

**SAIT Students' Association
(SAITSA)**



2015 General Election

CRO Report

Written by:

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Chief Returning Officer
2015 SAITSA SLC & SEC Elections



Executive Summary

The SAIT Students' Association (SAITSA) recognizes the need to hold open and fair elections for positions on the Students' Legislative Council (SLC) and the Students' Executive Council (SEC).

On February 2, 2015, nominations opened for students seeking a seat on either the SLC or SEC. Candidates were required to obtain twenty-five signatures from students that were in good academic standing with SAIT and good standing with SAITSA. To become a qualified candidates, a completed nomination was to be submitted by February 13, 2015 at 12:00pm.

On February 13, 2015, candidates that submitted a completed nomination package were required to attend an All Candidates Meeting to discuss the policies and procedures with the Political Committee. The nine candidates in attendance signed a copy of the SAIT Students' Association Policies and Procedures, and initialed each page to indicate they have read and understood the document. After the meeting, candidates were officially allowed to campaign.

A secondary nomination period was held for students who did not submit their package by the February 13, 2015 deadline. The secondary nomination period opened February 23, 2015 and ended on February 27, 2015. Candidates were required to meet the same criteria as the first nomination period. The second All Candidates Meeting was held on February 27, 2015.

Attendance at the first All Candidates Meeting was strong, there were six candidates running for six seats on the SLC and seven candidates running for SEC, although the VP Academic and VP External positions only had one candidate. Following the first meeting was Reading Week, so there were minimal students on campus. Many candidates began to submit platforms and campaign posters for approval. SAIT did express concerns with the placement and excessive use of tape for some of the posters.

At the second All Candidates Meeting saw another five candidates run for SLC and one additional candidate run for VP Student Life. This raised the number of candidates for SLC to eleven, and the number of candidates for SEC to nine. During the elections process a disqualification occurred for a candidate running for the position of President.

Voting opened on Thursday, March 5, 2015 at 08:30am. Emails were sent to all eligible student voters and the voting began. On Friday March 6, 2015 the voting came to a close at 4:00pm with 10.72% of 12628 eligible student voters having cast a vote. All candidates were to drop off all campaign expenses to MC107 by this time as well.

This report highlights some minor issues and recommendations in regards to SAITSA's election processes and information regarding an appeal. These issues and recommendations relate to the All Candidates Meetings, campaign periods, voting.



Overall, the SAITSA SEC & SLC Election of 2015 was conducted with minimal issues. The process was both open and fair. Regular review of the SAIT Students' Association Policies and Procedures will ensure future elections will continue to engage the student population of SAIT.

Candidates Elected

President

Brigitte Matheson

VP External

Joshua Bettle

VP Academic

Kimmi Nguyen

VP Student Life

Thao Nguyen

Students' Legislative Council

Gurinderpal Brar

Alysson Torres-Gillett

Adolfo Jiminez

Rebekka Lenz

Israel Maya

Denis Ram



Introduction

The Sait Students' Association (SAITSA) recognizes the need to hold open and fair elections for the Students' Legislative Council (SLC) and the Students' Executive Council (SEC).

The *Post-Secondary Learning Act of Alberta* states that the business and affairs of SAITSA shall be managed by the SLC, the members of which shall be elected by and from the members of SAITSA. SLC is the governing body of SAITSA and meets twice a month with the SEC to discuss student concerns, issues, and the overall operations of the organization.

SAITSA holds two sets of elections every academic year. The first election is held in the fall semester, and elects ten students to the SLC. The second election is held in the winter semester, and elects the SEC members and six summer SLC positions. The SEC and SLC work together to represent students' academic rights and to make the students' time on campus fun and rewarding.

This report will provide an overview of the nomination periods, All Candidates Meetings, campaign periods, voting, and results. Recommendations for future elections will also be provided in this report.

Political Committee

The Political Committee is comprised of four members: Chief Returning Officer (CRO), Deputy Returning Officer (DRO), Student at Large (SAL), and the SAITSA Resource Centre Manager as an ex-officio, non-voting member.

The Political Committee was comprised of the following:

Valerie Caden-Baptiste	(CRO)
Roderick Addun	(DRO)
Sydney Hanson	(SAL)
Natasha Lundrigan	(Ex-Officio)

The members of the committee discussed candidate questions, reviewed campaign material, and enforced policies and procedures pertaining to the election. The committee would only accept questions or concerns in the form of email. All candidates were provided contact for the Political Committee. The CRO provided written responses within a maximum of twenty-four hours.

The official results of the election were read to the students and candidates by the CRO at the end of the election period.

Issues and Recommendations:



- The initial Student at Large was unable to fulfill their role. A new one was quickly found but there was some time in which the Political Committee proceeded without this role.

Nomination Periods

Nominations refer to the act of candidates being formally entered into the election. In order to be nominated for SAITSA's fall SLC election, candidates must receive twenty-five signatures of students who are in good academic standing and good standing with SAITSA. Candidates who do not meet this criteria will not be accepted into the election.

There were two nomination periods for this election. Students who waited until the second nomination period were still able to campaign but had lesser time to do so. Therefore, there was an incentive for students to submit their package within the first nomination period to gain the extra week of campaigning.

The first nomination period ran from February 2-13, 2015. The total number of nominated candidates for the first nomination period was seven for SEC and six for SLC.

The second nomination period ran from February 23-27, 2015. The total number of nominated candidates for the second nomination period was one for SEC and five for SLC.

There were a total of nine candidate for SEC and eleven candidates for SLC for this election. During the election, one candidate was disqualified. This lowered the total number of SEC candidates from nine to eight.

Issues and Recommendations:

- There are no recommendations regarding the nomination periods.

All Candidates Meetings

An All Candidate Meeting was held at the end of each nomination period. Candidates who attended the first meeting did not have to attend the second meeting. This was a mandatory meeting for all candidates.

During the meeting, candidates were given the opportunity to read the Sait Students' Association Policies and Procedures and ask questions pertaining to the information provided. Candidates were asked to initial each page of the booklet to demonstrate they understood the information contained therein. Candidates who had questions following the meeting were asked to send an email to the political committee.



In addition to an overview of the policies and procedures, candidates were provided with information regarding the committees involved in the elections, the electronic voting process and a reminder of important dates.

Issues and Recommendations:

- Some candidates were unsatisfied with the photo process, some did not realize they were going to have a photo taken and some were unhappy with their picture. A reminder on the nomination form for photos could be beneficial for future elections.

Campaign Period

There were two campaign periods for this election. Candidates that were eligible for the first All Candidates Meeting were given an extra two weeks of campaigning starting February 13, 2015. The remaining candidates were allowed to start campaigning on February 23, 2015. All candidates were eligible to start campaigning after attending one of the All Candidates Meetings.

Each candidate conducted their own independent campaign. Candidates running for SEC were permitted a maximum budget of four hundred dollars. Candidates running for SLC were permitted a maximum budget of two hundred dollars. SAITSA reimbursed 50% of each candidate's legitimate campaign expenses. All candidates were directed to inform the Political Committee of all messages and content being used in their respective campaign.

Issues and Recommendations:

- One candidate wanted to donate their entire campaign allotment the political committee decided that money could only be reimbursed for campaign materials and they could then use the reimbursement for personal expenses
- Some posters were placed on glass and used excessive amount of tape, SAIT requested that these should be taken down. Most of the posters on glass were taken down but the tape remained even after the candidate was informed of the situation. SAIT ended up removing the tape and sending a bill to SAITSA
- Two candidates had poster designs which the political committee believed violated Policy 5#6 regarding the use of copyrighted images
- One candidate was disqualified for continued violation of Policy 5#6
- Many campaign posters were removed without permission. The Political Committee was not able to prevent this type of activity from happening, but it is worth noting it was an issue.

Voting

The SAITSA SEC & SLC Election of 2015 used online voting through an independent third party company, Votenet. Electronic voting has dramatically cut down on physical resources needed to run an election. Online voting provides real-time information and is a proven method



of conducting fair and transparent elections. In the past, paper ballots were used. This process was both time consuming and costly.

Voting opened on March 5, 2015 at 8:30am and closed on March 6, 2015 at 4:00pm. Students received an email at their SAIT email address with voting information once the voting period opened.

Issues and Recommendations:

- One candidate requested to have their photo removed from the ballot and website, we complied and they later expressed concerns regarding the layout

Results

The total number of eligible voting students was **12,628**

Votes Cast: 12628

Voter Turnout:

Vote breakdown by candidate

Students' Executive Council

President		
Choice	Votes	Percentage
Andrew Crossett	558	41
Brigitte Matheson	585	43
Neil Reid	211	16

VP External		
Choice	Votes	Percentage
Joshua Bettle - YES	1079	80
Joshua Bettle - NO	275	20

VP Academic		
Choice	Votes	Percentage
Kimmi Nguyen - YES	1107	82
Kimmi Nguyen - NO	247	18

VP Student Life		
Choice	Votes	Percentage
Sara DesRoches	430	32
Garrett Gault	321	24



Thao Nguyen	603	45
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Students' Legislative Council:

Choice	Votes	Percentage
Gurinderpal Brar	306	9
Jeromy Deleff	253	8
Gar Gar	305	9
Mateo Tobon Garcia	276	8
Adolfo Jimenez	325	10
Rebekka Lenz	477	14
Alyrah Lobo	214	6
Israel Maya	364	11
Michael McDougall	165	5
Denis Ram	357	11
Alysson Torres-Gillett	308	9

Candidates Successful in Election

Gurinderpal Brar
 Alysson Torres-Gillett
 Adolfo Jiminez
 Rebekka Lenz
 Israel Maya
 Denis Ram

Issues and Recommendations:

- There are no recommendations regarding the nomination periods.

Appeal

Presidential candidate Christopher De Paz informed the Political Committee of his intent to submit an Appeal on February 25, 2015 and the process to organize an Appeals Committee began. Christopher officially submitted an Appeal in writing to the Political Committee at 12:54pm on February 26, 2015. The Appeal was regarding the decision made by the Political Committee to disqualify him for the use of copyrighted images in his campaign materials. The Appeals Committee consisted of the CRO (myself) as chair and three students at large. One member of SEC and one member of SLC were also there as observers. A meeting was arranged for February 26, 2015 at 4:00pm.

Motion of Appeal



Estimated Students,

Within this document is a timeline which references images to emails between myself and the Elections Committee CRO. These are used to support my case as I am not allowed to attend my appeal.

I am a full-time student, work more than 20 hours a week and I volunteer inside and outside of Sait (SLC member). I am asking for a second opportunity at representing our Student Body. If I were to be forgiven for this minor misunderstanding I would approach with a new strategy and try something much different to communicate to the students my commitment to this position.

One of the main reasons I am running for Presidency is; I have a dream to bring the Sait Student Body together like never before. I am innovative, flexible and I always strive for greater feats. I believe that in the very small time my posters have been up I have done just that. Be that the posts on the Sait Confessions page or the ACAD student I have not had the pleasure of meeting who is drawing posters in support of me. Numerous students have come to me and other follow students in outrage over this decision. Many have done their own research and came to the same conclusion that I am not in the wrong by using the images.

I know how much I care about SAIT and how strongly I feel about this position. I have spoken with Neil Reid, another candidate and brainstormed what would be done if either of us won. It's not about the title; it's about making the school a better place.

I know I have done that with the simple act of putting up posters and standing for my rights. All I ask is that I can continue to do so, for you three and the rest of the student body.

I ask that you take a thorough look at the following documents. See the matter from an outsiders' perspective and follow your heart. If you can do that and still decide to allow my disqualification to go through, I will pride my short running with the change I have made so far.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to understand and consider my appeal. I await your decision and hope we can meet in the future. If you have any questions during the meeting do not hesitate to contact me at [omitted].

Sincerely, Christopher De Paz

Resolution

The Appeals Committee unanimously were in support of upholding the decision of the Political Committee. At the meeting the students read the Appeal letter, as well as supplementary images provided by the appellant. They also reviewed the relevant Policies and Procedures, bulbapedia,



Pokemon and American Greetings websites. The students carefully looked over all information provided and based their decision on some of the following reasons:

- The Care Bear posters were in violation of Policy Elec-5#6. The American Greeting company has strict policies surrounding ownership of materials and social distribution
- The bulbapedia website the Pokemon images were used from states that their images could not be reproduced for commercial use. Whether this would be considered for commercial use is a grey area, but even if it wasn't he would have had to have accredited the site
- Images weren't cited
- While some images had a "censored" image, not enough had been done for this solution to have been fully implemented

Christopher was informed the next day of the results of his appeal. All decisions made by the Appeals Committee are considered final and may not be overturned or amended.

Conclusion

Overall, the SAIT SLC Election of 2015 ran openly and fairly. The SLC election was fully contested with more candidates than seats available, which speaks to the success in advocacy from SAITSA staff and volunteers.

Voter turnout was 10.72%, which was slightly higher than the previous year.

Continual assessment of best practices is important. This report highlighted several recommendations to improve multiple aspects of the election process. It is important to note these recommendations are for consideration only.

The Appeals process was beneficial for giving the opportunity for appeals to be heard in a timely manner. It also provided larger oversight and clear procedures for both candidates and the Political Committee. The input from the three SAIT students was insightful and valuable.

Despite minor issues, the SAITSA SEC & SLC Elections of 2015 were both open and fair. SAITSA staff, volunteers, and candidates should be commended on completing a successful election. Regular review of current policies and procedures will ensure SAITSA adapts to changing circumstances and is able to continue running successful elections.