



sheridan student union

MEMO

TO: SSU Governance & Elections Review Committee
FROM: Laura DiViesti, Special Projects Coordinator & CRO
DATE: January 6, 2020
RE: Elections Strategy for 2020-2021

Dear Committee Members,

PURPOSE: This memo will serve to outline a brief description of the current state of SSU governance and elections. It will then provide a strategy moving forward to reposition the SSU Board of Directors within the organization's communications and with the student body to create a greater understanding of the role and decisions of the Board.

CURRENT PRACTICES AND ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES: The Elections department has faced a variety of challenges related to our annual Board of Directors General Elections and By-Elections, that often continue to pose other challenges once elected Directors have taken their seat in office for the term. Most notably are challenges associated with a lack of awareness of the Board and its scope/role, that can often develop into a lack of clarity for Directors while sitting on the Board, non-Board related business coming to individual Directors or the Board as a whole, and students-at-large being unsure or unaware of Board business.

The SSU is committed to reflecting on experience and reviewing current best practices to ensure that moving forward the SSU Board of Directors is repositioned in a variety of ways that can ensure the success of the self-governing body, create an engaging electoral process, and provide valuable opportunities for Directors.

Within the Elections process, we most often find that many student's expectations as to what they will be doing on the Board do not match what the scope of the Board truly is. Expectations often align closer to that of the roles of our Student Executives (President, Vice-President, Student Life Coordinator and Clubs Coordinator) or part-time staff (Marketing Street Team, Customer Service Representatives, etc.). There could be several factors that lead to this, including potential miscommunication from the SSU to students, or by word of mouth amongst students who contribute to the misinformation candidates and students-at-large receive.

We often find that there are very few candidates at the HMC and Trafalgar campuses, which leads us to create messaging and communications that broadly appeals to as many students as possible. As a result, the messaging needs to be very high level and appealing to all students, as opposed to creating a campaign that has clear and targeted messaging to appeal to students who would be interested in governance. This also often leads to a misunderstanding of the student body as to the duties and responsibilities the board holds.

There also tends to be a lack of interest in students not only from the perspective of running for a seat on the Board, but also our student journalists and the student-body-at-large during voting. By creating more opportunities for engaging candidates with students beyond Campaign Forums, this could potentially increase the voter turnout and awareness of elections and the Board as a whole.

REPOSITIONING STRATEGY:

As a result of what is needed to create greater awareness of the SSU Board of Directors and the business conducted at the Board table, the strategies below will not only generate awareness on the electoral process but also the student body's overall impression and understanding of the Board of Directors as a whole. Through proper education and highlighting of Board business year-round, the pressure on generating awareness/educating the student body during the elections will be reduced as hopefully they will already understand the board and possibly be more interested in running for a seat with the right intentions and expectations in mind.

In order to create a greater year-round awareness, it is our hope to be able to put out targeted information about Board business including meeting recaps and important corporate updates by utilizing the organization's LinkedIn and "News and Updates" feature on our website to elevate, publish and showcase the impact the Board has on the corporation and student experience at Sheridan.

SSU Elections will need to go under a communications review to ensure that information being put out is professional, accurate and informative. Strategies for that could include using former Board member's in visuals, getting first hand accounts of the experience and impact being on the Board had on alumni, and focusing on the high-level strategic direction provided by past Board's to showcase the impact decisions made have had on the current student body.

By communicating first-hand from former Directors to current students, we reduce the chances of miscommunicating the role of the Board and Directors individually, students have a chance to connect with their peers/alumni and we can provide our former Directors a unique opportunity to give back to the Sheridan community again. Communication methods could be in-person, using SheridanLife Radio, and written blog posts depending on the availability and comfort level of those involved.

DELIVERABLES:

There will be several deliverables required from the Committee and Board including: a revision of the Elections Policy, Bylaw amendments should anything need to change as a result of policy or composition changes (ex. qualifications/eligibility, composition, etc.), a revised job description, and edits or suggestions to elections documents/forms (ex. nominations package).

TIMELINES:

In order to make changes ahead of the 2020-2021 General Election starting in March 2020, Board approval of many changes will need to take place at the 269th meeting of the Board. Prior to bringing this forward to the Board, the Committee will need to meet to provide their feedback on the outlined strategies and provide direction on the modifications to the policies and

documents outlined above. It is recommended that the committee meet the week of January 13th, 2020 for 2-3 hours in order to complete all necessary tasks to keep on top of the aggressive timeline. After receiving Board approval, the Returning Officers will work internally to execute the strategy and prepare accordingly for the March 2nd opening of Nominations for the 2020-2021 General Election.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch. I look forward to discussing this in further detail at the next meeting.

Sincerely,

Laura DiViesti
Special Projects Coordinator & CRO
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