

To: Graduate Representative Council
From: Semyon Drozdetskii, Electoral Officer
Date: Friday, April 10th, 2026
Subject: Final Report, 2026 Board Elections and Referendum Results

Summary

On Tuesday, March 24th, 2026, at the Semi-Annual General Meeting (SAGM), voting members confirmed the election of the following members to the 2026-27 Executive Board

Chair	*Sarah Roberts
Director of Internal/University Relations	Violet Cieslik
Director of External Relations	*Victor Marrugat Arnal
Director of Finance	Eleanore Lonsbrough
Director of Student Life	Manuel Centeno Duque (*acclaimed)

And the following has been confirmed as the results of the Fee Referendum held on the Executive Board proposal that was seeking to align the GSS fees with members' use of campus services:

- 1) Eliminate the University 101 fee;
- 2) Re-allocate fees collected for University 101 program in the September 2025 term, and January 2026 term, to the UVSS Constituency Groups;
- 3) Eliminate the Student Advocate Fee;
- 4) Reduce the World University Services Canada (WUSC) fee from \$5.00/term for on-campus members to \$1.00/term for on-campus members*;
- 5) Increase the Constituency Groups fee to \$4.97/term for on-campus members in 2025-26, thereafter increase by the Consumer Price Index (inflation);
- 6) Increase the Food & Beverage Fee to \$13.00/term for on-campus members;

*At the time of this report, the results of this question are being contested by graduate students registered to campaign on behalf of WUSC as a NO side. The decision on the complaint will be made by the new Electoral Officer. While the complaint is pending, the results of this question should stand until the decision is finalized. See more on the complaint below in the Complaints section.

Background

In accordance with Bylaw 4.7, a call for nominations for positions on the Executive Board was made, providing 14 days between February 9th and February 23rd, 2026, to accept applications. During this time, we received two applications for the position of Director of Finance and one application each for the positions of Chair and Director of External Relations – all of which were deemed to be complete and correct – and no nominations were put forward for the positions of Director of Internal/University Relations and Director of Student Life.

This document was initially developed by Karen L. Potts with thanks from the GSS.

Also, the Council voted to put forward a question to all members in the form of a referendum in consideration regarding the fees connected to members' usage of campus services. These full questions can be found in the next section of this report.

Process and Procedures

As there were no contested positions for the positions of Chair and Director of External Relations, the nominees for these positions were acclaimed and thus no poll was conducted between March 4th and 6th for these roles.

The election for the position of Director of Finance happened between March 4th and 6th on the SimplyVoting platform. The results are as follows:

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE	
NOMINEE	Votes
ELEANORE LONSBROUGH	215 (63.4%)
SHAHWAIZ MEMON	124 (36.6%)
VOTER SUMMARY	
TOTAL VOTERS	357
ABSTAIN	18 (5.0%)

The referendum regarding the Society's fees was held on the SimplyVoting platform with the results as follows:

- 1) Do you support eliminating the University 101 fee?

OPTION	VOTES
YES	307 (88.5%)
NO	40 (11.5%)
VOTER SUMMARY	
TOTAL VOTERS	357
ABSTAIN	10 (2.8%)

- 2) Do you support re-allocating fees collected for University 101 program in the September 2025 term, and January 2026 term, to the UVSS Constituency Groups?

OPTION	VOTES
YES	275 (79.9%)
NO	69 (20.1%)
VOTER SUMMARY	
TOTAL VOTERS	357
ABSTAIN	13 (3.6%)

- 3) Do you support eliminating the Student Advocate Fee?

OPTION	VOTES
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YES	317 (90.6%)
NO	33 (9.4%)
VOTER SUMMARY	
TOTAL VOTERS	357
ABSTAIN	7 (2.0%)

- 4) Do you support reducing the World University Services Canada (WUSC) fee from \$5.00/term for on-campus members to \$1.00/term for on-campus members?

OPTION	VOTES
YES	217 (62.2%)
NO	132 (37.8%)
VOTER SUMMARY	
TOTAL VOTERS	357
ABSTAIN	8 (2.2%)

- 5) Do you support increasing the Constituency Groups fee to \$4.97/term for on-campus members in 2025-26, thereafter increasing by the Consumer Price Index (inflation)?

OPTION	VOTES
YES	244 (69.9%)
NO	105 (30.1%)
VOTER SUMMARY	
TOTAL VOTERS	357
ABSTAIN	8 (2.2%)

- 6) Do you support increasing the Food & Beverage Fee to \$13.00/term for on-campus members?

OPTION	VOTES
YES	227 (64.9%)
NO	123 (35.1%)
VOTER SUMMARY	
TOTAL VOTERS	357
ABSTAIN	7 (2.0%)

Following the end of the nomination period ending on February 23rd, 2026, and as per Bylaw 4.12, a call for further nominations for the positions of Director of Internal/University Relations and Director of Student Life was made. During the SAGM, a second call for nominations was made, and the following candidates were presented to Council for a vote after being given a minute to address the members present. The result of the vote is as follows:

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DIRECTOR OF INTERNAL/UNIVERSITY RELATIONS

NOMINEE	Votes
GAVIN KIERULF	10
PASCALE RICARD	4
VIOLET CIESLIK	12
KIMBERLY MUTTORE	6
IRAM ZAHRA	3

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT LIFE

NOMINEE	Votes
PASCALE RICARD	9
SHAHWAIZ MEMON	1
MANUEL CENTENO DUQUE	22

Council confirmed the acclamation of the uncontested Directors' nominations as well as the results of the vote held during the meeting for the new Director of Internal/University Relations and Director of Student Life.

Also, during this meeting, a call was placed for any members wishing to become the Electoral Officer for the 2026-27 Council. Sam Fielder was the only nominee and was acclaimed by the members present.

In total, the current Electoral Officer spent roughly 25 hours in normal activities requisite of their position, roughly 10 hours on contributing to edits of the Election and Referendum Campaigning Packages, and roughly 10 hours to address complaints on the electoral process.

Complaints

Before the deadline for appeals on March 16th, the Electoral Officer received two official complaints regarding the electoral process.

The first complaint was about one of the candidates running for the position of Director of Finance. The complaint was regarding their use of departmental listservs to distribute their campaigning materials, which according to the complaint, gave this candidate an unfair advantage.

The second complaint is a standing complaint from graduate students registered to represent WUSC in their campaign for voting NO on the Referendum question #4. The complaint is contesting the results of the referendum based on unfairness that resulted from the unequal access of the GSS Executive Board members who represented the YES side to the campaigning resources, to the Referendum FAQ.

The former complaint was addressed by assessing that there was no explicit violation of the GSS Bylaws and campaigning guidelines regarding the candidate's use of departmental listserv, since it is not openly stated in the Campaigning Package that candidates cannot use these listservs. However, admitting the fact that using these listservs by candidates may give them an unfair advantage, recommendations were made to the Bylaw and Policy committee regarding the use of the departments' listservs (see the Recommendations section below).

The latter complaint was attempted to be addressed in accordance with Section 7.13.2 of the GSS Governance Manual. Attempts were made to organize a roundtable between the YES and NO sides. Two

consultations were held with the UVic Ombudsperson on March 20th and 24th. After assessing the fairness of each possible decision, the Electoral Officer determined that, due to the personal conflict of interest they had with the Executive Board member, the best course of action for them would be to recuse from deciding on this complaint and transfer it to the newly elected Electoral Officer.

Recommendations

While the Governance Manual outlines general principles for electoral conduct, it lacks detailed procedural guidance for the Electoral Officer. This resulted in an overreliance on personal judgment and on informal advice from Society staff, creating inconsistency and uncertainty in decision-making and undermining its integrity. To address this, I suggest that the Society should develop and adopt clear, written Electoral Officer procedures, particularly complaint handling, including defined steps and timelines. In addition, I suggest that the Electoral Officer should receive formal training before the election period, particularly in administrative fairness, complaint adjudication, and society governance. Finally, I suggest that measures should be introduced to ensure the independence of the Electoral Officer, including explicitly stating in the Society's policies that the Electoral Officer's decisions should be made independently without interference from Society staff or other representatives, reducing reliance on Society staff for procedural guidance and clarifying advisory boundaries. Particularly, I believe that the GSS Staff should not have access to the email correspondence at the votegss@uvic.ca inbox.

In relation to the above, the current process of electing the Electoral Officer at the Semi-Annual General Meeting allows individuals with limited relevant experience or training to assume a role requiring complex knowledge in procedural and quasi-legal decision-making in society governance. This creates risks related to consistency, fairness, and confidence in the electoral process. To address this, I recommend that the Society transition the Electoral Officer role from an elected volunteer position to a temporary hired position for the duration of the electoral period, potentially someone from outside the Society to ensure impartiality in the electoral processes. The hiring process should be led by a hiring committee of Board members who are not seeking re-election, as well as GRC members, none of whom are involved in any referendum campaign side.

If the Society continues with electing the Electoral Officer, with consideration of the Society's budget, I believe it would be beneficial to bring in external training for the elected Electoral Officer. Several improvements can also be made to the current recruitment and election process for the new Electoral Officer. I believe that greater advertising of the position should be made in advance of the Semi-Annual General Meeting, where the new Officer is elected.

I believe that during the election process at the Semi-Annual General Meeting, the candidates for this position should be asked to present their statements and let attendees ask the candidates questions about their prior experience and qualifications.

The GSS Electoral Officer is compensated substantially lower than the typical industry rate. Regardless of how the new Electoral Officer is selected, I believe that increasing compensation to the Electoral Officer will attract more qualified candidates for this position.

Finally, the current Election Campaign Package does not define whether or how department listservs may be used for candidate campaigning. This creates ambiguity and the potential for unequal access to communication channels, giving some candidates an unfair advantage. To ensure fairness and consistency, I recommend that the Society establish clear rules regarding the use of department listservs


during the campaign period. One recommendation is that upon receiving all candidates' statements, the GSS sends a neutral email to the departments with the statements.

Summary

As this is the last communication I will have as Electoral Officer, I wish to thank the Executive, Board and Council for all their support provided and the trust they instilled in me to ensure a democratic and equitable process for all members. I have full faith in the Society's choice for Electoral Officer, Sam Fielder, and I will make myself available to assist in the seamless transition of roles and responsibilities. It's been a privilege to be part of my own and colleagues' education, and I look forward to my many ventures afforded to me because we have this Council.

And, THAT Council receives this report for information.

Signed,



Semyon Drozdetsckii, Electoral Officer