

I am writing this report in regards to my time as Chief Returning Officer for the King's Students' Union for the 2016-2017 school year. My time as CRO was demanding but overall a very positive experience. Throughout this position I felt very supported by the Communications Vice-President, Services and Campaigns Coordinator and Chair of the Union. This report focuses mainly on the areas of elections that I think could be adjusted in order to ensure the future success of the incoming CRO. There are several areas in which the entire elections process could be improved, both through bylaw amendments (recommendations have already been provided to the Bylaw Review Committee) and through general organization on the part of the future CRO and the Union. This report outlines my experience as CRO as well as recommendations that will ensure the success of future elections.

During the Fall Election we had at least one candidate running for every councilor position, although several were uncontested. This election was difficult, as it all happened very quickly due to a calendar error (we basically thought we had an additional week to prepare that we didn't actually have). Nominations had to be extended over a weekend due to an insufficient number of individuals running, but with increased social media presence and word of mouth we were able to have one person running for each position. As a result of the extended nomination period, the voting days were pushed back until after Thanksgiving weekend. Campaigning went very smoothly and Election's Committee did not need to award any strikes. Although we had a reduced membership on the Election's Committee, due to a student being nominated without their knowledge at the General Meeting (side note – this should not happen! Make sure everyone is ok with being nominated, especially if they are not in the room!) everyone was incredibly committed to being at the voting station and helping out in any way they could. During voting we had some trouble reaching quorum, which I will speak more significantly to later in this report. Overall, the fall election was successful and although it would have been nice to have more contested positions, every councilor position was filled without the need for a by-election!

This election period made me aware of some adjustments that can be made in order for this position to run as smoothly as possible. The first of which is the fact that although the Communications Vice-President provided a lot of support during the Fall Election, the amount of social media presence required as CRO as well the creating several different posters became overwhelming. Developing a solid communications strategy between the CRO, CVP and SCC prior to the election being underway is crucial. Prior to the Spring election we developed a plan for a communications strategy and sharing the work, which was incredibly helpful because it spread posting to several people and took off some pressure of having a constant online presence away from the CRO.

Next, based on my experience during the Fall in particular, an organizational tip that would be helpful for future elections is the creation of a file on a KSU computer or online database (or even a flash drive that is kept safe) that holds elections materials such as ballot templates, past nomination packages etc. A lot of this material is already in the email, but searching for it over the course of several years and then consistently only

finding documents from 2014 (that potentially are not fully up to date with bylaw amendments that then had to be manually entered) was incredibly time-consuming. In addition, creating a new ballot template every year is unnecessary, so if these files were to be stored somewhere safe, it would save time and stress for the future CRO, and ensure consistency with elections-related documents.

As stated previously, during the Fall Election, two rulings were issued by the Chair, the first in order to extend nominations due to low amounts of individuals running, the second to extend voting by two hours (until 9 PM) in order to reach quorum for the position of Journalism Representative. The issue that was brought forward by the first ruling should be addressed with a concentrated effort to direct election communications to the degree-specific positions (arts rep, science rep, journalism rep) in order to attempt to have more candidates interested in running for these positions. The second ruling reflects the issue of meeting quorum for these degree-specific positions, especially in regards to Journalism Rep. The Master's of Fine Arts students are included in the quorum count for Journalism Rep, which makes it more difficult to meet and sets unrealistic expectations for potential voter numbers. I have no specific recommendations in regards to this issue, but I believe that discussions around realistic quorum numbers (potentially limiting to undergraduate journalism students or only students who are on campus frequently and not completing a masters through distance) should be considered.

During the Spring Election, there were several referenda, and many contested Executive positions, which was exciting! The KSU held a referendum to increase union dues, the Dalhousie Bike Centre held a referendum to commence a levy that would allow King's students more access to their services, and the Loaded Ladle was originally going to hold a referendum in order to introduce a levy for King's students and expand their serving days, but decided to postpone this until the 2017 Fall election. The referenda brought forward several issues within the bylaws, which will be discussed more fully later on in this report, but the Executive and BOG election went incredibly well! Voter turnout was high and quorum was met very easily. Snow days pushed back our elections dates until after the Reading Break (as per a ruling of the Chair), but nonetheless the election was incredibly smooth and successful.

As noted above, the lack of concrete bylaws regarding Referenda created some difficulties. In collaboration with the SCC and Chair a set of guidelines was created in order to ensure a fair and equal referendum process for all parties on each side of the questions being asked. Our main issue with these guidelines was our decision that directors of the organizations being represented (executive members, councilors, board members) could not speak directly to the questions at the public forum. We instated this rule in order to try and facilitate wider participation from Union members. As we learned, this did not go as planned and resulted in speeches that had little engagement from the memberships and that did not allow for thoughtful discussion of these questions. In reference to this decision specifically, as well as other guidelines implemented during the referendum process, a full report has been sent to the Bylaw Review Committee in order to ensure that future referenda have rules laid out in the bylaws.

The Spring Election also saw the strike system finally being put into use, which proved that this is an incredibly effective system that in particular, ensures that candidate's who are accidentally breaching elections procedure (mainly in the instance of third-party online campaigning) are not immediately disqualified. The strike system makes judgment calls on behalf of the Election's Committee as fair as possible. There was one instance in which two strikes were issued because a candidate was directly motivating on behalf of a referendum platform within their speech. Two strikes were issued and then there was an appeal to the Chair made by the candidate. As of now, the bylaws do not allow the Chair to make rulings on strikes, which created an awkward situation for the Election's Committee in which we felt that our first decision was harsh and with recommendations from the Chair, decided to reduce the strikes down to one (as an accidental breach of procedure). However, had the Chair been allowed to issue a direct ruling, it would have been preferable and put the committee in less of an awkward position, this is another recommendation (that the Chair can issue a ruling on behalf of strikes and not just disqualification) for the Bylaw Review Committee, that I do not believe has been considered or addressed in my original report to them.

Overall, I believe my time as CRO has been successful, and many of the issues I have dealt with stem from a lack of regulation within the bylaws, which is being addressed and amended by the wonderful folks on the Bylaw Review Committee. I appreciate their willingness to hear my position and their commitment to ensuring that future elections and referenda are run successfully and with proper regulations, which will ensure fairness and accountability. The support of the SCC during the Spring Election (in the place of the CVP who was running for a position) was incredible. I can't thank Michaela enough for all of her support and insight, especially during the snow days when we had to adjust days and come up with plans with little knowledge about what was going to happen. Charlotte (our Chair) was also incredibly helpful and dedicated to ensuring a fair and equal process for all candidates and provided a lot of insight particularly regarding referenda. This role requires a lot of time and dedication, but is worth it in the long run because these elections are so crucial to ensuring the union has people who are fairly elected, and that student's feel that they have a choice and that their voices can be heard.