



18/19 Elections Report

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Introduction

The SRUCSA Elections are a critical part of the representative work of SRUCSA. In order that the student voice is one of all students, all students must be able to, be encouraged and supported, to run for office and vote in the elections.

In the early days post-merger, The colleges SA elections were held in different ways; on some campuses, voting was by Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), while others had paper votes - this was not equal, required additional staff time and excluded some distance students. More recently, SRUCSA elections have utilised voting via the SRUC Moodle VLE, as an easy way for all students to be able to access the voting, and for SRUCSA to ensure only one vote is cast per student. Moodle is already an everyday part of the learning experience for the vast majority of students. This is highly accountable, easy to access and simple to implement, but requires a certain level of effort and computer know-how which may exclude some students.

Promotion

These election dates were set in late 2017 and have been an active part of our calendar since the beginning of the year, and for the most part we anticipated them well.

Early in 2018, we designed a new elections logo to be the focus of the design for the new campaign. Though we created a schedule and timetable for the elections in our project management software, it would have been beneficial to draw up a specific promotions timetable, and to have arranged our promotional materials further in advance. Some materials were easily updated from previous years, such as email templates, however items like posters and digital materials took more time.

All campuses were asked to display the regulations and dates of the elections, in line with the 28 day notification regulation. We began promoting nominations by emailing all students through the Outlook student lists. For this reason it is critical that SRUCSA is able to rely on the student email lists being up-to-date and accurately populated. Earlier in the year, when promoting the autumn election, we discovered that some campus student email lists were unpopulated. This was resolved at the time, and it is thought that lists are now complete, but this has not been verified.

Posters were distributed both by campus officers and through senior tutors. Social media posts were created across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat.

We were able to use the Moodle Mobile facility to remind every student by text when polls opened. This was backed up with an all-student mail and social media updates. Candidate posters were distributed by asking them to be put up by each campus' senior tutor.

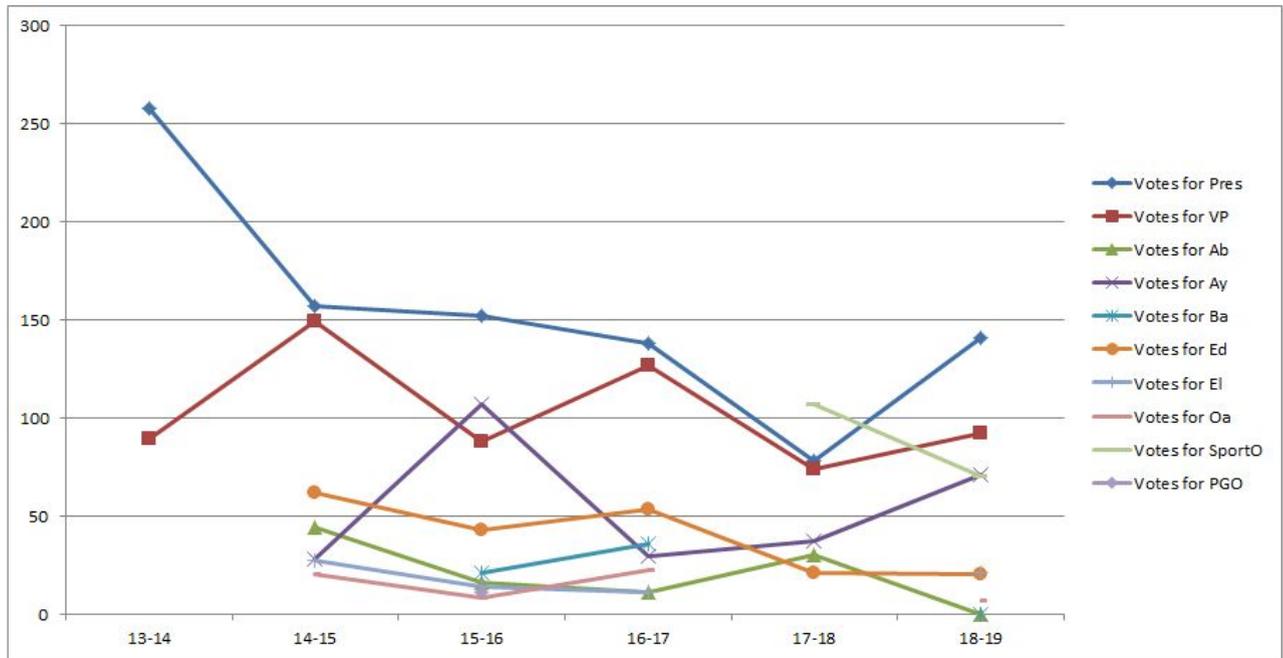
Statistics

Nominations

	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19
Nominations Pres	1	1	1?	2	1	2
Nominations VP	2	2	1?	1	1	1
Nominations S&A					3	1
Nominations Abn		1?	1	1	1	0
Nominations Ayr		1	4	1	1	2
Nominations Bar		0	1	1	0	0
Nominations Ed		1	1	3	1	1
Nominations Elm		1	1	1	0	1
Nominations Oat		1	1	0	0	1
Nominations PGO			1	0		

Votes

	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19
Votes for Pres	258	157	152	138	78	141
Votes for VP	89	149	88	127	74	92
Votes for Ab		44	16	11	30	-
Votes for Ay		28	107	29	37	71
Votes for Ba		-	21	36	-	-
Votes for Ed		62	43	53	21	20
Votes for El		27	14	11	-	21
Votes for Oa		20	8	22	-	7
Votes for SportO					107	70
Votes for PGO			11	-		
TOTAL VOTES	347	487	460	427	347	422



The 2018 SRUCSA Elections had 422 votes overall for our 7 available positions. Most voting activity occurred on the 28th when polls opened and another rush on the 6th of March the day before they were set to close, although a technical issue that prevented a few students voting meant we kept them open til the 8th, explained below. Here is a break down of each position and how many votes they received.

In comparison this year was better than last year, but lower than most years. It looks like the more candidates we have the more votes we have and when new posts are introduced we get significantly more candidates.

Concerns of current officer team

The Campus Officers and sabbatical officers were not clear on what level of involvement was allowed regarding campaigning on behalf of candidates. The candidates approached some campus officers to ask if they could post to the campus officers' dedicated Facebook profile, rather than personal pages. This was not mentioned in the regulations, but it could be seen as advantageous for candidates who may already know officers personally.

Technical issues

Moodle, though a good tool to use for voting, does have its limitations, mostly due to the work that must be done with student data before voting can take place. For example, to ensure that only Elmwood students can vote for Elmwood Campus Officer, the Moodle Administrator needs to import the student lists for each campus - either from UnitE, or from existing cohorts already in Moodle - and ensure only Elmwood students are given access to this voting module. The same goes for each other campus, then all student lists are given access to cross-campus elections.

During the first few days of voting, a handful of students emailed to let SRUCSA know that they were not able to vote; an error message said they were not enrolled on the elections course. These names were passed to the E-Learning team, who identified that these students were not included in the student cohorts moved to the elections module. This was resolved by overwriting the groups with updated Unit-E lists that were thought to be accurate. At this point, with only a few students affected and plenty of time for them to vote, nothing was changed, but we did mention in promotional material that students should let us know if they encountered any issues.

On the 6th of March - 24 hours before the close of polls - SRUCSA received multiple notifications from students that they were continuing to have issues accessing the voting page. E-learning identified that these issues were caused by students not being registered for the correct modules to be recognised as students. This would affect an unknown quantity of students (mostly fourth-years) and there was no way to identify which students were affected. After consulting with NUS for advice, it was decided to extend the voting period by 24 hours; email was sent to all students, along with directed social media posts.

Identified actions for next year

In the course of reviewing this year's elections, we have first identified these concerns which we will ensure we address at the next elections - this is by no means the final list, and we will continue to see how we can improve and pre-plan:

- Tech: contact with E-Learning team - we will get in touch earlier, and ask them to confirm that student lists are accurate, both across SRUC and by campus.
- Tech: keep our options open for alternate vote hosting - we will be looking at how other SAs host and run their elections, and considering what our best practice might be.
- Prepare communications strategy and 'look/feel' well in advance - we will create logos (hopefully bringing in Comms to advise) and E-SIN/Cultivate/social media schedules much earlier, and have the information ready to go out in a more orderly fashion.
- Update candidate packs and nomination form - we will improve the layout of the current pack and form based on candidate feedback (both verbal and via a candidate survey); for example, we will explicitly ask for the names candidates prefer to use online after some confusion this year.
- Give better guidance to current exec team - we made a great effort to ensure that candidates understood the rules and regulations of the election, however we need to ensure that the current exec team - candidates or not - are also given guidance on how they can and cannot promote the campaigns of and interact with the candidates.

- Contact senior tutors (and therefore education staff) earlier - the staff could be of great benefit to us - for example, in identifying suitable candidates - and we should be working with them more closely and supporting them in supporting these elections.

Conclusion

We are both new to running student elections but we feel that we have both brought good ideas and processes into this work, and we have had good ideas of what we might do to make this run more smoothly - and hopefully with more participation - in future. We have created an event plan and implemented project management software to track what we do and when it needs to be done, and will continue to building on this. With this work - and the feedback from this year's candidates - we can make next year's elections very successful, and hopefully more stress-free for all involved.