

Chief Returning Officer Report

Fall 2011 Elections

Introduction

This report accounts the events of the University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU) Fall 2011 by-elections period. The report also provides recommendations for consideration by the Elections and Referenda Committee and the UTSU Board of Directors for improving processes and policies in order to facilitate future elections.

The Fall 2011 by-elections period was held to elect certain Board of Directors members. No referenda were held during this period.

Activities before Voting Period

In preparation for the nomination and campaign period, and in accordance with the UTSU Election Procedures Code (EPC), a number of tasks were completed prior to the start of the nomination and campaign periods:

- Reviewing all relevant UTSU documents.
- Site inspections, selections and booking of potential polling locations
- Approval of polling stations for by-elections in consideration of vacant Division Positions and logistics.
- Preparation of nomination and election-related publicity materials for local campus newspapers such as: The Varsity and The Newspaper, posters for distributions or display on campus, and updates on the UTSU website.
- Hiring of one Deputy Returning Officer (DRO)
- Preparation of the nominations packages for Board of Directors candidates.
- Request for renewal of the Online Voters Eligibility Verification Systems and Official Voters List for verification of nominators.
- Scheduling and logistics for All-candidates Meeting.
- Order ballot boxes, voting booths, and seals from Elections Canada.
- Poll clerk hiring, scheduling and logistics for poll clerk training sessions

Nominations

Nominations for the UTSU Fall 2011 elections opened Friday, October 7th, 2011 at 09:00 and closed Friday, October 14th at 16:00. Five nomination packages were signed out and five were returned and completed as per EPC guidelines, they are as follows: one for the Faculty of Law, one for the Faculty of Medicine, one for the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), and one for the Faculty of Physical Education and Health. The CRO and DRO worked a combined total of 3 hours to verify all nominator's signatures. The number of candidates equalled the number of available positions for all five faculties. All the positions were uncontested.

All-Candidates Meeting

The all-candidates' meeting was held on Monday, October 17th, 2011 at 17:00 in the Chapel at Hart House. Attendance was limited to candidates and candidate proxies and all-candidates packages were distributed to all attendees. The meeting lasted approximately 30 minutes, as the CRO and DRO reviewed the relevant sections of the EPC, University of Toronto policies, the UTSU By-laws and role of the elections staff.

Polling Locations

As a large campus spread out across downtown Toronto, the University of Toronto St. George campus presents some challenges in ensuring representative distribution of poll stations. The Election and Referenda Committee (ERC) is required to consider a number of factors in allocating poll stations, including but not limited to: cost, wireless access, proximity to other poll stations, accessibility, and student traffic.

Polling Location:
Medical Sciences Building
Factor – Inwentash Faculty of Social Work
Athletic Centre

Campaigning

The campaigning period opened on Tuesday, October 18th, 2011 at 08:00 and closed on the last day of voting on Thursday October 27th, 2011 at 18:00. Candidates were informed during the all-candidates meeting and one week into the campaigning period that all campaigning materials must be approved 24 hours prior to being distributed and campaigning by all candidates was highly encouraged. Throughout the campaigning period none of the 5 candidates had submitted any materials for approval.

Voting

Voting took place on Wednesday, October 26th, 2011 to Thursday, October 27th, 2011 by way of a Yes/No ballot. Polling stations were open from 10:00 to 18:00. 12 poll clerks worked shifts from 09:00 to 18:00. Poll clerks were expected to use the Online Eligibility Verification System (OVEV) to confirm voters' eligibility by scanning their T-cards. However, due to technical errors with the OVEV system, no T-cards were verifiable during the voting period. Voters were asked to sign in and provided their name, student number, faculty and signature and the double envelope system was implemented during the two days. The discrepancy form for each polling station notes the OVEV problem. Poll clerks were instructed to each initial every ballot as they were given out to the students upon confirmation of their eligibility as voters.

Poll clerks met each morning before 09:00 at the U.T.S.U. office to collect the necessary equipment and materials from the CRO and DRO. Poll stations were closed each day at 18:00 and ballot boxes were sealed and signed by poll clerks. At the end of the first voting day, poll clerks transported ballot boxes to the Chapel at Hart House. Poll clerks dropped off their materials boxes off at the U.T.S.U. office prior to transporting ballot boxes to Hart House.

Reported Discrepancies

On both voting days, the OVEV system was experiencing technical issues, and the double envelope system was implemented throughout.

Ballot Counting

On Thursday, October 27th, 2011 at 18:30, the CRO and DRO explained all the formalities associated with ballot counting:

- Non-disclosure agreement forms must be signed by all those present
- No mobile phones or access to the public until counting has finished
- Ballot counting procedure
- For ballot counting, a total of 6 poll clerks were present to assist in the process of counting.

Poll Clerk Duties

- 2 poll clerks assisted in opening one ballot box at a time for counting
- 2 poll clerks assisted in verifying voter eligibility
- 1 poll clerk checked for both poll clerk initials and read the result aloud
- 2 poll clerk recorded the result on a tally sheet.
- All poll clerk duties were carried out in the presence of the CRO and DRO.

Since the double envelope system was implemented, all double envelopes had to be verified for voter eligibility. Following this verification, the ballots were then counted.

After the results have been read both poll clerks verify they have the same number of ballots per result as what was tallied. The ballots were then placed back into the ballot box. This system worked efficiently and the counting of 70 ballots was completed within two hours.

Double Envelope Ballots

During polling, poll clerks were instructed to use a double envelope system if prospective voters did not have their TCard, if the TCard's barcode could not be scanned, or if the prospective voter's status came up as 'ineligible' but the prospective voter believed that she/he was a full time undergraduate student for the correct Faculty/College. All double envelopes are cross-referenced with a list provided by Student Affairs – Vice Provost before placed back with the other ballots to maintain anonymity.

Spoiled Ballots

Ballots were considered spoiled if:

- No voter intent was indicated on the ballot;
- Only one poll clerk initialled the ballot;
- No poll clerks initialled the ballot;
- Voter did not verify as a UTSU member

6 of 76 ballots were spoiled under one or more of the conditions stated above.

**There were no requests for recounts or any appeals within the timeline outlined in the EPC.

Elections Results

U.T.S.U. Board of Directors for Fall 2011

Acclamations Seats:

Faculty of Law: Joshua Mandryk – YES 20 (77%), NO 0 (0%), Spoiled 6 (26%)

Faculty of Medicine: Howard Meng – YES 5 (100%), NO 0 (0%), Spoiled 0 (0%)

Faculty of Physical Education and Health: Danielle Emmons – YES 35 (100%), NO 0 (0%), Spoiled 0 (0%)

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education: Mark Roxas – YES 1 (100%), NO 0 (0%), Spoiled 0 (0%)

Transitional Year Program: Brine Mazengwe – Yes 9 (100%), NO 0(0%), Spoiled 0 (0%)

Recommendations

Find new ways to increase voter turnout

Propose a new way of counting ballots, in preparation for the Spring 2012 elections

Acknowledgements

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