

This report is intended to meet the requirements as contained in the SFSS Bylaws for a final report on any election or referendum held by the SFSS.

Elections and Referenda Report

2019 General Elections and Referenda

Simon Fraser Student Society

simon fraser
student society

The 2019 Independent Electoral Commission

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This report has been Prepared by Chief Commissioner Arr Farah with recommendations from the IEC commissioners

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Timeline	5
Candidates	6
President.....	6
Vice-President Student Services	6
Vice-President University Relations.....	6
Vice-President Finance	6
Vice-President External Relations.....	7
Vice-President Student Life.....	7
Faculty Representative – Applied Sciences	7
Faculty Representative – Arts and Social Sciences	7
Faculty Representative – Business.....	7
Faculty Representative – Communication, Art, and Technology.....	8
Faculty Representative – Education.....	8
Faculty Representative – Environment	8
Faculty Representative – Health Sciences	8
Faculty Representative – Science.....	8
At-Large Representative	9
Referendum Questions	9
Recommendations	12
Notice of Election Period/Pre-Election Period	12
Recommendation 1 – Hire IEC earlier.....	12
Recommendation 2 – IEC Hiring Process.....	12
Recommendation 3 – election schedule	13
Recommendation 4 – Debate planning.....	13
Recommendation 5 – Debate Accessibility	13
Recommendation 6 – Draft IEC Regulations	14
Recommendation 7 – Slates	14
Recommendation 8 – Student Centre.....	15
Recommendation 9 – Office hours & Tabling.....	15
Recommendation 10 – Election outreach.....	15
Recommendation 11 – Copy Centre.....	16
Recommendation 12 – Spending limit.....	16
Recommendation 13 – Handbills/leaflets.....	17
Recommendation 14 – Social Media.....	17
Recommendation 15 – Campaigning during the voting period.....	17
Recommendation 16 – Emailing Lists.....	17
Recommendation 17 – Unofficial results announcement.....	18

Recommendation 18 – Official Results.....18
Recommendation 19 – Filling of Complaints.....19
Recommendation 20 – No Fines.....19
Recommendation 21 – Severity of infractions19
Recommendation 22 – Appeal Process19
Recommendation 23 – Change IEC name20
Recommendation 24 – create a policy for the event of a Tie20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is the purpose of this report to provide a high-level overview of the 2019 SFSS General Elections and Referenda. The election saw a total of 33 candidates vying for 16 positions on the society’s board of directors. There were also 3 candidates who were forced to withdraw their candidacy for various reasons. The Referenda had two questions; one about extending the Universal Transit Pass all SFU student have access to and the other serving as a non-binding plebiscite regarding choosing a name for the upcoming Student union building. This report provides official results, an election timeline and the various issues the IEC came across and recommended solutions.

TIMELINE

<i>Electoral Period</i>	Start Date	End Date
<i>Notice of Election Period</i>	February 4 th	February 17 th
<i>Nomination Period</i>	February 18 th	March 3 rd
<i>Campaign Period</i>	March 4 th	March 18 th
<i>Voting Period</i>	March 19 th	March 21 st
<i>Post-Election Period</i>	March 22 nd	April 9 th

CANDIDATES

PRESIDENT

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>('Yes' votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>('No' votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Giovanni Ho Sang</i>	1396	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Kia Mirasalehi</i>	405	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Amrita Mohar</i>	852	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

VICE-PRESIDENT STUDENT SERVICES

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>('Yes' votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>('No' votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Prince Cheema</i>	904	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Christina Loutsik</i>	924	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Simran Randhawa</i>	817	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

VICE-PRESIDENT UNIVERSITY RELATIONS

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>('Yes' votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>('No' votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Harman Batish</i>	374	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Russell Dunsford</i>	983	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Shina Kaur</i>	1028	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

VICE-PRESIDENT FINANCE

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>('Yes' votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>('No' votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Tawanda Nigel Chitapi</i>	1903	325	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

VICE-PRESIDENT EXTERNAL RELATIONS

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>(‘Yes’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>(‘No’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Jasdeep Gill</i>	1418	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Ali Versi</i>	940	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

VICE-PRESIDENT STUDENT LIFE

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>(‘Yes’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>(‘No’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Balqees Jama</i>	955	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Jessica Nguyen</i>	1386	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE – APPLIED SCIENCES

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>(‘Yes’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>(‘No’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Sheldon Bond</i>	131	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Nick Chubb</i>	143	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE – ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>(‘Yes’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>(‘No’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Simran Bining</i>	298	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Jennifer Chou</i>	361	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE – BUSINESS

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>(‘Yes’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>(‘No’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Willson Leong</i>	80	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Abhishek (Abhi) Parmar</i>	38	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Andrew Wong</i>	227	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE – COMMUNICATION, ART, AND TECHNOLOGY

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>(‘Yes’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>(‘No’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Silke Minami Billings</i>	53	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Fiona Li</i>	94	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE – EDUCATION

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>(‘Yes’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>(‘No’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Emerly Liu</i>	54	5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE – ENVIRONMENT

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>(‘Yes’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>(‘No’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Lex Grandan</i>	78	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Julian Loutsik</i>	83	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE – HEALTH SCIENCES

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>(‘Yes’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>(‘No’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Roopan Garcha</i>	134	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Osob Mohamed</i>	135	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE – SCIENCE

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>(‘Yes’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>(‘No’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Jason Spence</i>	219	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Kasey Stirling</i>	101	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Simran Uppal</i>	228	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

AT-LARGE REPRESENTATIVE

<i>Candidate Name</i>	<i>Votes in Favour</i> <i>(‘Yes’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Votes Against</i> <i>(‘No’ votes if uncontested)</i>	<i>Elected</i>
<i>Maneet Aujla</i>	1474	530	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Rayhaan Khan</i>	1496	438	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>

REFERENDUM QUESTIONS

Question 1: U-PASS 2019 REFERENDUM RESOLUTION

Question	
	<p>BACKGROUND:</p> <p>The cost of a current monthly adult transit pass for the Metro Vancouver region is \$95 for one zone, \$128 for two zones, and \$174 for three zones.</p> <p>The Universal Transit Pass (U-Pass) BC program represents a discounted transit fare for students in Metro Vancouver and has existed since 2011.</p> <p>The current U-Pass BC program price is \$41.00 per month and has not changed in 2 years, and the current contract is set to expire at the end of December 2019.</p> <p>There is a proposed five-year agreement between the Province of BC and TransLink to continue offering the U-Pass BC program starting January 2020 at all Metro Vancouver public post-secondary institutions.</p> <p>The proposed structure extends the current rate of \$41.00 per month until April 30, 2020, then adjusts the rate to \$42.50 per month beginning May 1, 2020. Thereafter, the rate would increase by up to 2% per year rounded to the nearest \$0.05 (see the proposed fee schedule below). This structure could continue past April 30, 2025, upon renegotiation or renewal of the agreement.</p> <p>The U-Pass BC program will be discontinued for SFU undergraduate students if a majority of SFU undergraduate students vote “No”.</p> <p>QUESTION:</p> <p>Are you in favour of continued participation in the U-Pass BC program beginning January 1, 2020, at the following monthly rates?</p> <p>January 1, 2020 – April 30, 2020 – \$41.00 May 1, 2020 – April 30, 2021 – \$42.50</p>

	<p>May 1, 2021 – April 30, 2022 – \$43.35 May 1, 2022 – April 30, 2023 – \$44.20 May 1, 2023 – April 30, 2024 – \$45.10 May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2025 – \$46.00 May 1, 2025 onwards: annual increases of up to 2% per year rounded to the nearest \$0.05</p>
Votes in Favour	2671
Votes Against	407
Threshold for Passing	50%
Results <i>Pass/Fail</i>	Pass

Question 2: NEW SFSS BUILDING NAMING REFERENDUM RESOLUTION

<p>Question</p>	<p>BACKGROUND:</p> <p>The new SFSS building is under construction between the AQ and MBC and is currently known as the Student Union Building. The building will be devoted to student activities and will include lounges, game rooms, and indoor and outdoor spaces for independent and group study, as well as all SFSS programs and services.</p> <p>The SFSS Board of Directors would like to survey students to determine whether the name “Student Union Building” should stay or if a new name should be chosen instead.</p> <p>The following options were shortlisted from a list of student submissions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Union Building (Building code: SUB) “Student Union Building” is the name traditionally used for this type of building on Canadian campuses. • The Den (Building code: DEN) This name is meant to evoke a cozy feeling where you can sit by the fire after class, hold a study session in a team room, or unwind in the gaming lounge. “The Den” is where you can kick back and hang out. • The Hive (Building code: HIVE) This name suggests a building alive with activity – whether you’re in a club, student union, or with a group of friends, “The Hive” is filled
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	<p>with ideas, events, and people who make this campus their home away from home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Treehouse (Building code: TREE) This name reflects SFU's natural environment and elements of the building's design: wood, scenic views, outdoor patios, and a focus on sustainability. "The Treehouse" is your place to escape, right here on the mountain. <p>QUESTION: Select your preferred name for the new SFSS building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Union Building (SUB) • The Den (DEN) • The Hive (HIVE) • The Treehouse (TREE)
<p>Votes in Favour</p>	<p>Student Union Building (SUB): 1134</p> <p>The Den (DEN): 600 The Hive (HIVE): 720 The Treehouse (TREE): 601</p>
<p>Threshold for Passing</p>	<p>Non-binding plebiscite</p>
<p>Results <i>Pass/Fail</i></p>	<p>Student Union Building (SUB): Pass</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

NOTICE OF ELECTION PERIOD/PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

The Notice of Election Period was from February 4th to February 17th. During this period the IEC was being hired, mapping out the election, planning the debate, and drafting IEC Regulations.

RECOMMENDATION 1 – HIRE IEC EARLIER

Issue:	This year the IEC chief and two commissioners were hired in the last week of January. The other two commissioners were hired mid-way through March. The society typically begins the hiring process in January, leading to a rushed election process.
Recommendation:	All though this years IEC team had previous experience with the society that may not be the case in future years. I recommend that the society begin the hiring process of the IEC Chief in November, ideally having someone in the role before the winter break will give them the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the society and the relevant governing documents.

RECOMMENDATION 2 – IEC HIRING PROCESS

Issue:	For the last two election cycles the IEC chief and commissioners have been hired by society staff. However, in past years it was the responsibility of the chief to hiring their commissioners. Having society staff hire commissioners then seldomly interact with them is a mistake. The chief is required to work with and manage the commissioners throughout the election.
Recommendation:	I recommend the IEC chief be hired and orientated separately from the commissioners. Then the chief along with society staff hire the remaining commissioners on the IEC hiring committee.

RECOMMENDATION 3 – ELECTION SCHEDULE

Issue:	Since the family day holiday and SFU reading break has been changed, I think the election schedule should be changed as well. Specifically, the nomination period no coincides with reading break, giving potential candidates less time to submit their nomination.
Recommendation:	I recommend the society and future IEC’s increase the nomination period by one week. The society bylaws require a minimum of two weeks, but do not prohibit a longer period.

RECOMMENDATION 4 – DEBATE PLANNING

Issue:	In previous years there has been as many as 4 debates. Hosting a debate at the Vancouver campus is simply irresponsible as attendance is awful among students and candidates. The Surrey campus also has a poorly attended debate. However, simply having only one debate with all 16 positions does not do the society justice.
Recommendation:	I recommend the IEC and society plan two debates in future years. One debate for faculty and At-large representatives and a second debate for President and Vice-Presidents. This way there will be enough time for candidate’s questions and all audience questions.

RECOMMENDATION 5 – DEBATE ACCESSIBILITY

Issue:	It is unreasonable to expect the IEC (a group of undergraduate students) to be able to account for all possible accessibility needs or have any formal training to deal with accessibility needs. It is also unreasonable for the society to rely on students with disabilities or student groups to enlighten them on accessibility concerns and best practices.
Recommendation:	I recommend the society invest in ensuring that a staff member, ideally the events coordinator, has relevant accessibility training. That way they would be responsible for ensuring the debate (and all other society events) are accessible to all students.

RECOMMENDATION 6 – DRAFT IEC REGULATIONS

Issue	The Society’s bylaws are very outdated and need to be changed as soon as possible. The Elections portion of the bylaws doesn’t account for technology or social media. Moreover, the society’s policies are for the most part written by society staff and board members and tend to either contradict the bylaws or are like the bylaws are not feasible.
Recommendation	In the event the society is unsuccessful in changing its bylaws. I recommend the IEC draft their own IEC regulations that will account for how they wish to administer the election in all the areas the bylaws and policies don’t give enough guidance. This way candidates will know in advance the rules of the election, and the IEC won’t have to make new rules as the election goes on, which has happened the last few years.

RECOMMENDATION 7 – SLATES

Issue	Between the 2014 and the 2018 SFSS elections the IEC has allowed slates. Throughout this period several IEC’s have at the conclusion of their election cycles recommended slates not be allowed. Slates tend to breed conflict, make it difficult to hold individuals accountable for their actions during an election and give large advantages to some candidates. For these reasons this year the IEC implemented that recommendation and did not allow slates. The society still had a high voter turnout and a new board was elected.
Recommendation	I recommend future IEC’s do not allow slates. I also recommend the society put that in its policies or bylaws.

Nomination Period

The Nomination Period was from February 18th to March 3rd. During this period the IEC began tabling and hosting office to ensure potential candidates were aware of the election process and answered any question individuals had. The IEC along with society staff also held two candidate orientations.

RECOMMENDATION 8 – STUDENT CENTRE

Issue	Throughout the election the student centre distributed and received candidate orientation packages and expense forms. However, in previous years candidate only interacted with the IEC. The student centre is not trained to know much about student eligibility, or any of the rules that govern the election. When they are asked election related questions there is the increased likelihood that they would give in correct information when compared to an IEC member.
Recommendation	I recommend cutting the student centre out of the election process entirely. With the society moving to the SUB they should be able to house the IEC in their own office like in previous years. All nomination packages, expense forms and related election documents should be given directly to the IEC. That way the IEC who is specifically trained to administer an election can answer questions with the appropriate information.

RECOMMENDATION 9 – OFFICE HOURS & TABLING

Issue	The IEC commissioners tend to spend much of their time between office hours and tabling.
Recommendation	Tabling is not very effect, however office hours to answer candidate questions during the nomination period and campaign period is. Especially if the IEC receives all the nomination packages. I recommend the IEC hold office hours Monday to Friday 10-4 during the nomination and campaign period.

RECOMMENDATION 10 – ELECTION OUTREACH

Issue	The IEC does not gain much traction through tabling. The Society overall does not get much traction on its social media.
Recommendation	I recommend the IEC and society should use sponsored Facebook advertisements to increase awareness of the election through all the election periods.

Campaign Period

The campaign period was from March 4th to March 18th. During this period the IEC continued to table in the AQ and host regular office hours. The IEC also began to receive and process complaints from candidates. Lastly, the IEC also began to approve election material for all candidates.

RECOMMENDATION 11 – COPY CENTRE

Issue	With the copy centre closing this year, the society will need to be prepared to hold elections without the copy centre.
Recommendation	I recommend the society develop SOP's to address how candidates are reimbursed by the society.

RECOMMENDATION 12 – SPENDING LIMIT

Issue	The spending limit is designed to ensure that all candidates are on an even footing. The spending limit is enforced largely through an honour system of candidates reporting their own spending for reimbursement from the society.
Recommendation	I recommend the society increase the spending limit to \$80 or \$100.

RECOMMENDATION 13 – HANDBILLS/LEAFLETS

Issue	During the campaign period candidates litter the campus with handbills/leaflets. This practice is a waste of paper and money as they are left on tables and the floor.
Recommendation	I recommend the IEC and the society ban handbills and leaflets. The society needs to be more environmentally friendly.

RECOMMENDATION 14 – SOCIAL MEDIA

Issue	Currently the society bylaws and policies do not adequately address social media.
Recommendation	I recommend the society creating relevant bylaws and policies.

Voting Period

The Voting period was from March 19th to March 21st. During this period the IEC continued to approve online material and receive and process complaints.

RECOMMENDATION 15 – CAMPAIGNING DURING THE VOTING PERIOD

Issue	Currently the bylaws require campaigning with physical material be stopped prior to the voting period, but nothing is said of non-physical material i.e online.
Recommendation	The society should allow candidates to continue to campaign online during the voting period.

RECOMMENDATION 16 – EMAILING LISTS

Issue	The use of email list has been disallowed in some years as they can present an unfair advantage as only some candidates have access to certain email lists.
Recommendation	The society should not allow candidates to send any reminder emails during the voting period regardless of it's a single email or an email list.

Post-Election Period

The Post-Election Period was from March 22nd to April 9th. During this period the IEC dealt with complaints, expense forms and ensuring candidates received reimbursements from the society.

RECOMMENDATION 17 – UNOFFICIAL RESULTS ANNOUNCEMENT

Issue	Currently the unofficial results are released to the membership a day after the election. However, the society receives many complaints after the results are announced. Also, many candidates do not provide expense forms. Both of which are issues that can affect the official results.
Recommendation	I recommend all unofficial election results should be held until the at least the following Monday. During that holding period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All expense forms should be handed in - All complaints should be filed.

RECOMMENDATION 18 – OFFICIAL RESULTS

Issue	There currently is now mentioning of when the IEC must have official results ready for board ratification.
Recommendation	I recommend a policy be draft that requires the IEC to have official results provided to the board for ratification no later than 10 days after the announcement of the unofficial results.

Complaints Process

Currently the society’s election complaints process as outlined in bylaws and policies needs reform.

RECOMMENDATION 19 – FILLING OF COMPLAINTS

Issue	Currently complaints by anyone through a JotForm. Complaints can be submitted at any time.
Recommendation	I recommend that only candidates can submit complaints. I also recommend that complaints can only be submitted between the opening of the campaign period and 24 hours after the voting period. Candidates should not be able to submit complaints with the prior knowledge of if they one ore lost he election.

RECOMMENDATION 20 – NO FINES

Issue	Currently as part of the discipline process candidates can be fined up to \$100 by the IEC. However, if the candidate were to lose an election there is no way to force them to pay that fine. The society can only deem them to be members not in good standing which isn’t an adequate form of punishment. If candidates are fined and win, they would likely pay the fine.
Recommendation	I recommend the society remove the IEC’s ability to fine candidates as found in the bylaws and policies. I recommend the IEC no longer fine candidates.

RECOMMENDATION 21 – SEVERITY OF INFRACTIONS

Issue	Currently the IEC is required to determine how severe an infraction is. The IEC has little useful guidance on dealing with complaints.
Recommendation	I recommend the society establish a new discipline schedule that clearly lays out what are minor and major infractions and depending on what period of the election and infraction takes place if it should be elevated to a more severe form of discipline.

RECOMMENDATION 22 – APPEAL PROCESS

Issue	During this election the idea of an appeal process was raised. The IEC offered in person meetings with candidates seeking appeals or further clarification of events.
Recommendation	I recommend an appeal process be built into policy something that would also offer candidates an in person meeting with the IEC.

Final Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 23 – CHANGE IEC NAME

Issue	Currently the name Independent Electoral Commission implies that the body is or ought to be completely independent from the society, which it is not. The body is made up of undergraduates not professional electoral officers. As such the body must rely on various staff members in order to conduct their work. The body is higher by staff and work with staff they are independent from the board as they should be. But to be independent from a society they are part of is illogical.
Recommendation	I recommend the society change the IEC's name to The Elections Commission which will be comprised of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chief Commissioner (1) - Commissioners (4)

RECOMMENDATION 24 – CREATE A POLICY FOR THE EVENT OF A TIE

Issue	Currently the society has no bylaw or policy in place to deal with a tie. I created an IEC regulation to deal with it if a tie occurred during this election cycle. There were 4 positions that were within 20 votes, including one position decided by a single vote.
Recommendation	I recommend the society change adopt a policy to account for a tie, the IEC regulation that was developed is a good starting point.

Final Thoughts

Having prior experience with SFSS elections as a candidate twice and referendum lead, I felt I that I brought a unique perspective to the role of IEC Chief Commissioner. I was aware of much of the glaring loopholes in the society's governing documents and in good faith did everything in my power to ensure the election ran as smoothly as possible. I strongly encourage the society and the newly elected board of directors conduct a thorough examination of the existing electoral processes as outlined in the society bylaws and policies. The IEC as currently structured is not and independent body it severally relies on the expertise of staff. The IEC does not need to keep up a charade of independence instead it should simply be a body comprised of 5 students that strive to administer a student society election, while displaying professionalism and impartiality. I hope that the issues raised in this report are reviewed extensively, and that the recommendations are taken seriously. Lastly, I appreciate the work of my dedicated and professional IEC commissioners Sarah, Jason, TK, and Aarsal. I wish the incoming board of directors the very best.

Thank you,

Arr Farah
IEC Chief Commissioner