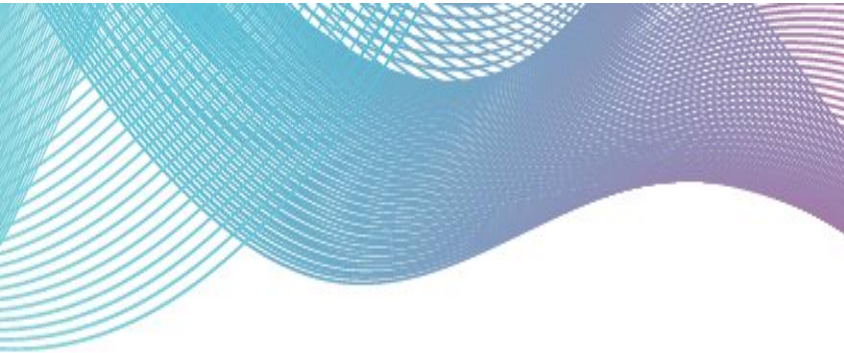




Fall 2021 By-Elections Report

**University of Ottawa
Students' Union**

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George Mogambi
Chief Electoral Officer

Background

The University of Ottawa Students' Union (UOSU) is a democratic organization dedicated to maintaining fair and transparent elections. The purpose of elections for the Board of Directors and the Executive is to give the voters of UOSU the opportunity to exercise their right to elect official representatives. Elections must be conducted in an impartial manner and must not unduly favour or hinder any candidate.

Voting in the Fall By-Elections took place between 12 and 14 October 2021. The poll went generally well without any major glitch. The objective of elections always is that all vacant positions will be filled competitively by fielding multiple candidates but that was not realized during this poll.

This report seeks to summarize some key takeaways from the election for the purpose of proposing future improvements for consideration by the Elections Committee:

SimplyVoting System

The system worked flawlessly for the election but to ensure continuity and enhance institutional memory, there is a need to do some information management, especially by designing formal tutorials for future Committee members so as to concretize the electoral process. We are also working on system maintenance and account management to ensure the UOSU and its members can continue to rely on smooth and successful elections technology.

Candidate Management

The candidates cooperated well throughout the period in terms of respecting the various milestones and deadlines. However, there were delays in submission of bios and pictures until late in the process. We propose that this be addressed by requiring candidates to submit their bios and pictures at the time of submitting their nominations to avoid a last minute rush and push.

Election Milestone Dates

The fact that the entire electioneering activities are all compressed into a five week period may have worked just fine for the by-elections with a limited number of candidates. However, in a general election with multiple candidates, it will be difficult to coordinate the language testing, candidates' bios and other related administrative tasks. I suggest a review to stretch the period within the allowed timeframe by the Elections Code.

Official Languages

We strived to communicate in either or both languages based on the specific context and to the best of our ability. While we strived to ensure that bilingualism is respected and adhered to, we do appreciate that there is a need to be deliberate in communication in both official languages especially when designing communiqués that are going out to the larger student community.

Media/Communication Management

One major mandate of the Elections Office is to ensure that pertinent and adequate communication goes out to the entire student community pertaining to the elections. This was well executed throughout the electioneering period.

The intra-communication between the Elections Office and the Communications team was invaluable in guaranteeing a smooth poll period. There were regular and quality interactions at every stage which ensured that nothing slipped.

Guided by the Elections Code, we reached out to the two main media outlets on campus to ask them to jointly host an Executive Candidate Forum. Despite best efforts, there were some difficulties in delineating roles and coordinating logistics and communications between the Elections Office and the two publications in the process of organizing the event.

Going forward, we feel that it may be better to simplify the process by reducing the formal role of the Elections Office. The Elections Code already requires representatives of campus media to moderate the Forum, so we feel it would be beneficial for the media outlets, rather than the Elections Office, to organize these

events as well. They have shown an ability and willingness to do so in the past, and they are also experienced in covering student politics. This would also liberate some of the Elections Office's time to work on other matters of election administration during the very busy campaign period.

Appeals Committee

It is proving quite difficult to get volunteers to sit on the Appeals Committee. While this is understandable given the competing academic priorities, there is probably an opportunity to push for more visibility and advocacy so as to draw more volunteers. This critical aspect of the electioneering process is currently under review which will hopefully make it more robust and arms-length from the Elections Committee's purview.

Stakeholders Support

I got all the support I needed first and foremost from the Elections Committee and principally through Henry Mann as the Chair. The President, Tim Gulliver was always at hand and even blocked time on a weekend to work with me on the student registration on SimplyVoting. I also got lots of support from the other officers in Management, Communications as well as from the candidates in this election. We also had very cordial interactions with the OLBI for the language testing, with Finance, HR and IT for all the corporate support function.

Conclusion

The critical role that UOSU plays in enhancing and promoting student democracy cannot be overemphasized. We feel privileged to be part of this process and to contribute in our own small way in ensuring that fair elections happen and that advocacy and governance values are promoted on campus.

The results of this report can be used to improve UOSU's approach to managing future polls, especially the upcoming winter elections.

I would like to thank the various contributors, partners and colleagues who made this Fall By-election a success with minimal challenges.

Contact Information

George Mogambi

Chief Electoral Officer

Email: ceo@seuo-uosu.com

Tel: 519 701 8550

Reference Documents

- UOSU Elections Code – https://www.seuo-uosu.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/UOSU_Elections-Code_08.29.2021.pdf
- UOSU Constitution – <https://www.seuo-uosu.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2019-11-07-UOSU-Constitution-English.pdf>
- UOSU SimplyVoting Site – <https://uosu-seuo.simplyvoting.com/index.php>
- Previous correspondences via email