

**SAIT Students' Association  
(SAITSA)**



**2014 Students' Legislative Council  
Election Report**

Written by:

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2014 SAITSA SLC 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 September 2, 2014, nominations opened for students seeking a seat on the SLC. 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 September 12, 2014 at 12:00pm.

On September 12, 2014 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 September 12, 2014 deadline. The secondary nomination period opened on September 15, 2014 and ended on September 19, 2014. Candidates were required to meet the same criteria as the first nomination period. The second All Candidates Meeting was held on September 19, 2014.

This report highlights some minor issues and recommendations in regards to SAITSA's election processes. These issues and recommendations relate to nomination periods, All Candidates Meetings, campaign periods, voting, and results.

A minor issue with electronic voting occurred during the voting period. Students were to receive an email when the voting period opened with the information required to cast their ballot. However, a significant portion of students did not receive this email until the last day of voting. This issue is likely the cause of lower voter turnout than in previous years, which reached 6.64%. Despite the technical difficulties, candidates were kept informed of the situation and all eligible students were given the opportunity to vote.

Overall, the SAITSA SLC Election of 2014 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.



## **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:

Jessica Mitchell	(CRO)
Valerie Caden-Baptiste	(DRO)
Vacant	(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:*

- It would be beneficial to fill the Student at Large position to ensure the student body has adequate representation in the election process



## **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 September 2 – 12, 2014. The total number of nominated candidates for the first nomination period was eight.

The second nomination period ran from September 15 – 19, 2014. The total number of nominated candidates for the second nomination period was eight.

There were a total of sixteen candidates for this election. During the election, two candidates were self-removed. This lowered the total number of candidates to fourteen.

### *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. In one instance, a candidate was unable to attend an All Candidates Meeting. The CRO and DRO met with this candidate separately to allow the candidate the opportunity to participate in the election.

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 electronic voting process and a reminder of important dates.

### *Issues and Recommendations:*

- There are no recommendations regarding the All Candidates Meetings.



## Campaign Period

There were two campaign periods for this election. Candidates that were eligible for the first All Candidates Meeting were given an extra week of campaigning starting September 12, 2014. The remaining candidates were allowed to start campaigning on September 19, 2014. All candidates were eligible to start campaigning after attending one of the All Candidates Meetings.

Each candidate conducted their own independent campaign with 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:*

- There are no policies regarding what items SAITSA considers to be eligible for reimbursement and the Political Committee was expected to exercise their best judgement. It may be useful to have clearer guidelines on what candidates can expect to be reimbursed for.
- Several candidates inquired about rules regarding campaigning on social media, particularly Twitter. The Political Committee decided candidates may not tweet at @SAITPolytechnic, @SAITSA, @SAIT\_Trojans, @SAITRez, or any other Twitter accounts associated with SAIT or SAITSA. However, the political committee decided to allow candidates to use any hashtags they wish, provided they are not inappropriate. It may be useful to add this to the Policy and Procedures manual.
- The policies on home printing are currently up to the discretion of the Operational Committee. It may be useful for the Operational Committee to determine the reimbursement rate for home printing in advance of the campaign period, or add a more specific policy to the manual.
- To promote equality, the Political Committee decided candidates should not use friend discounts or personal discounts for printing campaign material. These would be assessed as donations. The committee further elaborated that deals available to all candidates, such as through Groupon, would be acceptable. It may be beneficial to implement a policy that encapsulates this idea.
- To further clarify the existing policies regarding prohibited poster locations, the Political Committee reminded candidates they are not allowed to place posters within 30 meters of any intersection, city bus shelter, transit bench, bus zone, LRT station, or LRT platform (City of Calgary Bylaw 29M97). It may be worthwhile to add this to the existing policies.
- 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 SLC Election of 2014 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 September 25, 2014 at 8:30am and closed on September 26, 2014 at 4:00pm. Students received an email at their SAIT email address with voting information once the voting period opened.

### *Issues and Recommendations:*

- A significant portion of the student population did not receive an email with the necessary voting information on the first day of voting. However, a second email was sent to students on the second day of voting, after which point no further issues were reported.

## Results

The total number of eligible voting students was **11,884**.

Votes Cast: 789

Voter Turnout: 6.64%

Vote breakdown by candidate:

Choice	Votes	Percentage
Lambie Carruthers	155	6
Christopher Depaz	182	7
Katerina Dulay	227	9
Connor Goodfellow	248	10
Aaron Kadatz	180	7
Krystal Keene	134	5
Jonah Peters	160	6
Kyla Robb	124	5
Claudia Siller Vargas	193	8
Lisa Sterr	242	10
Ruth Tang	103	4
Alysson Torres-Gillett	195	8
Jame Vy	209	8
Karan Wadhvani	190	7



### Candidates Successful in Election

Christopher Depaz  
Katerina Dulay  
Connor Goodfellow  
Aaron Kadatz  
Jonah Peters  
Claudia Siller Vargas  
Lisa Sterr  
Alysson Torres-Gillet  
Jame Vy  
Karan Wadhwani

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the SAIT SLC Election of 2014 ran openly and fairly. The 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 6.64%, which is lower than it has been in past years. Lower turnout is likely the result of the delay in sending out voting information to students. Therefore, this change is not overly surprising.

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.

Despite minor issues, the SAITSA SLC Election of 2014 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.