

VICE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AD HOC COMMITTEE

Report 1

SRA 15E- July 19th, 2015



Dear Members of the Assembly,

During the General Assembly of 2015, interest in holding a referendum to elect Vice Presidents at large was shown by 479 students, leading to the formation of an Ad Hoc Committee on Vice Presidential Elections. The committee's goals include investigating the current system of Vice Presidential and SRA Elections and presenting a series of recommendations, including a referendum.

Over the past two months, the committee has had the opportunity to meet on two different occasions. Through these meetings and the work that followed, the committee has explored three unique areas for insight into the best route forward for McMaster Students Union (MSU)'s Vice Presidential (VP) Elections. The first area examined was the pros and cons associated with our own system. Following this, electoral processes for a variety of universities across Canada were examined, to gain an understanding of the other systems in use and how they are received by students.

Pros and Cons

The views presented hereinafter in this portion of the report were expressed at meetings of the committee, and thus represent only the views of members and observers of the committee.

On Monday April 13th, at meeting 15A, after 22 hours in Gilmour Hall, the 2015-2016 Student Representative Assembly (SRA) finished electing this year's Board of Directors. This meeting helped illustrate one of the biggest areas of concern with respect to the MSU's current system for VP Elections: the potential for egregiously long meetings. There are a number of reasons why this sort of meeting is prohibitive in nature: it impairs the ability of each candidate to effectively present themselves or respond to questions, it creates an inaccessible environment for students to be engaged in this process, and it has the potential to hinder the critical thinking skills of the elected members. An interesting note is that in the past, these meetings have never gone so long; however, the reality of a meeting which uses Robert's Rules of Order is that there is never any set duration.

Robert's Rules of Order are the processes which dictate procedure during all SRA meetings, and allow meetings to be well-organized. In the context of VP elections, there has been concern that these rules pose barriers in allowing MSU members unfamiliar with governing processes to participate. Given that VPs represent the multiple facets of the MSU, it is imperative that all students have the chance to be involved in the decision. Robert's Rules may also create many challenges for SRA members, as the VP election is the first official SRA meeting in which the members use these rules in a formal setting.

Additionally, some parties argue that every student in the MSU should have a direct vote in the VP elections. Conversely, others feel that the current system lowers the barriers to running for a position on the Board of Directors (BoD). For example, individuals who are qualified for the position of President may hesitate to run because at large elections are very public in nature, but this problem exists to a lesser extent in the MSU's current VP Election system.

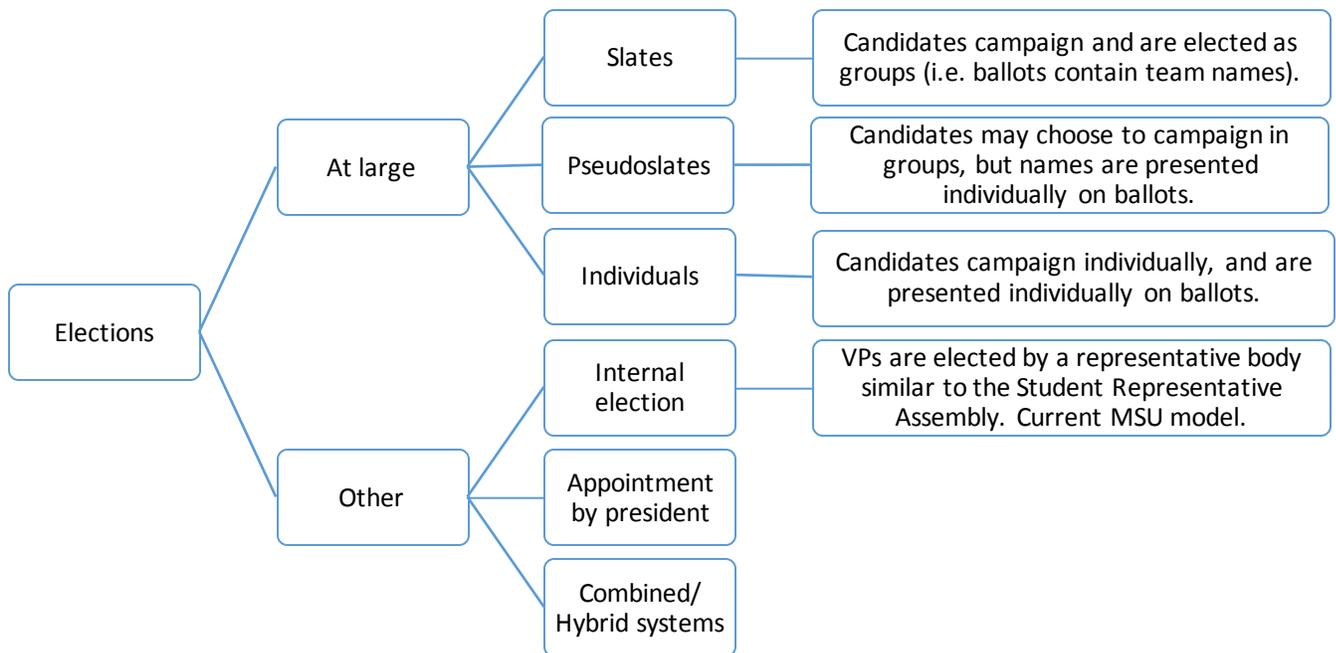
Some have also expressed concern over the expectation that VP candidates are to meet and discuss their platforms individually with every SRA member. This requires many hours of commitment on the part of both candidates and SRA members. Further, many also criticize the private nature of these one on ones as limiting transparency within the election. Others,

however, feel that this process allows SRA members, as voters, to gain a better understanding of the candidate's platform and defining characteristics than is often possible in an at large setting election. Additionally, as the BoD is elected by a single governing body, a cohesion between their visions and that of the President could more easily be accomplished than individuals elected by the student body at large.

By examining both perspectives on our current VP Election system, it was made clear that the potential for excessively long meetings is a prominent area of concern. There are also a number of indisputable logistical problems with the current electoral system, such as the fact that elections occur during exams, which can be considered unfair to candidates and SRA members. However, with many of the other potential issues, there are two sides to the coin. As such, when presenting alternative options, resolving these logistical problems is one of the priorities of this committee.

School Systems

When investigating the systems used by other universities in Canada, the committee subdivided the systems by model. The following divisions were decided on for the purposes of the present report.



The research done by the committee is presented below, subdivided into the aforementioned categories.

At Large- Slates

University	System	Notes
University of Saskatchewan	The students at large elect president and VP's. Slates for executives	23% Voter Turnout

		http://ussu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/USSU_Bylaw_2014_11_27.pdf
Algoma University	VP's elected at large, in slates	23% (have less than 1700 students); 2 VPs acclaimed http://www.sootoday.com/content/news/details.asp?c=88439
Carleton University	VP's elected at large, in slates	26% voter turnout, source: http://www.charlatan.ca/2015/01/unofficial-results-executive-candidate-results-for-2015-cusa-election/
Western University	Recently adopted a slate system. Students at large elect the executives	
Queens University	Students at large elect President and Vice Presidents. Executives are elected on a slate system. Students vote on slates not individual.	In 2015, executive ran unopposed. No vote of confidence either: http://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2015-01-20/editorials/ams-acclamation-omits-students/ 36.25% voter turnout in 2014

At Large- Pseudoslates

Simon Fraser University	The Students at large elect the Executives. Executives run on Pseudo Slates.	2014 Voter turnout was 10% http://elections.sfss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015-Candidate-Handbook.pdf
University of Manitoba	Individuals run in slates, but voted to respective positions individually.	http://www.themanitoban.com/2015/03/heated-2015-umsu-general-election-results-mixed-executive/23138/
Lakehead University	Students at large elect VP's. People can run on slates or individually.	29.8 percent Voter Turnout, 1 VP ran unopposed. http://lusu.ca/vote/
University of Ottawa	Students at large elect the 5 "executives", with election in winter term; can run together on slates but voted individually	~10% voter turnout, http://thefulcrum.ca/news/results/
Ryerson University	Students at large elect the VP's. Candidates are allowed to run on slates, but voted on individually.	<15% voter turnout, http://www.ryersonian.ca/transform-ru-sweeps-the-2015-rsu-elections/
University of	VP's are elected individually but are	Voter turnout is roughly 20%.

Toronto (UTSG and UTM)	allowed to run as a slate (including the President). They have 6 VP's; typically people run as slates	http://utsu.ca/uofficial-results/issues with ballot stuffing: http://www.matigari.com/political-essays/2015/3/23/corruption-in-the-student-union
UOIT	6 VP's elected in winter semester. Selected by students at large, candidates can run on a slate or independently.	Voter turnout < 10%, one VP acclaimed. http://www.your-sa.ca/elections/
University of Waterloo	Students at large elect President and Vice Presidents. Executives are elected on a pseudoslate system; members are voted on individually.	Roughly 5% Voter turnout in 2015

At Large- Individuals

University of Alberta	The students at large elect the executives. Candidates run and are elected individually	19.9% Voter Turnout https://thegatewayonline.ca/2015/03/students-union-announces-2015-16-executives/ http://www.su.ualberta.ca/legislation/wiki/Bylaw:1500#Who_may_be_appointed_Tribunes
University of Calgary	The students at large elect president and VP's. VP's are elected the same time as president. Slates not permitted.	25.4% voter turnout https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Elections_Policy-April2015.pdf
Laurentian University	Students elect VP's at Large. Elections are run sometime in mid March. Slates are not allowed due to the size of the school.	16% Voter Turnout. http://www.sga-age.ca/candidates-201516/
University of Windsor	Students elect VP's at Large. Elections are run at the same time as presidential election, which is in March. Slates are not permitted.	Voter turnout ~10%, two VPs acclaimed. http://www.excal.on.ca/student-action-sweeps-most-yfs-seats/
York University	President and VP's are elected at large with a pseudoslate system.	Voter turnout <15% past 2 years, http://www.excal.on.ca/student-action-sweeps-most-yfs-seats/
University of Prince Edward Island	Students at large elect the president and the 2 VP's at large. Vote for the candidates individually.	Source: http://www.upeisu.ca/notice/2015/03/upei-student-union-unofficial-election-results

Brock University	Students at large elect President and Vice Presidents. Executives are elected individually.	Voter Turnout of 34%
UBC Vancouver	The students at large elect president and 4VP's. Candidates can endorse each other, but cannot run in slates. Elections occur sometime between February 15 th and March 15 th .	Nomination forms signed by 50 students. 12.9% Voter Turnout http://www.ams.ubc.ca/studentsociety/elections-2/
University of Winnipeg	The students at large elect president and VP's. VP's are elected the same time as president and council.	http://theuwsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/UWSA-Bylaws2.pdf
University of Lethbridge	The students at large elect president and VP's.	http://ulsu.ca/userfile/file/Bylaws%202014-2015.pdf
Trent University	President, 2 VPs, 6 Commissioners elections	22.6% voter turnout. http://trentcentral.ca/governance/elections.stats.php
University of Guelph	No president; 5 executives elected at large	19% voter turnout. http://www.csaonline.ca/home/csa-general-elections-2015-unofficial-results/
Nipissing University	Students at large elect the VP's individually. VP's are elected between January and April, varies year to year.	
OCAD University	No president. Students at large elect the 3 executives at the end of the second semester.	~10% voter turnout, 1 executive acclaimed: http://ocadstudentunion.tumblr.com/post/82095383639/the-2014-2015-election-results-are-in
University of Laval	The executives are elected by the students at large.	Executive Candidates must be elected to administrative council (like SRA) to be able to run. http://www.cadeul.com/elections_cadeul/ca.php

At Large- Unspecified model

McGill University.	The 5 VP's are elected at large by students.	http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/SSMU-Executive-Officers-Contract-Job-Descriptions-2011-12-01.pdf
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Memorial University of Newfoundland	40 elected student representatives, 5 of which make up the executive. All positions are elected at large.	
University of New Brunswick	Executive committee (President and 4 VP's) are elected at large. Elections happens at the same time.	http://www.unbsu.ca/president/
St Thomas University	Students at Large elect the president and the 4 VP's.	http://theaquinian.net/voting-for-stusu-general-elections-opens-feb-24/
Mount Allison University	Students at Large elect the president and the 3 VP's.	Source: http://masu.ca/elections
Cape Breton University	Only 2 Executives: President and Executive President are both elected at large.	http://www.cbusu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Elections Act.pdf

Other- Internal election

Sherbrooke University	Executive council elected by representatives of the student council (Similar to SRA)	http://www.feus.qc.ca/la-feus/structure/
University of Montreal	Executive elected by the student council (Similar to SRA)	http://www.faecum.qc.ca/a-propos/fonctionnement

Other- Appointed by President

Wilfred Laurier	Students at large elect president. The President hires all the VP's.	24.3% voter turnout in 2015, lowest in 5 years since electronic voting
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Other- Combined/Hybrid

University of Toronto Scarborough	6 VP's, all of the VP's (except Operations and Campus Life) are elected by students at large. The incoming executives as well as the outgoing president and outgoing Campus Life or Operations depending on which position is being hired hire the other two VP's. Executives are allowed to run on a slate. VP's are elected in January - February.	Voter turnout <10%, one VP acclaimed. http://www.scsu.ca/about/elections/elections-results/
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Acadia University	President and 3 of the 4 VP's are elected by students at large. The VP Finance is appointed due to the 'technical requirements' of the job	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acadia_Students%27_Union
Dalhousie University	President and 3 of the 4 VP's are elected by students at large. The VP Finance is appointed	18.1% voter turnout http://www.dsu.ca/about-us/governance

Next steps

As McMaster currently has a relatively high level of student engagement for Presidential Elections compared to other student unions, one metric we are looking to examine in greater depth is voter turnout. Factors affecting voter turnout that the committee is looking to examine include promotion, system of voting (Slate, Semi-Slate, At Large, etc.), and the method of voting (online, in person, over what period of time) for both Vice Presidential and SRA elections. As we move forward in our research we are interested in engaging with professors in developing our methodology. One goal of this research is to conduct a longitudinal analysis of voter turnout at McMaster and other schools similar in size and other demographics. Additionally, the committee will begin to look into appropriate options for referendum ballot choices.