

March 19, 2021

To: The URSU Board of Directors

From: Amber Smale, Chief Returning Officer

RE: 2021 URSU General Election Final Report

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## **BACKGROUND**

The URSU engaged the services of a Chief Returning Officer in late September 2020 to oversee the 2020/21 By Election and General Election that was held on March 17 and 18, 2021.

During this engagement the CRO and the URSU jointly completed a Candidates Information and Nomination package along with the required public notices of the nomination period and available positions. The nomination period was February 10-24, 2021, with Nomination Day on February 24, 2021. Candidates were given until March 7, 2021 to withdraw from the Election or some positions if multiple were initially selected. Three individuals withdrew or were determined to be ineligible, leaving 28 candidates in this General Election. Additionally, this election included candidates for the RPIRG Board of Directors and a plebiscite related to the use of ProctorTrack and Recreation and Athletic Fees.

The URSU held a candidate questions and answer session with URSU Executive and staff on February 11, 2021. The purpose of this session was to advise potential candidates of the URSU, the responsibility of URSU and the Board of Directors, the meeting expectations and commitment required to serve in those roles. The CRO held an all candidates meeting on February 26, 2021 which provided instruction to all candidates on their roles and responsibilities as candidates and what was/wasn't allowed during the campaigning period. This was an overview of the Election and Referendum Bylaw along with the Candidates Information and Nomination package. An all candidates' forum was held for all candidates running for Executive and Board of Director Positions on March 11, 2021. This provided the candidates with an opportunity to present their platforms and answer any questions from students who were present.

The campaign period ran from March 1-18, 2021. Candidates were provided with clear instructions by the CRO about what they could/couldn't do during the no campaigning period and on Election Days.

The list of available positions and candidates who ran for each is attached as Appendix A.

## **DISCUSSION**

### Election Results and Complaints

There was a total of 17,866 students eligible to vote. Based on the Executive positions where all students are eligible to vote, a total of 1,200 voted which is a 6.70% voter turnout which is down from previous elections by 2.88%.

The official results were announced on March 19, 2021.

The Chief Returning Officer received a total of 4 complaints related to possible Election violations. The complaints fell into the following categories:

- Inappropriate use of position and resources
- Intentional misrepresentation of facts
- Slander against other candidates
- Privacy breaches

All complaints were received in writing, via e-mail to the CRO. Complainants identified the individuals involved, had witnesses or provided video and photos of individuals and incidents.

The Election Committee made up of the CRO, Public Elections Officer, Marc Kelly and the Student Elections Officer, Rhythm Ray met on March 18, 2021 to review the complaints and to determine appropriate disciplinary actions. The Elections Committee has determined that Amir Said is no longer a member in good standing and ineligible to continue as a candidate or hold a Board of Director's position including University Council, Executive of Council or Senate positions.

Attached as Appendix B is the official results of online voting. Provided separately is the results received from the Simply Voting System which includes the outcome of each round for ranked ballots.

The Elections Committee will not be releasing the names of complainants or evidence provided as it may identify the complainant and this would breach the privacy between the CRO and the complainant and may cause people not to report known violations in the future.

Provided below is the result of demerit points that will be issued:

Abu Mohammad Hammad Ali - 8 points

Harshkumar Patel - 5 points

Amir Said - 40+ points

Some of the infractions are not listed in the Bylaw. As per the Bylaw, the CRO has discretion over these types of instances but they should be added to the bylaw. This will be covered later in the report.

### Online Voting

The General Election was held via online voting using the software, Simply Voting. This software allowed the URSU to carry through on previously passed motions from the membership to conduct ranked voting moving forward. The system worked well and showed no indication that the ranking was done improperly. Members receive an e-mail with the direct link to voting. Additionally, the system allowed the URSU to only display races that applied to the voters. For example, faculty members only saw the races for the Executive positions and their faculty, rather than seeing every race. This provides greater accuracy on the results than previously when it couldn't be prevented and there was no way of knowing if only the faculty members voted or not.

Given the Provincial and University directives around the COVID-19 virus, the two polling stations that are normally established at Riddell Centre and The First Nations University of Canada were closed. However, this still allowed the CRO to carry out the online voting as with previous elections.

### Election and Referendum Bylaw Improvements

The CRO noted a few things that could be improved in future elections and to enable a more modern approach to Elections. The proposed changes are outlined below.

**Section 3.1 General Election:** There continues to be less than six months between a By Election and General Election. There are times when this may be needed and times when it's not. I would recommend this section be reworded to make By Elections optional depending on the URSU's ability to carry out decisions and operations with the existing Board of Directors. If this is not achievable, you may want to consider moving the General Election to the fall and a By Election to the spring. This would give those elected a longer period to get familiarized with their role and increases the likelihood of keeping candidates for a full year, rather than running a General Election in the spring followed by summer months where many may be out of classes and not focused on University activities. Lastly, all eligibility of candidates should be completed prior to the campaigning period beginning. There may need to be a week in between the Nomination and Campaign period to facilitate this.

**Section 3.1.4 Constituencies and Positions:** It's important that the meeting with the URSU General Manager occur prior to Nomination day. This is a requirement that candidates wishing to run for an Executive Position must sign off on. Having the nomination day prior to the meeting deadline encourages candidates to falsify their nomination papers. There were 3 meetings held after nominations were submitted and these nominations should have been rejected because the meeting did not occur yet they signed off that they did.

**Section 3.1.15 Campaigning Guidelines:** There were some serious matters in one of the complaints and the demerit point system doesn't cover these types of behaviours. There's also some things within the structure that are not as severe as others. I would suggest the structure be revisited and it clearly be outlined what will result in a disqualification so there is no room for doubt by candidates. The CRO can assist with this review and restructure. The following items should be added under the disqualification category:

- 1) Inappropriate use of a Board position and organizational platform to gain an advantage in the election.
- 2) Intentional misrepresentation of an organizational endorsement.
- 3) Inappropriate use of an external organization's social media account to promote candidacy for which the candidate is the account administrator.
- 4) Use of an external organization as an endorsement which is a prohibited activity under the Bylaw

**Section 3.1.18 Resolution of Campaigning Complaints:** In this section, demerit points on their own should not disqualify a candidate. The consideration needs to be given to the nature of the offence, the intent, knowledge and actions of the offender before and after the complaint is known and the CRO's

ability to maintain the integrity of the Election itself as a result. Without that type of wording, it makes it very easy for candidates and others to simply report matters to try and get others disqualified.

**Section 4 Consequences for Non-Compliance:** This section requires further discussion and review.

Not-for-Profit Legislation

The URSU is a non-profit organization that falls under Provincial Legislation. In this Act, is a clear outline of the Board of Directors composition aside from Student members. The URSU should consider the provisions to appoint 1-3 public members on the Board who bring experience and leadership in serving on Boards and Committees. These individuals provide continuity to the Board and are able to guide and mentor new members in their duties and behaviours.

Each Election, the URSU suffers some sort of reputational harm that may be attributed to inexperience and a lack of understanding of the roles and how a Board functions together as a collaborative and cohesive team. Board training and regular mentorship for Executive members is key to rebuilding URSU's image with students and partners along with developing the appropriate relationship with the Carillon.

Respectfully Submitted,



Amber Smale  
Chief Returning Officer

## APPENDIX "A"

### Candidates by Position

#### **EXECUTIVE**

##### President

Amir Said  
Hannah Tait

##### VP Student Affairs

Ziyang (Zeo) Li  
Saurav Munjapara

##### VP Operations and Finance

Harveer Singh

##### VP External Relations

Pawanpreet Singh

#### **DIRECTORS**

##### **Faculties**

##### Campion College

Ariana Gargabite

##### Centre for Continuing Education

No Candidates

##### Arts

Rebecca Dziaduk

##### Business Administration

Jiaolin Chen  
Karanveer Singh

##### Education

No Candidates

##### Engineering

Intiyaz Ahmed

##### Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR)

Aditya Pathak  
Muhammad Shaikh

Kinesiology and Health Studies

Manveet Singh

Media, Art, and Performance

No Candidates

Nursing

No Candidates

Science

Basmah Almosallem

Abhi Patel

Nakul Purohit

Social Work

Ruth Asfaw

First Nations University of Canada

No Candidates

La Cité

Mathieu Gauvin

Luther College

Kiegan Lloyd

**CONSTITUENCIES**

Equity and Campaigns

Jashanpreet Singh

Indigenous Students

No Candidates

International Students

Abu Mohammad Hammad Ali

Harshkumar Patel

Jayant Tyagi

LGBTQIA2S+ Students

No Candidates

Part Time Students

Emily Camposano

Students with Disabilities

Katlyn Richardson

Women Students

Isabella Grajczyk

Jindpreet Kaur

**SENATE**

**Six positions available**

Imtiyaz Ahmed

Abu Mohammad Hammad Ali

Amir Said

Hannah Tait

**UNIVERSITY COUNCIL**

**Faculty**

Arts (10 positions available)

Rebecca Dziaduk

Business (6 positions available)

No Candidates

Education (6 positions available)

No Candidates

Engineering (3 positions available)

Imtiyaz Ahmed

Graduate Studies and Research (6 positions available)

No Candidates

Kinesiology and Health Studies (3 positions available)

No Candidates

La Cité (1 position available)

No Candidates

Media, Arts and Performance (2 positions available)

No Candidates

Nursing (4 positions available)

No Candidates

Science (9 positions available)  
Nakul Purohit

Social Work (6 positions available)  
No Candidates

Centre for Continuing Education (2 positions available)  
No Candidates

**EXECUTIVE OF COUNCIL**  
**Faculty – 1 position per faculty**

Arts  
Kiegan Lloyd

Business  
Hannah Tait

Education  
No Candidates

Engineering  
Imtiyaz Ahmed

Graduate Studies and Research  
No Candidates

Kinesiology and Health Studies  
No Candidates

La Cité  
No Candidates

Media, Arts and Performance  
Katlyn Richardson

Nursing  
No Candidates

Science  
Basmah Almosallem  
Nakul Purohit

Social Work  
No Candidates

Centre for Continuing Education  
No Candidates

## Appendix B

**University of Regina**  
 URSU General Election  
 March 17 and 18, 2021

No	Position	Eligible Voters	Votes
1	<b>President (Hannah Tait)</b>	17,866	Amr Said (390) Hannah Tait (552) Abstain (258)
2	<b>Vice President, External Relations (Pawanpreet Singh)</b>		ACCLAIMED
3	<b>Vice President, Operations and Finance (Harveer Singh)</b>		ACCLAIMED
4	<b>Vice President, Student Affairs (Ziyang Li (Zeo))</b>	17,866	Ziyang (Zeo) Li (441) Saurav Munjapara (303) Abstain (456)
5	<b>Director, Campion College (Ariana Gargabite)</b>		ACCLAIMED
6	<b>Director, Faculty of Arts (Rebecca Dziaduk)</b>		ACCLAIMED
7	<b>Director, Business Administration (Jiaolin Chen)</b>	1,819	Jiaolin Chen (74) Karanveer Singh (47) Abstain (103)
8	<b>Director, Faculty of Engineering (Imtiyaz Ahmed)</b>		ACCLAIMED
9	<b>Director, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (Aditya Pathak)</b>	2,107	Aditya Pathak (56) Mohammad Shaikh (44) Abstain (45)
10	<b>Director, Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies (Manveet Singh)</b>		ACCLAIMED
11	<b>Director, Faculty of Science (Abhi Patel)</b>	2,754	Basmah Almosallem (55) Abhi Patel (130) Nakul Purohit (63) Abstain (97)
12	<b>Director, Faculty of Social Work (Ruth Asfaw)</b>		ACCLAIMED
13	<b>Director, La Cité (Mathieu Gauvin)</b>		ACCLAIMED
14	<b>Director, Luther College (Kiegan Lloyd)</b>		ACCLAIMED
15	<b>Director, Equity and Campaigns (Jashanpreet Singh)</b>		ACCLAIMED
16	<b>Director, International Students (Harshkumar Patel)</b>	17,866	Abu Mohammad Hammad Ali (180) Harshkumar Patel (492) Jayant Tyagi (278) Abstain (568)
17	<b>Director, Students with Disabilities (Katlyn Richardson)</b>		ACCLAIMED
18	<b>Director, Part Time Students</b>		ACCLAIMED

	<b>(Emily Camposano)</b>		
19	<b>Director, Womens Students (Isabella Grajczyk)</b>	17,866	Isabella Grajczyk (425) Jindpreet Kaur (318) Abstain (457)
20	<b>University Council, Arts (Rebecca Dziaduk)</b>		ACCLAIMED
21	<b>University Council, Engineering (Imtiyaz Ahmed)</b>		ACCLAIMED
22	<b>University Council, Science (Nakul Purohit)</b>		ACCLAIMED
23	<b>Executive of Council, Arts (Kiegan Lloyd)</b>		ACCLAIMED
24	<b>Executive of Council, Business (Hannah Tait)</b>		ACCLAIMED
25	<b>Executive of Council, Engineering (Imtiyaz Ahmed)</b>		ACCLAIMED
26	<b>Executive of Council, Media, Art and Performance (Katlyn Richardson)</b>		ACCLAIMED
27	<b>Executive of Council, Science (Nakul Purohit)</b>	2,754	Basmah Almosallem (64) Nakul Purohit (137) Abstain (144)
28	<b>Senate (Imtiyaz Ahmed) (Abu Mohammad Hammad Ali) (Amir Said) (Hannah Tait)</b>		ACCLAIMED ACCLAIMED INELIGIBLE ACCLAIMED
29	<b>ProctorTrack Plebiscite (Non-binding)</b>	17,866	In Favour (731) Opposed (214) Abstain (255)
30	<b>Recreation and Athletic Fee Plebiscite (Non-binding)</b>	17,866	In Favour (737) Opposed (152) Abstain (311)
31	<b>Regina Public Interest Research Group Board of Directors</b>		Isabella Grajczyk (299) Asma Akhi (69) Safoora Abdul (121) Sundus Zia (63) Abstain (747)

**Appendix "C" – Records of Discipline**

**Record of Discipline Sheet**

In the event that a member is disciplined for an offence this sheet should be filled out by the CRO to document disciplinary actions taken. These sheets should be turned in to the General Manager following the election.

Date and (approximate) time of Offence	March 3, 2021 - 6:43 pm
Name of Offender	Abu Mohammad Hammad Ali
Description of Offence (use other side as necessary)	Claims of slander against another candidate in the Election on social media. Copy of post attached to complaint.

Discipline	March 2, 2021 - 2:51 pm - instructed Hammad to remove the post immediately and reminded him of his obligations as a Candidate and the relevant sections of the Bylaw to review. Hammad was advised of demerit points being issued.
Resolution (ex: was payment made?)	Post was removed immediately and 8 demerit points have been assessed.

If the candidate wishes to appeal, the request for appeal must be affixed to this sheet and submitted, along with the appeal and any and all supporting documents or evidence to the Elections Committee.

## Record of Discipline Sheet

In the event that a member is disciplined for an offence this sheet should be filled out by the CRO to document disciplinary actions taken. These sheets should be turned in to the General Manager following the election.

Date and (approximate) time of Offence	March 17, 2021 - 7:54 pm approximate
Name of Offender	Harshkumar Patel
Description of Offence (use other side as necessary)	Candidate sent a text message to an individual asking him if he voted and who he voted for in the race he is a candidate in. He later asked the individual to forward to his friends and ask them to vote. The candidate did not ask that people vote for him.

Discipline	This was an unintentional breach of student privacy. Voting is a personal and private individual choice that the candidate didn't know he couldn't ask.
Resolution (ex: was payment made?)	Five demerit points will be assessed against the candidate.

If the candidate wishes to appeal, the request for appeal must be affixed to this sheet and submitted, along with the appeal and any and all supporting documents or evidence to the Elections Committee.

## Record of Discipline Sheet

In the event that a member is disciplined for an offence this sheet should be filled out by the CRO to document disciplinary actions taken. These sheets should be turned in to the General Manager following the election.

Date and (approximate) time of Offence	March 8, 2021 - 1:48 pm
Name of Offender	Katlyn Richardson
Description of Offence (use other side as necessary)	<p>A public Facebook comment was made where the complainant felt it negatively depicted the current Executive team, which includes two members of the Executive who are running for re-election. The Complainant feels she does not think highly of either candidates, and thus argues that this is slander against other candidates.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Complainant feels her platform contains a deliberate misrepresentation of facts. It states that she "has been the disability director since 2019," when in actuality she had resigned prior to the election and is no longer in that role.</p>
	No discipline. While the complainant provided a screenshot of the comment posted, the individual did not provide supporting documentation on where the post was from, or what it was in relation to when asked. Furthermore, the candidate made the post

Discipline	without identifying any one candidate and it expressed her struggles briefly in dealing with the Executive as a whole, not one person. It's also been confirmed she was the Disability Director since 2019 even if she chose to step down prior to the term ending and is seeking re-election. No one has served in between her terms.
Resolution (ex: was payment made?)	This complaint is dismissed, the complainant has been advised.

If the candidate wishes to appeal, the request for appeal must be affixed to this sheet and submitted, along with the appeal and any and all supporting documents or evidence to the Elections Committee.

## Record of Discipline Sheet

In the event that a member is disciplined for an offence this sheet should be filled out by the CRO to document disciplinary actions taken. These sheets should be turned in to the General Manager following the election.

Date and (approximate) time of Offence	March 17, 2021 - 9:25 pm approximate
Name of Offender	Amir Said
Description of Offence (use other side as necessary)	Concerns reported that the candidate used his position as a member of a campus organization to use their social media platform to make campaign posts which appear to be an unauthorized endorsement for himself as President. Candidate has been removed from the Executive as a result and the organization has issued a statement that this was an unauthorized use and message that they don't endorse any candidates.
Analysis	The Election Committee spoke with the Candidate, and also with the two co-presidents of the organization that were affected by his use of their social media accounts. We also reviewed the Carillon post detailing the event.

In summary, from the Candidate:

- He was the ESA, Social media representative and held that role for a few months
- From his perspective - never any requirement for approval
- He figured – He could just use his platform on the page.
- He shared his facebook page on the ESA’s facebook page, and their Instagram story.
- He saw a complaint within 6 minutes of the post, realized the error of his ways, and removed the facebook post only.
- He indicated that 10 minutes following that the ESA president reached out to him, and she had removed the story post from Instagram.
- There was a third and fourth account for which he was an administrator, which was unrelated to his role with the ESA, but also unrelated directly to his campaign, that he shared similar content to. One was related to a UBC event..

In summary, from the representatives of the ESA:

- Candidate was in that role for a short period of time.
- Authority and use associated with social media was discussed informally – but was clear that it was around the scope of the business of the ESA.
- One co-president saw complaint through message on social media, and inquired with Candidate about problem. Later saw instagram post, and removed it.
- Unclear on exact timing of everything, but Co-President had received a number of personal messages inquiring about the use of the account as described. Thought it was longer than 6 minutes, and recalls instagram post showing as if it had been posted 1 hour prior.

### **Conclusion**

In short, the Candidate did or should’ve known better than to post on the ESA social platforms without obtaining the consent of the

group at large. He was aware of other organizations that were allowing the practice, and was hoping to use that leverage as part of his campaign. The Candidate was aware of the rules, and was one of the first to comment or complain if he felt that the conduct of other candidates was out of line with expectations. The candidate was also aware of the availability of the election officer to provide any insight or commentary on practices that might be in the fringes of acceptable conduct.

While the Candidate did express regret, his subsequent conduct after being caught for failing to obtain the proper authority was not so convincing. The panel has looked to the subsequent conduct of not removing the IG post, and allowing the other IG posts to linger on platforms that were clearly intended for other groups and purposes as indicative of a lack of meaningful acceptance of his mistake.

The Appeal Panel did note the article by the Carillon. It was identified by the candidate, and we independently discussed the story with the interested parties to confirm any relevant details. While it was helpful to identify the issue in a timely way, the panel was concerned about the identification of the article as a news item (it was categorized as such on the website) when the author quite clearly had an editorial spin on the conduct of the Candidate. This was evidenced by the following:

- The graphic of the URSU logo in a trashbin, and the description thereunder.
- Recognition within the article of the news editor's participation in the story
- A material quote in the article that describe the author's take on the Candidate's actions:

"There are no explicit rules in the nomination packages barring candidates from seeking endorsements from student groups, however Said's decision to use the social media of organizations he is affiliated with to promote his own campaign, without receiving

	<p>permission from those organizations is ethically concerning, and his leaving the ESA executive speaks for itself.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A call to action in response to the article: “The polls close on March 18, 2021, meaning that students have a few hours left to cast their vote(s) and have their voices heard.”</li> </ul> <p>While the perception of fairness by the members in the course of the election is key, so too is fair and balanced reporting, especially during the days and final hours of voting.</p> <p>For all of these reasons, we found the Candidate as being in breach of the relevant policy.</p>
<p>Discipline</p>	<p>The Election Committee has determined the Candidate’s actions were in violation of the Election and Referendum Bylaw in the following ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Inappropriate use of a Board position and organizational platform to gain an advantage in the election.</li> <li>2) Intentional misrepresentation of an organizational endorsement.</li> <li>3) Intentional violation of the Bylaw.</li> <li>4) Inappropriate use of an external organization’s social media account to promote candidacy for which the candidate is the account administrator.</li> <li>5) Use of an external organization as an endorsement which is a prohibited activity under the Bylaw</li> <li>6) Use of electronic devices to facilitate, influence or coerce a members’ vote</li> </ol>
<p>Resolution (ex: was payment made?)</p>	<p>Based on the demerit point system, each violation is the following points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Not listed in the matrix - CRO discretion</li> <li>2) Not listed in the matrix - CRO discretion</li> <li>3) Matrix assigned - 20 points</li> <li>4) Not listed in the matrix - CRO discretion</li> <li>5) Not listed in the matrix - CRO discretion</li> <li>6) Matrix assigned - 20 points</li> </ol>

	<p>It is the decision of the Election Committee that the candidate is no longer a URSU member in good standing thereby making the candidate ineligible to run in this election and assume a position on the Board of Directors.</p> <p>Further, the Election Committee encourages some discussion with the Carillon regarding their treatment of this event as learning opportunity for future elections.</p>
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If the candidate wishes to appeal, the request for appeal must be affixed to this sheet and submitted, along with the appeal and any and all supporting documents or evidence to the Elections Committee.