2019 SU By-Election Report:

Advertising/Marketing:

I began meeting with the marketing department in May of 2019, sending them an email within a week of assuming the CRO office. We developed an advertising strategy, which included testimonials from alumni that had been involved in student governance, physical (printed) materials, new coffee sleeves and targeted advertising to encourage candidacy. The marketing department wanted to re-create Election marketing strategy, including new colours and style design. As such, the elections office would not create materials. These initial meetings were productive and provided an outline with approximate dates to follow for the by-election and general election alike.

I would like to note that those in the marketing department have done a wonderful job and been as accessible as circumstances will allow. They have been extremely helpful when called upon, unfortunately the marketing department is completely overworked. Staff issues and a heavy workload prevented them from achieving their goals in regards to the election, and resulted in extremely limited, sometimes non-existent advertising.

To coordinate with the marketing department, I sent an email in mid-July to schedule a follow-up meeting. The purpose of the meeting would be to determine where marketing was in the timeline and provide any support the elections office could provide to further Elections marketing projects. When a week passed without a reply I reached out to President Bhatnagar, who forwarded the memo to marketing and a follow up meeting was scheduled for August 7th. Once again, this meeting was productive and we provided room in the Elections office budget for LRT and other transit ads, SUTV ads and informed marketing we had budget space for print advertising as well. The marketing department was already overloaded with handling the student handbook, WOW and other SU projects and none of this advertising was implemented.

In addition to advertising in advance of the By-election, we also ventured to create testimonials from alumni who had been involved in student governance, especially as members of the SU Executive, Students' Council, or GFC. The marketing department

had wanted to approve the questions before I would reach out to alumni. These questions were written the day after our follow up meeting and were as follows:

1.   What was your most memorable accomplishment as a member of Students' council or GFC?
2.   How did your time as a part of Student's Council or GFC help you both during and/or after your University career?
3.   Can you describe a lasting impact for the University or students that was created, at least in part, by your participation in student council or GFC?

Alumni would have been asked to answer one of the preceding questions in a short video that could be taken and sent into the marketing department, where it would be posted on appropriate social media. I started to reach out to a few alumni I personally knew, and there was interest to participate, however marketing did not reply to provide feedback, so I was not given the go ahead and the project was dropped.

Lack of transition:

When I was appointed as the CRO, I contacted my predecessor to organize a transition meeting. My predecessor informed me that his team was in the process of organizing a transition document, and we set a meeting for April 27th, unfortunately my predecessor failed to show up for the meeting. As he left town the next day, no agreeable time to meet could be found, and there was no transition meeting. A phone call was also never arranged, although it was agreed upon after the initial meeting failed to materialize.

Since my appointment as CRO, I have contacted my predecessor for only the door password to the elections office and for admin privileges. At this time, the keys to the election office have not been given to me because (to my knowledge) my predecessor never returned them to DG. The majority of my time in this position for the first few months was learning the responsibilities of the position and gaining technical knowledge, which prevented early progress on many of my initial goals.

Physical polling booths:

I reached out to SU staff in order to procure Chromebook or iPads for the by-election in order to have a test run of a physical voting booth. Unfortunately, with

no volunteers in place as of yet, we would have needed to rely on SU staff members to run the voting booths, and the cost was prohibitive.

DROs:

I began the search for DROs almost immediately after taking office. I understood the need to have strong support on campus since I was no longer a student at the University of Alberta. I reached out to the outgoing and incoming president of the PSUA in May, and sent emails asking for students who might be interested. I mentioned the hunt for a DRO in my June presentation to council, hoping that those student leaders in council might help me connect to interested candidates. I determined an appropriate salary for the DROs and informed Rebecca Taylor who was able to place the ad up on Jobkin the same day (July 17th). From that date, I continued to use my previous networks to encourage potential candidates to apply. By August 19th, only one candidate had applied. The hiring committee interviewed the candidate, but they were found to be unviable and it was agreed I would run the by-election by myself.

The original DRO ad had expired in mid-to-late August (exact date unknown) and it was taken down without my knowledge. I noticed this error on September 9th, informed Rebecca Taylor who placed the ad back up the next day. Since that time, I have received a single email inquiry, as well as interviewed two candidates for the position. These candidates were acceptable, and the hiring committee agreed they would fulfill the responsibilities of the office with proper training. My decision to resign, however, made the committee uneasy in pursuing these DROs if there were to be a new CRO in a few months time. I will pass their names along to my successor so they can begin their search with these candidates.

I should address CAC's suggestion to hire competent DROs to take on some of the responsibilities and ease my time demands. I was not satisfied that the DRO applicants we interviewed were at the competency level required to assume that much responsibility. Furthermore, I did not believe it was fair to give a DRO the nearly full responsibilities of CRO, when they hold a reduced title and make a reduced salary. They should receive the full compensation of their work, so CAC's suggestion is not viable in my opinion, and played a factor in my decision to resign.

Physical posters:

I began my search for a DRO in April, before I had assumed office as the CRO. There had been only one interested candidate to date and no other inquiries in those nearly 5 months. I had informed the marketing department about my search for DRO in our initial May meeting; however, no material had been made. I took it upon myself to make crude posters in the style of a hiring poster. While I was making and posting DRO advertisements, I decided to do the same for the by-election. These were not intended to be professional looking, they were simply meant to grab some attention and direct candidates to the DRO application and by-election nomination packages.

In my recent meeting with some members of CAC, there was concern raised that these reflected poorly on the Students' Union. Councillor Beasley passed along the suggestion that I should have contacted CAC to help organize these posters. The Elections office had not created material in the past due to marketing desire to create new branding for the elections, and the idea that marketing would be more effective if they looked uniform in colour and design. I believe that this suggestion from CAC is impractical and tone-deaf, considering CAC not reached out to the elections office beforehand. As such, this option was available to me, and even if I had considered the possibility, I would have been reiterated the same sentiments I had been told as a councillor when similar issues arose: "advertising needs to be uniform and handled by the marketing department. If there are issues, contact the President."

At the time of posting these posters, I had already taken considerable steps to work with marketing, and alerted the president to the issue. CAC would have redirected me to the same steps and would not have offered their own support as readily as they do in hindsight. In addition, despite CAC's objections, these posters have been successful. We will not know their impact on the by election unless we survey those candidates, we have received twice as many applicants in the past two weeks, as we had received in the previous two months.

Encouraging Candidacy:

The by-election includes seven candidates, including one running solely for GFC, two running for student's council and GFC and four running solely for Students' Council. This is far off our original targets of filling the vacant GFC and Student council seats. This is likely due to the limited advertising strategies available to the elections office

and implemented by the marketing department. Looking towards the future, advertising strategies would need to be unveiled when nomination packages are released in mid-August.

August 15th Advertising strategy:

I gave a presentation to council on June 4th, and described it at the time as fulfilling the responsibility to unveil a marketing strategy to council by August 15th. I gave the collaborative strategy we had decided upon, and invited feedback after the presentation for questions. After the meeting, I had several emails from councillors who offered feedback and suggestions. Despite CAC's concern about this responsibility, it was completed to the satisfaction of council months before its due date.

Nomination package and SU website:

CAC had raised concerns that updates need to be made to the website to reflect the by-election, and that the nomination packages were late to be released. The original target for releasing the nomination packages was August 15th, but I moved the deadline to August 23rd. August 20th was the final summer meeting for Students' Council and I waited for Speaker Paches' attendance report to ensure the nomination package accurately reflected the vacancies on council. I announced to the marketing team on August 23rd that the nomination packages were available; however, I did not have access to the SU website at this time.

I was in contact with an SU staff member so I could begin editing the website and place the nomination package online. We tried to arrange three separate dates between the 24th and the 30th to meet so I could learn how to make edits, however our schedules never lined up. Due to the time sensitive nature of uploading the nomination package, they eventually uploaded the package for me on August 30th. September 24th I finally had the opportunity to talk with another SU staff member who was able to demonstrate how to edit the website, and I uploaded candidate bios.

It came to my attention at the time I released the nomination package that I did not have admin access to the UASU elections page. I contacted several members of the marketing department and other SU staff members, all of whom were unsure of whom to contact and referred me to each other. I sent quite a few emails at this time

with no clear answers until a member of the marketing department inexplicably gained admin access and added me to the page. This was finalized on September 4th.

The issues that arose with editing the website and using UASU social media pages was the result of the aforementioned lack of transition. With no institutional memory, this simple task became impossible, and drained much of the time I had devoted to running the elections office, further hampering progress on many of the goals of the office.

Email response times:

CAC has raised a concern about my email response times, which I believe to be unfounded. Councillor Beasley stressed the importance of speedy response times to candidates in our meeting on September 26th. I agreed with him, and revisited the response times to candidate inquiries since the beginning of the by-election. Excluding two times candidates emailed me after I had fallen asleep for the night (which it should be noted, I answered them as soon as I woke up.) I have responded to all emails in a timely manner. The longest a candidate has waited for a response has been 54 minutes, with a mean response time of 19 minutes. In my opinion, it is unreasonable to expect better than those times.

I believe that the source of the complaint would be that Councillor Vargas Alba's email, which was unanswered for three hours and fifty-five minutes. He had emailed me at 12:39 that afternoon inquiring on by-election candidates attending student's council. Due to issues we will discuss with the candidates meeting, I did not have a mailing list gathered, and would not until later that evening. I was teaching a class that day from 12:03 through to 2:48, and left the school at 3:10 (the earliest I could) in order to make it to the university. I did not want to respond to Councillor Vargas Alba's message with a non-answer, and did not have time to explain the situation if I were to arrive on campus in a timely manner.

I was quite alarmed at one councillor's hostility when we crossed paths that day. I had noticed them in the executive office and when I went to greet them, I was confronted with the quote "Jimmy, answer your fucking emails. You need to be available to candidates, and councillors are getting pissed." The tone was quite aggressive and left me in a very uncomfortable position. I told councillor Beasley that if this were a traditional employee- employer I would have resigned on the spot due to this interaction. The councillor's presence on Council Administration Committee, and

thus part of the committee that directly oversees the CRO, is quite alarming. The councillor has not apologized at the time of writing, and their unprofessional conduct has played a factor in my decision to resign.

Candidates meeting and nomination package:

I accept responsibility that the by-election has failed to meet both my own, CAC's and Student Council's expectation. The candidates meeting was held nearly an hour late, which was a violation of bylaw. I offer no excuses, just an explanation. I incorrectly input the candidates meeting into my calendar for Tuesday, not Monday. It is my responsibility to double-check the nomination package to ensure dates are correct, and I did not fulfill this responsibility. I was alerted to my mistake at approximately 6:20 on Monday evening, when candidates began emailing me. I immediately left my place of employment and drove directly to the university, arriving at approximately 6:54pm. All 7 candidates were present at this time and remained for the duration of the meeting, thus satisfying their responsibility in bylaw. This is an unacceptable transgression from the CRO, and CAC is correct to demand an explanation and improved performance in the future.

Unfortunately, the candidates meeting is symptomatic of a larger issue I have been presented with during this by-election. There are only 7 candidates running for Students council and GFC and only 6 Faculty or Departmental Associations who have reached out to use the SU's voting system. Still, I have not been able to dedicate the appropriate time needed to ensure the quality of materials that the elections office deserves. The nomination package has numerous discrepancies in dates that should have been resolved prior to their release. At this time, they have posed no issue, however it has left to several emails from candidates for clarification.

As it became apparent that the marketing department was overworked, I would have liked to create my own material for DRO advertising and for encouraging candidacy, however I did not have the time to commit to these ventures. At the time I accepted this position, my professional commitments were flexible. I was willing and able to provide time to both create suitable materials and have a presence in the campaign office. Since that time, I have accepted a full-time teaching position, and have been given responsibilities in that position which do not allow me enough time to adequately dedicate myself to the elections office. The challenges we have faced in encouraging candidacy, votership and producing suitable materials for the by-election could have been mitigated by a CRO who had more time to give to the office.

Considering I have been overwhelmed by the relatively small volume of work in the by-election, I have decided to resign my position in hopes that a CRO with better availability will meet these challenges in time for the general election. I will be giving my time past my resignation to fulfill bylaw in finding a suitable replacement and providing a strong transition and I am hopeful that this will provide a much stronger election campaign in the spring.

Final week of the By-election:

There were difficulties displaying candidate bios onto the SU website, which I was not alerted to until hallway through the first day of voting. I tried to publish bios once again, but I was ultimately unsuccessful in placing the bios on the SU website. I again take full responsibility for this mishap, which could have been remedied with a more intensive training session with SU staff.

Otherwise, there were no major issues during the final week of the by-election. All candidate questions were answered in due time, no bylaw violations were reported, and all candidates who ran were elected (all uncontested). Voter turnout was low, but in line with past by-election performances.

Congratulations to Charles Blondin (Open Studies), Dave Konrad (ALES), Anthony Nguyen (Nursing), Olivia Harris (KSR) and Andrew Batycki (Engineering) for winning seats on students' council. As well, congratulations to Alana Krahn (Business), Olivia Harris (KSR) and Larry Zhong (Engineering) for winning seats on General Faculties' Council.

Recommendations to CAC:

I have been a part of three election campaigns and have witnessed four separate CROs run elections, including myself. Therefore, I offer the following suggestions to CAC in order to help improve candidacy and voter turnout through better support of the elections office:

- **Urging the Finance committee to commit more funds to the marketing department. Marketing has incredible people but is understaffed to handle the demands of the entire SU.**

- **Increasing the pay of the CRO and DRO. In busy months, elections office staff will work a minimum of 100 hours a month, which translates**

to approximately $10 an hour. While elections staff do not work as much during off months, raising this wage would attract stronger candidates to the position.

- Consider restructuring the **CRO** position to a permanent staff member of the **SU**. There have been many attempts at organizing transition documents for the **CRO,** and all have failed. There is lots of institutional knowledge lost in transition, and leads to unprepared **CROs** running les than satisfactory elections. A permanent **SU** staff member could run the elections and understand the mechanics of the election, while Student **DROs** would be able to provide fresh ideas.

- **CAC** should reach out to the **DRO** prior to the by-election, in August, or even early September to check in prior to the by-election