

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

General Elections and
Referenda— 2020

Simon Fraser Student Society

simon fraser
student society

THE 2020 INDEPENDANT ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Commissioners:

Harshil Bhimani

Riddhi Shah

Simone Tardif

Chief Commissioner:

Alicen Lange

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TIMELINE

<i>Electoral Period</i>	Start Date	End Date
<i>Notice of Election Period</i>	February 3rd, 2020	February 16th, 2020
<i>Nomination Period</i>	February 17th, 2020	March 1st, 2020
<i>Campaign Period</i>	March 2nd, 2020	March 16th, 2020
<i>Voting Period</i>	March 17th, 2020	March 19th, 2020
<i>Post-Election Period</i>	March 20th, 2020	April 19th, 2020

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>Christina Loutsik</i>	537	n/a	
<i>Osob Mohamed</i>	956	n/a	X
<i>Miguel Resendiz</i>	309	n/a	

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>	690	n/a	
<i>Matthew Provost</i>	993	n/a	X

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>Gabe Liosis</i>	706	n/a	X
<i>Julian Loutsik</i>	456	n/a	
<i>Rubab Singh</i>	566	n/a	

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>Joben Bassi</i>	341	n/a	
<i>Corbett Gildersleve</i>	787	n/a	X
<i>Sabil Nathani</i>	251	n/a	
<i>Lara Radwan</i>	343	n/a	

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>Samad Raza</i>	858	n/a	X
<i>Simran Uppal</i>	765	n/a	

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>Jennifer (Meme Queen) Chou</i>	984	n/a	X
<i>Rachel Dee</i>	424	n/a	
<i>Saqib Madhany</i>	309	n/a	
<i>Jonathan Perl Gort</i>	81	n/a	

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>Kia Mirsalebi</i>	68	n/a	
<i>Harry Preet Singh</i>	136	n/a	X

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>Inderpreet Gakhal</i>	79	n/a	
<i>Sude Gwendik</i>	273	n/a	X

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>Sanaa Cassum</i>	79	n/a	
<i>Mehtaab Gill</i>	237	n/a	X
<i>Pariya Zabibi</i>	74	n/a	

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>Aman Ahmad</i>	74	n/a	
<i>Haider Masood</i>	91	n/a	X

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>Tagwa Ali</i>	46	n/a	
<i>Emerly Liu</i>	50	n/a	X

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>Anuki Karunajeewa</i>	90	15	X

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>Daria Elrick</i>	27	n/a	
<i>Roopan Garcha</i>	68	n/a	

<i>Nafoni Modi</i>	70	n/a	X
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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>Pooria Arab</i>	43	n/a	
<i>WeiChun Kua</i>	127	n/a	X
<i>Boris Perdiya</i>	104	n/a	
<i>Arvi Vashisht</i>	25	n/a	

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>Faiq Bandedi</i>	258	n/a	
<i>Balqees Jama</i>	695	n/a	X
<i>Arnaz Lalani</i>	234	n/a	
<i>Phum Luckkid</i>	708	n/a	X
<i>Harleen Sebra</i>	193	n/a	
<i>Geetanjli Sharma</i>	409	n/a	
<i>Harman Shergill</i>	328	n/a	

REFERENDUM RESULTS

WUSC FEE INCREASE

<p>Question</p>	<p>BACKGROUND:</p> <p>World University Services Canada SFU (WUSC SFU) is a student-led club to support education for refugee youth whose goals are to increase awareness about forced migration and the impact of education on the lives of those affected among youth refugee students and supports re-settling the refugee students that SFU students sponsor through a partnership with WUSC Canada.</p> <p>The program gives displaced students between the ages of 18 – 25 yrs the opportunity to complete their education in Canada. Refugee students are sponsored (books, tuition, and some living costs) by from over 90 universities across Canada. The financial support comes from students levy once per term across all participant Canadian universities/colleges. The total number of students sponsored from 1981 to 2019 is 71 students.</p> <p>At SFU, undergraduate students currently contribute \$2.50 per semester except undergraduate students taking 3 credits or fewer who currently contribute \$1.25 per semester. SFU WUSC needs additional revenue to be sustained and to continue supporting refugee youth, and without there being an increase WUSC SFU would not be able to continue sponsoring refugee students at SFU.</p> <p>QUESTION:</p> <p>Are you in favour of increasing the student levy for the SFU WUSC – World University Services Canada to \$5.00 per semester for students, except students taking 3 credits or fewer who would contribute \$2.50 per semester, adjusted annually for inflation according to the Canadian Consumer Price Index (CPI)?</p> <p>Yes/No</p>
<p>Votes in Favour</p>	<p>1245</p>
<p>Votes Against</p>	<p>765</p>
<p>Threshold for Passing</p>	<p>50%</p>
<p>Results <i>Pass/Fail</i></p>	<p>Pass</p>

SFPIRG FEE INCREASE

<p>Question</p>	<p>BACKGROUND:</p> <p>The Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group (SFPIRG) is an independent student society at SFU that engages students in social and environmental justice, through education, action, research, and community-building. Established in 1981, SFPIRG provides a wide range of programming, resources, services, and volunteer and employment opportunities to students.</p> <p>Visit www.sfpirg.ca to learn more about SFPIRG.</p> <p>All SFU students are members of SFPIRG, and contribute a member fee every semester as part of their Activity Fee. All SFU students currently contribute \$3 per semester, except students taking 3 credits or fewer who currently contribute \$1.50 per semester. This member fee was last set by referendum in 1994. The inflation rate in BC from 1994 to 2019 was 45.03%, meaning that something that cost \$3 in 1994 would now cost \$4.35 significantly impacting SFPIRG’s operating budget.</p> <p>SFPIRG needs additional revenue to maintain current levels of programming and services, to expand and enhance the organization’s scope and capacity, and to adjust for the inflation that has occurred over the last 25+ years. Without there being an increase, SFPIRG would not be able to continue operating at current levels, nor continue growing and developing new programs, services and opportunities for students.</p> <p>RESOLUTION:</p> <p>Be it resolved to increase the student levy for SFPIRG to \$5.50 per semester for students, except students taking 3 credits or fewer who would contribute \$2.75 per semester, adjusted annually for inflation according to the Vancouver Consumer Price Index (CPI).</p> <p>Yes/No</p>
<p>Votes in Favour</p>	<p>911</p>
<p>Votes Against</p>	<p>1004</p>
<p>Threshold for Passing</p>	<p>50%</p>
<p>Results <i>Pass/Fail</i></p>	<p>Fail</p>

KEY ISSUES

In this section I will address a few of the main issues that arose during this election.

ISSUE 1: POSTER VANDALISM

There was a big issue with candidate posters being torn up, removed, or displaced. There are no by-laws or policies currently addressing this issue. The IEC is in a difficult position when it comes to these complaints because there is almost never any evidence of who tore the posters down. The IEC can not and should not be expected to stand guard of posters to ensure they are not being vandalized. The IEC cannot issue any disciplinary action without proper evidence. Due to a lack of by-laws and policies relating to this issue, the IEC had very little options on how to resolve this problem. I have addressed the issue in the recommendations.

ISSUE 2: SLATING

This year the IEC drafted a regulation that prohibited slates. This regulation was drafted in an attempt to reduce conflict and to limit unfair advantages. This regulation caused a number of issues throughout the election. First, 'slating' is not defined in the by-laws or policies. Slating refers to campaigning as a group. 'Campaigning' is not defined in the by-laws or policies. This caused problems when trying to label certain behaviour as "slating" or not. Moreover, there were issues brought forward as to what behaviour constitutes slating and what behaviour constitutes endorsement of another candidate. For example, where do we draw the line between supporting another candidate and campaigning with another candidate? There is a lot of grey area surrounding this issue of slating and the regulations did not adequately address each possible issue, leaving a number of "loop holes". The issue of slating must be addressed for future elections. I recommend that slating be addressed and defined in either the SFSS by-laws or policies in the future.

SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION

This year, the IEC conducted an investigation directly following the end of the voting period. During the final day of the voting period, the IEC received a number of similar complaints in regards to the alleged existence of a candidate-created “voter bank”. There were also accusations of slating. The IEC conducted a thorough investigation over a week’s time. During this investigation we interviewed every candidate who was alleged to be involved, we examined all of the available evidence, and we sought aid from legal counsel in order to better interpret and apply the governing documents. Based on the available evidence and the findings of the interviews, the IEC unanimously agreed that there were no direct violations of any SFSS by-laws, policies, or regulations by the accused candidates. This investigation has inspired many policy recommendations to avoid similar conflicts in the future and to ensure a fair election process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THE IEC

RECOMMENDATION 1 – HIRE ICE EARLIER

Issue	The IEC chief and one commissioner were hired in the second week of February. Two more commissioners were hired in the beginning of March. This late hiring does not leave enough time for the newly appointed commissioners and chief to plan all the necessary election related events, outreach opportunities, and elections regulations.
Recommendatio	As IEC commissioners do not typically have previous experience with the SFSS or with election management, it is best to give them as much time as possible to adjust and familiarize themselves with the rules and processes prior to the election. I recommend that the society begin the hiring process in December. This will give the IEC the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the relevant governing documents and procedures. This will also allow time to properly write the IEC regulations, plan outreach initiatives, and schedule office hours before the campaign period begins.

THE BY-LAWS AND POLICIES

RECOMMENDATION 2- POLICY & BY-LAW UPDATE

Issue	The current by-laws and policies that govern the SFSS elections are quite vague and out of date. The current rules are not comprehensive and leave a lot of grey area and loop holes which makes it very difficult for the IEC to keep the elections fair.
Recommendation	I recommend that the society updates the by-laws and policies. This is the recommendation that I believe is the most important to allow for fair elections in the future. The new by-laws and policies should include provisions regulating: campaigning via social media, campaigning via social media during the voting period, the use of mailing lists, the use of faculty and society lists for the purpose of campaigning, etc. I will list specific recommendations in the remainder of this report.

RECOMMENDATION 3 – BY-LAW AND POLICY DEFINITIONS

Issue	There are very few definitions in the available governing documents. This creates a number of problems when the IEC is required to interpret and apply by-laws and policies throughout the election.
Recommendation	I recommend that new definitions are written into the SFSS Elections and Referenda Policies for the following terms: ‘campaigning’, ‘campaign’, ‘campaign manager’, ‘campaign volunteer’, ‘defamatory material’. This will help the IEC to properly apply and enforce the elections rules and will also allow candidates to clearly understand and abide by the elections rules.

RECOMMENDATION 4 – SLATES

Issue	In previous years, slating has been allowed during the SFSS elections. In 2019 and 2020, regulations were made that prevent slating. Slating creates conflict and offers certain candidates an unfair advantage. There are currently no by-laws or policies that address slating.
Recommendation	I recommend that the Society create a provision, either in the by-laws or policies, that addresses the slating. Since slating greatly affects the dynamic of an election, I believe it should be officially disallowed by the official governing documents. Prohibiting slating in the IEC regulations for that election year only creates conflict because a) candidates will not know whether or not slating is allowed until a week or two before the campaign period, b) candidates do not respect the authority of the IEC to draft these regulations, and c) the IEC are not equipped to draft regulations like this that require extreme clarity and depth to avoid “gray areas” and “loopholes” in the regulations.

RECOMMENDATION 5 – INVOLVEMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS IN CAMPAIGNING

Issue	There was an issue in this year’s election of current board members acting as campaign managers for candidates. This created a lot of conflict. Board members can use their power and standing in the SFSS to influence the election.
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<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>I recommend that a by-law or policy is created to prohibit current board members from acting as campaign managers for other candidates. Though the by-laws allow any student to campaign on behalf of candidates, I think this rule should be modified to limit the participation of current board members in campaigning. This will keep the elections fair by limiting the influence of current board members on the election results.</p>
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RECOMMENDATION 6- UPDATE INFRACTION SCHEDULE

<p>Issue</p>	<p>The current infraction schedule as laid out in the policies is ineffective and lacks any guidance. There are three steps: warning, fine, disqualification. Since fines are basically useless as candidates cannot be required to pay them, that leaves the IEC only the option of a warning or a disqualification. Moreover, the infraction schedule set out in the policies does not guide the IEC as to what constitutes a minor or a major infraction. This gives too much responsibility to the IEC to administer disciplinary action freely with no guidelines .</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>I recommend that the society sets out a new infraction schedule. I recommend that the society replace the option of “fines” with another form of discipline or that they create a system that requires candidates to pay their fines. This infraction schedule should clearly outline what constitutes a minor offence and what constitutes a major offence, dependant on which period of the election it occurs in.</p>

EVENTS

RECOMMENDATION 7- HOST TWO DEBATES

<p>Issue</p>	<p>There were 48 candidates this year. It is difficult to realistically fit that many candidates into one debate timeline while still allowing each candidate a reasonable amount of time to speak.</p>
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<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>I recommend that the Society host two debates. One debate can be for the faculty and at-large representatives and the other can be for the all of executive positions. This will allow each candidate adequate time to speak about their platform and will allow students to attend whichever debate they would like without the pressure of having to stay for 3+ hours.</p>
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RECOMMENDATION 8- HOST MORE CANDIDATE ORIENTATIONS

<p>Issue</p>	<p>There were 48 candidates this year. There were only two candidate orientation meetings this year. Many people were unable to attend the meetings due to scheduling conflicts. The chief had to spend hours communicating with candidates to coordinate alternative meeting times. This wasted a lot of time an energy.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>I recommend that the society hosts at least three candidate orientation meetings during the nomination period. This will provide candidates with more options of times to attend and will increase the probability that every candidate will be able to attend a scheduled meeting.</p>

Final Thoughts

Having no prior experience with the SFSS elections, I came into the position of IEC Chief Commissioner with fresh eyes. I soon became aware of the excessive loopholes and grey areas that exist in the current governing documents. Myself and the rest of the IEC did our best to ensure a fair election based on the current documents to guide our decisions. The IEC is also governed by the same by-laws and policies as are candidates. For this reason, their authority and the decisions they make are limited to the written by-laws and policies. The current governing documents are vague and outdated. I strongly encourage the Society to make efforts towards editing and adapting these documents based on the recommendations provided in this report. The IEC is placed in a position where they are given immense responsibility with little guidance and little support (due to the independent nature of the commission). In order to move forward with fair and clean elections, it is imperative that the governing documents are improved to address recurring issues. This will allow the IEC to properly analyze and apply the by-laws and policies as needed, without having to struggle to draft their own regulations to fill in the blanks. I hope that the issues raised in this report are reviewed and taken into consideration to improve the electoral process for future years.

Alicen Lange

IEC Chief Commissioner