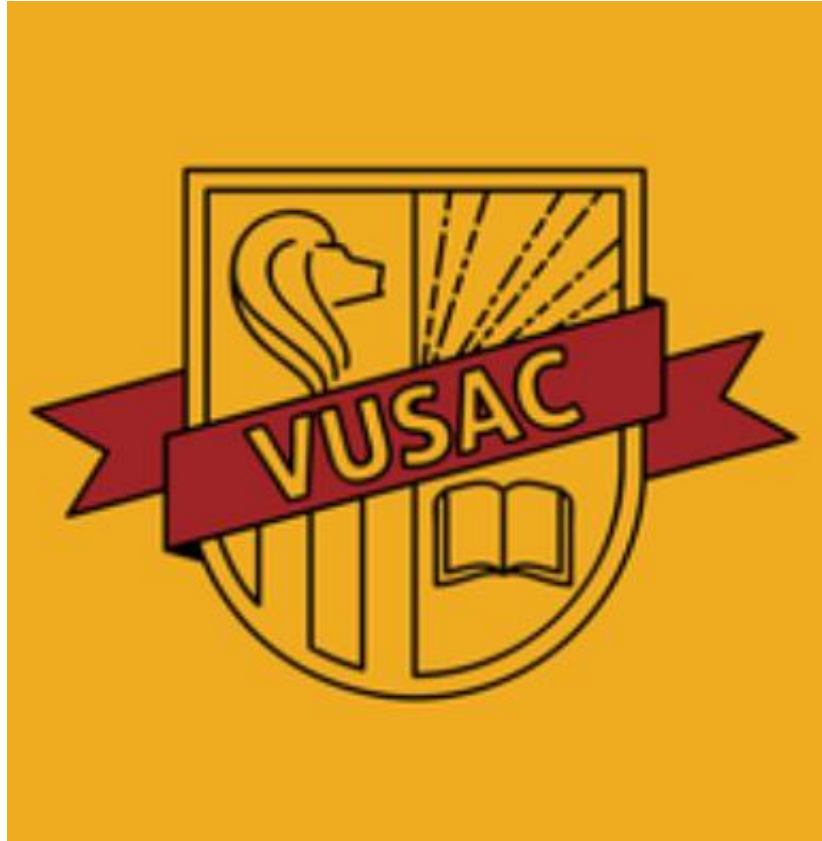


# Spring 2023 Elections Report



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.

## **Elections Timeline**

### Victoria College 2023 Spring Elections

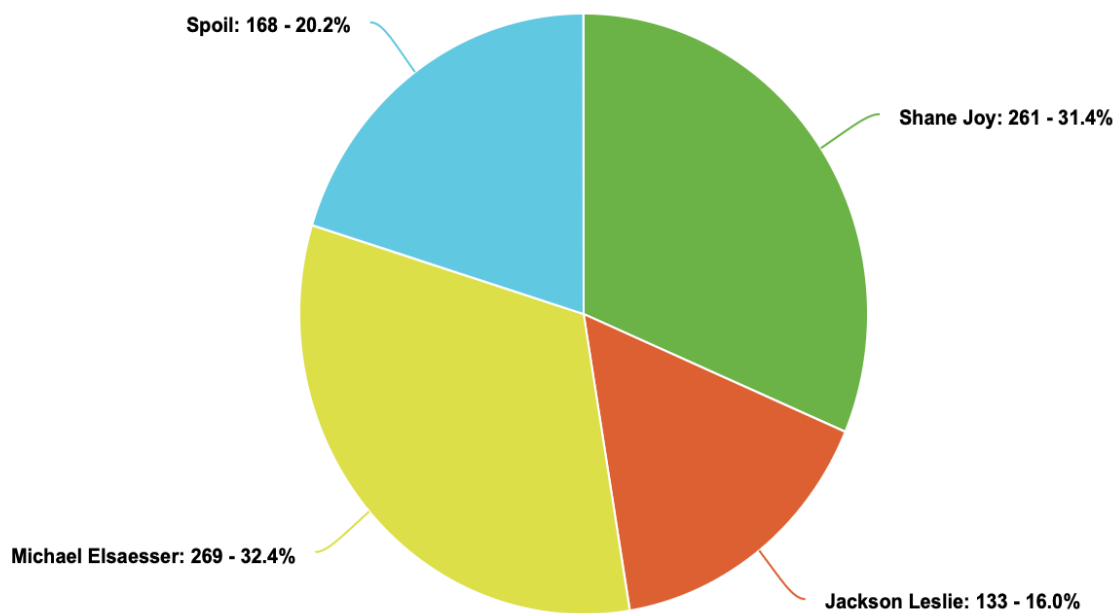
<b>DATES &amp; TIMES</b>	<b>IMPORTANT EVENTS</b>
<b>Wednesday March 1st</b>	<b>Nominations Open!</b>
<b>Wednesday March 1st</b> <i>10:00 am-11:00 am</i>	Q&A Session #1 <b>Location: VUSAC office</b>
<b>Thursday March 9th</b> <i>12:00 pm-1:00 pm</i>	Q&A Session #2 <b>Location: VUSAC office</b>
<b>Wednesday March 15th</b> <i>1:00 pm-2:00 pm</i>	Q&A Session #3 <b>Location: VUSAC office</b>
<b>Thursday March 16</b> <i>4:59 pm</i>	<b>Nominations Close!</b>
<b>Thursday March 16</b> <i>6:00pm - 7:00pm</i>	<b>All-Candidates Meeting</b> <b>Location: VUSAC office</b>
<b>Thursday March 16-</b> <i>After ACM</i> <b>Tuesday March 28</b> <i>11:59pm</i>	<b>Campaigning Period</b> <i>You may begin campaigning as soon as the All Candidates Meeting is complete.</i>
<b>Wednesday March 22</b> <i>5:00pm - 8:00pm</i>	<b>Town Hall</b> <b>Location: Wymilwood Lounge</b>
<b>Wednesday March 22</b> <i>11:59pm</i>	Candidate Statements due!
<b>Thursday, March 23</b> <i>5: 00 pm</i>	Submit social media page(s), and candidate budgets to CRO <i>Note: this is a hard deadline no extensions are possible</i>
<b>Friday March 24</b>	<b>Voting begins online</b>

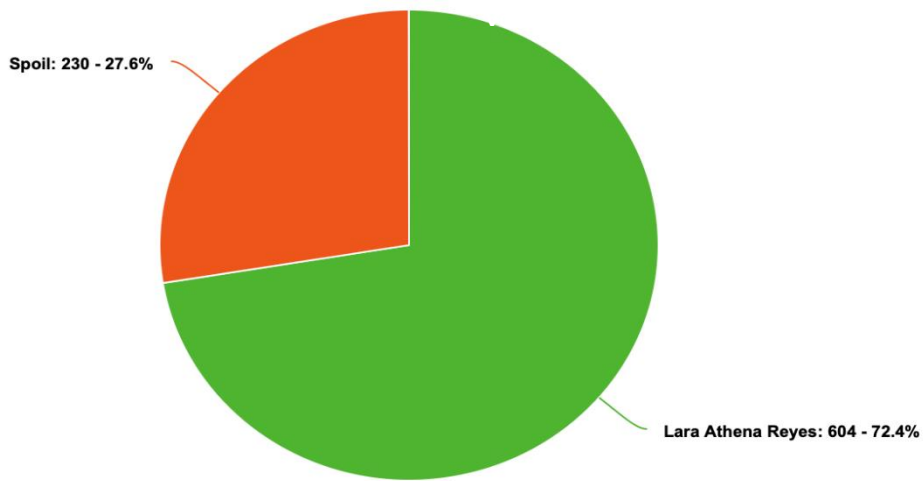
12:01am	
<b>Tuesday March 28</b> 11:59pm	<b>Voting ends</b>
<b>Wednesday March 29</b>	Results announced to <u>candidates only</u> @ 12:00am; Appeals period begins; Results are kept secret!
<b>Thursday March 30</b> 11:59pm	Appeals Period ends
<b>April 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> at noon</b>	Voting and campaigning period extended
<b>April 4<sup>th</sup> noon – April 6<sup>th</sup> noon</b>	Silent period
<b>April 6<sup>th</sup> post noon</b>	Results announced. Ratification took place by email vote.

**EAC members:**

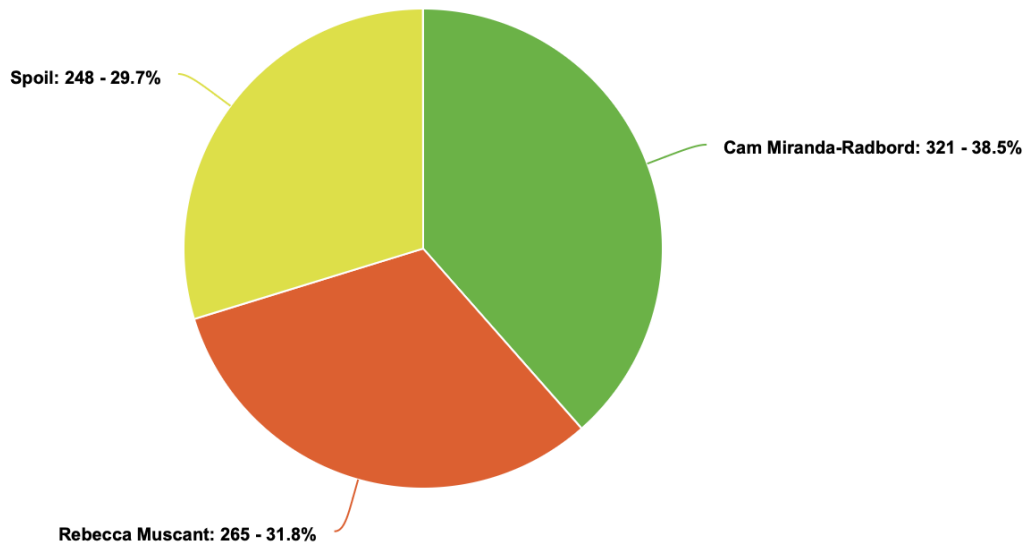
- Subhi Jha
- Erica Matsui
- Amanda Solomon
- Sam Rosati Martin
- Atharv Agrawal
- Faith Wershba

Results:

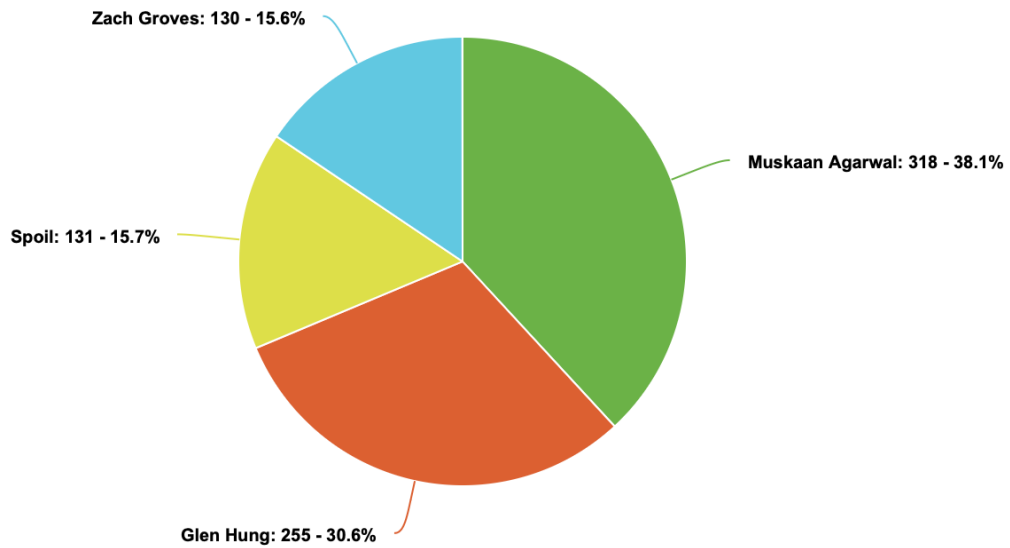




**VOTE FOR YOUR VICE PRESIDENT EXTERNAL CANDIDATE**

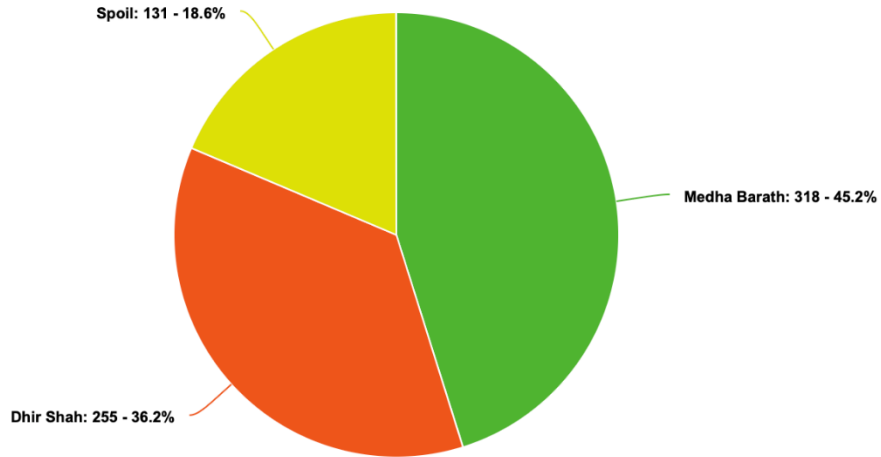


**VOTE FOR YOUR VICE-PRESIDENT STUDENT ORGANISATIONS CANDIDATE**

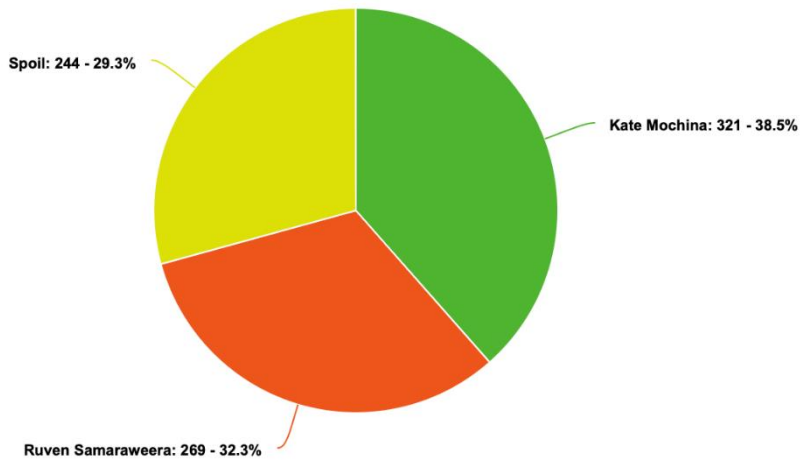


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VOTE FOR YOUR ACADEMIC COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE

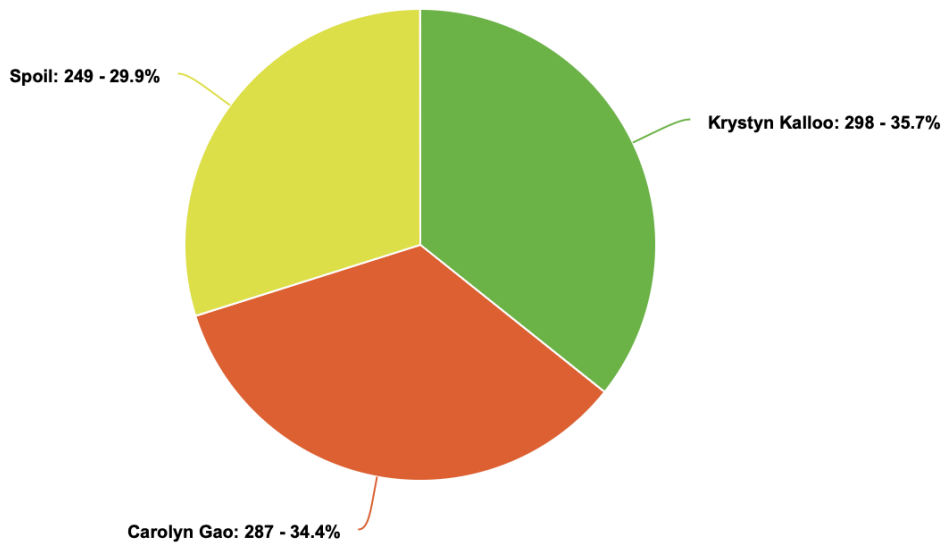


VOTE FOR YOUR ARTS & CULTURE COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE

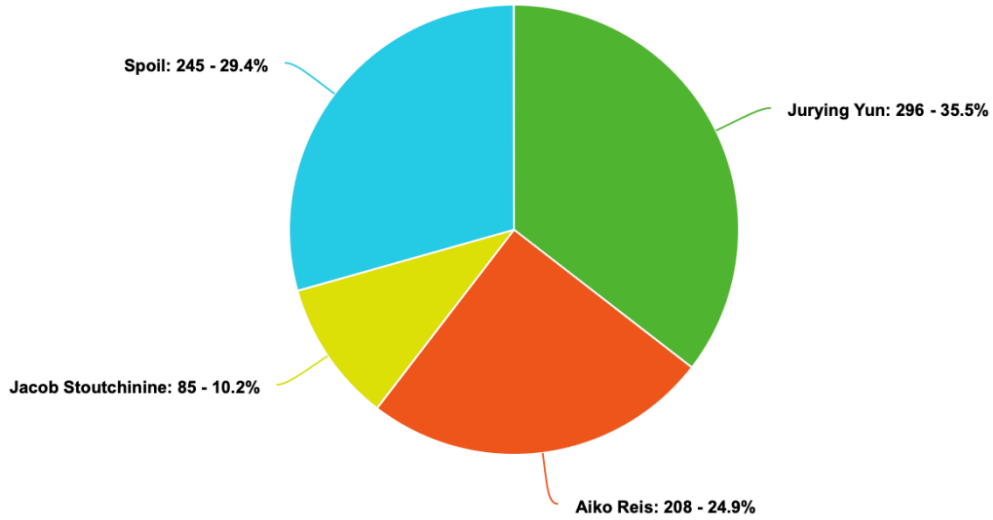


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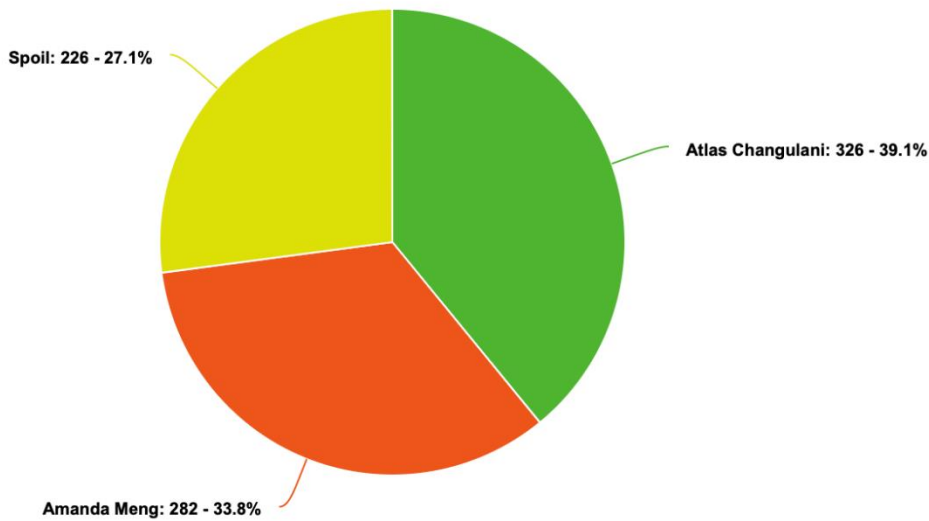
VOTE FOR YOUR SCARLET & GOLD COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE



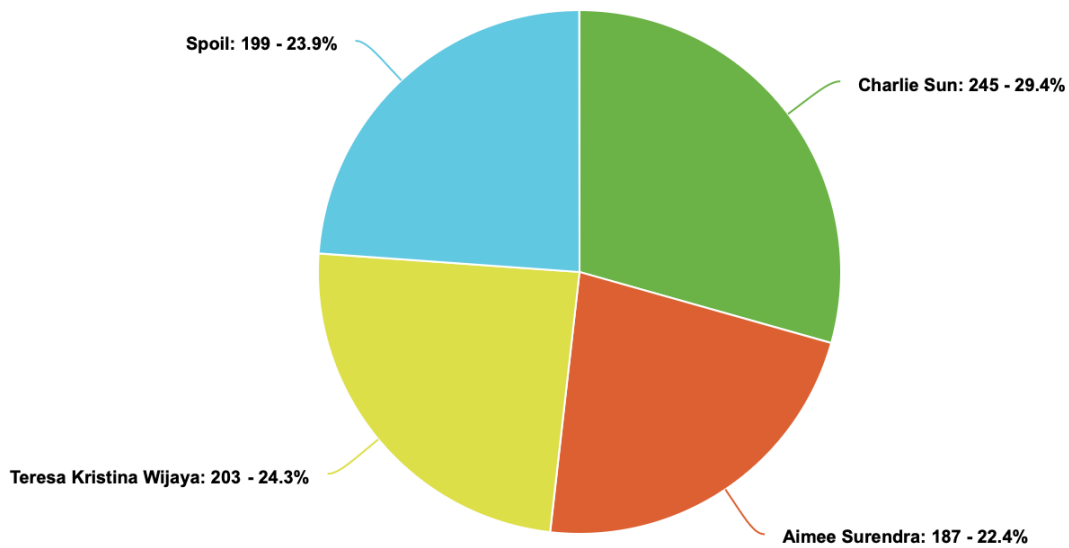
VOTE FOR YOUR COMMUTER COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE



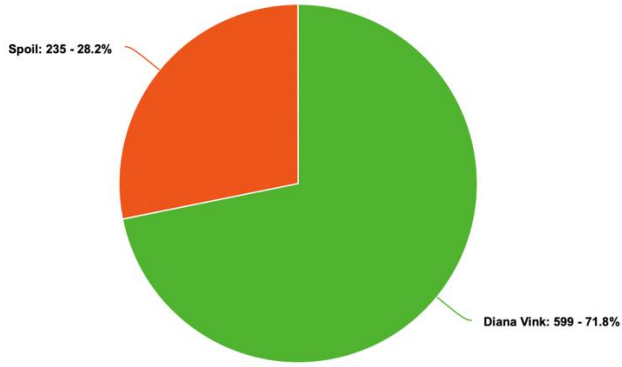
VOTE FOR YOUR SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE



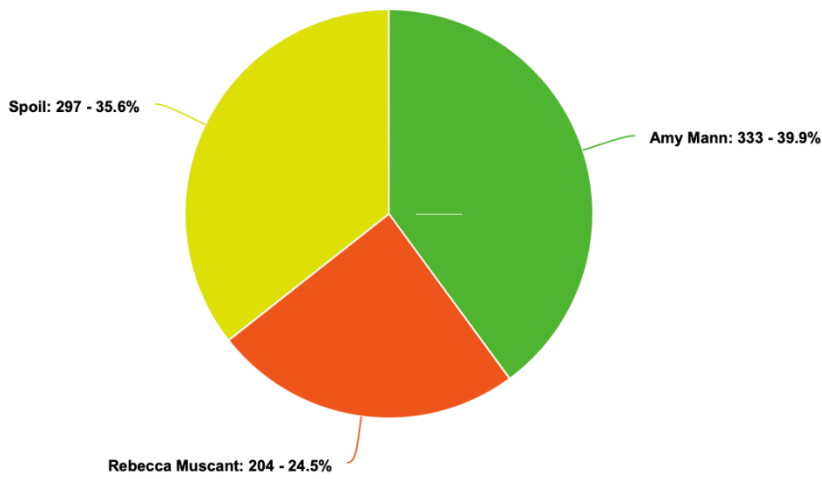
VOTE FOR YOUR MENTAL WELLNESS COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE



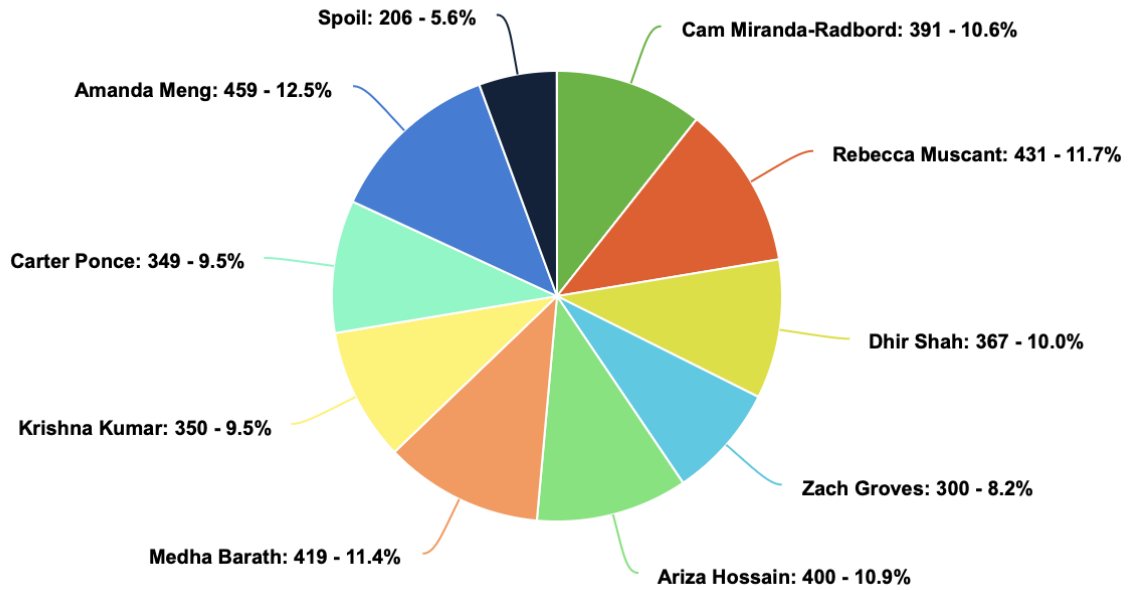
VOTE FOR YOUR EQUITY COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE



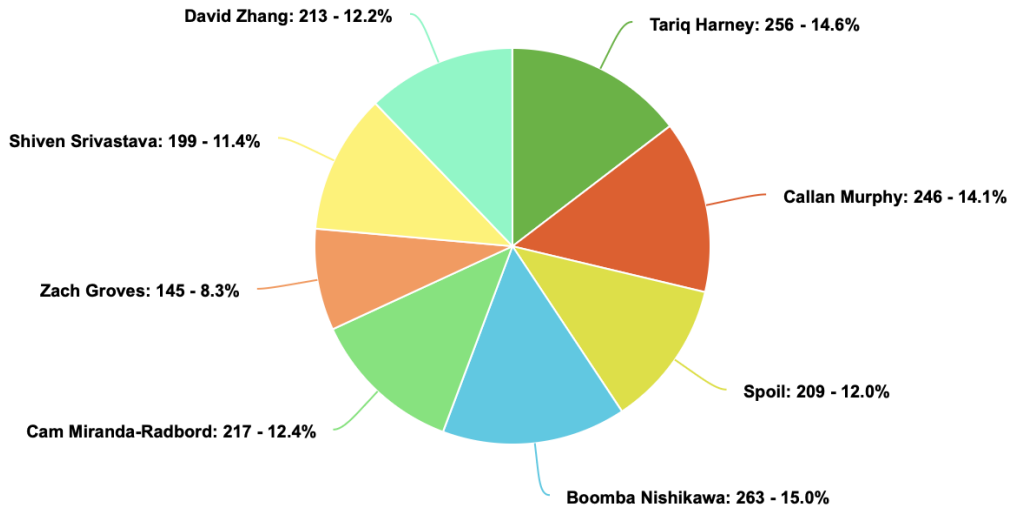
Vote for your Board of Regents two-year term candidate



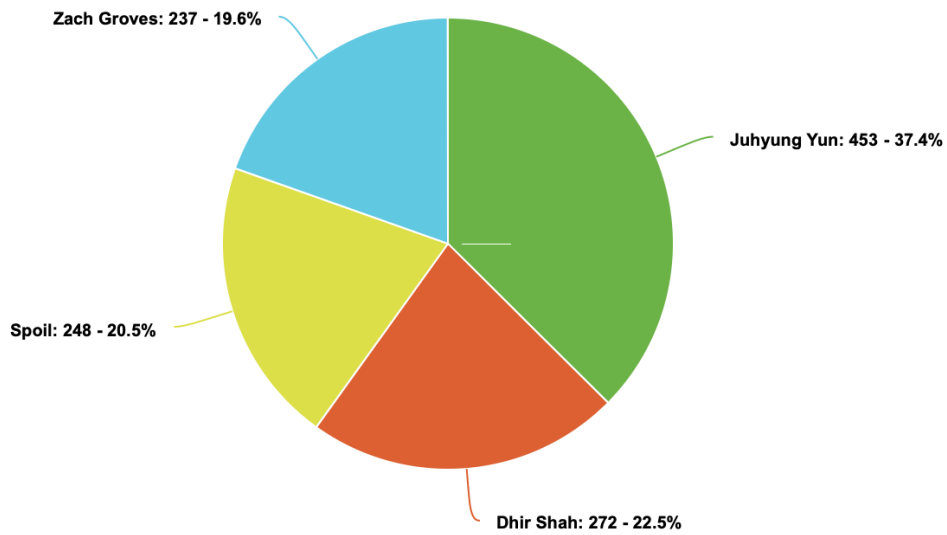
Vote for your Victoria College Council candidates (select UPTO 9)



Vote for your one-year term Board of Regents candidate (select UPTO 3)

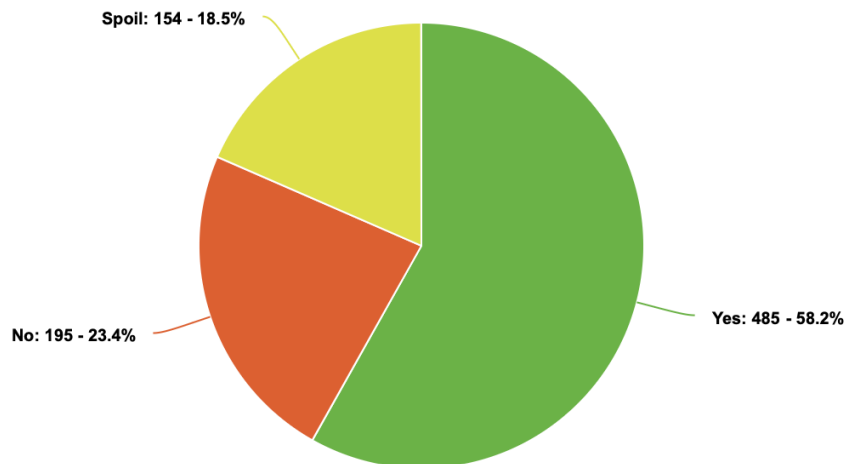


Vote for your Victoria University Senate candidates (select UPTO 2)





VicPride Referendum Question: Are you in favour of increasing the annual levy fee of VicPride by \$0.72 from \$0.33 to \$1.05 for full-time students and by \$0.50 from \$0.25 to \$0.75 for part-time students per semester? VicPride is Victoria College's LGBTQIA+ Student Association that runs events & programming, provides educational & support resources, gender-affirming care, and engages in advocacy at Vic and within the larger UoT community.



### Pre-nominations

The pre-nomination period spanned from October 2022 to February 28<sup>th</sup> 2023. During pre-nominations period, the VUSAC President Sooyeon Lee and I planned the important dates for the Spring elections. I also participated in a review of the ERC to determine which parts were redundant, outdated or find grammatical errors. When we conducted the review of the ERC during this period we did not identify many big changes to make however, there was much debate about adding club heads as neutral parties much like levy heads. Finally, it was decided that candidates could not promote themselves to club heads but club heads could endorse candidates of their own volition as a middle-ground.

I spent much of pre-nominations reflecting on Fall elections and how to improve on those, possibly by having a stronger social media presence on the CRO account. I also spent this period assembling the nominations package for the election and preparing the All Candidates Meeting slide pack. My aim was to have voter turnout be at least as high as in fall which was around 14%.

There was one warning issued to [REDACTED] during pre-nominations period for pre-campaigning as a candidate created an Instagram page for their campaign. I was alerted of this and had the page taken down, letting the candidate know they needed to wait until campaigning began.

Overall pre-nominations period ran smoothly however, the EAC did not get to approve of the nominations package as I prepared it very close to when nominations opened therefore, it is best to start as early as possible. The same goes for making changes to the ERC – these should be done ASAP.

### Nominations Period

Nominations period was from March 1<sup>st</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>. During nominations period, 3 Q&A sessions were held by Soo and I at the VUSAC office. Attendance was poor with no one attending two of the sessions and only two people attending the final one. I made sure these sessions were highly publicised on the VUSAC Instagram page therefore, I do not think it was an issue of

unawareness. I believe attendance was low as people had a good idea of what the positions entailed already.

At the beginning of nominations period ██████ had asked if there was a maximum number of nominators / signatures for a position and I said no. Later into nominations period, I realised that might be considered a form of pre-campaigning. As a result, I issued a strike to ██████ on March 15th. This was completely my mistake as I first permitted it then penalised them without warning because I re-thought the decision. Therefore, I rescinded the strike on March 16<sup>th</sup>.

Soo and I also heard from multiple sources that ██████ was offering to get nominations for someone and make their campaign materials if they ran in the VUSAC election. This occurred in the VUSAC office – a neutral space and it was done by a neutral party – making it that much worse. I thought this was absolutely unacceptable and issued ██████ two strikes for this. My reasoning was the following: Not only are you not permitted to have elections related conversations in the VUSAC office but under no circumstances is anyone but the candidate themselves supposed to get nominators for their candidacy therefore, one strike was issued. Not only are you not permitted to have elections related conversations in the VUSAC office but under no circumstances is anyone but the candidate themselves supposed to make their promotional materials. This would be considered plagiarism which is absolutely not permitted. Therefore, another strike was issued. Especially because it could be considered campaigning in slates. ██████ appealed the strikes with the EAC after nominations period ended (within 48 hours of the strikes being issued) and the EAC accepted the appeal given that they did not do any of those things, just say them in the context of a joke.

Every single position received at least one nomination and only 2 positions went uncontested by the end of nominations period, which indicated high interest in participating in VUSAC and the ex-officio positions. Unlike previous years, the VCC was almost filled up (9 nominations out of 10 seats) and the ex-officio positions were heavily contested, especially BoR. At the time of nominations closing, there were 31 different candidates for the various positions.

All candidates except one either attended the ACM or sent a proxy. The meeting ran smoothly with candidates seeming to comprehend the rules and asking good questions. One person submitted their nominations package after the ACM as they realized the deadline was 5 pm not midnight. I just sent them the ACM summary and slides and allowed them to still run. One candidate asked a question about if non-Vic clubs are allowed to endorse candidates to which Soo and I responded no given that we did not have the time nor capacity to deal with allowing non-Vic clubs to engage with the elections. This is something that should be decided upon and amended in the ERC. I would advice keeping non-Vic clubs neutral and doing something similar with non-Vic club heads as allowing them to be non-neutral requires too much oversight for the CRO, President and candidates themselves.

Overall, nominations period ran decently smoothly until the last 2-3 days when I had to issue the penalties. In the future, it would be good to think upon questions that are asked and respond to them at a later date as I responded hastily to the nomination maximum and non-Vic club question.

## Campaigning Period

Campaigning period lasted from March 16<sup>th</sup> after the ACM until the end of original voting period which was March 28<sup>th</sup> and then it ran again from April 2<sup>nd</sup> to April 4<sup>th</sup> at noon.

Campaigning period was when the most rules were broken and penalties were issued. There were many postering warnings and warnings for social media campaigning I issued throughout this period:

- March 20<sup>th</sup> – warned [REDACTED] for having neutral parties in Instagram posts
- March 20<sup>th</sup> – warned [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for having more than 5 posters up in Goldring
- March 20<sup>th</sup> – warned [REDACTED] for promoting another candidate's post on their story
- March 21<sup>st</sup> – warned [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for having neutral parties in their Instagram posts / stories
- March 22<sup>nd</sup> – warned [REDACTED] for asking neutral parties to promote their campaign. This brought [REDACTED] up to 2 warnings – 1 strike
- March 22<sup>nd</sup> – warned [REDACTED] for putting their posters on top of other candidates' posters in Goldring. This brought them up to 2 warnings – 1 strike

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.

During campaign period, on the CRO account I put up posts where people could ask their questions to specific candidates e.g. commuter commissioner, president, etc. Engagement was very high with each position getting one or more questions and candidates engaging in proper debates and answering questions in detail. This might have also increased interest in the election and townhall.

As for in-person campaigning, there was a lot of confusion as I wanted to set up specific times for postering in residences but the dean's office preferred if the posters were just put in the dons' mailboxes and put up by them. I heard from Soo and some candidates that the dons would find it easier if candidates directly coordinated with the dons and set up times to go around postering on residences. There was also confusion on whether candidates could slide posters under doors as this was mentioned in the nominations package but not the ERC. Ideally, do not allow poster sliding under doors next year as it raised issues with residents. Initially I allowed it as long as candidates did this with dons present however, after hearing about complaints from residents who felt it was a violation of their privacy, I disallowed it. Therefore, postering was to be followed as per the ERC and I removed the line about sliding materials under doors from the nominations package. Moreover, I got questions about postering on the exterior doors of residences like RJ and MargAd, the Victoria College building, pillars and Northrop Frye. The ERC does not explicitly state anything about this so I allowed postering if there were bulletin boards e.g. in NF. As for the outer doors of VC, I allowed it given that it occurred last elections cycle without issue. I did not permit postering on the exterior doors of RJ and MargAd though. It would be good to clarify postering rules for buildings that are not mentioned in the ERC though.

Townhall was a highly successful event. It was very well attended by non-candidates as well as candidates. In fall the attendees were largely candidates whereas this time other members of the VCU got involved too and there were a lot of questions put into the google form about what the

VCU wants to ask candidates. All candidates but one attended (they were sick) and seemed well prepared and engaged. This semester, I made sure to promote townhall well in advance on the VUSAC and CRO Instagram page, possibly improving attendance.

During campaigning period, a member of the EAC reached out to me regarding Zach Groves running in the elections. Given that he was removed from a position of power earlier in the year, I was asked if I could prevent him from running. Unfortunately, the ERC and constitution has nothing pertaining to such a situation therefore I was unable to disqualify him. This is something that should be amended in the ERC and constitution as it is illogical and a large equity concern to allow someone to run for VUSAC if they have been removed from another position of power.

Campaigning period lasted for way too long, in my opinion. I believe it could last for just 4 days and then overlap with voting for another 3-4 days rather than lasting 10+ days as that creates more work for the CRO and reduces the buzz around the election as campaigning cools down in the middle few days. Moreover, for Spring elections I believe it is essential to hire an Assistant CRO as keeping up with emails for poster and post approval, checking postering rules in person and dealing with candidates proved to take up more time than actual academics did.

All the candidates submitted their candidate instagrams and statements either on time or just slightly late but still in a timely enough fashion that I was able to edit and include the statement. It is wise to make the statement deadline 5 pm as it gives the CRO time to edit statements for length, or get candidates to make the edits and send the statement back.

### Voting Period

Voting period ran from March 24<sup>th</sup> at 12:01 am to March 28<sup>th</sup> at midnight. It also ran again from April 2<sup>nd</sup> to April 4<sup>th</sup> at noon as voting had to be extended – this will be explained later in this section.

During campaigning period I had emailed all the BoR candidates asking them to specify if they were running for the 1 or 2 year term as many of them kept changing their mind or did not clarify on the nomination form. I did not realise that Rebecca changed to running for the 2-year term from the one-year term and on the voting website she was listed under the 1 year term. I realised this 10 hours into voting (she alerted me) and had to re-start the whole voting website to rectify the error. I also added an explicit abstain option to each option. During those 10 hours, 251 people voted, which was a pretty good turnout.

On the first day of voting period, I had to issue a disqualification to [REDACTED] for making racist comments. Initially I had issued a strike but I realized the severity of the comments warranted disqualification. [REDACTED] made these comments on the CRO Instagram while replying to a question asked to commuter commissioner candidates. The candidate's name was not removed from the ballot as the ballot cannot be changed once the election has been published.

I issued a warning to [REDACTED] for asking neutral parties to vote for them on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

I issued a warning to [REDACTED] for being endorsed by a non-neutral party on the 24<sup>th</sup> also.

On March 28<sup>th</sup> I issued a warning to [REDACTED] for discussing campaign material in a neutral space with a neutral party. This brought them to 1 strike due to the 2 warnings accumulated.

On March 28<sup>th</sup> I issued a warning to [REDACTED] for having another candidate in a picture on their story.

Voting period ran smoothly for the first few days however, I was alerted to voting issues on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March and contacted the person who runs the voting website – the UTSG campus life coordinator. She told me that sometimes the voting website glitches and sometimes some people are not on the ballot despite being in the VCU. I sent her the emails of the 2-3 people who reported issues thinking it was not widespread. On 28<sup>th</sup> March I was alerted to widespread voting issues as a don emailed me telling me that many students in residence were unable to vote – especially if they were architecture or engineering students. I spoke to Soo and we decided to create a form that had all the same questions as the voting site and make that available on the VUSAC website and Instagram for people who were unable to vote. Given the timeline during which I was alerted, the form was only put up 3 hours before voting closed and around 15 people voted on it.

Voting period ended for the first time at midnight on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Soo counted the votes on the form we created and using that I sent out results and silent period began. Voter turnout was the highest it has been in years at 19.7%. This shows that the VCU was highly involved in this election and I achieved my goal of increasing voter and candidate engagement.

During silent period a VPSO candidate submitted an appeal asking for a run-off election. The EAC accepted the appeal because a significant amount of people were unable to vote. However, they decided to extend voting for every position.

The original plan was to follow what the EAC said. However, the VPI and Equity commissioner brought forward a number of equity concerns asking instead for a complete restart. These concerns included: the EAC being selected unconstitutionally (non-neutral), not enough transparency about penalties and appeals, and neutral parties getting involved in the election. We decided it was viable to restart voting, but not address all these concerns given time and capacity constraints. This decision was unconstitutional. Overturning a decision made by the EAC and re-starting voting entirely broke the rules of the ERC as EAC decisions are binding. There was also a petition going around asking for results to be honoured. The VUSAC constitution and ERC has no information on re-starting or extending elections – this should be looked into, and added.

During this time all candidates were given the option to withdraw if they wish and Jackson and David withdrew from the election. Ruven and Lara also withdrew but Lara rescinded the withdrawal and Ruven did not reply when candidates were asked again therefore his name remained on the ballot.

I issued a strike to [REDACTED] as they moderated the Cat's Eye Subcom space which is a neutral space therefore, there should not be discussions of election results there. The second reason the strike was issued was because [REDACTED] read out a statement by a levy head at the VUSAC meeting and this to me was another violation of neutrality and a conflict of interest. As a result I issued a strike which was overturned by the EAC upon appeal. The strike was overturned as it was found that neutrality was not violated.

A candidate appealed the decision to re-start voting and the EAC accepted the appeal for the above mentioned reasons. Therefore, Soo, the VPI and I issued a statement regarding the elections and apologising for the decision. Therefore, we went back to the original plan of extending voting for 1-2 days so people who had not voted could vote.

Voting period re-started on April 2<sup>nd</sup> at 12:01 am and ran until April 4<sup>th</sup> at noon. Initially, the new voting form had David on the ballot and Lara was not there at all so it was relaunched within the first half hour.

During this new voting period, I was sent a report of slander by one of the presidential candidates about the other one. I looked into this and decided that was not the case. The same candidate submitted a second report and I was trying to look into this allegation when silent period began.

Silent period began on April 4<sup>th</sup> at noon however, since a new form was being used, it took a while to calculate results which were only sent out around 9 pm. One of the Scarlet and Gold candidates submitted an appeal for plagiarism against the other candidate to the EAC. This appeal was rejected. One of the presidential candidates also submitted an appeal to the EAC on grounds of plagiarism and aforementioned slander. The appeal was rejected on grounds of plagiarism and accepted on grounds of slander. The slander was performed by others on the behalf of the candidate. As a result [REDACTED] was disqualified and the other candidate won the presidential election.

The disqualified candidate tried to appeal the decision however, this is not allowed given that EAC decisions are binding.

### Penalties

This election was not clean at all with a lot of penalties issued as mentioned above. Moreover, a lot of candidates seemed to not realise that neutral parties could not appear in their promotional materials – as a lot of them were already on VUSAC so they had many pictures with them from events.

### Conclusion

In conclusion this election was very strenuous for both candidates and me. I think Spring elections definitely need an ACRO to function smoothly as this was highly chaotic. I do apologise for the judgement mistakes I made during this election.

Voter turnout and VCU engagement was very high at almost 20% therefore, I am happy with the overall passion and interaction with the election. It was clear that people wanted to vote as they reached out about the voting site issues and candidates were very intense and passionate about the election results. Multiple candidates submitted reports, possible penalties and rule breakages to me showing their engagement.

Before the election, members of VUSAC did Instagram takeover which I think helped possible candidates understand more about the role. I would advise doing this again before the next Spring election. Facebook should no longer be allowed and neither should Tiktok (I suspect this might become an issue in the future).

## Appendices

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ru8qzSGE99CHJi2VOHw9Xnsegmp0PVZnoggIJkeZ5Sc/edit>

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1\\_S1dbGEfmT7L0HMLRj6pSFTdanIlt4i022q7mDIVQZk/edit#](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_S1dbGEfmT7L0HMLRj6pSFTdanIlt4i022q7mDIVQZk/edit#)