

# 2020 UVSS Elections to the Board of Directors and Referenda

Chief Electoral Officer's Report

Prepared by Shawn Slavin

## Introduction and Acknowledgements

As outlined in section 9.2 of the University of Victoria Students' Society (UVSS) Electoral Policy Manual (EPM), the Chief Electoral Officer must prepare a report setting out:

- i. The official results of the Electoral Event, (Appendix A)
- ii. A financial statement setting out the full cost of the Electoral Event, (Appendix D)
- iii. A list of any complaints and appeals and the decisions made, (Appendix B)
- iv. Any suggestions to improve the efficiency and/or fairness of the electoral process, and
- v. Any other information that the CEO deems to be important to include.

This report has prepared in accordance with the policy.

The UVSS Electoral Office would like to thank the University Secretary's Office, Zap Copy, The Martlet, CFUV and Graphics, for all their support of the electoral event. The UVSS Electoral Office would also like thank all the candidates, proponents, campaign managers and volunteers who took the time to participate and engage in the UVSS's democratic processes.

## Overview

The spring 2020 electoral event consisted of three referenda questions and elections to the UVSS Board of Directors. Proponents for the three referendum questions were selected by the UVSS Board of Directors when the questions were approved (per EPM 6.2.c).

The electoral event was organized and administered by:

- Chief Electoral Officer – Shawn Slavin
- Senior Electoral Officer – Alexander Guibord
- Deputy Electoral Officer – Ali Calladine
- Elections Adjudicator – Owen Pachal
- Arbitration Panel – Marcus Hadley, Hilary Graham and Emma Hamill

A total of four official complaints were received by the UVSS Electoral Office (see Appendix B). None of the decisions of the Chief Electoral Officer were appealed by the complainants or respondents to the Elections Adjudicator or Arbitration Panel.

As a result of a failure to submit a completed expense form, one of the referendum proponents was disqualified after the close of voting.

A total of 27 candidates and three proponents participated in this year's electoral event.

A total of 2,705 members (of 18,256 members) cast one or more ballots.

The official election results are in Appendix A.

In reviewing the election data over the past four years, there appears to be an **inverse relationship** between the number of candidates seeking election to the UVSS Board of Directors and voter turnout. This electoral event saw a moderate decrease in the total number of candidates seeking election to the UVSS Board of Directors compared to 2019, but notably higher than compared to 2018 [2017 = 35 candidates; 2018 = 19 candidates; 2019 = 34 candidates; 2020 = 27 candidates]. This electoral event saw a moderate decrease in overall voter turnout compared to the year before, but notably lower compared to 2018 [2017 12.2%; 2018 = 18.2%; 2019 = 15.6%; 2020 = 14.8%]

## Timelines

The dates for the 2020 electoral event were set by the [UVSS Board of Directors](#) on May 6, 2019. The Chief Electoral Officer was appointed by the [UVSS Board of Directors](#) on November 4, 2019. The Chief Electoral Officer worked with the Electoral Committee to make updates to the EPM through the month of November in alignment with the direction of the UVSS Board of Directors – campaigning activities of Separately Incorporated Fee-Levied Groups (SIFLGs), third-party endorsements, all-candidates forums, and slates/ cooperatives. Updates to the EPM were passed by the [UVSS Board of Directors](#) on December 9, 2019. The Senior Electoral Officer was hired at the beginning of December. The Deputy Electoral Officer was hired at the beginning of January. Between December and March, the UVSS Electoral Office staff worked to plan, organize and execute all aspects of the spring 2020 electoral event in alignment with the following dates:

**Call for Nominations:** January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (9:00am PST)

**Nominations Open:** January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (9:00am PST)

**Nominations Close:** February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (9:00am PST)

**Confirmation of Candidates/Proponents/Opponents:** February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Candidate Training Session:** February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (5:00pm PST to 6:00pm) in SUB B028

**Martlet Supplement Released:** February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Campaign Posting Begins:** February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (9:00am PST)

**Director at Large Candidates and Referenda Forum:** March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 (2:30pm PST) in Vertigo

**Lead Director Candidates Forum:** March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 (2:30pm PST) in Vertigo

**Voting Opens (Webvote):** March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (9:00am PST)

**Voting Closes (Webvote):** March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (12:00pm PST)

**Campaign Period Ends:** March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (12:00pm PST)

**Deadline for Removal of all Campaign Material:** March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (4:30pm PST)

The UVSS Electoral Office released the unofficial results on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 3:30pm. In alignment with the timelines for complaints and appeals outlined in the EPM (8.3.a; 9.1.c), the official results were released on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (see Appendix A). The Chief Electoral Officer gathered feedback from members through to March 16, 2020 and the feedback gathered is captured in this report (see Appendix C).

## Voter Eligibility

The UVSS Constitution and Bylaws provides opportunity for all active UVSS members in good standing the opportunity to vote on referenda questions and elections to the UVSS Board of Directors. Two elections were prepared within the Webvote System based on voter eligibility:

1. All UVSS Members (UVSS Constitution and Bylaws 6.5): Referendum Questions, Lead Directors, and Directors-at-Large
2. All UVSS Members who are International Students (UVSS Constitution and Bylaws 6.4): Director of International Student Relations

The University Secretary's Office (administrator of Webvote and responsible for distribution of mass emails) can easily identify most eligible voters directly through UVic's student database system (i.e., who has paid UVSS fees). However, there are a few groups of students whose UVSS membership fees do not go through UVic's student database system and must be added manually – their fees are paid directly to UBC (Island Medical Program) or the UVSS Info Booth (STEPS Forward Program participants). Based on historical research and documentation, the overall eligible voter list requires the following manual additions:

- 1st year Island Medical Program Students in their second or third semester or studies
- 2nd year Island Medical Program Students
- 3rd and 4th year Island Medical Program Students who have opted into the UVSS
- STEPS Forwards Program participants

The UVSS Electoral Office's understanding of the Webvote system is that University Secretary's Office staff require lead time to finalize the voters list/test the Webvote system, and that there can be no additions to the voters list once the election goes live. As manual additions are required to ensure that these members are all provided the opportunity to vote, there is no administrative direction provided to the UVSS Electoral Office as to the cut off date for adding additional names. If there are members who opt in between the time that the manual additions are provided to the University Secretary's Office and the close of voting, there are no avenues for these members to vote. While this was not an issue this year, the UVSS Electoral Office recommends that consideration is provided to manage "day-of opt-ins" that can be included in the official results.

*The UVSS Electoral Office recommends that the Electoral Committee work establish a secondary mechanism for members to vote, while ensuring that the member:*

1. *Is a member; and,*
2. *Has not already voted.*

## Referendum

The Electoral Committee provided the Chief Electoral Officer the opportunity to review potential referendum questions before they were brought to the UVSS Board of Directors for decision. The Chief Electoral Officer confirmed that all of the questions could be answered “yes” or “no.”

To ensure alignment with the call for nominations, the UVSS Board of Directors held a meeting on January 16, 2020 to consider referendum questions to be held concurrent with the spring 2020 elections to the UVSS Board of Directors (there were challenges with scheduling as the University of Victoria shut down on January 15, 2020 due to weather). At the January 16, 2020 [UVSS Board of Directors](#) meeting, three questions were approved, three proponents were selected, and endorsements were provided to the “yes” side of all three questions.

Prior to the campaign period, it was noted that the wording of one of the referendum questions approved by the UVSS Board of Directors was slightly different than the version that was provided to the UVSS Electoral Office. The incorrect wording was used by the UVSS Electoral Office in the call for nominations and the print version of the Electoral Supplement. The digital version of the Electoral Supplement and the ballot were both updated to ensure that members voted on the approved question.

Incorrect wording: Are you in favour of establishing a fee of \$1.50 per full-time student per semester and \$0.75 per part-time student per semester, in order to fund the creation of open-source textbooks and other open-source learning materials, which would be used in UVic classrooms?

Correct wording: Are you in favour of establishing a fee of \$1.50 per full-time student and \$0.75 per part-time student in order to fund the creation of open-source textbooks and other open-source learning materials, which would be used in UVic classrooms?

While all the referendum questions received a majority of votes for the “yes” side, quorum was not reached for the electoral event (UVSS Constitution and Bylaws 4.7.c).

## Notable Events and Recommendations

### Board-Appointed Proponents/Opponents

The three referendum questions were all approved by the UVSS Board of Directors, which also enable the UVSS Board of Directors to select the proponent for each of the questions. While the UVSS Board of Directors provided the UVSS Electoral Office with the names of the proponents, we did not receive their contact information to proactively provide them with the information that they needed regarding the electoral event. Additionally, given that the proponents were already selected by the UVSS Board of Directors, the UVSS Electoral Office did not obtain their contact information through the typical process (i.e., the submission of a nomination form).

*The UVSS Electoral Office recommends that the UVSS Board of Directors provide the UVSS Electoral Office with the name, phone number and email address of any board-appointed proponents or opponents.*

### Cooperatives

The biggest change to the EPM this year was the elimination of slates (essentially ‘political parties’) and the creation of cooperatives – the [UVSS Board of Directors](#) initiated this change in an attempt to increase accessibility and encourage independents to run. While efforts were made to ensure the policies were clear about what candidates, cooperatives can/cannot do, there were some challenging questions that were raised that may require further clarity within the EPM.

The biggest area of confusion was around the interpretation of EPM 5.6.d:

“Candidates may not make reference to any other candidates, including other cooperative members, in any campaign materials.”

The UVSS Electoral Office received many questions from candidates and campaign managers around the interpretation of this policy, and two of the four complaints that were submitted also hinged on this specific policy. Based on the EPM itself, the UVSS Electoral Office found it challenging to make a ruling, however the intention of the UVSS Board of Directors was captured in the meeting minutes when the new policies were approved. Feedback was also provided during the election period that the EPM is not clear on what campaigning activities cooperatives can do, but rather on what they cannot do.

*The UVSS Electoral Office recommends that the EPM is updated to improve clarity around the intention of cooperatives, which will help to provide clarity around permitted campaign activities, including:*

1. *Candidates sharing social media posts created by other candidates*
2. *Candidates liking/commenting on social media posts created by other candidates*
3. *Candidates sharing content (e.g., article) created by a third party (e.g., The Martlet, CFUV)*

### Chalking Policies

Concerns were raised by UVic Facilities Management around the volume of chalking around campus during this electoral event and the possibility that costs could be incurred by the UVSS for Facilities Management to remove it. The EPM provides guidance to the UVSS Electoral Office and candidates around where chalking is permitted (EPM 5.4.k: “Chalking is permitted only on classroom chalk boards and on exterior surfaces that are exposed to the weather” which is in alignment with the Student Election Poster and Banner Procedures outlined in UVic’s Poster, Banner and Handbill Policy (13.00(a):

“Chalking is permitted...on an exterior surface that is fully exposed to weather”). Unlike other campaign material (e.g., posters, banners), neither UVic or the UVSS have provided direction to candidates or the UVSS Electoral Office around the quantity or size of chalking that is permitted.

The UVSS Electoral Office received questions from candidates and campaign managers around the interpretation of these policies, and two of the four complaints that were submitted also hinged on these policies. Based on the EPM and the Poster, Banner and Handbill policies themselves, the UVSS Electoral Office found it challenging to make a ruling around where candidates can and cannot chalk. The Chief Electoral Officer was unable to locate any documents that captured the intention/rationale behind the policies. In the absence of clear intention, using the other policies as a guide, the Chief Electoral Officer ruled:

- 1) Candidates may chalk in areas where it a reasonable person would assume that rain would wash it away; and,
- 2) Candidates are wholly responsible for the removal of their campaign material at the end of the campaign period, including chalking.

*The UVSS Electoral Office recommends that the EPM is updated to improve clarity around the size, quantity, and permitted locations of all exterior chalking, as well as candidate responsibilities to remove their exterior chalking.*

### Scope of the UVSS Electoral Office – Campus

One of the historical challenges of the EPM (and was noted as being an issue with one of the referendum questions in 2019) was the inability of the UVSS Electoral Office to have influence or oversight on elections-impacting activities that are done by individuals who are not candidates, proponent, opponents or campaign managers. The UVSS Electoral Office has no authority to impose sanctions on UVSS members, UVSS Board of Directors members, clubs, course unions, Separately Incorporated Fee Level Groups (e.g., The Martlet, CFUV), and other on/off-campus groups for elections related activities that may not comply with the EPM. Prior to this year’s election season, the [UVSS Board of Directors](#) introduced changes to EPM that provided some clarity around the scope of the UVSS Electoral Office It was recommended that these policies are removed from the EPM and added to other, relevant UVSS policies that govern those individuals/groups.

An issue was raised this year by a member noting that a candidate (also a current UVSS Board of Director member) had stored campaign material in the UVSS Board of Directors office. The concern raised by the member is focused on the individual’s conduct as a current director, not as a candidate. While the UVSS Board of Director Policy is clear on director conduct (UVSS Board of Directors Policy 1.1.), the UVSS Electoral Office cannot (and, in the opinion of the Chief Electoral Officer, should not) enforce those policies.

Another issue was raised this year, by a proponent noting chalking around campus encouraging members to vote no on one of the referendum questions. Given that there was no official opponent to the referendum question, these campaigning activities were likely done by individual who are not involved in the electoral process.

*The UVSS Electoral Office recommends that the UVSS Board of Directors continue to pursue updates to other policies/documents that clarify election involvement by non-candidates, and a mechanism to investigate, address and resolve issues.*

### Scope of the UVSS Electoral Office – Broader Society

A couple of issues were noted or raised this year around actions candidates/cooperatives took (or were considering) that fall beyond the scope of the UVSS Electoral Office – the collection and use of personal information, and the reproduction and use of trademarked/copywritten material.

It came as a surprise to the Chief Electoral Officer that there was a belief by some that “if it isn’t in the EPM, it’s allowed”. It is important that candidates remember that the UVSS does not sit within a bubble, and that there are broader laws, policies, and rules of society that apply.

*The UVSS Electoral Office recommends that the EPM is updated to remind candidates that they are required to comply with the laws, acts, policies and rules that govern our broader society.*

*The UVSS Electoral Office recommends that the EPM is update to provide clarity to the Chief Electoral Officer around mechanisms to investigate and sanctions for actions that candidates take that violate laws, policies and rules of society that may be relevant to campaigning activities (e.g., Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Personal Information Protection Act, Trademarks Act, Copyright Act).*

### Candidate Forums

Updates were made to the EPM [prior to this year’s election](#), that provided the UVSS Electoral Office with more flexibility regarding the organization and format of the candidate forums. The UVSS Electoral Office worked in collaboration with CFUV and The Martlet to organize and host two candidate forums. Most of the feedback provided to the UVSS Electoral Office after the forums was positive. A recommendation was provided to the UVSS Electoral Office after the voting period (see Appendix C) which may want to be considered for next year’s forums.

## UVSS Electoral Office Finances

As a result of an unexpected closure of the UVSS Student Union Building, a summary of the finances for this electoral event are not available currently. When it is safe for the Student Union Building to reopen, a copy of the UVSS Election Office expenditures will be added to Appendix D.

## Appendix A: Official UVSS Election Results – Spring 2020

Number of Eligible Voters	Number of Voters	Voter Turnout
18,256	2,705	14.8%

**Referendum Question 1:** Do you support an increase to the student fee for World University Services of Canada (UVic WUSC) in the amount of \$1.50 per full-time student per semester, and \$0.75 per part-time student per semester, for the purpose of expanding the Student Refugee Program to sponsor one additional student per year and to extend first-year support for newly resettled students?

Yes	No	Result
1,747	837	QUORUM NOT MET (PER UVSS CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS 4.7.C)

[Number of Spoiled/Blank Ballots: 121]

**Referendum Question 2:** Do you support an increase to the Students of Colour Collective Fund of \$1 per full-time student and 50 cents per part-time student for the purpose of creating support resources for visible and invisible minorities on campus?

Yes	No	Result
1,498	1,074	QUORUM NOT MET (PER UVSS CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS 4.7.C)

[Number of Spoiled/Blank Ballots: 133]

**Referendum Question 3:** Are you in favour of establishing a fee of \$1.50 per full-time student and \$0.75 per part-time student in order to fund the creation of open-source textbooks and other open-source learning materials, which would be used in UVic classrooms?

Yes	No	Result
2,006	589	QUORUM NOT MET (PER UVSS CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS 4.7.C)

[Number of Spoiled/Blank Ballots: 110]

### Director of Campaigns & Community Relations:

Candidate	Number of Votes Received	Result
Tal Katz	807	
Emily Lowan	1,307	ELECTED

[Number of Spoiled/Blank Ballots: 591]

### Director of Events:

Candidate	Number of Votes Received	Result
Sebastian Franco-Monroy	1,020	ELECTED
Tommy Lay	996	

[Number of Spoiled/Blank Ballots: 689]

**Director of Finance & Operations:**

Candidate	Number of Votes Received	Result
Caleb Burd	1,302	ELECTED
Shaun Zhang	706	

[Number of Spoiled/Blank Ballots: 697]

**Director of Outreach & University Relations:**

Candidate	Number of Votes Received	Result
Sarina de Havelyn	1,252	ELECTED
Isabella Lee	857	

[Number of Spoiled/Blank Ballots: 596]

**Director of Student Affairs:**

Candidate	Number of Votes Received	Result
Katy Berglund	952	
Dalal Tubeishat	1,091	ELECTED

[Number of Spoiled/Blank Ballots: 662]

**Director of International Student Relations:**

Candidate	Number of Votes Received	Result
Justin Lo	106	
Dipayan Nag	126	ELECTED

[Number of Eligible Voters: 2485 | Number of Voters: 235 | Voter Turnout: 9.5% | Number of Spoiled/Blank Ballots: 3]

**Directors-at-Large:**

Candidate	Number of Votes Received	Result
Abdul Abuelazm	820	ELECTED
Isaiah Adachi	745	ELECTED
Jana Barkowsky	769	ELECTED
Ramneet Bhullar	723	
Marran Dodds	784	ELECTED
Nick Gaina	583	
Elizabeth Giesbrecht	773	ELECTED
Evan Guildford	836	ELECTED
Reeve Henderson	733	ELECTED
Emily Hiser	957	ELECTED
Isaac La Roy	704	
Paarth Mittal	838	ELECTED
Jocelyne Parent	786	ELECTED
Victoria Ritchie	854	ELECTED
Carlton Taylor	589	

## Appendix B: Complaints and Appeals

Complaint #	Allegation	CEO Ruling	Sanction(s)
1	Multiple candidates chalked in the Petch Breezeway, thereby contravening section 5.4.k ("Chalking is permitted only on classroom chalk boards and on exterior surfaces that are exposed to the weather.")	Chalking is not permitted in the Petch Breezeway as it is not exposed to the weather.	1. Remove, with water, all their own chalking on <u>unauthorized</u> surfaces. 2. Remove two [2] campaign posters for the remainder of the election period.
2	Candidates shared social media posts created by other candidates, and commented on other candidate's social media posts, thereby contravening section 5.6.d of the EPM ("Candidates may not make reference to any other candidates, including other cooperative members, in any campaign materials.")	Complaint dismissed.	Not applicable.
3	Candidate posted a video on social media that had two other candidates present in the background.	Complaint dismissed.	Not applicable.
4	Candidate chalked on a Clearihue wall with an overhang/ledge above, thereby contravening section 5.4.k ("Chalking is permitted only on classroom chalk boards and on exterior surfaces that are exposed to the weather.")	Complaint dismissed	Not applicable.

## Appendix C: Member Feedback

Theme	Feedback
Webvote Ballot	Without slates it is imperative that candidate bios are listed on the ballot, which was not the case in past elections. After speaking with the University Secretary's Office they said that they would list candidate bios on the ballots if we sent them to them. Myself, along with many other students, were dismayed to see that these bios were to included in the ballot and I believe it significantly impacted many students abilities to vote.
Candidate Forum	It was good that candidates were not allowed to ask questions at the candidate forum
	During the candidates forum, the rapid fire questions where candidates had a show up fingers to rank how much they would work on this issue were problematic because no candidate was going to say that they didn't value important issues.

## Appendix D: UVSS Electoral Office Finances

This page will be updated later, once the UVSS Accounting Department can access the Student Union Building.