



REPORT

From the office of...

MSU Elections Department

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Helen Zeng, CRO and Kritika Seth, DRP
SUBJECT: MSU Elections Report [2]
DATE: November 8, 2016

UPDATE

We are just emerging from the 2016 October By-Election and Referenda and while the results have been released the appeals period is still in effect, so it will be a few weeks more before the results are official. We have met and dealt with a great number of challenges over this period. We had 5 Referenda with 4 campaign sides registered, as well as 2 candidates for the SRA Social Sciences by-election. Congratulations to Hannah Martin for being elected as the 5th member of the SRA Social Sciences Caucus!

Moreover, all referenda have failed with the exception of the first Marmor referenda regarding the elimination of the \$9.22 fee. We had many complaints submitted and after a 6-hour meeting, the Elections Committee has decided to disqualify the Exclusive Club Card side and invalidate the associated referendum. Again, these decisions will be subject to appeal on November 16th.

Another challenge we faced was the short campaign period versus the relatively large amount of referenda and therefore information that we had to communicate to MSU members. We approached this problem through holding an Elections 101 event, including the seminar session as well as the SRA Meet n' Greet. SRA members particularly have been fantastic in producing material, holding outreach events, and engaging students overall on the Referenda and SRA By-Election. We would like to give huge thanks to the SRA, and hope that we can continue to work together to engage students!

We had a decent voter turn out for such a short campaign period, with anywhere from 17.5-18.5% of eligible voters casted a ballot. As this is the first time in a long time that we have had October Referenda, there is not much to compare this to, but we achieved quorum, which is fantastic. As well Ryan Macdonald and Sarah Mae Conrad did a wonderful job in creating info graphics that I believe made a huge impact in the accessibility of these Referenda questions.

Another challenge we faced this past month was the SRA stances on the Exclusive Club Card referendum. There was no readily available past-precedence to determine how we would proceed, but Michael Woorder and Victoria Scott have been fantastic in helping us through this process. The stance itself was not the problem, but more so the financial resources given to promote the SRA stance. We met extensively with office members as well as the Elections Committee to set standards by which the MSU could promote

without damaging the integrity of the election. For future, it would be helpful to outline a specific procedure by which the SRA can make such a recommendation, as “financial resources” is both a vague and potentially problematic statement. With elections, it is always best to be specific and to outline specific parameters to which the MSU can act, and even a specific dollar amount would be helpful. I would suggest no more than \$200-300 given the MSU’s wide build-in audience and extensive campaigning experience. As well this would put them on a better playing field with any “yes” sides registered and ensure that the student campaigns are not smothered by the MSU’s message, which I do not believe happened here.

Moreover, the Electoral Appeal Board has met in terms of the First Year Council disqualification and made their decision to be released by the Speaker.

SERVICE USAGE

This was a period of high usage for Elections, we have met with quite a few people throughout the past month and the e-mail traffic has increased exponentially. Demand for CRO/DRO was high overall, but is expected to decrease over the next month. People often accessed office hours and messaged us on Facebook and via e-mail.

PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

We held our first official Elections 101 event this year the Thursday after reading week. This was intended to increase awareness on how to run a campaign both on a referendum side as well as a candidate for by-elections, president etc. A separate event will be held for SRA members in the Spring. We took feedback from the working group MSU Wants You and created a more formalized seminar session that was hopefully more accessible than an event in 1280. Here we detailed all the nuances of running in an election with a power-point presentation and guest SRA speakers. At the same time we wanted to compare the effects of both types of events, and still held a Meet n’ Greet in 1280 with SRA members and members of the Board of Directors. Turn out was decent at both events, we had approximately 20 people at the seminar session and anywhere around 50 people at the Meet n’ Greet. Many of these people ended up running referenda sides and in the SRA by-election, so we are happy that they received some sort of guidance from these events.

The operating policy for MSU Wants You has been passed this October, spear headed by Preethi Anbalagan. The changes include the addition of either the CRO or DRO as the chair, which we hope to solve the problem of continuation throughout the years.

However, this also means that this will have to be added to the Elections job description. We are testing this new role out and seeing if it is feasible for the CRO/DRO to chair this committee. We plan to have our first meeting soon.

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

The next big activity we have is the MSU Presidential Election and Referenda coming this January. This is traditionally the busiest times for Elections and we hope to prepare as much as we can through November in order to be prepared. Nominations will open

December 1st, 2016 and close January 12, 2017. We are already planning times for the Presidential debate and Meet n' Greet.

BUDGET

We've spent a lot of money on referenda, please give us more.

September Statement was wiped in the e-mail shut-down. Below is a tabulation of the October Expenses.

October only:

Promoting Referenda and By-Elections (\$1000)

October printing Credits (\$600)

Coffee Sleeves (\$120)

TwelvEighty for Elections 101 (\$575)

Promoting Elections 101 (\$200)

VOLUNTEERS

Elections Committee is going well. I have asked that anyone who wishes to run in the January election or who wishes to be on a campaign team to notify me by November 11th. We had a few concerns with expectations and commitment to EC, which had left us struggling to reach quorum. However, they have since been handled and we had all 8 members present at the fines meeting, which is a great sign for the future. We hope to continue working with EC to make their experience as rich as possible on this committee.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

We are facing some small challenges in booking and finding space, but that is looking farther into the future. A lot of Part Time Managers have voiced this in the meeting we had, but work-life balance always seems to be an issue. Both CRO and DRO have expressed concerns with this, particularly in this busy year, we are finding out first real break to be coming up this November.

Moreover the space change has been done, and so we are now behind Jess Bauman's office. The space is relatively new and so we just need a few of the resources to be in place. We just received the key for one of the cupboard this past election, but we would like to have more, especially in such an open space. As well we are finding that we definitely need a phone. Candidates and campaign managers are being stopped at the front desk, however with no mode of communicating to us the office clerks have no choice except to bring them directly back, which can be surprising for us and defeats the purpose of stopping them. This continues to be an issue with space and so we would like for the future that these concerns are met as soon as possible in order for us to function properly in January.

SUCSESSES

Finishing the election up to the fines meeting is a great success to us, as well as achieving quorum for all referenda. As well, as seeing many of the people who came out to our events ended up running and feedback overall was satisfying.

OTHER

We spent around \$500 on food, which as standard for previous events. However, we received multiple complaints that the food was insufficient during the Elections 101 Meet n' Greet. For future, this might be something to consider and hoping to add to the budget as we have many more potential 1280/1280 catered events in the future.