Pre-Nominations

Following the fall elections an Elections and Referenda Code (ERC) review committee was struck. I served as chair of this committee, we met five times and presented 29 amendments to council. A bulk of these amendments were related to an overhaul of the referenda policy (which was unable to be looked at during the summer due to timing) and a re-evaluation of the 'Facebook pages' policy, which was reworked into advertising of social media pages, at the recommendation of the committee. All proposed amendments can be found at vusac.ca/docs.

The Spring election dates, as per the ERC, were decided in the summer, but sent to all of council and to levy heads in October so as to best ensure there was no conflict with major Vic events. This seemed successful as there was not the traditional conflicts with events such as Highball, Caucus, of the VCAA banquet.

In January the nominations package was emailed to the VUSAC executive and Election and Appeals Committee (EAC) for their approval. The nominations package was quite similar to the fall nominations package with the exception of the amendments that had been passed recently.

I hired VUSAC councillor Gabby Da Silva to be my assistant CRO, she was a great asset when it came to marketing. Together we created a set of 'position profiles' to highlight the different positions available during spring elections, as well as creating posters to promote voting.

At the suggestion of Equity Co-Chair, Vibhuti Kacholia, I worked to design small 'I voted' stickers (similar to those given out in the US elections). These cost $117, which was approved at the VUSAC Winter Budget meeting. While not incredibly popular some were definitely taken by members of the VCU.

Finally, I worked with the VP Internal and President to stress neutrality among council both in the VUSAC retreat and in VUSAC meetings.

Recommendations
- Hire an assistant CRO early on in the process and know what you will need for them, for example, I knew that I needed extra support with promotion of elections and planning Town Hall
- Make sure everyone knows the election dates as early as possible - try to remind people as well.

- Clearly explain the rules of neutrality to both council and neutral parties, there was some lack of clarity on what was allowed in terms of social media and their own candidacy

Nominations

Nomination Period

Nominations opened on February 15th and remained open for three weeks. Approximately 40 packages were printed initially and once all were taken an additional 15 were supplied.

During the nomination period I held to information sessions, however, only one was attended and only by one person. This is in part because, during spring elections, people have a clearer idea of the positions they are running for, and there are not as many new students (as opposed to first years running for councillor). However, it is worth pursuing how to make these sessions more interesting and/or accessible as this is a recurring issue mentioned in past CRO reports.

Additionally, we distributed information on all of the positions, as well as on how to hold a referendum, on VUSAC's social media, and the latter was distributed to all clubs and levies via email.

Reopening Nominations

This election VUSAC reopened nominations for President, Vice-President External, Commuter Commissioner, Equity Commissioner, Mental Wellness Commissioner, and Scarlet and Gold Commissioner. It is of note that, as of the All Candidates Meeting, all six of these positions had one candidate running (though the Equity Commissioner candidate did later withdraw from the elections) but, per the constitution, the positions had to be reopened.

The reopening of positions led to Mental Wellness and Scarlet and Gold being contested, in addition to a new Equity Commissioner candidate running (though uncontested). However, there were no new candidates for President, Vice-President External, or Commuter Commissioner.

There was some confusion among candidates and the VCU with regards to the reopening of nominations. First, there were rumours circulating that these positions had no one running (when the reality is positions are reopened if they have zero *or* one candidate) - as such, it is worth considering making it clear that there are still candidates, but that is very much a discretionary decision. Certainly, however, there needs to be a clear way to explain the reopening

process. Second, the positions of Academic Commissioner and Sustainability Commissioner became uncontested during the campaigning period as candidates withdrew, this led to questions from both candidates and the VCU as to why these positions were not reopened. Unfortunately, due to timing, it would not be possible to reopen positions on a rolling basis if candidates withdraw. However, once again, the reopening process must be made clearer. Third, as the constitution does not make any mention of reopening nominations for governing bodies, there was not a reopening for the UTSU Director position. This was the position that led to the most questions and concerns from members of the VCU. Additionally, as this is the first year in recent memory that VUSAC has elected this position internally, there was a lack of clarity on when the by-election would be held, and whether it would be done by VUSAC or by the UTSU.

All Candidates Meeting

The All Candidates Meeting was held on March 8th. Every candidate who submitted a nomination form either attended or sent a proxy. A powerpoint, similar to that of the fall elections, was presented as well as a question and answer period.

It is of note that some candidates indicated difficulty finding proxies, which put them at risk of disqualification. While this is not the responsibility of the CRO it raises some issues with the proxy system. Additionally, it should be made clear in the nominations package that proxies may not be candidates in the election or neutral parties as this was cause for confusion.

Additionally, as the All Candidates Meeting was the same time as a VUSAC meeting (it started at 7:30, approximately 2.5 hours into the VUSAC meeting which was still happening). This proved problematic as a number of voting members of VUSAC were also candidates in the election. As such, this resulted in VUSAC losing quorum mid-meeting as a number of voting members left to attend the All Candidates Meeting.

This particular meeting was actually pushed back a week so as not to coincide with Town Hall (which requires attendance from all VUSAC members). However, in the future it may be advisable that the All Candidates Meeting be on a different day than a VUSAC meeting. Given the proxy system, there is no reason that the All Candidates Meeting cannot occur during class hours.

Recommendations
- Reach out to clubs and levies to promote both the elections and referenda
- Request editing access to the Facebook and Instagram accounts as they will be used to promote elections frequently and it is easier for both the CRO and the Communications Coordinator

- Create a clear graphic or post to explain how and why nominations reopen, additionally, make the reopening process clear within the nominations package
- Meet at least once with the Chair to consider election dates and meeting dates, working to ensure there are as few conflicts as possible

Campaign Period

Campaigning lasted one week for all candidates but those who had their positions reopened (which did cause some anxieties for those involved). Generally speaking it went smoothly, much of my time was spent signing posters and collecting candidate statements and website links.

One thing of note was the difficulty of hanging candidate posters for them as it is very time consuming and often difficult to ensure the availability of the CLC, the CRO, and members of VUSAC to help out. As such there was an amendment passed to the ERC so as to allow some flexibility with this.

Other than that things were quite successful during campaign. By dividing the Facebook Elections Forum into days per position served to not overwhelm the candidates (though the schedule was not as clean as I liked because of re-opening positions). The only issue is that it is sometimes hard to convey information clearly to members of the forum, so there is no way to guarantee they see this information about questions on certain days or on other forum rules.

There were some issues with candidates asking members of the VUSAC Executive to sign their posters, which is technically not allowed. This was allowed to happen as VUSAC Executive can sign other posters and it is an easy misunderstanding. An amendment was passed to allow this because I believe that it is a good idea, but it is something of note.

Also during this period we had one Equity Commissioner candidate, one Academic Commissioner candidate, and two Sustainability Commissioner candidates withdraw from the race. As well as holding a second All Candidates Meeting.

Town Hall

Like in the fall, Town Hall was quite successful. It was once again hosted in the Cat's Eye, there was entertainment, and dinner was provided. This year I chose to have the executive candidates answer questions first as many people cannot stay the entire time but most people have expressed they are most invested in executive candidates.

The fundamental issue with Town Hall, particularly in the spring, is that it is too long because of the number of positions, but there is not enough time to answer every question. I think it could be argued that Town Hall should take place as two events (an executive debate and the same Q&A debate for the other positions). Additionally, it should be made clear that, due to the length of answers, questions cannot be the same hard hitting manner as those in the forum. There were questions for the presidential candidate that took longer to read than they had to answer them. There needs to be away around this.

Finally, there was an issue of the same people asking questions (many already members of VUSAC) this is not fair and can be intimidating. It is important to meet the needs of voters while also not making candidates uncomfortable.

Nevertheless, I consider Town Hall to be quite successful and was very pleased with the turnout once again.

Penalties

Two warnings and two strikes were given:
- One warning for pre-campaigning for a candidate implying they were running in a VUSAC meaning.
- One warning for failure to use the appropriate hashtag on a social media post.
- One strike for the defamation an opponent.
- One strike for failure to submit a budget on time.

Multiple candidates were informed that they forgot to use hashtags on social media, but if they were diligent no warning was given unless it happened multiple times.

No appeals were made, however, one warning was withdrawn by myself after a candidate further made it clear that the endorsements they had received were not in anyway affiliated with VUSAC or with levies.

Recommendations

- Revert back to tagging the CRO Facebook in posts, it is cleaner to follow than a hashtag in terms of endorsements.
- Ask for the submission of websites/social media pages sooner as many members of the VCU wanted more time to look over the platforms of candidates (but all should still be posted at the same time).

- Create an anonymous form for asking Facebook Forum questions - this will allow people to ask hard questions in the forum (a better place than Town Hall) even if they do not want to engage on their own Facebook.
- Consider looking into bettering the Town Hall process to make it shorter and therefore more accessible.

Voting and Results Period

Voting commenced at 12:01am on March 16th. However, due to an error on the part of myself, the election was shut down at, approximately, 3:30am. At approximately 2:40am a candidate reached out and noted that I had published the incorrect candidate statement on the voting website, as they had sent in a revised statement before the deadline to do so. Given the large difference between the two statements in both content and statement, myself and the VP Internal decided it was best to restart the election.

The election was restarted at 4:10am. At the time of shut down, 42 votes had been cast, unfortunately there is no way of knowing who cast those votes - as such we cannot be sure that they knew to revote. However, I alerted all candidates, as well there were postings on the VUSAC Facebook page and in the elections forum.

Other than that, the voting period ran smoothly. Candidates were able to continue to post on social media, but not in person, which was a change from last year but seemed to work well.

In total, there were 436 votes, which was less than the 2018 spring election but more than the 2017 spring election. It was a 13.2% voter turnout, which did not meet quorum. However, VUSAC was the highest voter turnout of any student government on campus, according to the Varsity. The lower turnout than last year can likely be attributed to the fact that the President position was not contested as that tends to drive turnout.

No appeals were made of the election results. However, the elected Sustainability Commissioner candidate did not accept the position and a by-election will need to be held.

Recommendations
- Be sure to reach out to as many channels as possible to promote voting, this year we made a voting event on Facebook as well to help
- If it is possible, it's advisable that the appeals period fall on a weekend rather than on weekdays as there were issues of people not maintaining confidentiality during the appeal period. Something that may be reduced if people are not in the office as much.

Appendix: Official Spring Election Results

President

- **Alexa Ballis - 85% (370 votes)**
- No - 8% (37 votes)
- Spoiled - 7% (29 votes)

VP External

- **Vibhuti Kacholia - 90% (393 votes)**
- Spoiled - 6% (24 votes)
- No - 4% (19 votes)

VP Internal

- **Katie Marsland - 63% (276 votes)**
- Aurore Dumesnil - 30% (132 votes)
- Spoiled - 5% (21 votes)
- No - 2% (7 votes)

VP Student Organizations

- **Cameron Davies - 53% (232 votes)**
- Sayeh Yousefi - 33% (145 votes)
- Spoiled - 8% (36 votes)
- No - 5% (23 votes)

Academic Commissioner

- **Lucy Faria - 89% (386 votes)**
- Spoiled - 7% (29 votes)
- No - 5% (21 votes)

Arts & Culture Commissioner

- **Vivian Li - 55% (239 votes)**
- Ashleigh Middleton - 25% (111 votes)
- Spoiled - 14% (62 votes)
- No - 6% (24 votes)

Commuter Commissioner

- **Michelle Zhao - 89% (390 votes)**
- Spoiled - 7% (29 votes)
- No - 4% (17 votes)

Equity Commissioner
- **Massoma Kisob - 81% (355 votes)**
- Spoiled - 12% (53 votes)
- No - 6% (28 votes)

Mental Wellness Commissioner
- **Spandan Sengupta - 39% (170 votes)**
- Liam Jennings - 28% (122 votes)
- Mehriban Mehtiyeva - 10% (43 votes)
- Spoiled - 17% (73 votes)
- No - 6% (28 votes)

Scarlet & Gold Commissioner
- **Tran Thai - 44% (193 votes)**
- James Cassady - 43% (186 votes)
- Spoiled - 8% (36 votes)
- No - 5% (21 votes)

Sustainability Commissioner
- **Victoria Silva - 92% (400 votes)**
- No - 8% (36 votes)

Board of Regents (4 elected)
- **Devon Wilton - 23% (300 votes)**
- **Vibhuti Kacholia - 21% (278 votes)**
- **Ally Johnston - 19% (247 votes)**
- **Sayeh Yousefi - 17% (222 votes)**
- Aloysius Wong - 16% (205 votes)
- Spoiled - 3% (35 votes)
- No - 1% (13 votes)

Victoria College Council (10 elected)
- **Aloysius Wong - 29% (313 votes)**
- **Akash Kothari - 24% (260 votes)**
- **Konrad Samsel - 24% (255 votes)**
- **Lucy Faria - 16% (177 votes)**
- Spoiled - 5% (55 votes)
- No - 2% (23 votes)

Victoria University Senate (2 elected)
- **Thomas Siddall - 70% (306 votes)**
- No - 17% (75 votes)
- Spoiled - 13% (55 votes)

Victoria College UTSU Director (2 elected)
- **Thomas Siddall - 71% (311 votes)**
- No - 17% (73 votes)
- Spoiled - 12% (52 votes)

Referenda to Dissolve the Victoriad
- **Yes - 80% (347 votes)**
- No - 12% (51 votes)
- Spoiled - 9% (38 votes)