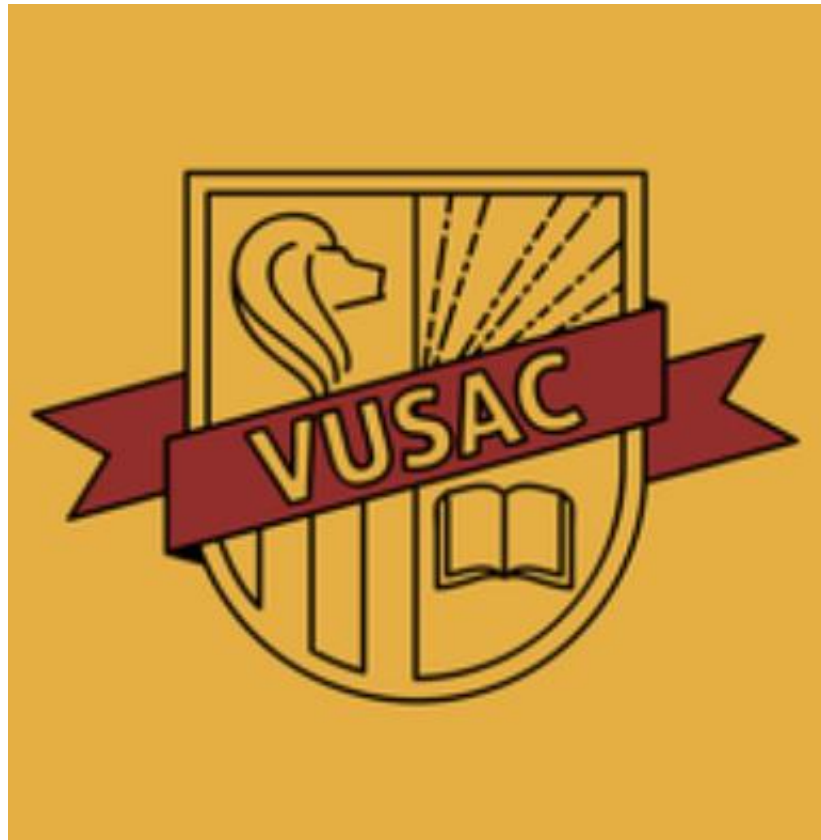


Fall 2022 Elections Report



By : Pooja Ajit
Chief Returning Officer

Introduction:

This report will be divided into the following sections: Introduction, Results, Pre-nominations period, Nominations period, Campaigning period, Voting period and Conclusion. The elections were conducted in accordance with the Elections and Referenda Code 2022. As there were no referenda questions this year, this will not be discussed.

Elections Timeline

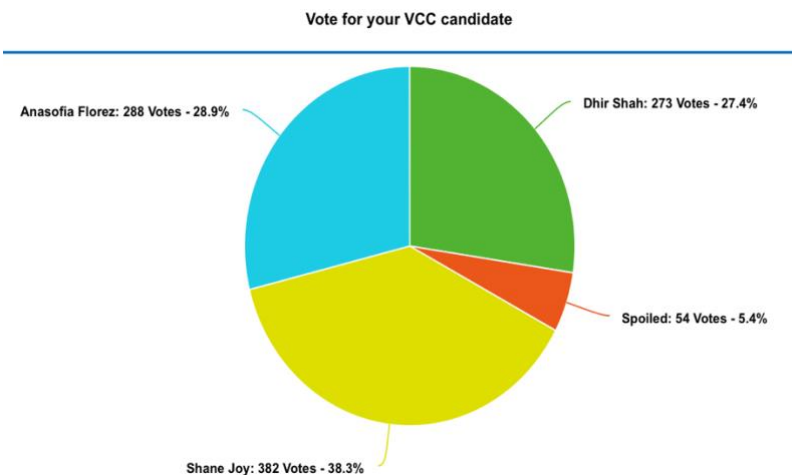
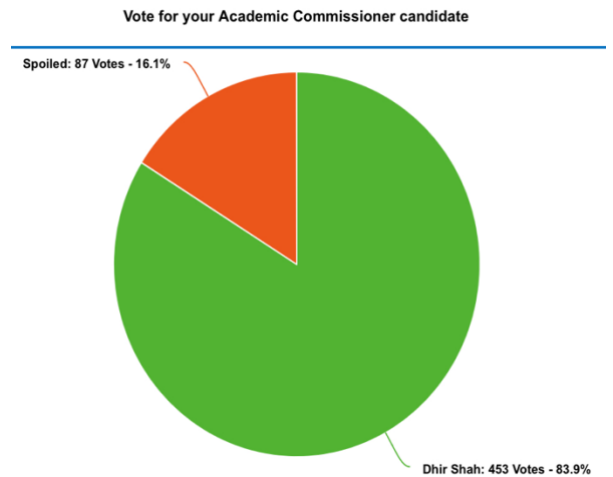
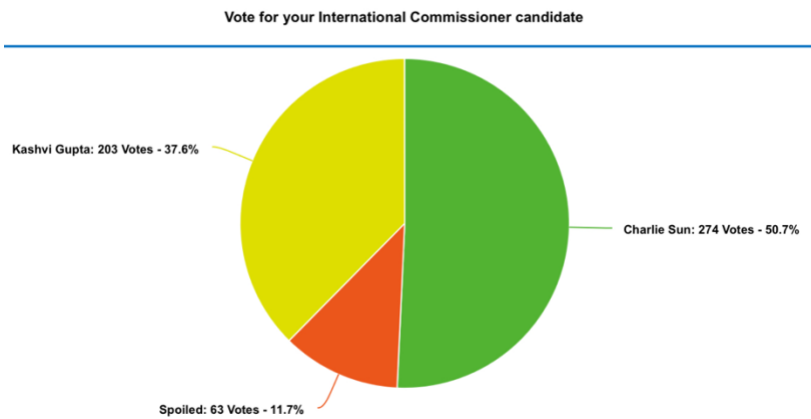
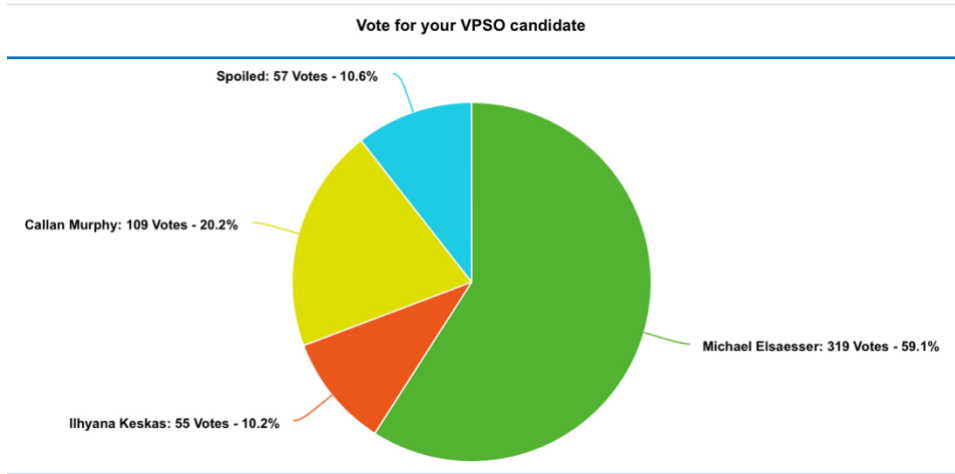
| DATES & TIMES | IMPORTANT EVENTS |
|--|--|
| Monday September 5, 2022 | Nominations Open! |
| Monday September 12, 2022 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm | Q&A Session Zoom Link: https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/84746859159 |
| Thursday September 15, 2022 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm | Q&A Session Location: VUSAC Office |
| Monday September 19, 2022 4:59 pm | Nominations Close! |
| Monday September 19, 2022 8:00 pm - 9:30 pm | All-Candidates Meeting Location: VUSAC Office |
| Tuesday September 20, 2022 - Tuesday September 27, 2022 | Campaigning Period <i>You may begin campaigning as soon as the All Candidates Meeting is complete.</i> |
| Thursday September 22, 2022 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm | Town Hall Location: Wymilwood Lounge |
| Friday September 23, 2022 5:00 pm | Candidate Statements, Candidate Budgets, and social media page(s) due to CRO! |
| Saturday September 24, 2022 12:01 am | Voting begins online |
| Tuesday September 27, 2022 11:59 pm | Voting ends |
| Wednesday September 28, 2022 12:00 am/Midnight | Results announced to <u>candidates only</u> @ 12:00am; Appeals period begins; Results are kept secret! |
| Friday September 30, 2022 12:00am/Midnight | Appeals period ends |
| Friday September 30, 2022 | Elections results posted |

EAC members:

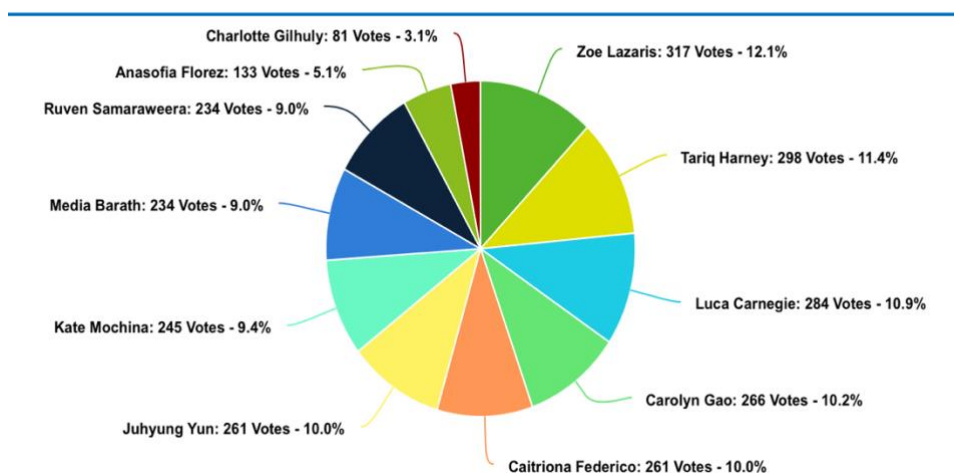
Subhi Jha

Erica Matsui
Amanda Solomon
Sam Rosati Martin
Atharv Agrawal
Faith Wershba

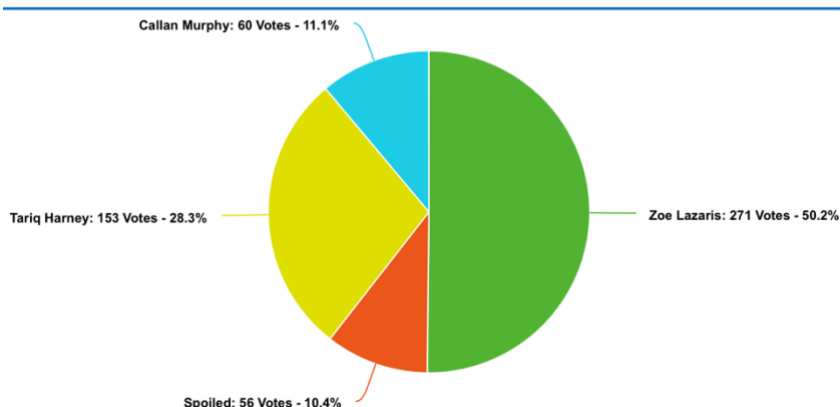
Results:



Vote for your Councillor candidate (Select 6)



Vote for your BoR candidate (Select 3)



Pre-nomination Period

The pre-nomination period spanned from Summer 2022 (June), when I was hired, to the beginning of September. It started with meetings between the VUSAC President, Sooyeon Lee, the VPI, Jackson Leslie and I to discuss the basics of running elections and the Elections and Referenda Code (ERC). I spent most of the pre-nominations period reading and comprehending the ERC and VUSAC constitution so I better understood my responsibilities and the rules and regulations surrounding the running of elections. We also finalised the election timelines and dates for submissions like social media page and candidate statements.

We also decided to shift the election back to 100% in person while still allowing online campaigning as campus was opening back up but online campaigning is more convenient and has a greater reach than in-person campaigning, giving the candidates a better chance of reaching more people.

During this period, most of the interest in elections was generated during orientation as first-years learned more about VUSAC and its goals. However, to generate interest among upper years, perhaps we could hold a Q&A session during this period for the Spring elections.

Nominations Period:

Nominations period ran from September 5th to 19th for all positions except VPSO and Academic Commissioner, for which nominations were extended by two days, until

September 21st. As a result, the deadline for candidate statement, budget and social media submissions was also moved to September 23rd, for all candidates.

Overall, nominations period ran smoothly, with very few nominations coming in initially but many coming in closer to the deadline. The nominations packages were all correctly filled out, with the appropriate number of signatures so it was an easy process overall. Candidate feedback about nominations was also all positive, with them saying the package was easy to understand and fill out.

There was a lot of interest in the councillor and BoR positions, with more candidates applying than there were positions. However, for VCC, there were 7 positions and only 3 applicants. Moreover, for Academic Commissioner there were no applicants during the original nomination period and even with the nominations extension, there was only 1 candidate. With VPSO, initially there were no nominations submitted but after the extension, 3 people submitted applications, showing that there is a lot of interest in the role but perhaps people are nervous to run for bigger positions. In the case of VCC, I think there is less oversight or understanding of what the role entails, resulting in the lack of interest towards sitting on the council.

To improve this, I would like to facilitate an Instagram takeover by the VPs and President next semester before the election so they can walk Vic students through their role, the time commitment and provide more oversight on what it entails. I believe that people are unsure of how much work and time these higher level roles entail and that they may be overwhelmed thinking of applying for or doing the role however, communication from former holders of these positions may provide transparency and make it seem more manageable so interested students will apply. As for roles like VCC, promoting the position more and providing more information about what someone in the position does might be beneficial.

I was sick for the All Candidates Meeting so it was run by the VUSAC president, using the slide deck I created for the Fall elections. She told me it ran smoothly, and all candidates but one attended (they sent a proxy). Feedback on the ACM was positive as well – it said it was helpful and easy to understand.

Campaigning Period

Campaigning began on Monday September 19th after the ACM. This year in-person campaigning re-started with postering rules and regulations being a big focus of mine, since these rules are quite specific and, this is the first time in years that campaigning has been in person.

Since nominations period was extended until the 21st for the Academic Commissioner and VPSO roles, these candidates got fewer days to campaign (6 instead of 8) however, this did not seem to hinder their campaigns as both positions did not have many spoiled votes, indicating that people were still voting for candidates. Having voting and campaigning period overlap helped as the Academic Commissioner and VPSO candidates still got time to campaign which would not have occurred without the overlap as the candidates for these positions would have gotten only 3 days to campaign in that case.

A lot of campaigning still took place over social media with all the candidates submitting social media accounts to promote their run. In general, everyone was quite good about following the CRO account once they created their accounts and tagging the CRO Instagram.

I did have to issue a warning about Instagram campaigning which will be discussed in the penalties section.

No campaigning took place over Facebook with all of it happening on Instagram. This got me thinking about whether Facebook should be permitted and still mentioned in the ERC. I will re-evaluate this post winter elections to see if there is any engagement with Facebook as a campaigning platform.

In person campaigning largely ran smoothly with almost all candidates following posting rules. The dons were quite helpful with poster signing and regulating and candidates sent all posters to me for approval before putting them up. I did have to issue a warning about posting which will be discussed in the penalties section.

I posted on the CRO account asking people for any questions they have for candidates running for the various positions. Engagement on those posts was very low with no questions being asked. I think this is because I created the account for that elections cycle. Next time I will probably ask the VUSAC page to repost some posts or promote it in their stories so there is more engagement with the account.

Townhall went quite well with almost all the candidates attending and giving speeches. The candidates that did not attend or came late / left early had given me advance notice. I made sure to notify those that skipped that it could negatively impact their campaign, as mentioned in Chapter IX, Article 16 of the ERC. I created a google form asking for members of the VCU to pose their questions to candidates and looked for questions from previous years that might be pertinent. The form got 22 responses, many during the townhall as candidates were giving their speeches. This suggests that audience members were engaged with the townhall. However, most attendees were VUSAC members and there could have been more presence from other students. To increase presence, I plan to market town hall further in advance on the CRO Instagram page and get it promoted on the VUSAC Instagram.

Most of the candidates adhered to deadlines for budgets, candidate statements and social media page submissions during this period. Those that missed the deadline did not have candidate statements put on the voting website as it was a hard deadline 7 hours before voting went live therefore, I was not able to make any changes or accept late submissions after saving and launching the voting website.

Voting Period

Voting period began on September 24th, 2022. It ran very smoothly with no reported issues. I am quite happy with how voting period turned out overall as there were no technical issues, the questions and options looked exactly the way I had set them. I was able to send out a test version of the site to Sooyeon and she double checked that everything was running smoothly which helped a lot.

Turnout was the highest it has been in years, at 14% of all Vic students. In my opinion, this is partly because everyone was finally back on campus and the elections were being run in person for the first time in years. Moreover, during voting period I sent out an email to everyone eligible to vote the moment voting went live. I also sent a reminder email during voting period to those who had not voted yet which I think helped prompt people to vote.

Penalties

I did not have to issue any strikes during elections period or any disqualifications. It was largely quite clean; however, I did have to issue warnings to two different candidates. One of them was for campaigning to neutral parties through Instagram. I believe it was a mistake as the candidate did not realize while mass messaging that they were sending a message to the neutral party. I was alerted by the party who got the message and immediately clarified the situation with the candidate. The other candidate was issued two penalties for breaking postering rules. I was alerted about the rule breakage by another candidate who was asking if postering in those areas was permitted. I immediately went to Vic and began taking down the posters after issuing the warnings as they were on trees and signs outside of Victoria College grounds and on glass doors. The candidate understood once I issued the warning and did not break postering rules again.

Conclusion

Overall, elections period ran quite smoothly with voter engagement being very high, candidates largely following the rules and voting running smoothly.

I created a feedback form for the elections and all the responses were positive, saying that the ACM instructions were clear, CRO responsiveness and support was good and that they had a good elections experience. The only feedback from that was that townhall did not have enough student engagement. I aim to tackle this by promoting the event in advance rather than 1 – 2 days before.

The next election cycle is going to have all the VUSAC executive roles available therefore, I believe engagement and interest in positions should be high. However, roles with so much time commitment and power seem intimidating as shown by the nominations period extension for the VPSO role. Therefore, I will encourage the execs to do Instagram takeovers and talk about a day in the life so their roles seem more accessible.

I will also monitor the role Facebook plays in this election to consider whether it should be a part of the ERC going forward.

I hope to keep voter engagement up for the upcoming election by allowing campaigning and voting periods to overlap again and by sending reminders to vote throughout voting period.

I am happy with how the elections ran and am grateful to Sooyeon and Jackson for all their support and guidance during the process as well as the candidates for being patient with me as CRO.

Appendices

ERC:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/15yC8Y-acWjXBsqpF7u3giwtRqvvcZ1HP35A5UqGcIwE/edit?usp=sharing>

Nominations package (contains sample budget form and appeals form):

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zHzmdmc7PkAguOjq5ykVQvHFh24pCVN4aQER2dmxIDo/edit?usp=sharing>