



2019 SAITSA Executive Council Election Report

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Executive Summary

This report illustrates the oversight and adherence to the SAIT Student Association (SAITSA) Election Policies and Procedures during the 2019 Executive Council Election. The Executive Council election was open and fair, with good accountability of all candidates and good student participation. This year however saw the most policy and procedure infraction demerits issued (17) ever recorded by this chief returning officer. However, the greatest challenge was accounting for the drastic increase in the number of voters. The voter list jumped from 13,072 in 2018 to 16,651 this year – an increase of 21%.

The Executive Council had 7 candidates on the election ballot and 11.4% voter turnout (1,903 out of 16,651 eligible voters), which was only 1 vote less than last year's voter turnout (14.57%, 1904 out of 13,072 eligible voters).

There are a few items to recommend for future elections in this report that are normally considered out of scope for the committee, which include thoughts on operational policy, and the connection of the election proceedings to SAITSA's Code of Conduct and Ethics and the SAIT Student Code of Conduct.

The following report makes recommendations from the Chief Returning Officer and the Political Committee; however, it does not constitute any endorsement by SAITSA or its representatives.

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Candidates Elected

The SAITSA Political Committee would like to congratulate and thanks all of the candidates, supporters and voters of the 2019/2020 Executive Council election.

The following candidates were the successful in their campaigns:

President: Ryan Morstad

Vice President Student Life: Jess Beddow

Vice President External: Garrett Koehler

Vice President Academic: Tanya Pittis

Overview

This report highlights the issues and recommendations of the Political Committee activities, nomination periods, the candidate meetings, candidate panel night, candidate meet and greet, campaign periods, voting, and results.

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 Governance and Advocacy Manager as an ex officio, non-voting member.

The Political Committee was comprised of the following:

Jennifer Dotchin (CRO)

Raj Lakhan (DRO)

Kelsey Tovell (SAL)

Rachel Paris (Ex-Officio, Governance and Advocacy Manager)

Policies and Procedures

It is recommended that there be a regular review of the SAIT Students' Association Policies and Procedures to ensure that this improved level of accountability is assured

year to year. A demerit system was used again to ensure that the Election Policies and Procedures were adhered to. This points-based system would entail penalties such as 1 point for improper poster placement, while 10 points is the highest penalty resulting from significant infractions such as damage to SAIT and/or SAITSA property.

Nominations

The Political Committee saw 9 nominations from students seeking a position on the Executive Council, and 7 who were on the ballot. To qualify as a candidate, a completed nomination was to be submitted by February 27 (1st Nomination Period) or March 6 (2nd Nomination Period) by 4:00pm. Each candidate was required to obtain fifty signatures from students. Candidates are also required to be:

- In good academic standing with SAIT
- In good standing with SAITSA
- Willing to be a candidate

By the final deadline, 8 candidates had submitted a completed nomination package and opted for running in the Executive Council election and a nomination package that was received after the deadline was not eligible but noted as submitted.

There was a total of 7 candidates for the Executive Council election: 2 for President, 1 for VP External, 1 for VP Academic and 3 for VP Student Life. The low number of candidates is seen to be an anomaly, SAITSA may want to consider alternative outreach efforts to increase engagement in the 2020 EC Election.

Issues and Recommendations:

- Undertake previous report recommendations to update the Policy and Procedures
- Provide an online mechanism to submit nomination packages
- SAITSA consider year-long outreach/marketing to increase student interest and understanding of the role of the EC
- Consider adding in the nomination package a question for self-identification of international students who sometimes may require additional guidance.

Candidates' Meetings

Candidate Meetings were held at the end of each nomination period (February 27th and March 6th). These meetings are mandatory for all candidates to attend. Candidates were introduced to the Political Committee, reviewed the Political Committee's responsibilities and read the Election Policies and Procedures, Code of Conduct and Ethics statements.

The Political Committee found a challenge within the Policies and Procedures regarding who must attend the Candidate Meeting – it currently notes that the candidate and Campaign Manager must attend the meeting. Occasionally, a candidate is unable to attend the meeting, which poses a challenge to accommodate the candidate. It is recommended that the candidate be able to send a Campaign Manager in their place, but it is imperative that the Candidate understand that they still must read the Election Policies and Procedures.

Issues and Recommendations:

- The Campaign Manager OR the Candidate is required to attend the Candidates' Meeting, not both.
- Accommodating a candidate who is unable to attend or send someone in their place if they are in the 2nd nomination period: the CRO and at least one other member of the Political Committee must be present for any meetings that are scheduled to accommodate a candidate who is unable to attend due to conflicts with academic schedules or unforeseen circumstances.

Campaign Period

This year also saw the most policy and procedure infraction demerits issued (17) ever recorded by this chief returning officer. There was 8 demerit points issued this election for inappropriate signage infractions. The penalty points were distributed to candidates by email.

A few other complaints were made:

- A complaint was made about a non-student campaigning for a candidate.

- A complaint about comments made on social media, and the use of #saitsavotes hashtag in social media
- A complaint of a candidates' desire to run a slate

In all cases, the Political Committee investigated. In two cases demerit points were issued, the others there was insufficient evidence.

In a unique element that occurred is a Campaign Manager had a campaign concern that they directed to the Executive Director of SAITSA. This concern was re-directed by the Executive Director to the Political Committee. No demerit points were issued regarding the concern.

As well, the Policies and Procedures note that the current sitting executive members must not work during the week of the election. However, there were numerous requests to work during this time.

As well, there was one complaint about the sitting executive working while campaigning, to which 5 demerit points were issued.

Issues and recommendations:

- The SAITSA operations need to consider supporting the Executive Council members during the week of elections either by providing paid leave, reducing the operations of SAITSA during election week, and/or booking the elections far in advance so as all staff can plan to work a non-standard schedule.
- Ensure that SAITSA staff and the Political Committee review social media platforms and that SAITSA staff report any concerns directly to the Political Committee.
- All Candidates and Campaign Managers must be aware of complaint mechanisms for ensuring all concerns are directed to the Political Committee.

Meet and Greet

To encourage campaigning and discussion with candidates, the meet and greet ran for 3 hours this year compared to 2 in years past. This mandatory event on March 11 had over 300 participants, and all the candidates attended. Candidates were provided with a booth and a tray of cookies from SAITSA to support their setup and conversations with voters.

Issues and Recommendations:

- SAITSA host a 'Campaigning 101' informational session that includes how to market and present oneself for events such as: Meet & Greet, Panel Night and general campaigning.
- Recommended that a voting member of the Political Committee be required to attend this event.

Candidate Panel Night

Candidates were required to attend and participate in the Executive Council Candidate Panel Night on March 12th. Each candidate answered a series of questions based on the theme of "Evaluating Value"; questions via SAITSA were provided ahead of time, questions from the Weal were asked of each position, and questions from the audience were submitted and selected randomly. The panel drew approximately 35 attendees to the Odyssey Coffeehouse and over 800 views of the livestream video on Facebook. Questions from the livestream audience were included in the random audience question selection.

Issues and Recommendations:

- The introduction of a timekeeper and sound person were instrumental to the successful operation of this event.
- Recommended that a voting member of the Political Committee be required to attend this event.

Voting

There was a serious voting challenge this year, specifically in confirming the number of eligible voters, as the numbers jumped from 13,072 in 2018 to 16,651 this year – an increase of 21%. This challenge is complex as SAITSA relies on SAIT to provide the voter list; SAITSA's voter list is extrapolated by SAIT from SAIT's total student population, some of whom do not pay SAITSA fees and are therefore ineligible to vote. It is imperative that SAITSA have a complete understanding of their membership numbers in order to effectively execute their elections.

A few students who should have received the voting email but didn't were reported to the Manager of Governance & Advocacy and those instances were resolved; one individual completed a paper ballot, which was entered into the voting system manually.

Voting opened on March 13 at 8:00am. Emails with voting details were sent to all eligible student voters and voting commenced. On March 14th voting came to a close at 4:00pm with 11.4% voter turnout (1,903 out of 16,651 eligible voters).

Issues and Recommendations:

- Create a mechanism to ensure that all students who pay SAITSA fees within the academic year are included in the voter list.
- Request a breakdown from SAIT regarding the composition of the voter list and assist SAITSA in understanding their membership demographics to enhance their outreach abilities.
- Include a provision to ensure any paper ballots that are manually entered are done so by the Manager of Governance & Advocacy witnessed by either an employee and/or a volunteer of SAITSA, or a member of the Political Committee.
- In August 2018, SAITSA switched voting software providers to Simply Voting and this has been a very positive transition with minimal technical difficulties; it is recommended that SAITSA continue with this provider.

Expenses and Poster Tear Down

All candidates were able to submit their campaign expenses by 4:00pm on the last day of voting. Poster tear down was a success, and all candidates worked together to clear main campus of poster materials.

Issues and Recommendations:

- Recommended that a candidate OR a member of their campaign team be required to attend the poster tear down; currently it is required that a candidate attend or be issued demerits.

Codes of Conduct

Candidates are required to sign SAITSA’s Code of Conduct and Ethics and students are required to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct. However, there is no process outlined for how the Political Committee holds candidates accountable to both codes and what the process would be if one or both of them are violated.

Issues and Recommendations

SAITSA review the codes and establish whether candidates should be required to sign SAITSA’s code, and determine a process by which the committee takes action should one or both of the codes be violated.

Official Results

President Candidates	Votes	Percentage
Ryan Morstad	1198	67.4
Deanna Bella	580	32.6
<i>Abstain</i>	124	6.5

VP External Candidates	Votes	Percentage
Garrett Koehler – Yes	1428	86.8
Garrett Koehler - No	217	13.2
<i>Abstain</i>	257	13.5

VP Academic Candidates	Votes	Percentage
Tanya Pittis – Yes	1473	90.1
Tanya Pittis - No	161	9.9
<i>Abstain</i>	268	14.1

VP Student Life	Votes	Percentage
Jess Beddow	683	40.5
Chevaughn Fuller	569	33.8
Caleb “K-Love” Pakosz	433	25.7
<i>Abstain</i>	217	11.4

