



2015 Elections Report

Engineering and Computer Science Association

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Prepared for: ECA

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I INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is Shan Wain, Chief Returning Officer for the ECA’s 2015 Elections. In this report you will find a complete and comprehensive run-down of what happened during these elections, as well as advice, training and recommendations for future CROs.

Should you wish to reach me, my e-mail is shan.wain@gmail.com and mobile number is (514)791-8032.

2 ELECTION SUMMARY AND RESULTS

2.1 Timeline:

CRO and ARO appointment: Monday, March 16th, 2015 at the ECA's Council Meeting

Nomination Period: Monday, March 23rd - Friday, March 27th*

*Nomination period was extended to Tuesday, March 31st, due to 2 open positions.

Campaign Period: Monday, March 30th - April 6th

Debate & Q+A: Wednesday, April 1st (8:30pm - 11:00pm)

Voting Period: Tuesday, April 7th - Thursday, April 9th (10am - 7pm)

Ballot Counting: Thursday, April 9th 7:30PM - 11:00PM

2.2 Budget:

Item	Description	Cost
Polling Clerk Hours	4 Polling Clerks working 10 hours/day for 3 days + 3 staff ballot counting for 3.5 hours	\$1,366.20
Printing Costs	Printed at Copies Concordia, with Card Stock Paper	\$120.26
Office Supplies	Paper, boxes, bristle boards, etc	\$120.38
Security	1 agent for 4.5 hours @ \$35/hour	\$148.75
Computer Rental	2 laptops for 3 days @ \$25/laptop	\$150.00
CRO Salary	Honorarium	\$700.00
ARO Salary	Honorarium	\$300.00
Other Miscellaneous expenses	Notice of Elections Poster	\$40.00
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$2,945.59

Results:

2.2.1.1 Executive Positions

President

Mayla Tenorio – yes: 241, no: 50, abstain: 31 – is elected

VP Finance

Anas Ouadhi – yes: 228, no: 67, abstain: 45 – is elected

VP External

Sebastian Arjona – yes: 226, no: 57, abstain 55 – is elected

VP Sports and Competitions

Wenyu Qi – yes: 230, no: 47, abstain: 50 – is elected

VP Marketing and Communications

Sabrina Daou – yes: 243, no: 52, abstain: 49 - is elected

VP Academic

Dilany Abeywickrama – yes: 174, no: n/a, abstain: 26 - is elected

Abir Fakhreddine – yes: 130 , no: n/a, abstain: 26

VP Social

Arravein Ponnudurai – yes: 121, no: n/a, abstain: 15 - is elected

Daniel Sciascia – yes: 98, no: n/a, abstain: 15

Ryan Wong – yes: 109, no: n/a, abstain: 15

VP Internal

No candidate

2.2.1.2 Departmental Representatives

Mechanical and Industrial Representative

Mohamed-Hedi Rais – yes: 143, no: 47, abstain: 16 - is elected

Building, Civil and Environmental Engineering Representative

Amal Bouanani – yes: 51, no: 14, abstain: 3 - is elected

Electrical and Computer Engineering Representative

Amine Mhedhbi – yes: 24, no: 1, abstain: 3 - is elected

Computer Science and Software Engineering Representative

Leo Collard – yes: 35, no: 6, abstain: 2 – is elected

2.2.1.3 Referendum Questions

Bylaws – yes: 231, no: 73 , abstain: 34 – passed

Equipment Fund – yes: 286, no: 39, abstain: 19 - passed

Student ID Collection - yes: 244, no: 79, abstain: 25 - passed

Number of Candidates:

% Increase of Candidates from 2014: 87.5% (8 in 2014 to 15* in 2015)

*One candidate withdrew during the campaign period, resulting in 14 candidates present on the ballot (75% increase)

Voter Turnout:

% Increase of Voters from 2014: 110.91% (165 in 2014 to 348 in 2015)

% of Students in ENCS who voted: 9.78%

3 ELECTION REPORT

3.1 Nomination Period:

The nomination period was between Monday, March 23rd - Friday, March 27th. Having been appointed literally the week before, I had to immediately begin preparations for my mandate.

What's needed:

- Advertisement and Promotion (at least 2 weeks before)
 - Is this my job, or the ECA's? This was the most confusing part of my mandate, was I supposed to promote the elections as well as be impartial and unbiased? I felt many times I had to make posters and advertise, when this should have been done simultaneously and independently by the ECA.
 - Many students were unaware that it was nomination period until even hours before the deadline (again, is this my fault?).
- Nomination Form:
 - I had trouble finding the original form, however after searching through the sent e-mails, I was able to find it.
 - Future recommendation: Be more specific and strict about proceedings for the nomination forms. Students were switching positions halfway through, getting

there friends to go around for them to get signatures, etc. Not that this is against the rules, it just needs to be specified whether or not this is accepted. I will leave this to the discretion of the next CRO.

During the week, the ECA office received several interested students asking about the ECA, involvement, the responsibilities of an exec, etc. There were some complaints about the short notice of the nomination period. In the end, a total of 15 nomination forms were submitted. When a student handed one in, it was my responsibility to verify the number and validity of the signatures gathered by the prospective candidate. After, I sent the student's info (name and ID) to the DoS to verify if they are eligible to be a candidate.

On Friday, we received 14 nomination forms, for 10 out of the 12 positions. With two open positions, especially VP Internal, we decided to extend the nomination period to the following Tuesday at noon. The reason for this was to allow interested students time on Monday to be at school and collect signatures. We couldn't push it later, as we had the debates scheduled for Wednesday, April 1st. During the extension we received one more nomination form, for the position of the ECE Rep. Unfortunately, VP Internal was still open. We didn't explicitly advertise that the position was open, for the reason that it seemed manipulating, in my opinion. People might just apply because it was an open executive position and not because they genuinely wanted to apply for the position.

During this time, I also had begun making bookings, such as tables, laptops, etc.

Booking Tables: I had asked the ECA to reserve for me 2 tables and 4 chairs for the voting period (1 table and 2 chairs for the Hall lobby, same for the 8th floor) through distribution and custodial services. On Tuesday, April 7th, when I arrived at school to prepare for the voting period, there were no tables and no chairs at either locations! I called custodial services, but without the work order which I never had, they couldn't find the reservation we made. According to them, one was never made in the first place. This was unacceptable to me, because I got in trouble and looked bad for the most trivial of things. For future reference, please get the work order number from the ECA's booking officer and confirm with custodial services a week before.

Booking the spaces: Done through ECA and the dean of students. I simply sent them an e-mail telling them where and when our elections and voting booths would be taking place.

Laptops: I went to the DoS office and filled out the "Procedure for Student Elections" form, which is the form required to get access to the student database. Although the option for the 8th floor wasn't there, I made a note on the form asking for access for the 8th floor booth. It takes about two weeks for this request, so do it ASAP. Also, make sure to check up on the

status, because a week later I asked about it, and it turns the DoS forgot to send it to IITS! Go figure. The next step was to send an e-mail to "help@concordia.ca", telling them to request access to the database and that you filled out the form (send them the scanned copy of the form). After I had to book the laptops, done through sgwbooking-iits@concordia.ca. No network outlet activation was required, since we were given wireless access.

Last year, apparently they had problems with access to the database, and the recommendation was to not use it again. This year, we still had a problem getting access at the beginning, but that was because they switched the access codes for the laptops. After that, it seemed to have worked fine for the duration of the elections, and was the best way to record voters. Just make sure to book in advance and double-check the statuses of your requests.

Lastly, during this week we were getting applications for polling clerks, as the deadline was the following week. I delegated the hiring/screening to my ARO.

3.2 Campaign Period:

The campaign period lasted Monday, March 30th until Monday, April 6th at midnight. The candidates were all sent an information package with all the election rules regarding campaigning, and they were all to sign and send back to me an acknowledgement form stating that they read and understand the rules laid out by yours truly before they could start campaigning. I had to approve any posters or promotional material, and be an admin for any facebook event or group created.

Candidates had a maximum budget of \$50 to spend on campaign materials, followed by a expense report that they must submit, regardless if they spent anything or not.

3.2.1 Elections withdrawal notice:

During the campaign period, I announced that if a candidate wanted to withdraw from the elections, they had until Thursday, April 2nd, as I had to begin making and getting the ballots printed. At this point, I only received 1 withdrawal, from one of the candidates for the President position.

This led to a final count of 14 candidates for 11 positions. Two contested positions are presented: two for VP Academic, and three for VP Social.

3.2.2 Debates:

Debates were held on Wednesday, April 1st, at 8:30pm. All candidates except one were able to attend. I did not officially book a room, as classes are over at that time. I picked a decently-large classroom, and it filled up.

I announced it a few days in advance, and still many people attended.

What's needed:

- Camera(s) for either recording or live streaming.
- Someone to take minutes.
- A structure/proper agenda. Having never chaired an electoral debate, I had no idea what to expect.
- Someone to time keep.

I definitely could have organized or structured this debate better. I initially thought I would be able to take minutes while chairing and taking down the order of speakers for questions, however I turned out to be wrong. We started the debates with introductions of all the candidates, who had 2 minutes to talk about themselves. Then we went into a Q+A session for the department reps. This part took a lot longer than anticipated, and we ended up rushing through the session for the executive candidates. I didn't end up sticking to a particular set structure I had initially stated.

The event was live streamed and some other audience members also brought their own recording devices.

Having to moderate and run things by myself, I ended the event a bit after 11pm since it was quite exhausting. Members of the ECA still had questions for the candidates, and suggested to be allowed to post them on the facebook event page. I allowed this, and questions were posted and candidates had a few days to post answers. However, before I was fully able to investigate, apparently some posts were deleted. I did not know anything about the subject matter of nor reason for the deletion of said posts other than what some people told me what allegedly happened. Apparently some posts seemed to target certain candidates and were perceived to be in bad taste and were deleted by that person.

Unfortunately I was unable to see what was deleted, or see that something even was so. This occurred during the Easter long weekend and I was away from Facebook to monitor the page and ECA account.

For future recommendation, I would not recommend this to happen again; once the debate is over, it's over. In principle, it might have been a good idea, since it would give exposure to the candidates, but also allow the opportunity for negative campaigning and libel, which makes it too much of a risky move to make. Future CROs should make a very prudent call when allowing for discussions to happen on public/social media forums, also to better structure the debate/Q+A session so that all questions can be answered, and minutes can be properly taken and then posted. Also, make it clear that abuse of power, like having access to the ECA's facebook account and using it personally during the campaign period, is strictly against the rules and could even be considered grounds for disqualification.

3.3 Voting Period:

The voting period was between Tuesday, April 7th - Thursday, April 9th. Two voting stations were installed: one in the Hall building Lobby, and one in the hall 8th floor hallway. They were operating between 10am - 7pm.

On Tuesday morning, as I mentioned earlier, there were no tables and chairs. The laptop/database access also wasn't working so this first morning was a bit of a disaster in my eyes. Not many students however, came to vote. It took about 2 hours to have everything set-up and running, but after, there were no other major issues, except for having to print more ballots.

What's needed:

- 2 tables with chairs
- Polling clerks, 2 per station
- 2 laptops
- 6 boxes (2 per day)
- 2 3-fold bristle boards
- Tape
- Scissors or box cutter
- Pens or markers and spare paper
- Enveloppes in case voting system is down
- ECA banner

3.3.1 Polling Clerks:

This year, we hired five polling clerks to work throughout the three days, with the shift starting at 9:30am until 7:30pm. We had one 30-minute training session the week before. They were

given a training document. The job in general is very easy, so there wasn't much explaining to do.

Four out of the five were graduate students, which accurately represented the amount of interest I received for the position of polling clerks. I asked my ARO to screen and hire five polling clerks. We ended hiring four graduate and one female undergraduate engineering students.

The highest number of hours worked was 30, while the lowest was 11.5, with the average being 22 hours. The shifts were about three hours long: 9:30AM - 12PM, 2PM - 4PM, 4PM - 7:30PM.

I recommend hiring about the same amount of polling clerks for next year, and start phasing out graduate students, and hiring more undergrads. Previous years' CRO hired close to a dozen polling clerks, which doesn't really make much sense for such a small election, where you only have four people working at 3-hour shifts.

3.3.2 Ballots:

I made 10 separate ballots for this election: three for the referendum questions, four for the department representatives, one for the uncontested positions, and two for the contested executive positions.

On the referendum and uncontested positions, I had put a "YES" or "NO" option. I could have added an "Abstain" option to all of them, which I recommend adding for future years. If you don't add an abstain option, I recommend at least making a sign that says that if you don't write anything on the ballot, it is considered an abstention, which is what happened most of the time for the abstained votes. There were only a handful of spoiled ballots, some containing insulting comments, some irrelevant and some unnecessary. They made no difference however in the final result of the votes.

I also bought coloured, card-stock paper from staples, which I recommend doing for future years, as it made ballot counting much easier and makes sense. The problem was that they came in packs of 5 colours x 50 pages, which lead to 200 ballots per colour, since I printed 4 copies per page. As I was anticipating over 200 voters, I wasn't anticipating over 200 voters from a particular department (MIE). I had to print more for MIE, as well as the general ballots given to all voters (in white coloured card stock). I recommend printing for a turnout of 500-600 voters, with most coming from the department that has the most candidates running (11/15 candidates were from MIE). I also recommend having a counting system for voters.

At the end of each day, I stored the used and unused ballots and boxes at the security office (H-108) and in the mornings I picked up new boxes and ballots. They also let me store everything else I needed, which was convenient. Make sure to e-mail them a few weeks in advance that you are doing this (Event Analyst Valerie Bolduc).

3.3.3 Ballot Counting:

We started counting ballots as soon as the voting period ended on Thursday, April 9th. It took exactly three and a half hours (7:30PM - 11:00PM). Counting the ballots were myself and two of my polling clerks. In attendance was the president of the ECA, and a hired security guard. I would recommend not to hire one, as it was quite unnecessary. I felt bad for him, as he was literally not doing anything the entire time.

We double-checked the votes for the contested positions. I recommend for future years that the CRO have a ballot-counting system ready and in place that can make the process more efficient and time-saving.

4 CONCLUSION

I hope this report shed some insight into how I ran the elections, the amount of work required, and generally how it all went down. The fact that I never received any official complaints to me is a sign that it was overall a successful campaign, however there is always room for improvements (which I have stated throughout this report). The mandate of the CRO is a lot of work, especially since it is at the end of the semester, and finals and school projects do not make it any easier. I was fortunate to be only taking one class this semester, or else I would have had to delegate a lot of work to my assistant. Future CROs must be effective managers with good time management and delegation skills. I would also recommend the ECA to hire the CRO more in advance, and to try to make their elections not after the Easter long weekend. I lost two very important days, the Friday and Monday before the voting period, because Concordia and businesses were closed, which put me under a lot of stress. To protect both the CRO and ECA, it is also imperative that a contract or work agreement template be made as soon as possible.