2020 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ELECTION REPORT

SAIT Students' Association (Saitsa)

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Prepared For: Saitsa Board of Directors

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Contents

Executive Summary

The 2020 Executive Council Election saw candidates conduct their campaigns in accordance with the Guiding Principles of Fairness, Equality, Transparency and Student Interest. Candidates were actively engaged in all aspects of the electoral process which was evidenced in their attendance at the Candidates' Meeting, Meet & Greet and Panel Night, as well as in their thoughtful and creative campaign strategies.

There was a total of 7 candidates on the ballot running for the 4 Executive Council positions as follows: 2 candidates vying for President, 1 candidate each for the Vice President Academic and Vice President External, and 3 candidates for Vice President Student Life. Voter turnout for this year's election was 13.0%, an increase of 1.6% more than in 2019.

A mere 2 demerits were issued this election for minor poster violations.

Saitsa is committed to maintaining the highest standards of fairness, equality, transparency and student interest in its elections. This report will highlight candidate results, election process, issues encountered as well as recommendations to the Board and more.

All recommendations made within this report have been made in consultation with Saitsa's Manager of Governance & Advocacy and are based on observations and experiences of the Political Committee. In efforts to continually improve Saitsa's election processes and to establish best practices, the Political Committee encourages the Saitsa Board of Directors to strongly consider all recommendations contained within this report.

Candidates Elected to the 2020/2021 Executive Council

Congratulations from the Saitsa Political Committee to all the candidates in this year's Executive Council Election, their campaign teams, supporters, and the student body who chose to come out and vote. The following are the successful candidates for this year's election:

President:	Ryan Morstad
VP Academic:	Jasmin K. Bhatti
VP External:	Liam Hunter
VP Student Life:	Jessi Leippi

Overview

This report will provide an overview of the Political Committee, election promotion, nominations, Candidates' Meetings, Meet & Greet, Panel Night, campaign period, demerits issued, voting, candidate expenses and results. Issues encountered as well as recommendations are included at the end of each section.

Political Committee

The Political Committee is comprised of four members. Members of the Political Committee are the Chief Returning Officer (CRO), the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO), the Student at Large (SAL) and the Saitsa Manager of Governance & Advocacy as Ex-Officio (non-voting member).

2020 EC Political Committee Members:

Ilene Burns – Chief Returning Officer

AnneMarie Darichuk – Deputy Returning Officer

Sukhvir Sangha – Student at Large

Rachel Paris – Manager of Governance & Advocacy, Ex-Officio (non-voting)

Members of the Political Committee hosted several events including Candidates' Meetings, Meet & Greet, and Panel Night. As well, the committee responded to candidate questions, ensured the Election Policies & Procedures were adhered to and oversaw voting activities.

Following the recommendations in previous election reports from the CRO, the Manager of Governance & Advocacy was able to work with SAIT to develop a new email system for the Political Committee. Initial thoughts are that the new email system worked well. The Political Committee is now able to manage emails in a more efficient and timely manner in comparison to previous elections.

Issues and Recommendations

- As with the BOD election, members of the Political Committee attended all candidate events to not only observe but to provide answers to candidate questions, manage any concerns/issues and to provide additional support.

  The Political Committee will continue in this active role as it was proven once again to be a valuable asset to the election process.

Election Promotion

A revised Election Information Package was successfully launched this election. This provided students with a brief but thorough overview of what is involved in Saitsa's governance, what is involved with being a candidate as well as what are the expectations if elected.

Issues and Recommendations

- Two positions, VP Academic and VP External, were uncontested and resulted in yes/no ballots; there continues to be a low number of students submitting nomination packages for elected positions.

  It is recommended that the Political Committee continue discussions with the Manager of Governance & Advocacy as well as Marketing & Communications to discuss alternative ways to promote the student leadership positions/opportunities to the student body.

Nominations and Candidates' Meeting

Nominations opened on February 10, 2020 and closed on March 4, 2020. The nomination packages were available online and in print form. For a nomination to be considered valid, students had to be members of Saitsa in good standing who had paid their Saitsa and SAIT fees in full. They had to obtain 50 signatures from active Saitsa member students and they must have attended a Candidates' Meeting. Deadlines for submission of nomination packages to the Political Committee was no later than 12pm, noon, on February 26, 2020 for the first nomination period and 12 pm, noon, on March 4, 2020 for the second nomination period. A total of 8 nomination packages were submitted resulting in 8 qualified candidates seeking a position on the Executive Council.

At the first Candidates' Meeting on February 26th there were 3 candidates in attendance and 2 at the second Candidates' Meeting on March 4th. Two special Candidates' Meetings were granted by the Political Committee due to scheduling conflicts for the remaining 3 candidates.

There was 1 candidate who, early on, opted to withdraw from the election for personal reasons. This left 7 candidates to run in the election as follows; 2 for President, 1 each for VP Academic and VP External, and 3 for VP Student Life.

Issues and Recommendations

- In 2019 the nomination deadline for submitting nomination packages for both the elections was changed from 12pm, noon, to 4pm, on the appointed day, deviating from what is written in the Election Policies & Procedures. This created a situation where the Manager of Governance & Advocacy had insufficient time to review last minute nomination packages received to confirm if they met eligibility requirements prior to the 5pm start of the Candidates' Meeting. For this election the deadline for the nomination period reverted back to 12pm, noon, on the date appointed adhering to the Election Policies & Procedures. With this reversion back to the original deadline there were no issues encountered with being able to confirm eligibility of the nomination packages before the Candidates' Meetings.

  Going forward it is recommended that the deadline for the submission of nomination packages continues to adhere to what is written in the Policies & Procedures.

- This election was the first time the Political Committee had utilized the use of a Power Point Presentation for the Candidates' Meeting. It proved to be an effective tool to present a large amount of information to the candidates. The Power Point does need to be slightly adjusted to remove redundancies of the content and to promote a better flow in the presentation of the material.

  It is recommended that the Political Committee reconfigure the content of the Power Point, in consultation with the Manager of Governance & Advocacy, and continue with its use during future Candidates' Meetings. The committee may wish to consider relocating where the Candidates' Meeting is held to better accommodate this new presentation style.

- The Political Committee hosted 2 Special Candidates' Meetings due to scheduling conflicts for 3 nominees who were current Saitsa Board members. The Board scheduled

a special meeting for the same date and time frame as the 1ˢᵗ Candidates' Meeting thus preventing the nominees from being able to attend the 1ˢᵗ Candidates' Meeting. If it were not for this special board meeting all three of these nominees were willing and able to attend the 1st Candidates' Meeting so they would be able to begin campaigning at the end of that meeting and not have to postpone campaigning until after the 2ⁿᵈ Candidates' Meeting a week later. Based on this time conflict as well as other factors, the Political Committee agreed to arrange two special Candidates' Meetings to accommodate those nominees.

It is the recommendation of the Political Committee that the Board takes into consideration the dates of future BOD and EC election dates when arranging their meetings to prevent these types of scheduling conflicts.

Meet & Greet and Panel Night

Meet & Greet for the candidates was again well received with approximately 300 students attending. The candidates were each provided a booth in the Stan Grad Atrium to decorate however they chose. Modelled after Saitsa's Federal "Popcorn & Politics" event, popcorn was provided by Saitsa for this year's Meet & Greet. It was observed that while the students were waiting for a new batch of popcorn to be made, they visited the candidates' booths and engaged in conversation with the candidates.

Panel Night, in the Odyssey Café, provided all the candidates with a chance to answer a multitude of questions presented to them by both the moderator and the audience, both in-house and online. Several of the questions were provided by Saitsa to the candidates in advance of the forum to help them prepare while others, including those from the audience, were asked in real time. Questions pertained to Saitsa, the roles of the Executive Council as well as the candidates' platforms. The use of a moderator and time keeper continue to be key components for the effective functionality of Panel Night.

Live streaming of the forum was on Instagram with 13 viewers live. Post live-stream views on Instagram totalled 383 views. A recording of the forum was also later published on Facebook and YouTube - receiving 57 views on Facebook, and 120 on YouTube.

Issues and Recommendations

- Even though it required more clean-up, serving popcorn at the Meet & Greet proved successful in getting the students to interact with the candidates and is recommended for future Meet & Greet events.

- The process in which questions from the audience, both in-house and online, requires some adjusting.

  It is recommended that the Political Committee revise how audience questions are presented to the candidates. Possibly having all questions submitted prior to the start of Panel Night and provided to the moderator to present to the candidates instead of being taken from the floor. Another suggestion would be to host two separate opportunities on Panel Night to engage the candidates: 1) by candidate position, candidates answer

questions provided in advance by Saitsa, and then 2) the entire panel of candidates answer questions from the students.

- Although the live streaming of Panel Night did not have a large number of viewers this year, the post-live stream views were high.

  The Political Committee recommends to continue to live-stream this forum as well as posting this event on other social platforms post Panel Night.

Campaign Period & Demerit Issuance

Campaigning began at the completion of the first Candidates' Meeting on February 26th for the first 4 qualified candidates. The remaining 3 qualified candidates began their campaigning the following week on March 4th at the close of the second Candidates' Meeting. The campaign period closed with the close of polls at 4pm on March 12th.

Effective resources for providing information and communicating with the candidates were again used this election. The Google Drive file was a key 'go to' for candidates looking for election information during the campaign period. Using calendar invites to remind candidates of important events was again successful.

New ways of presenting candidate information were utilized. Candidates were introduced to a new profile format. This new format helped streamline the candidates' messaging providing voters with an even platform for candidate comparison. A more elevated look on how the candidates were listed on the Saitsa website was also incorporated.

There were only 2 demerits issued for minor poster violations.

Issues and Recommendations

- It is believed the introduction of the Power Point presentation to the Candidates' Meetings as well as photos on prohibited poster placement available on the Google Drive file were contributing factors in the low number of demerits that were issued this election.

  The recommendation is to continue with the use of these tools in all future elections.

- The Political Committee supports the continued use of calendar invites for the candidates for all election events.

- Issues continue to be had with candidates not showing up to their scheduled time slot for their campaign photo and video shoot. It takes considerable time and resources to produce this event and proves to be an ineffective use of this time and resources when candidates are no shows.

  It is recommended that the Manager of Governance & Advocacy explore new ways to conduct the photo and video shoots. One suggestion is to perhaps take the candidate's photo at the beginning of the Candidates' Meeting and schedule the videos later.

- The Manager of Governance & Advocacy will be discussing with Marketing & Communications for the use of a lapel mic for the video shoots to eliminate background noise.

- While the Election Complaint form has been a useful resource for the Political Committee when dealing with candidate complaints, it has been implied it is too complicated, especially for minor infractions.

  The committee will look into simplifying the Election Complaint form for future elections and possibly moving to an online form format.

Voting, Poster Tear Down and Expense Forms

Simply Voting, an independent third-party company, was once again used for this year's Executive Council Election. Polls opened promptly at 8am on March 11th with no issues and closed at 4pm March 12th.

Elector turnout was 13% for this election. A total of 1,908 out of the 14,695 electors on the list of electors came out to cast their ballot. It was observed by the Political Committee that the student population on campus appeared to be significantly less than it should have been on the 2nd day of voting. It is the opinion of the committee that this was due in part to the COVID-19 outbreak. It was rumoured that many students were expecting the school to announce its closure that day. Had this not been weighing on the minds of the student population, voter turnout is guesstimated to have been higher than the 13% recorded. Overall, the Political Committee believes voter turnout was good for this election.

The List of Electors received by the Manager of Governance & Advocacy from SAIT was not as inclusive as it should have been. Numerous students expressed they did not receive a voting email. Some of these instances were a matter of the voting email going into their junk folder or being inadvertently deleted by the student. Students who were experiencing this were asked to check their junk and deleted folders in an attempt to locate the missing email. The Manager of Governance & Advocacy assisted 32 students who were unable to locate the voting email and assisted them with getting access to the voting platform to cast their ballot. This was an extremely time-consuming task for the Manager of Governance & Advocacy that could have been time better spent tending to other election work.

Two polling stations were set up for this election, one outside of MC107 and one in the cafeteria area of Senator Burns beside NN118. Each station was equipped with 4 laptops for students to use to cast their ballot. Voter resources were provided for the electors at the polling station in the form of candidate profile booklets at each laptop as well as a large poster with the candidates' profile pictures and names. Both stations were open from 10am to 4pm for the two consecutive voting days. Mobile Pollsters with tablets travelled to the Aero Centre, unfortunately scheduling conflicts prohibited mobile polling being conducted at the residence towers.

Once the two polling stations were set up, all campaign posters that were within 5 metres of either of the voting stations were removed and held for pickup by the candidates in room NN118. The Political Committee did not issue demerits for these posters.

All candidates eagerly participated in the Poster Tear Down this year without any issues.

Expense forms from all candidates were received prior to the 4:00 p.m. deadline on March 12th. The expense limit for the Executive Council election was $400, all inclusive. Clarification from a couple of candidates was required regarding their printing done on campus as the printing receipt from the SAIT Library is not itemized. Both candidates were requested to provide a detailed receipt for the printing to explain the expensed amount recorded on their expense form. In both instances the candidates were able to provide sufficient information to satisfy the Political Committee's concerns.

Election results were hosted in the Odyssey Café as they were for the previous BOD Election. This venue is a more inclusive environment and has been better received than when results were hosted in the Gateway.

Issues and Recommendations

- Issues continue with the List of Electors provided by SAIT. As stated above, 32 eligible electors who contacted the Political Committee/Manager of Governance & Advocacy were assisted in gaining access to the voting platform in order to vote. The Office of the Registrar informed the Political Committee, via the Manager of Governance & Advocacy, that some students in Academic Upgrading are assessed the Saitsa fee, while others are not, adding to student confusion. Additionally, themes began to emerge in what programs may have not been fully included within the voter list:
  - Architectural Technologies
  - Information Technologies Software Design
  - Journalism; and
  - Electrical Engineering Technology

  Staff from the Office of the Registrar have indicated that changes related to *Banner 9* require the request for the voter list to be made a minimum of two weeks in advance of the voting days, which was not done this election.

  The Political Committee recommends that the Executive Director works with SAIT to guarantee access to a complete list of eligible electors for the next Board election in a timely manner.

  It is also advised that the Manager of Governance & Advocacy request the List of Electors at the earliest possible time frame from SAIT in order to have time to review the content to see if all Saitsa fee paying programs have been included in the list. As well as to assess if the enrolled number of students in each program appears reasonable.

- In an effort to free up valuable time, the Manager of Governance & Advocacy will look into delegating the role of assisting students who are experiencing issues with their voting email.

- Voter apathy continues to be an issue with the electors. Part of this can be attributed to a lack of understanding as to what the roles of the Executive Council are as well as what the Board is responsible for.

  In an effort to get more students interested in voting, it is recommended that the Political Committee, with the assistance of Saitsa, engage in additional promotion to educate the

student body on the roles and responsibilities of Saitsa's student-led governing bodies, and specific explanations of the different positions within the Board and Executive Council. Examples of this could be posters placement a couple weeks prior to an election, emails sent to the students and/or postings on the Saitsa website.

- Voter privacy was still an issue this election, with some electors having to walk in behind other electors that were voting to get to a vacant voting screen to cast their ballot. A request to the Events department to have space between voting station tables was not able to be achieved due to equipment requirements and internet port availability.

  The Political Committee will continue to work with the Events department to acquire the necessary additional equipment to allow for the polling stations to be set up in a way that will protect the privacy of the voters. The use of diagrams to illustrate polling station set up on the equipment requisition is hoped to assist with this.

- Location of the polling stations has not been ideal. The polling station outside of MC107 is in a narrow, high-traffic area that tends to impede traffic when there is a line-up of students who are trying to vote. The polling station in the cafeteria section of Senator Burns, outside of NN118, was better positioned than in the previous election but still not ideal.

  For the next BOD election in Fall 2020, the Political Committee will attempt to book the Atrium in Stan Grad to replace the MC107 polling station location. It will also look into a better location in Senator Burns for that polling station as well as other possible locations that may be better suited for a polling station.

- Providing voter resources, such as the candidates' profile booklet and large poster with the candidates' profile pictures and names, at the polling stations was appreciated by the electors. During the previous election voters commented on having better resources available to them at the polling stations to help remember who the candidates were or to assist them with their selection if they were still undecided.

  It is recommended that these resources continue to be used in future elections.

- The inclusion of a yes/no icon next to the candidates who had a yes/no vote was helpful and will continue to be used in future elections where there is a yes/no vote.

- Due to space limitations experienced at some polling locations the Political Committee found it hard to justify adhering to the Policies & Procedures regarding poster placement prohibited 10 metres of a polling station.

  The Political Committee recommends amending the wording in the Election Policies & Procedures for section 9.4.2 k) from "10 metres of a polling station;" to "5 metres of a polling station for posters and 10 metres of a polling station for physical campaigning;".

- Issues with candidates obtaining detailed receipt information when printing via on-campus printing (ie: Reg Erhardt Library) needs to be addressed.

The Political Committee will attempt to provide a better explanation of what is required for a receipt for printing done on campus. If possible, the committee will put an example in the Google Drive file.

- It is recommended to continue with hosting the election results in the Odyssey Café for future elections as it has been found to be a better environment for such an event.

Official Results

President Candidates	Number of Votes	Percentage
Ryan Morstad	1229	68.6
Tristan Ryan	563	31.4
Abstain	116	6.1

Vice President Academic Candidate	Number of Votes	Percentage
Jasmin K. Bhatti - Yes Votes	1490	89.4
Jasmin K. Bhatti - No Votes	176	10.6
Abstain	242	12.7

Vice President External Candidate	Number of Votes	Percentage
Liam Hunter - Yes Votes	1385	87.6
Liam Hunter - No Votes	196	12.4
Abstain	327	17.1

Vice President Student Life Candidates	Number of Votes	Percentage
Jessi Leippi	574	34.8
Jaz Fraser	539	32.7
Elliz Amurao	537	32.5
Abstain	258	13.5