

# SAIT Students' Association



2015 Fall Board of Directors

Supplementary Report to the CRO Elections Report

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## FOREWORD

This supplementary report is intended to address three issues that were identified in the 2015 Fall CRO elections report that required additional analysis. The CRO's elections report was accepted by the SAITSA Board of Directors on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on good faith that this supplementary report would be completed and distributed in a timely manner. The issues that required further investigation were as follows:

- Delayed voting
- Scheduling of elections
- Voter turnout

The information below details the findings of the investigation.

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## DELAYED VOTING

### Background

SAITSA contracts a company, Votenet, to manage all election voting related materials, including but not limited to: voting email distribution, voting link, user name and password, voting ballot, voting statistics and a final report of all relevant information. SAITSA instructs Votenet on when voting polls open (when voting emails are sent to students and when they can start voting) and when polls close (when students can no longer vote).

SAITSA instructed Votenet to distribute the voting emails on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at 6:30am (with polls to open at 8:30am). On the morning of September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015 SAITSA staff monitored the software to ensure that voting emails were distributed as scheduled. Due to the sheer number of emails that must be distributed (11,000+) there have previously been delays with students receiving their emails at exactly 8:30am. However, on September 24<sup>th</sup> by 8:45am it came to the attention of SAITSA staff that there was an issue with the emailing voting system.

Staff began to troubleshoot and contacted both SAIT's IS department and Votenet. The issue was resolved by 11:45am on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015, and students began voting. No other issues were reported.

### Issues Identified

In order for Votenet to be able to distribute the emails through their third-party provider, SAITSA must complete the following:

1. SAITSA requests a current list of Students' Association fee-paying members from SAIT (the list from SAIT only includes student ID numbers, not names)
2. SAITSA converts the ID numbers to email addresses by adding '@id.sait.ca' to the end of the student ID number (ex: 123123@id.sait.ca)
3. SAITSA submits the email list to Votenet; Votenet develops random passwords for each voter
4. Votenet submits the voter list and passwords to their third-party email provider
5. Votenet's third-party email provider sends out emails to voters based on SAITSA's instructions; the emails are distributed through saitsa.centre@edu.sait.ca

SAIT and Votenet have both indicated that there was a 'bug' in the system that caused SAIT's email system to not recognize the previously whitelisted '@id.sait.ca' email address. Once the bug was identified by SAIT, the problem was resolved and the '@id.sait.ca' emails were allowed to go through the spam filter (thereby allowing voting to take place).

### Suggested Solutions

SAITSA has designed a solution in conjunction with SAIT; two test email accounts have been created. SAITSA will use the two email accounts to send test voting emails to prior to the election going live, by allowing SAITSA to test the email system this will help to ensure that there are no complications with the emails when the voting goes live in the future.

## **SCHEDULING OF ELECTIONS**

### Background

SAITSA organizes and holds its elections in accordance with its bylaws. The September 2015 BOD elections were organized by the Operational Election Committee between May and August of 2015 (bylaw# 10.2.2). The bylaws state that whenever possible, the elections should follow a certain schedule (bylaw# 11.2). The Operational Election Committee decided to hold the BOD elections from September 8<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015, with the required events scheduled on the following dates:

- Candidates' Meeting #1: September 11<sup>th</sup>
- Candidates' Meeting #2: September 18<sup>th</sup>
- Voting Days: September 24<sup>th</sup> (polls open at 8:30am) to September 25<sup>th</sup> (polls close at 4:00pm)

The BOD Training Retreat (event designed to unify the board and train new members) was scheduled for October 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>, this retreat would also host the first BOD meeting whereby the newly elected BOD members would be ratified once the CRO elections report was accepted.

### Issues Identified

The condensed BOD elections schedule resulted in an imprecise voting list being submitted to the voting software company, Votenet. SAITSA is required to submit the voter list to Votenet two weeks prior to the first day of voting. For this election, SAITSA was granted special permission from Votenet to submit the voting list late on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015. SAIT's Add/Drop deadline was September 18<sup>th</sup>, and SAIT indicated they would have only been able to provide an accurate list to SAITSA no earlier than September 21<sup>st</sup>.

As a result of the inaccurate voting list, SAITSA received 1,134 'bounce back' emails, indicating that 1,134 students were no longer SA fee paying members. Unfortunately, what SAITSA is unable to determine is how many registered, fee-paying SAITSA members (those who registered with SAIT between September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and SAIT's Add/Drop deadline) were not able to vote in the SAITSA elections because they were not registered in the Votenet system.

### Suggested Solutions

SAITSA's Operational Election Committee should consider SAIT's Add/Drop deadline when planning the scheduling of elections.

## **VOTER TURNOUT**

### Background

Due to the issues detailed in the 'Scheduling of Elections' section, the total percentage of voter turnout for the 2015 BOD election is inaccurate.

### Issues Identified

Due to the requirements of the voting software, Votenet, SAITSA had to submit the voting list prior to SAIT's Add/Drop dates; this resulted in the submitted voting list being inaccurate. Of the 12,606 voting emails that were sent out, SAITSA received a total of 1,134 'bounce back' emails, indicating that 1,134 students had dropped out of SAIT programs and were therefore no longer SAITSA fee paying members. The list below details the number of voters:

- As of September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015: the total number of eligible voters = 12,606
- As of 4:00pm on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015: total number of 'bounce back' emails = 1,134
- As of 4:00pm on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015: total number of votes cast = 963

These numbers indicate that the total number of eligible voters for the SAITSA 2015 BOD elections was actually 11,472 ( $12,606 - 1,134 = 11,472$ ), not 12,606.

This new total of eligible voters indicates that the voter turnout was higher than what was reported through Votenet. Votenet's final report on the 2015 BOD elections indicated that voter turnout was 7.64% ( $963/12,606 = 7.64\%$ ), however, when the total number of eligible voters is more accurately reflected by deducting the number of emails that were 'bounced back', the numbers indicate that voter turnout was actually 8% ( $963/11,472 = 8.0\%$ ).

### Suggested Solutions

SAITSA's Operational Election Committee should consider SAIT's Add/Drop deadline when planning the scheduling of elections.