



THE RETROSPECTIVE REPORT OF THE
CHIEF RETURNING OFFICER
REGARDING THE 2019 SPRING
ELECTION HELD ON MARCH 28, 2019 TO
APRIL 3, 2019

PART II

Introduction

This retrospective report contains recommendations to strengthen the elections process at the Student Association of George Brown College. I will focus on three main areas in this retrospective report: (1) campaign and discipline reform; (2) elections structure reform; and (3) the governance upkeep needed to ensure appropriate governance practices are in place going forward.

I would like to thank the election staff for all their work during this election. During the course of this election, my role as the Chief Returning Officer shifted to being a coach for the elections team and only being on campus for key and important points during elections process. I am grateful for the support of the elections team.

This was the first election with a smaller board election and as a result of the smaller board of directors, we had a similar amount of candidates as previous years but for less positions. In my opinion, this shows a small group of dedicated people who are interested in serving in these positions. In my last report, I called for a return to a culture of engagement at the Student Association. In some respect my words were heeded, however, the Student Association still have a long way to go in this regard.

We had the highest voter turn out during four elections here, but we still have a long way to go to create year round, sustained voter engagement in the affairs of Student Association. To those who are elected, I exhort and urge you, find methods to engage with the students of George Brown College year round. Listen to your students. Create opportunities for open discussion. Given changes to the framework of Student Associations in the province this is not only essential for increased elections turnout, but also for the future of the organization.

Part I – Campaign and Discipline Reform

Recommendation 1 – spending limits for future elections

I recommend that the current spending limits for candidates are unreasonably high, and should be decreased. The spending limits were established during a time when posters were the main expense for candidates; this is no longer the case. It is my recommendation that the spending limit for executive candidates be set at \$200.00, for Board of Directors candidates at \$100.00, and for acclaimed candidates at \$75.00. The reality is that as technology progresses, posters will increasingly become not the preferred way of campaign. As technology progresses, Social Media and in person, interactions are becoming more important for elections, both of these have less cost associated with it.

Recommendation 2 – Campaign discipline reform

I recommend a reform of the campaign discipline system to equalise the demerit point threshold for all candidates. Currently the threshold of disqualification is set at 20 demerit points for board members and 35 demerit points for executive candidates. It is my recommendation that the disqualification threshold be set at 20 demerit points for all candidates. It is not appropriate that those who seek leadership roles within the organization be held to a lower and not a higher standard than others who seek office in the organization.

Recommendation 3 – Standing of Candidates within the Organization

I recommend amending by-laws to prevent those who have a demonstrated pattern of behaviour that is contrary to the values of the Student Association from running in the Elections. To this end, I would recommend that former executive and board members who have been dismissed from their positions, and Student Association Staff Members who have discipline for cause are prohibited from running for an 18 month period.

Recommendation 4 – alternative to posters

During this election, there has been significant tension between the college and the candidates over the enforcement of poster regulations. Discussions should take place to ensure that future elections are agreeable to both the college and candidates.

I would further recommend that candidates look for alternative ways of campaigning in order to allow a shift focus from posters to in person interactions.

Recommendation 5 – definition of candidates

Throughout the course of the election, a number of election issues regarding candidates came up that involved behaviour from before the election campaign period. I recommend that the by-laws be amended to add a clarification that the authority of the Chief Returning Officer begins at the beginning of nominations and last until the results are ratified by the Board of Directors.

Part II – Electoral Reforms

Recommendation 6 – First Past the Post

As we have seen more candidates running for less positions, a discussion needs to take place to determine if the first past the post system is the most appropriate system to use for the Student Association elections going forward. To this end, I recommend that an Instant Runoff Election or Ranked Ballots be used going forward. This will ensure that any candidate who wins receives a majority of the votes casted.

Recommendation 7 – The increased use of technology in elections

Over the course of the last four elections, the use of online technology in elections have both increased and became the norm for voting. The SimplyVoting Platform is accessible, and integrates with assistive technologies and mobile devices. The time has come to complete the transition to online only voting with help stations set up for those names are not on the voters list. The help stations will function in a similar way as voters stations, which allow voters to vote on tablets and the elections CromeBooks.

Part III – Governance

Recommendation 8 – Elections Governance

As the size and scope of the Board of Directors have now decreased in size, I recommend that external appoints within the college community be added to ensure that the committee will remain political neutral and non partisan.

Recommendation 9 – General Governance requirements for a smaller executive

As a necessity of smaller executive, increased accountability regimes are required. To this end, I would recommend the following accountability regimes:

- Closed meeting regulations, limiting the scope of closed meetings and prohibiting meetings to material advance the agenda outside formal meetings and a closed meeting investigator to ensure that the policy is enforced;
- Renewed conflict of interest policies to prevent improper approval of financial procedures; and
- Ombudsperson and integrity commissioner to ensure that conflicts are mediated and conflict of interest policies are enforced.

It would be my recommendation that these provisions are based on part v.1 of the Municipal Act with adaption to address issues within the student association post secondary system in Ontario.

Recommendation 10 – Sitting Executive, Board, and Staff Members

It is my recommendation that the by-laws be amended to explicitly forbid sitting executive, board and staff members from endorsing candidates during the course of their term of office. This should stress that executive members who terms are not expiring should remain impartial during the course of the election. This is critical to ensure effective operations of the Student Association.