

# Electoral Report

2013 Fall Referendum

UVSS Elections Office

January 6, 2014

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The University of Victoria's Student Society (UVSS) Elections Office, as dictated by the Electoral Policy Manual, submits this 2013 UVSS Electoral Report. The UVSS Elections Office is comprised of four electoral officers:

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) – Shawn Slavin  
Senior Deputy Electoral Officer (SDEO) – Hilary Arias-Carrasco  
Deputy Electoral Officers (DEOs) – Emma Hamill and Owen Pachal

The UVSS Elections Office team was able to build on the successes of last year's office team to produce a successfully referendum, ran on fair and just motivations. Under the expertise and guidance of the CEO, the direction of the Electoral Policy Manual (EPM), and the support of the UVSS Board of Directors and staff, this fall referendum ran with very little issue. Although voter turnout decreased from 21.11% for the 2012 fall referendum to 16.09% for the 2013 fall referendum, we are very hopeful that the publicity of this referendum will aid in increasing voter turnout for the upcoming spring elections.

This report outlines a debriefing of the very successes and issues of the 2013 fall referendum, with detailed resolutions and recommendations for future election events. This report will discuss a summary of the referendum timeline, highlighting specific considerations to support our proposed recommendations. Next, this report will discuss issues relevant to the nomination and voting processes, with a final consideration to possible goals and solutions for future electoral officers and committee members.

## **SUMMARY OF REFERNDUM**

### **The Referendum Question**

Do you support increasing the special events fee by \$2.00 per semester for full-time students and \$1.00 per semester for part-time students?

### **The Nomination Period**

Nominations opened October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at 9:00 am PST. As mandated by the EPM, all of the necessary documentation was advertised and made readily available online, specifically housed on the UVSS Elections Office website's 'Resources' page. The relevant referendum forms included: the EPM, Constitution and Bylaws of the UVSS, third-party endorsement form, and the nomination forms for proponents and opponents. Information about these forms and relevant nomination procedure was outlined in our 2013 Candidate's Handbook, which was released during the call of nominations (October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

Only one proponent form was submitted, while no opponent forms were received by the Elections Office before the close of nominations. After the close of nominations, the proponent form was rejected by the SDEO due to the absence of a stamp from the Office of the Registrar, as per EPM 4.b.3. The decision of the SDEO to reject this form was in adherence to EPM 4.f. This rejection was posted on the door of the Elections Office, website, and social media outlets (Twitter and Facebook). The decision of the SDEO was immediately appealed to the CEO.

Under conditional approval, the CEO permitted the individual to run as the proponent to maintain the integrity of the electoral policy and the democratic process of the referendum. However, the individual was required to adhere to strict campaigning restrictions. While the spending limit of \$100.00 still applied to the campaign (a maximum amount of \$70.00 at Zap! Copy and a maximum of \$30.00 could be spent elsewhere), the Elections Office did not provide the candidate with the \$70.00 Zap! Copy account, but rather she was required to pay for it herself. Restrictions were also put in place on posters and banners, which decreased from 100 to 50 posters, and from six to four banners.

Further, the CEO's decision was that the candidate's platform would not be printed in the Martlet Supplement. The candidate did not provide the Elections Office with a written platform by the close of nominations, therefore this campaign restriction did not impact the candidate in any way. As such, all of the content of the Martlet Supplement was created by the Elections Office, and only provided readers with unbiased and non-partisan information related to polling, online voting, and the Elections Office.

## **Polling**

Polling was conducted using the University's WebVote system (WebVote) for a twenty-four [24] hour period. Voting opened at 9:00 am PST on Wednesday, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013 and closed at 9:00 am PST on Thursday, November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013. This is the fifth time that WebVote has been used for UVSS Elections purposes and it worked without any issue.

As per the EPM, nine [9] polling stations were set up around campus in designated buildings/areas. These areas included: Student Union Building, Cadboro Commons, McPherson Library, Clearihue, Engineering and Computer Science, Engineering Lab Wing, MacLaurin, Fine Arts, and Fraser. Each station included a computer with access to WebVote, appropriate Martlet supplements, and a pollsitter supervising the polling station. Polling station locations and times were determined by the Deputy Electoral Officers based on the busiest times and locations of classes. The decision to place only nine stations instead of last fall's sixteen stations was decided due to the successful use of online voting through means other than the use of physical polling stations.

## **Results**

The referendum question failed with 58.56% of voters voting in opposition. Out of the 2759 total ballots cast, 1142 were in favour, 1614 were opposed, and three ballots were spoiled. Out of 17,147 eligible voters, 2759 voted, resulting in a voter turnout of 16.09%. The referendum results were posted on the UVSS Elections website, social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), and in buildings around the UVic main campus, as mandated by the EPM. Voter turnout decreased when compared to last year's referendum, from 21.11%, with a difference of 5.02%. To view a complete breakdown of the voting statistics, please refer to Appendix A.

## **ISSUES**

### **Hiring International Students**

During the hiring process, we had several international students interested in pollsitting positions this semester. For those who hold a student visa and attend the University of Victoria, the individual may apply and accept job offers for work opportunities on UVic's campus. At the end of our interviewing process, we sent out job offers to three international students. These individuals were required to obtain a SIN number prior to working for the Elections Office. As per their student visa, in order to obtain a SIN number, Service Canada requires an international student to provide an original job offer letter by the University of Victoria as proof of employment, the original student visa, and their valid national passport.

The UVSS Elections Office was unfamiliar with the hiring process for international students and therefore much patience from our office and our successful polling candidates was extended, as the application process of Service Canada grew tedious and frustrating.

Appendix B contains a copy of the contract given to one of our employees (a digital copy of this contract is also available). This contract should be used as a format; this is the type of format in which Service Canada will accept. Another issue that arose was the type of SIN numbers our international student staff were given. SIN numbers that begin with "9" indicate that the individual is not a Canadian citizen, and he or she must also provide the UVSS with a copy of their student visa.

### **Pollsitting Hiring Constraints**

This year, the pollsitter/promotions job opened on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013 with a proposed closing date of November 1<sup>st</sup>, at 4:00 pm PST. Due to the lack of applications submitted to the Elections Office, the deadline for applications was extended until November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013. With a total of fourteen [14] applications, we were able to interview thirteen [13] candidates. Out of those thirteen candidates, we hired ten [10] pollsitters for voting day. Our main concern was the lack of interest from the student population for this job opportunity, considering the flexibility and temporary status this job entails. The job posting was posted on the job posting board in the SUB, posted around campus, and available on the UVSS website, the Elections Office website, and its social media outlets.

### **The University's Poster Complaint**

During the campaigning period, the UVSS Elections Office received a complaint from the University regarding the placement of the proponent's posters around the UVic campus. The complaint revolved around the posters being put up by heavy-duty packing tape on pillars and poles. At the time of the complaint, the University had already requested maintenance staff to take down the posters. Our office took issue to this complaint for two reasons: (a) their explanation of the violation they provided to

us was vague and non-constructive, and (b) their interpretation of University Policy Number BP3140 differed entirely from how we have historically interpreted the policy. The CEO addressed the complaint via email, explaining our interpretation of the policy and if such correction to our interpretation is needed, to communicate this to our office. The issue was also made aware to Mishkin, with an offer of compensation of removed posters. Please refer to Appendix C for the detailed explanations given by the CEO.

The University failed to respond to the specific questions raised by the CEO regarding the interpretation of University Policy Number BP3140. Should issues arise in future elections or referendum periods, it is recommended that this matter be clarified with UVic's Vice President of Finance and Operations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **“Get Out the Vote” Campaign**

A main campaign, which has been developed and improved throughout the years by each Electoral Office team, would be the “Get Out the Vote” campaign across the UVic campus. This has become a core initiative to create awareness about the independence of our office from the UVSS Board of Directors, to boost publicity of UVSS student elections and referenda, and to encourage the student population about the importance of participation in the student democratic process.

This year, the Elections Office plans to focus the majority of the efforts towards creating successes in this initiative. The Elections Office understands that it is our main responsibility to oversee all operations and procedures of all election events, however we feel confident in our solid understanding and application of the EPM and our efficiency in executing a successful election event. We understand that this is our primary responsibility and concern, and yet we are excited to take on this initiative as a challenge to ultimately increase our voter turnout to exceed our record high of 21.1%.

### **Advertising**

Branding the Elections Office was a major concern that staff had this year. This had been an issue echoed and partially developed by last year’s Elections Office staff, with the launch of the social media outlets. The 2012-2013 Elections Office focused on producing a strong presence in social media. This year, we would like to approach this project by creating a new logo, producing an office banner representing our new look, and participating in a “feet on the street” marketing strategy, where Elections Office staff will be on campus talking to students and making connections with those who are unaware or unsure of what the office actually does. Our mission is to strip away any negative or misunderstood view of our mandate and create an open line of communication between electoral officers and students.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Overall, the UVSS Elections Office is very pleased with the planning, organization, and execution of the 2013 Fall Referendum. We feel that our Elections Office team was well received in the UVSS departmental family and we extend our thanks to the following groups and individuals: The UVSS Board of Directors, Ben Johnson, Dale Robertson, the electoral committee, the SUB General Office, the Martlet, and the Graphics Department. We are thankful for your support and patience with our office. We would also like to thank the proponent, Ariel Mishkin, and our pollsitters for participating in the fall referendum, helping us to create awareness of the UVSS and its democratic process. If there are any further questions or concerns, we welcome those to contact us via email, Facebook, Twitter, or in person. We thank everyone involved on behalf of the UVic student body.

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Shawn Slavin, Chief Electoral Officer

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Hilary Arias-Carrasco, Senior Deputy Electoral Officer

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Emma Hamill, Deputy Electoral Officer

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Owen Pachal, Deputy Electoral Officer

## APPENDICIES

### Appendix A: Voting Statistics

#### Fall 2013 UVSS Referendum Results (Official Results)

Item Description	Total Ballots	Spoiled Ballots	Valid Ballots	In Favour	Opposed	% in Favour	Result
Do you support increasing the special events fee by \$2.00 per semester for full-time students and \$1.00 per semester for part-time students?	2759	3	2756	1142	1614	41.44%	FAILED

Number of Eligible Voters	Number Who Voted	% Voted
17147	2759	16.09%

## Appendix B: Job Offer and Contract for International Students



Date

Name  
Address  
City Province Postal Code

re: Offer of Employment and Contract

Dear Name,

As a follow-up to our earlier conversation I am pleased to inform you that you have been selected for a position as a Pollsitter with the University of Victoria Students' Society on the campus of the University of Victoria. Your salary for this appointment will be \$12.23 per hour.

It is my understanding from our conversation today that you would be willing to accept this position beginning November 22, 2013. When you report for work, you will be asked for valid documents to establish your identity and employment eligibility for the hire paperwork process. It is also my understanding as a condition of your study permit, that you are currently a full-time student at the University of Victoria.

I and members of my staff are looking forward to your joining the UVSS Elections Office team.

Sincerely,

Shawn Slavin  
Chief Electoral Officer  
UVSS Elections Office



FOREIGN STUDENT PERSONAL INFORMATION				
TITLE Ms.      Mrs.      Mr.		GENDER Male      Female		DATE OF BIRTH (D/M/Y)
SURNAME			GIVEN NAME	
APT #	ADDRESS	CITY	PROV	POSTAL CODE
STUDY PERMIT DOC #		DATE SIGNED (D/M/Y)	VALID UNTIL DATE (D/M/Y)	

ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYER INFORMATION		
NAME OF BUSINESS UVSS Elections Office (University of Victoria Students' Society)		EMPLOYER'S NAME Shawn Slavin
ADDRESS WHERE WORK WILL BE PERFORMED Student Union Building – Room B211 3800 Finnerty Road (Ring Road) Victoria, BC V8P 5C2		EMPLOYER'S SIGNATURE
EMPLOYER'S TELEPHONE # (250) 472-4305		EMPLOYER'S EMAIL ADDRESS election@uvic.ca
EMPLOYEE'S POSITION TITLE Pollsitter	EMPLOYEE'S START DATE November 22, 2013	EMPLOYEE'S END DATE November 28, 2013

I have attached a copy of the job description and the Collective Agreement that forms the basis of your contract with the UVSS. Your employment is a temporary, part-time position with the UVSS Elections Office. By signing below, you accept the position of a pollsitter and agree to the conditions of your employment, and you agree to have the necessary qualifications, experience, and abilities to assist the UVSS Elections Office with the conduct and administration of the elections.

By signing below, you agree to accept this job offer.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE NOTE that the letter must be signed in original form (this is defined by Service Canada as using a blue ink pen for all signatures on job offer letter). This file can be found on the Elections Office Google Drive and email account.

## **Appendix C: Emails Regarding University Poster Complaint**

Good morning Ariel

We have received a complaint from the University regarding the placement of your posters around campus. The issue I have is that their the information that they have provided to us is extremely vague, and their interpretation of the policy differs entirely from how we have historically interpreted the policy. Regardless, we want to pass the information on to you.

The information we have is that the posters are being posted using "heavy duty tape (packing tape)" on "pillars and poles". My understanding is that the university is currently removing them, however, their own policy says otherwise. I have submitted a response to the University on your behalf, however the lady who informed me of this issue yesterday is now on holidays until December 2 (I have attached a copy of the email below). As such, your posters may continue to be removed from those locations since we will not receive direction from the university until after voting closes. Further, we have never received direction from the university regarding the type of tape that can or cannot be used, and as such, we have never put limits on that.

Our office will continue to fight to uphold what University Policy Number BP3140 states, which is that you are permitted to post posters and banners on general notice areas of campus notice boards, and on unpainted concrete, concrete block, or stone surfaces where these are protected from the weather, but not on doors or on glass. Provided you are following these above mentioned rules, no action can be taken against you.

In the meantime, please have a look around campus to see whether you have lost some posters that were removed by the university which would have otherwise followed the posting regulations that we provided to you. If you have lost some, please let us know how many posters you have lost, and the Elections Office will cover the cost to replace them.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to send them our way.

Shawn Slavin  
UVSS Elections Office  
SUB B211  
250-472-4305

[election@uvic.ca](mailto:election@uvic.ca)

I am the Chief Electoral Officer of the UVSS Elections Office, and I have been forwarded this message, as I believe this is an issue that stems from direction provided to candidates by me and my staff.

As has been the case historically with referendum questions, since the posters must be stamped and approved by our office, we have considered that they fall under the category of posters and banners for student elections. As such, we have always enforced Appendix A.3.3 of the University Policy Number BP3140 (<http://www.uvic.ca/universitysecretary/assets/docs/policies/BP3140.pdf>).

As indicated in 3.1, my understanding of this is that the general posting regulations (i.e.: where on campus posters can be posted) do not apply to posters and banners for student elections (i.e.: posters and banners stamped by the Elections Office). As such, we have told our candidates that they are permitted to post their posters and banners on:

3.3.1 General notice areas of campus notice boards;

3.3.2 On unpainted concrete, concrete block, or stone surfaces where these are protected from the weather, but not on doors or on glass.

You also mention that the posters are being posted with heavy duty tape. Our understanding of BP3140 was that the university does not have any rules surrounding the type of material that can be used to post posters (provided it does not damage the surface), therefore we have never taken any steps to tell candidates what they can and cannot use. If the university does not want some types of tape/adhesive being used, I can certainly pass that information on to all of our candidates (and future candidates).

If our interpretation of these policies are incorrect, please let us know, as this is how we have been interpreting them for several years now. Please advise me how you would like me to proceed in regards to our interpretation of the posting locations and the tape concerns.

I apologize for any inconvenience that this has caused you, and I hope we can resolve this issue quickly.

Thank you very much,

Shawn Slavin  
Chief Electoral Officer  
UVSS Elections Office  
SUB B211 250-472-4305

[election@uvic.ca](mailto:election@uvic.ca)