



REPORT

From the office of the...

Elections Department

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Returning Officers, Peter Belesiotis (CRO) & Stephanie Dephoure (DRO)
SUBJECT: First Year Council and October SRA By-Election Report
DATE: October 29, 2019

Dear Members of the Assembly,

We are happy to report to you the outcomes of a successful election cycle. Specifically, this report discusses the First Year Council (FYC) Election and an October SRA By-Election (to fill one vacancy each on the Engineering and Humanities caucuses). As per *Bylaw 10 - Elections*, our department is required to relay to the SRA the results of each electoral period, including recommendations of the Elections Committee.

Both elections ran successfully and without any major issues. Insights from the October SRA By-Election are limited as both vacant SRA seats were won by acclamation, as is frequently the case for SRA By-Elections. Thanks are due to FYC Coordinator Grace Bryson and the Engineering and Humanities SRA Caucuses, whose close collaboration with our Department during the elections helped facilitate student engagement.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please do not hesitate to connect with us.

Best,

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A. Results (FYC Election)

The results of the First Year Council Election as ratified by the Elections Committee are included below. These results may be considered official as the appeals process for the First Year Council Election has been exhausted.

Chair:	Nerij Sharia
Vice Chair Internal:	Haider Ali Khan
Vice Chair Events:	Haley Birch
Bates Residence Chair:	Zishan Ahmed*
Brandon Residence Chair:	Ana Han
Edwards Residence Chair:	Stella Diagoupis
Hedden Residence Chair:	Colin McGuigan*
Les Prince Residence Chair:	Riley Chung*
Mary Keyes E. Residence Chair:	Jude Gal
Matthews Residence Chair:	Tasin Karim*
McKay Residence Chair:	Jonathan Paglialunga*
Moulton Residence Chair:	Hafsa Paracha*
PGCLL Residence Chair:	Jason Bergman
Wallingford Residence Chair:	Leila Somani-Davis*
Whidden Residence Chair:	Leon Yao*
Woodstock Residence Chair:	Sezgi Yanikomeroglu

*Acclaimed

Position	# of Candidates Running
Chair	5
VC Internal	4
VC External	4
VC Events	5
Bates RC	1
Brandon RC	3
Edwards RC	2
Hedden RC	1
Les Prince RC	1
Mary E. Keyes RC	2
Matthews RC	1
McKay RC	1
Moulton RC	1
PGCLL RC	3
Wallingford RC	1
Whidden RC	1
Woodstock RC	3

Full voting results for the FYC Election can be found on the MSU Elections webpage.

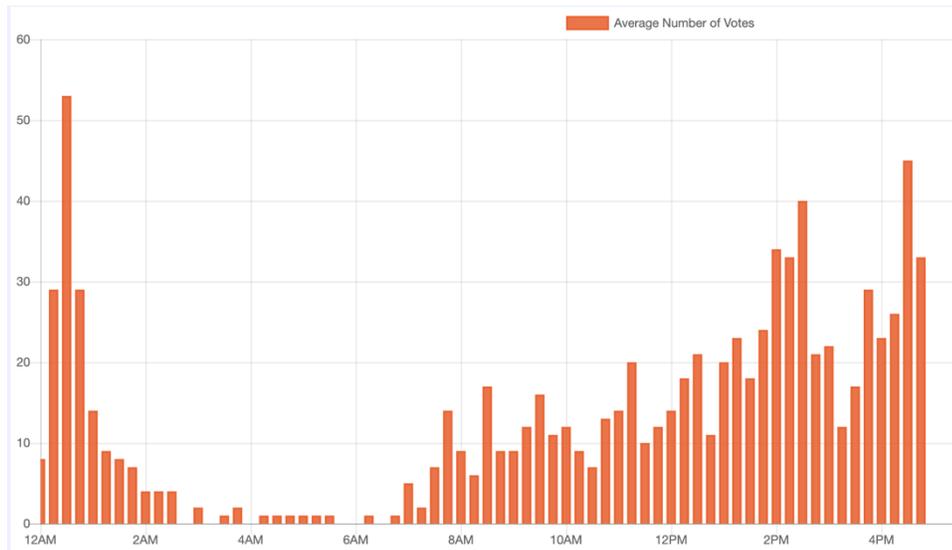
Quick Stats:

- 40 nominations were submitted, with each candidate running in one race
- 8 positions were acclaimed by candidate running unopposed

B. Turnout (FYC Election)

Chair and Vice-Chair Elections

Voter turnout for the 2019 MSU First Year Council Chair and Vice-Chair Elections was 13.0%, with 880 students voting this year. In comparison, 21.6% of electors cast a ballot in the 2018 First Year Council Chair and Vice-Chair Elections and 14.6% of electors cast a ballot in the 2017 First Year Council Chair and Vice-Chair Elections. Unfortunately, we are not able to segment the results to indicate turnout by faculty; the faculty of enrollment of each elector was not strictly necessary to set up the FYC Election, thus this information was not requested from the Registrar’s Office due to privacy concerns.



Residence Chair Elections

Voter turnout for the 2019 MSU First Year Council Residence Chair elections is indicated in the table below. Across all residences, 21.3% of electors cast a ballot. This was a decline from the overall turnout of 31.8% in the 2018 Residence Chair Elections. No overall turnout data is available from 2017 or earlier (as 2018 was the first year all residence chair elections were hosted on a single ballot with segmented electors).

Residence	Electors	Votes	% Voted
Brandon	489	91	18.6
Edwards	92	47	51.1
Mary E. Keyes	236	32	12.2
PGCLL	484	92	19.0
Woodstock	267	77	28.8

C. Results (October SRA By-Election)

The results of the October SRA By-Election as ratified by the Elections Committee are included below. These results may be considered official.

SRA Engineering (one seat open): Amro Alkashef*

SRA Humanities (one seat open): Daniel Zhang*

*Acclaimed

Given that both open seats were acclaimed by unopposed candidates, no further data regarding results/turnout is available.

D. Promotional Events and Strategies

Elections 1A03

This event is designed to help make taking part in the FYC Elections – either as a candidate or as a voter – accessible to first-year students who may be unfamiliar with the MSU and MSU Elections. Our Elections 1A03 event was hosted in close collaboration with Grace Bryson, FYC Coordinator. Similar to past years, the event was centered around mentorship stations with SRA members, previous FYC members, and BOD members leading rotations. This event served as a great opportunity to promote and encourage students to run in the FYC election, as many of the FYC nominees had attended the session.

Nomination Promotion

For both the October SRA By-Election and the FYC Election, our nomination promotion included a strong cross-platform social media strategy in conjunction with hard-copy posters and the engagement of key stakeholders with reach to relevant electoral populations (FYC Coordinator and the SRA Engineering Humanities Caucuses).

Voting Promotion

Following the implementation of MacID authentication for SimplyVoting access last year, all students eligible to vote in an MSU Election receive an email directly to their McMaster inbox at the start of polling that includes a link to their ballot, or are able to vote separately from this email by heading to the MSU SimplyVoting page – the link to which was distributed on social media both by the Elections Department and candidates – and logging on with their MacID.

Information Distribution

Throughout the FYC Election and October SRA By-Election, the MSU Elections webpage was maintained with up-to-date information. A list of nominees with links to their social media pages was made available. Following the close of voting, unofficial election results were posted on the website and on our social media platforms in conjunction with a copy of the detailed voting breakdown from SimplyVoting.

E. Elections Committee Recommendations

The Elections Committee noted the need for clearer social media rules, particularly for Instagram and Snapchat. Their full input is scheduled to be discussed at a meeting following this report's submission, and developments will be shared with the SRA as changes are made.

F. Challenges

Large number of acclaimed positions

Despite employing a similar outreach and promotions strategy as was done in 2018 (which had a record number of nominations submitted), the number of acclaimed positions this year increased slightly to a number in line with prior years. Large numbers of acclaimed positions can undermine the face validity of an election and diminish enthusiasm/voter turnout. We plan to consider new strategies to help increase the number of nominations submitted as we move into future election cycles.

Appeals process

A significant number of FYC candidates submitted appeals following the announcement of the unofficial results. Ultimately, the EC struck down all appeals and the candidates chose not to escalate their appeal to the EAB. This may reflect a poor understanding of the appeals process and associated expectations on the part of first year students. We plan to create documents outlining more clearly what information a candidate can submit to the Elections Committee to successfully inform decision-making during the appeals process.

G. Successes

Feedback

Our Department made it a key priority to ensure MSU community members felt empowered to share feedback regarding elections through both formal and informal channels. In particular, we engaged with first-year students to take stock of their perspectives on the FYC Elections process and how it can be made more accessible to students transitioning to university.

No issues logging-on to SimplyVoting

Thanks in large part to the integration of MacID authentication with SimplyVoting, we did not have any issues with students not being able to log-on to SimplyVoting and cast their ballot. This is also a product of close collaboration with the Registrar, with whom we updated our protocol for requesting elector lists earlier this year to ensure that the elector lists that we receive are complete and accurate.

H. Next Steps

EC Rule Recommendations

The Elections Committee will meet to discuss potential changes to election rules based on their experience with the FYC Election. This feedback will be relevant to future FYC Elections and upcoming elections this year (e.g. Presidentials, SRA Generals).

Preparation for Presidential Elections

Our Department has begun preparing for the release of MSU Presidential Election nominations in December.