50 from each part time student to be directed to Access UVic! for the purpose of organizing an effective advocacy centre for disabled students at the University of Victoria?
    - (2009) Do you support an increase in student fees beginning September 2009 of $1.00 per part-time student and $2.00 per full-time student per semester to be directed to Access UVic! for the purpose of increasing awareness, inclusion and accessibility for all people with disabilities on campus and in society?

The Board had also expressed to me that there was currently policy in the works regarding the wording of referendum questions, however not to do with question neutrality, but rather the use of illegal language. One Board member did also make a point that nowhere in policy does it state that the referendum question has to be neutral in the first place.

When it came to the final decision, every voting Board member present voted to uphold the initial ruling of the Board of Directors and to allow the question to be posed to students as it was originally written. Their rationale was that there was nothing in policy regarding the wording of a question, and as such, I was not permitted to interpret the policy beyond what was written. The major issue however, is that there is clear policy that the Board is required to stay out of Elections Office decision making, specifically in regards to overruling the decision of the CEO.

At the 2010 AGM a restructuring of the UVSS elections hierarchy took place as to separate the Board of Directors and the electoral committee from the entire elections process. The changes were a result of months of policy development after reviewing the recommendations of Sandra McCallum (following the 2007 UVSS Elections). Students voted to reduce the power of both the Electoral Committee and the Board of Directors, and direct this power to the Elections Office (CEO and DEOs), who would be overseen by the Elections Adjudicator, who in turn was overseen by the Arbitration Panel. This Board restructuring also came following the resignation of the independent Chief Electoral Officer during the 2010 Election to the UVSS Board after a ruling he had made was overturned by the Electoral Committee.

When I came into the job as CEO for the referendum in the Fall of 2010, my vision and intent was to create and run an elections office void of any partisanship or bias. I ensured that everything that was produced by the Electoral Office or said by the Electoral Officers, was done without intention of supporting one side of any of the referendum questions. It was for that reason why I, in 2010, reworded the referendum questions to produce questions that were clear and stated no information that could be construed as potential campaigning. The Board supported this decision and appreciated that this was the position that I took as the head of the elections office. It was for that reason why I took the same approach at the start of the 2011 elections, by rewording the questions that had already been passed by the Board so that they would be completely neutral. One of the big changes between 2010 and 2011 was that I was no longer a UVSS member or student at UVic, and as such had zero vested interest in the outcome of any of the referendum questions.

What it boiled down to was whether the Board of Directors would not take an action because there is nothing in policy governing the language of the referendum question and who had final say over it, or taking an action that goes against the directive of the student body to distance itself from the proceedings by not upholding the decision of the independent Chief Electoral Officer. The Board, as a whole, overruled the student body's desire to separate the Board from the entire elections process, due to the lack of policy surrounding one aspect of the elections process.

My concern as a result of this decision, was regarding the integrity and fairness of the elections from here on out. If a student was to approach me wishing to oppose any of the referendum questions, and raises concern that the question itself is clearly biased and contains unnecessary information, I believe that the Board's decision undermines the intent of the UVSS Elections Policy. I understand that the Electoral Policy Manual's objective, Part A.1(d), "that there is an established process for electoral policy rulings," could be up for debate in that there are currently no policies in place for a scenario governing referendum language, however Part A.1(c) emphasizes the importance of a "fair and just election" and that "[the] primary function of the UVSS Electoral Policy is to provide an orderly and democratic [process]" for elections and referendum. To run a referendum question that contains information that could easily be construed as campaign material is extremely unfair.

Two complaints were received to the Elections Office, both of which expressed concern regarding the language of the Women's Center referendum question. The issues raised were:

- The question is worded in a biased manner – campaigning within the question in a seeming attempt to influence the voter at the time of voting

- The reference of the mandate of the Women's Centre, though may be supported, may create guilt on the part of the voter who, while supporting the actions of the Women's Centre, may not support fee increases due to personal finances
- The rule regarding "campaigning within 6 metres of the polling booth" are broken, as it campaigns within the question itself
- The question violated the fairness principle outlined in section A:1(c) of the EPM – it clearly places any opponent to the referendum at a disadvantage as the question is already biased against them

Given that a Board member raised the fact that there is nothing in policy even stating that the wording of the referendum question has to be neutral, this raises an interesting question: since there is nothing in policy governing the wording, where would the Board of Directors draw the line? Would the Board put the following question to students:

Do you support an increase in student fees of XX per student per semester to fund XX to promote their mandate of hosting entertaining and inclusive social events and activities for all students at UVic, so that everyone has a more enriching university experience?

I understand that this is much more misleading than the question posed by the Women's Centre and contains more evident campaigning within the question itself, but I highly doubt the Board would approve of its wording. The rules for an election, whether they are specifically written or not, need to be clear and orderly, and for the Board to arbitrarily decide that a question is valid when concerns have been raised regarding its neutrality, makes the entire process vague and unclear.

If a leading question similar to that of the Women's Centre was ever brought forth in a municipal, provincial or federal referendum, it would certainly be discarded and reworded. I, along with many, agree that the language for the 2011 BC Referendum regarding the Harmonized Sales Tax was not as clear as it could have been, however it was not a leading question whatsoever. The referendum didn't ask:

Are you in favour of keeping the HST to support the BC government's vision in enhancing their capacity to provide services to all citizens of BC, and to ensure public interests are reflected and served?

The BC government has no policies in place regarding the wording of a referendum question (aside from the fact that it is set by the Chief Electoral Officer), however along with the trust in the abilities of the CEO, the disgust and shame that would follow if a leading referendum question was ever posed ensures that it never happens. I expected that the UVSS Board of Directors would have held themselves to a similar level of impartiality and fairness, and keep their personal vested interests out of the question itself, however I truly believe that this was not the case.

During the election period in 2007, the UVSS Board of Directors overturned the ruling of the Chief Electoral Officer which resulted in the recommendation and review by Sandra McCallum. In a summarized version of that issue, the Board of Directors made the final call to choosing the chair of the UVSS after the CEO had disqualified two of the three candidates who had run for the position of chair and the appeals made their way to the Board. At that time, the hierarchy of the decision making process ("that there is an established process for electoral policy rulings" EPM Part

A:1(d)) allowed for decisions of the CEO to be appealed to the Elections Committee, while their decision could be overturned by the Board of Directors. With those systems no longer in place (by a vote of students at the AGM in 2010), it makes it apparent that the Board circumvented the rules to make the final call, when in fact the decision should have gone to an Elections Arbitrator. There are rules and systems in place to govern the decision making process, and these were not followed.

I do take part of the blame for what took place and agreeing to speak to the UVSS Board regarding this matter in the first place. I expressed my concern and discomfort in approaching the UVSS Board of Directors to Mandee, the Resource Coordinator, and the UVSS Chairperson, but being that this was a time sensitive matter, without an Elections Adjudicator hired, I felt that I didn't have any other options available to me. I would have felt much more comfortable for this matter go to an independent Elections Adjudicator and not to the UVSS Board of Directors – as this is clearly stated within the Electoral Policy Manual.

After the Board made the decision to uphold the power of wording of the question to the Board, they should have reviewed and reworded the question to remove any resemblance of impartiality (even though that is not in policy). Every Board member was aware that I, as the independent CEO, had concern with the wording of the question, and they should have acknowledged that fact and amended the wording. At the very least, it would have been appropriate for the Board to give me the opportunity to express the issues I had with the actual wording of the Women's Centre referendum question itself, and not just express the issues I had surrounding the lack of policy to govern the situation.

The Board should not be involving themselves in the decision making of the UVSS Elections or Referenda beyond the hiring of the Electoral Committee – that is clearly in policy and the constitution and bylaws. I would hope that future Boards do not continue to make decisions like they did in this election, and that they would leave the administration of the referendum to the individual(s) whom they themselves hired to do so.

ACTION ITEM: Address the jurisdiction of issues not mentioned in the Electoral Policy Manual and Constitution and Bylaws, and give this decision making ability to the Chief Electoral Officer.

Posters Around Campus – Facilities Management

As was the case in past years, there tends to be miscommunications or lack thereof between the Elections Office, Facilities Management, and Facilities employees. The postering guidelines of the University dictate that the Elections Office has more ability than any other group on campus. The big problem however, tends to be that the employees in Facilities Management do not know this is the case. As a result, this leads to hundreds of posters and banners being torn down during the elections period, even when they are posted according to the University's postering guidelines. Not only does this affect a candidate's ability to campaign fairly, but this is a waste of resources, money and time for the candidate as well as the elections office.

In the past a letter has been sent to Facilities Management letting them know that the Elections Office will be stamping and approving posters, however this information tends not to get passed through the appropriate channels. As was the case in years past, David Strong, MacLaurin, Cornett, ECS, ELW and the Fine Arts building were the major problem areas on campus during this election. Every year we try and find a resolve to this issue, but it has never worked properly.

ACTION ITEM: Arrange a meeting with Facilities Management to discuss the concerns of the Elections Office in detail.

Referendum Rules Can Be Broken

Having had the opportunity to oversee the Referendum period for two years now, it is clear that the UVSS is lacking significantly in policy and procedure to govern how candidates who are representing the YES or NO side of a referendum question compose themselves.

As it currently stands, the main reason why a candidate would register him or herself with the Elections Office for a referendum would be to get the modest Zap! Account credit, and platform publication in the Martlet Supplement. The big issue however, is that the Martlet supplement is no longer a major contributor for the elections, as 90% of voters vote from home, where the Martlet is not present while they cast their ballot.

As such, if a candidate chooses not to follow the rules, and they are disqualified, there are no repercussions as they can still campaign. The Elections Office will not remove the question if the candidate is disqualified. As it stands, the Elections Office has almost zero power over a candidate running as a representative for a referendum...this should not be the case. The Elections Office is the overseeing body for all votes within the UVSS and should be capable of having jurisdiction over the rules for referendum.

ACTION ITEM: Address the concerns regarding lack of policy for UVSS referendum, and establish appropriate process that would give the Elections Office some jurisdiction over referendum candidates.

Third Party Endorsements

A few years back, the rules regarding Third Party Endorsements were changed significantly, and have been used negligibly since. There is zero benefit to having an endorsement by a third party because all of a sudden the candidate is then responsible for the actions of the group. If a Third Party Endorsement form is not completed, that same group can do whatever they choose in the form of campaigning but the Elections Office cannot hold the candidate responsible.

The Elections Office has zero control over the actions of anyone aside from the candidates. Regardless of the individual's affiliation to a club, course union, constituency group etc. the Elections Office cannot assume that their actions are related.

None of the four candidates completed endorsement forms this year, and as such, used that to their advantage. WUSC set up a table outside of the fountain for campaigning (which the candidate herself would have been unable to do), the Women's Centre created fabric patches that were posted around campus beyond what the candidate had made herself, and the Board held Free Coffee Days in conjunction with the role of "Campaigns" an used it as a means of encouraging students to vote. These are all examples of candidates and their respective groups circumventing the rules to campaign beyond what they are allowed as individuals. The Elections Office cannot do anything to the candidates or these groups, because, like stated above (Referendum Rules Can Be Broken), we have almost no jurisdiction over what a candidate can or cannot do within the confounds of the referendum rules.

Equal Rights For All Candidates

As it currently stands, come election time, not all candidates have the same rights and access to equipment as other candidates. Specifically this is in regards to an individual's ability to book a room, equipment, and/or table space through the UVSS as well as through the University. Individuals currently on the Board of Directors, signing authorities of clubs, and constituency group representatives who run as a candidate for an election and/or a referendum have this advantage over a student who doesn't have a current role. That being said, in order to run a fair election it is expected that candidates who do have access to resources through other means, do not use them. The reality is different though. It was apparent during this election that individuals felt they could use their position/role as a tool to improve their campaign. This was not contested by any individual; however I am certain that if there was a candidate running a "No Side" campaign against one of the four questions, this issue would have been raised.

It is strongly recommended that policy is included that states that:

"All candidates will be given room, equipment and table booking privileges similar to that of Clubs and Course Unions. The Elections Office will put limitations of the table booking privileges inside and outside the Student Union Building that will ensure little or no disruption to revenue generating table bookings."

Our ruling during the election was that all candidates, regardless of whether they already had authority to do so or not, were given the same booking privileges within the Student Union Building, with some exceptions on table bookings (as requested by SUB Management).

ACTION ITEM: Create policy for the EPM as discussed above.

Tabling Inside and Outside the SUB

Past precedent has governed that the Elections Office will book indoor table space for candidates to campaign through the campaign period. In the past, these tables were not set up on voting days. For this referendum period, a table was reserved for four days over the campaign period. Given that there were no recognized opposition

candidates to any of the four questions, I gave the four candidates the choice of sharing the table on all four days, or getting a table to themselves for one entire day – only one candidate responded with their preference, and as such, all candidates had access to the table all four days. To my knowledge only two candidates used the table over the four indoor tabling days.

Partway through the referendum period, the issue of outdoor table bookings was raised. We approached this from two points of view: tables on SUB property, and tables on University property (excluding the SUB). For outdoor tables on SUB property, we permitted candidates to book one table for one day of their choosing during the campaign period. They could book this table through the Info Booth on a first come first serve basis, and the table must be set up at one of the approved vendor locations. Our rationale for allowing candidates to book only one table on one day was to ensure that 'Student Elections' did not hinder potential revenue from table bookings. We also did not permit candidates to book tables inside since there are only 5 table indoors and again we did not want to occupy all of the revenue generating table space – nonetheless we still made indoor tabling available to candidates on a much smaller scale.

For tables and room bookings elsewhere on campus, we don't believe this is something that all candidates should be afforded. This is where a Third Party Endorsement would be beneficial – a recognized on campus third party is capable of submitting a table booking and/or room booking request with the university on behalf of a candidate.

Regardless of whether a table is booked or not, the Elections Office did not and will not put limitations on where candidates can stand and campaign. In the eyes of both the University and the SUB, the physical presence of a table is significantly different than an individual standing around and distributing material. As such, the Elections Office felt this is a fair method of interpreting and creating policy surrounding this matter.

ACTION ITEMS: See 'ACTION ITEMS' from 'Who Has The Jurisdiction to Set the Wording of the Referendum Question?'

Voting Parameters – Law Students

When the online voting system was opened, we did not realize that there would be any issues with how we had pulled the parameters for voting eligibility. When dealing with the University Secretary's Office, it is required that you give them very specific guidelines that would ensure that you are pulling the proper list of voters from the Banner System. After discussion with several individuals, the parameters set for the Referendum was "All undergraduate students enrolled at UVic who have paid or are supposed to pay UVSS fees for the Fall 2011 (201109) term", as this would include all UVic students who are on co-op and exchange, as well as all distance students. Unbeknownst to us, as well as the University Secretary's office, even though Law students pay UVSS fees, the Banner System does not classify them as 'Undergraduates' nor are they even classified as 'Graduates'...they are Law students. Consequently, our parameters were incorrect when the voting opened. The problem was not brought to our attention until mid-afternoon on the Wednesday, when a Law student emailed the Elections Office saying that she had not voted, and the system was telling her that she was ineligible to vote. After talking to the University Secretary's Office who then

talked with the group responsible for pulling the requested parameters, it was made clear to us that our parameters excluded Law students.

We had a couple of options to try and resolve the matter: adding the Law students' Netlink IDs manually to the currently running elections or create a brand new election solely for Law students. We felt that the latter of the two options would be the most logical, and that we could have direct communication with Law students instead of having to deal with concerns raised by the entire Undergraduate population. The issue however, was that WebVote then had to recreate a brand new election in a very short amount of time with all Law Students being eligible to vote. We were hoping that this wouldn't take more than a couple of hours, however it took just over a day and a half to get everything ready. As such, the Election for Law Students did not open until 9:00am on Friday November 5th, a whole two days behind all other undergraduate students. To keep the process fair for all parties involved, we extended the voting opportunity for Law students until 4:00pm on Sunday November 7th to give them the same amount of time to vote as all other undergraduate students had (they did however get one extra hour due to Day Light Savings Time). Nonetheless, there were no complaints regarding this issue, and no concerns raised by candidates, law students, or other undergraduates. We believe that the situation was handled reasonably well, and this is one reason why it was good to do the less contentious referendum in the Fall using the online system, rather than diving head first into the Spring Elections period using online voting for the first time.

Issues After Voting Closed – Medical Students and Students Who Dropped a Class

Two issues were raised after voting had finished that were not considered or raised while voting was in session.

The first was an individual who had registered for a Fall class, and dropped it prior to the drop deadline. When we had sent out emails to all students informing them that voting was open, we used the identical parameters as we had set for our eligible voters list. She indicated that she had received an email saying that she was capable of voting, which would suggest that she could have logged into the system to vote. She did not attempt to log in during that time, to see whether the WebVote System would actually let her vote, however based on our assumptions of the parameters used by the University Secretary's Office, it is highly likely that she would have been able to. This issue was brought up to the University Secretary's Office, but have yet to hear back from them regarding the matter.

The second was from an individual who had experience with the CFS Referendum last year, and determining the voting eligibility of particular groups on campus. As she had indicated, Medical Students that are enrolled in the Island Medical Program are technically UBC students, however their student fees are transferred from UBC to the UVSS as they, like Law students, pay UVSS fees while they are not specifically undergraduate programs. Again, this is something that should be investigated more critically to determine whether this is the case or not, and whether they should be eligible to vote. The Elections Office met with the University Secretary's Office immediately after voting closed, but still have yet to hear back from them regarding these issues.

ACTION ITEMS: Follow up with the University Secretary, and investigate Medical student fees.

CONSIDERATIONS

Role of Pollsitters and Future Polling Stations

We hired 19 individuals to do the pollsitting for the 2011 Fall Referendum. Unlike the paper ballot system, the EPM does not have strict guidelines and rules surrounding the polling stations for Electronic Voting. When we started planning the polling station schedule, we decided that we would put in more polling stations than necessary as a means to determine whether students are using the polling stations to vote, or whether they are largely an additional form of advertising. Based on the numbers of individuals who voted using our stations, it is clear that most people did not need the polling stations as a reminder to vote, nor did they use them to vote. All in all, just over 10% of the individuals who voted in the referendum used our computer stations to vote, while everyone else voted at a different internet accessible device (on and off campus). Furthermore, nearly two-thirds of the individuals who voted had done so within the first 8 hours of polling being open – it is safe to assume that we can attribute this largely to the email that we sent out to all eligible voters just after polls had opened.

Of the polling stations, some garnered zero voters while open, while others, like the Library and Clearihue, were a little more successful. For future referenda, it is suggested that there is little need to hire as many pollsitters as we had, and the polling stations hours could be reduced even more. Though we reduced polling hours by more than 70% over the year before, we believe we could reduce it by an additional 50%. There is little need to set up polling stations beyond the "six locations" as stipulated in the Electoral Policy Manual. Based the number of individuals who voted at our polling stations from this election, it would be suggested that a table is set up in the Library (2 computers), Clearihue, SUB, University Centre, Cadboro Commons and Social Sciences and Math. The computers set up in Wright, MacLaurin, Elliot, ECS, and DSB proved to be completely underused or not used at all – assumingly because students will not vote immediate before or after a class, but rather when they have time to vote leisurely. It would be interesting to try setting up a computer in McKinnon and/or Ian Stewart, and the Bookstore to cover the buildings on campus that are not predominantly academic.

At the end of the polling period, we gave pollsitters the option of requesting to work again for the March election, as a means of eliminating the need for another interview. Of the 19 pollsitters we hired, eleven of them have requested to stay on and work again in March, while eight of them did not respond to our email. It may be of the interest of the Elections Office to do this at the end of every election period, in an attempt to try and find individuals who have some experience, and to try and get a few individuals who understand the role of the pollsitter to return every election period.

Pollsitters Laid Off (request to work March Elections):
Lofting, Erin
Chwist, Anastasia
Gibson, Erica
Wright, Keirnan
Ward, Chris
Hunter, Julia
Arias-Carrasco, Hilary

Sands, Taylor
Anderson, Carmen
James, Alannah
Stermann, Juliana

Pollsitters Dismissed:
Zielonka, Chris
Rogers, Lisa
Pybus, Jenna
Tiede, Stephanie
Neelin, Genevieve
Smith, Michael
Liebault, Katie
Lorenz, Angela

Publicity

Given the significant change in the voting for this year, the Elections Office spend the majority of its time doing publicity work. The purpose was to inform students where, when and how they were now able to vote. It was the first time that a significant amount of effort was put into a "GOTV" campaign, but it proved to be extremely successful. We did several things that we believe had an impact on the major increase in voter turnout and student engagement.

Having worked in the Elections Office for four years, it was something that we have always discussed, but never acted upon until this year. For the two weeks of campaigning, we hired four individuals (selected four of our pollsitters) who had the job of doing publicity and marketing work for the elections office. The four individuals were hired to work for 7 hours each. Five of those hours were allocated to doing classroom speaking - we asked that they talk to 25 classes each (we used the Banner report of the largest classes on campus and had them talk to them). We put together a Google document with a list of the 150 largest classes on campus, along with the day of the week, time, location, professors name and professors email address, so that the four individuals could sign up for the classes that they want (that work for their schedule), and email the professor in advance to request one minute at the beginning of the class to talk about the upcoming election. In addition to the classroom speaking, for two of the four individuals we asked that they spend two hours doing chalkBoarding on campus, and the other two individuals to do handbilling.

The elections office printed off about 3600 handbills (12 per page) on bright coloured paper that we gave to all of our pollsitters to distribute. Given that the role of the pollsitters changed significantly, we wanted to ensure that they had material they could distribute to individuals who wished to vote later, but wanted to take the web address for WebVote with them. We distributed nearly 3400 of the handbills.

We also created and posted a lot of posters and banners around campus prior to voting, as well as on voting days, with a lot of the same information that we had on the handbills. Further to that, since we moved to an electronic form of voting, we put Quick Read (QR) Codes on all of our advertisements (posters, banners and handbills) that would take students to the Elections website or the voting website.

The most influential aspect of our marketing campaign was likely the email that was sent out to all eligible voters shortly after voting opened on the Wednesday. It provided all of the information needed for students to vote, as well as a link to the website. What was beneficial for us was that the student didn't have to return to the email later on, or have to remember to vote, but rather could do so as soon as they checked their email. We would strongly encourage all online elections to follow suit and send out an email to all voters shortly after voting has opened.

New Equipment/Investment

Upon the confirmation that the elections would move online for the Fall Referendum, a lot of research was done to determine the most feasible option of setting up polling stations with computers. We looked into purchasing computers, renting computers, and borrowing computers. Based on the feasibility of all three options, it was in our best interest to invest in eight Netbook computers that could be used for many years to come. This one time investment proved to be worthwhile. The Elections Office spent just under $2500 on eight netbook computers, as well as cases, surge protectors and laptop locks for each of the eight units. Given that the computers are only used 3-6 days per year under current policy, the computers are expected to last for several years. The voting system is set up to use Mozilla Firefox, but is prepared as a kiosk which significantly reduces an individual's ability to navigate out of the WebVote website, as well as disables access to other programs or the task manager on the computer.

There is a highly detailed document discussing how the computers were set up, and how to make necessary changes to them. The Resource Coordinator was also trained on how to make changes, and some of the information can be found in the Pollsitter Orientation document.

Collaboration with University Secretary's Office for Senate/BOG/UVSS Elections in the Spring

After the election period, the Elections Office met with the University Secretary's Office (Morag MacNeil) to discuss what took place and where we will be going in the future with the elections. The transition to online voting for this election period was relatively seamless, as it allowed for us to work out some issues surrounding the UVSS voters list, in addition to getting a moderate grasp on what running an online election entails and the response from the student body.

The move to online elections, in our eyes, was extremely beneficial. Not only did this eliminate much of the concern surrounding security and the potential to vote multiple times (as was evidenced in the past), but it also saved a substantial amount of time and money. We were able to hire a significantly lower number of pollsitters which

resulted in a reduction of nearly 70% of polling hours over last year, as well as the elimination of the need for ballot counters. We didn't have to worry about the possibility of ballots going missing, or being taken (as was the case in 2009), nor was there any need to worry about how we would keep track of voters given the fact that the university has eliminated any physical evidence of student cards being validated with stickers.

There two major concerns from the Board upon the transition to online elections were surrounding security and voter turnout. The Senate and BOG elections have used UVic's WebVote system for several years now, and have continually reported voter turnout at less than 5% annually. Of course this would be a grave concern to transition from the traditional paper ballot to a system that has historically been underused for elections. Luckily for us, this was certainly not the case, and voter turnout actually increased by nearly 300% over the Fall Referendum last year. As it was suggested by the Elections Office for several years, the fact that Senate and BOG elections run concurrently with UVSS Elections likely makes the entire system confusing for the majority of students on campus. Unless one is involved in school politics or knows someone who is, it is highly likely that they do not comprehend the different governing bodies on campus and as such think that by casting their paper ballot for the UVSS they have voted for everything. Now that UVSS will be using the same system online, this will likely have a huge impact on the voter turnout for Senate and BOG elections. However, we believe that it would be extremely helpful for all students if the UVSS Elections Office and the University Secretary's Office work together for the upcoming election season. Not only would it minimize the large number of emails students would be getting, but once they log into the WebVote system, it is likely that the system could be set up to ensure that students vote for everything that they are capable of voting for.

Perhaps WebVote could be set up as follows

Undergraduates → Senate / BOG / UVSS Elections

Law Students → Senate / BOG / UVSS Elections

Graduate Students → Senate / BOG

When a student logs in to vote for the UVSS, they would click on the "Undergraduates" or "Law Students" (depending on their status) and it would link them to all three of the elections currently underway for them. This would also assist in email communications for students when voting actually opens, as all messages sent to the student body could be tailored to each specific parameter that is eligible to vote.

This is something that we strongly believe should be done, as it would eliminate much of the confusion for students, and it would make the voting process as easy as possible for students. The role of the UVSS Elections Office is to run a fair election, and this would also include developing ways to make the voting system more accessible and easier to comprehend.

ACTION ITEMS: Meet with the University Secretary's Office regarding the potential for collaboration during the springtime campus elections.

Removal of Martlet from Inside Polling Booth

In the past, when the paper ballot system was in place, the UVSS Elections Office put a copy of the Martlet Supplement in the voting booth, as a means to assist voters with identifying particular candidates and/or having easy access to information. Now that the vote is done online, and the vast majority of students did not access the WebVote System using our voting station, it is necessary to re-evaluate the presence of the Martlet Supplement in the voting booth. We believe that it isn't something that we should be placing in the voting booth, but we can have readily accessible for voters (i.e.: at the voting station table).

ACTION ITEMS: Decide whether to amend EPM Part I:1:d. and strike the following 'and they must make sure that the Martlet supplement is in the voting booth and has not been written upon'.

Platforms of Candidates on WebVote

With Senate at BOG elections, the University Secretary's Office sets up links on all of the candidate's names which would allow a voter to read the candidate's platform. This is another way to provide easy to access information for individuals wishing to vote, aside from the presence of a Martlet Supplement. Logistically speaking, it would be more work to set up, and may be an issue with the way the computer voting stations are currently set up – this is something that could be changed. For this election, we opted to keep the campaign material off of the WebVote System, as we had publicized that a copy of the Martlet Supplement was available for download from the UVSS Website, and in The Martlet. This is quite an important aspect and means of campaigning, and policy should be drafted to reflect the Board's decision regarding this matter.

ACTION ITEMS: Decide whether candidate's platforms should be included directly on the WebVote System.

Two Days or One Day of Voting

Our understanding is that the Board of Directors has raised concerns regarding the potential for "Voting Parties" at night that would or could potentially result in people being forced to vote a particular way. Though we believe that there is a very small chance that this could happen, but these parties would largely be friends of individuals who would already be voting, and likely would already vote in that particular direction. At this point in time, the University Secretary's Office is unable to put "blackout" periods on the WebVote System – they are unable to pause or turn off the voting over night while these voting parties would assumedly take place. At this point in time, the Elections Office does not recommend reducing the number of voting days to one, nor if it was possible, do we recommend black out period. By moving to online voting, the intent is to be more sustainable, and also to be more accessible for students. This includes students who work full time, who are distance, who are away on co-op or who are on exchange – as a result, individuals who are in a different time zone or who are unable to vote during regular business hours are capable of doing so when they please.

Below is a graph outlining the voting trends at different times and dates over the three day voting period for this election.
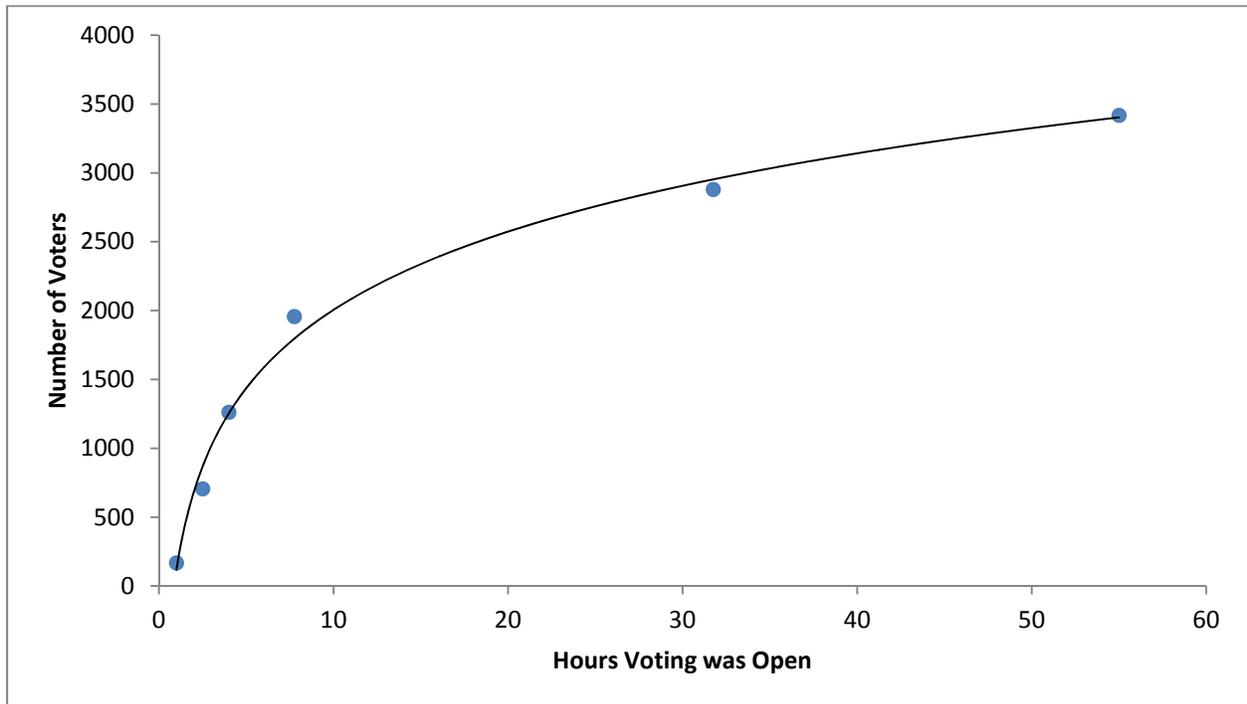
As we can see, the vast majority of the votes that were cast occurred within the first 9 hours of voting (nearly 2/3rds of all eligible votes). From a cost savings standpoint, it would be worthwhile to stop voting after approximately 10 hours. However, the costs associated with the referendum should not be the primary concern, but rather giving everyone who wants to vote, the opportunity to vote. Understandably, students were aware that they had three days to cast their ballots which may have resulted in individuals procrastinating, and as such, we don't know whether we would have lost those individuals who voted on Day 2 or Day 3, had we only allowed for voting on one day.

Below are two other graphs that outline the usage of our polling stations. As was indicated before, the polling stations were extremely underused, and are more likely a marketing tool to help encourage students to get out and vote. This data will hopefully help future elections officers decide on a polling station schedule and polling locations.
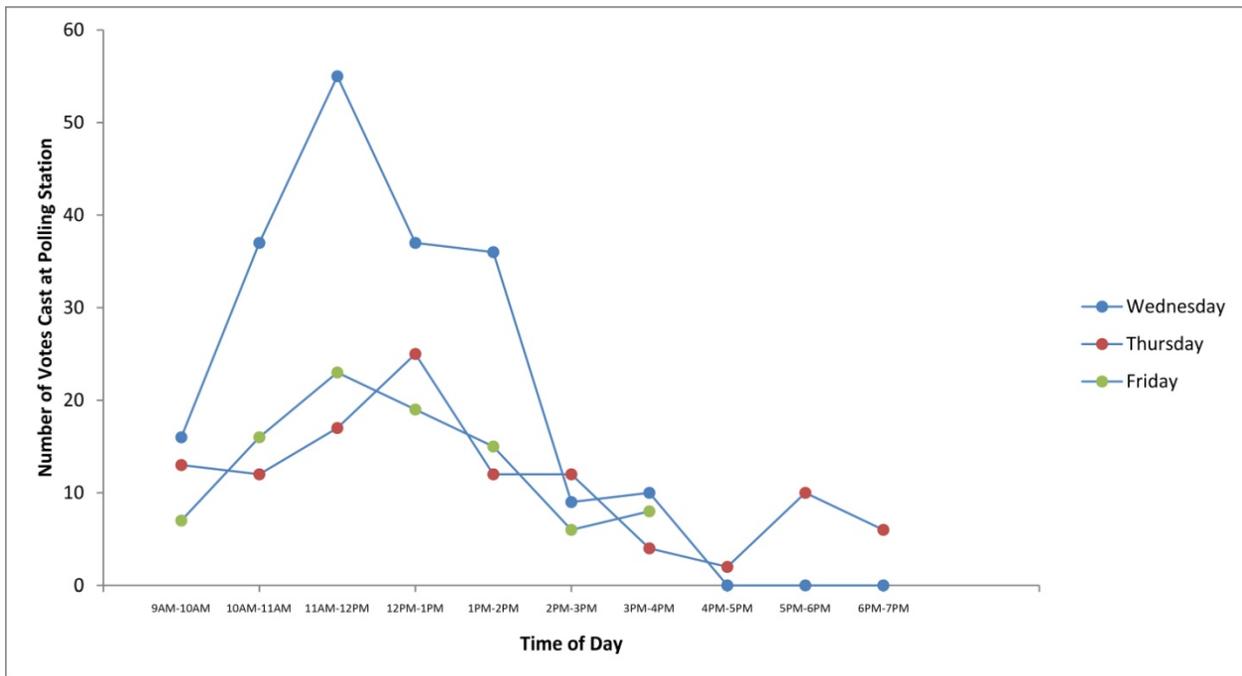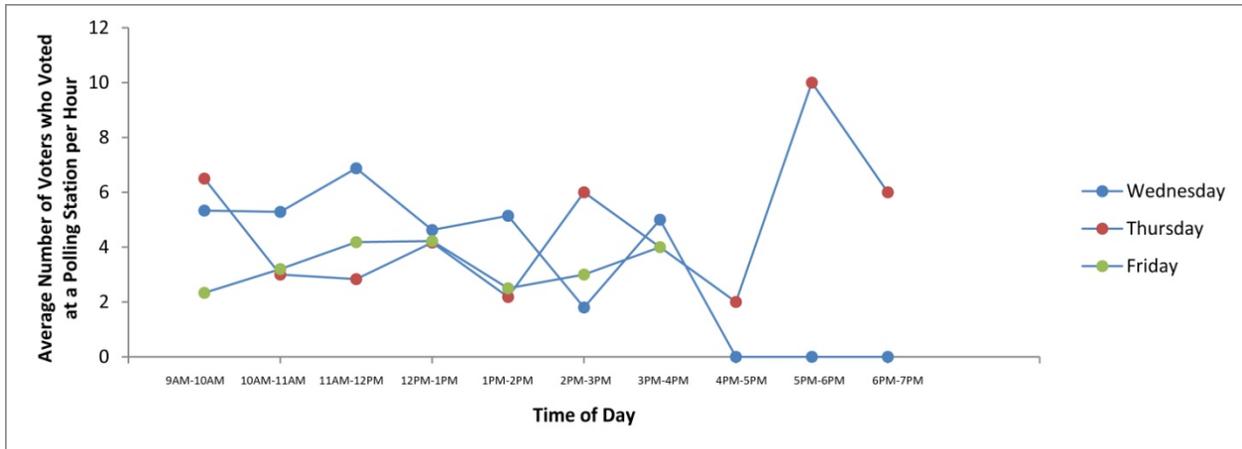
From a usage standpoint, the computer voting stations that we set up were used, on average, more frequently on day 2 than on day 1 or day 3, even on the whole, day 1 did see more people voting at the computer stations.

What can we extrapolate from this data? The intent is to try and determine how to minimize polling costs for the future. As we can see, 2/3rds of people voted on Day 1 while polling stations were open, yet not even 10% of those that did used our polling stations. What this would suggest is that the polling stations do likely act as a forum of information and memory, to remind students to vote rather than a location for students to cast their vote. For future elections, not only do we strongly suggest setting up polling stations in a significantly lower number of locations, but

reduce polling hours significantly on day 2 and 3. If the campus is over saturated with information on day 1, we could likely push the number of individuals who vote even higher, and reduce the man hours needed for the other days.

Conclusion

This referendum was predominantly dedicated to understanding the role of the Elections Office in publicizing elections, combined with getting a new understanding on the use of online voting. The transition to the WebVote System was relatively seamless and we hope that it will make future elections a little easier. We hope that this Electoral Report has provided some insight into what took place, what worked, what didn't work, and what needs to be improved upon for future years.

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Shawn Slavin, Chief Electoral Officer

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Jacob Helliwell, Deputy Electoral Officer

Appendix 1 - UVSS Referendum Results (November 2011)

Item Description		Total Ballots	Spoiled Ballots	Valid Ballots	In Favor	Opposed	Percent in Favor	
Do you support Do you support an increase in student fees of $0.25 per part-time student per semester and $0.55 per full-time student per semester to be directed to the UVSS Women's Centre to work towards its vision of creating social change through political action, education and support of University of Victoria women students?		3418	5	3413	1574	1839	46.05%	FAILED
Do you support an increase in student fees of $1.00 per full time student per semester and $0.50 per part time student per semester to fund the Student Refugee Program run by the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) UVic Local Committee?		3418	6	3412	2128	1284	62.26%	PASSED
Do you support establishing a dedicated fee for the purpose of UVSS campaigns to promote the interests of UVic students in the amount of $0.48 per part-time student per semester and $0.96 per full-time student per semester?		3414	4	3410	1247	2163	36.53%	FAILED
Do you support establishing a fee of $0.15 per full-time student per semester, and $0.08 per part-time student per semester to be directed to the UVSS Travel Pool Fund?		3412	3	3409	1182	2227	34.64%	FAILED

Number of Eligible Voters	# Who Voted	% Voted
17448	3425	19.63%