

# UWSA REFORMS

## 2020-21

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Following the 2020 UWSA General Elections, former executives publicly shared experiences of harassment and discrimination that highlighted how harmful our established systems were. Over the last few months, the UWSA went through a significant learning experience that led us to re-evaluate the way we work with and support students and address the need to restructure the organization.

The UWSA Board recognized that it needed to address the issue at a deeper, organizational level and hired an external consultant - Catalyst Research and Communications - to engage in a process which allowed the UWSA to examine its strengths and weaknesses.

The accompanying table lists the recommendations made by the consultant and the resulting reforms implemented by the UWSA.

To review the full report, please [click here](#).

RECOMMENDATION	REFORM	REASON
<p>Consider that terms for Board members be staggered to ensure continuity of knowledge around governance and key functions. The suggestion is that half of the Board has a one-year term and the other half have a two-year term. For the Executive, have one of the three positions be a two-year term.</p>	<p><b>Staggered two-year terms for the UWSA Vice-President External Affairs (VPEA), Vice-President Student Affairs (VPSA), and four Emerging Leader Directors.</b></p>	<p>This will ensure that there is always someone new and someone experienced on the Executive team and the Board. It will help the older directors pass on experience, knowledge and campaigns to the new team members. The new directors and VPs will also bring in new ideas to the team and be supported. It will also allow executive to work on achieving organizational goals and provide stability to the UWSA.</p>
<p>Establish an ongoing leadership/board development plan for the Board that includes:</p> <p>a. A mentoring program for all Executive and Board members.</p>	<p><b>Creation of Four Emerging Leader Directors positions:</b> Their duties include general membership engagement; promotion of UWSA events, board meetings, and general meetings; and assisting the VPs in board mentorship and transition year-to-year.</p>	<p>As Emerging Leader Directors, students will have the opportunity to develop leadership, collaboration, and mentorship skills. Assisting the VPs will give them insight into what it means to be an executive and motivate them to take on future leadership roles. The directors' duties also align with UWSA values of outreach and engagement.</p>
<p>Define an election process for UWSA that aligns with UWSA's values. As a student union, there are options available that go beyond Canadian politics. What election system is UWSA endorsing and promoting? This is an important conversation for UWSA to lead and implement changes to support a process that does not harm candidates.</p>	<p><b>Introduction of an Election Evaluation and Feedback Policy:</b> Election Campaign Facilitators (ECFs) will conduct entry assessments and exit interviews with election candidates to understand their needs and goals, learn about their experiences, and examine the strengths and weaknesses of the election process.</p>	<p>An Election Evaluation and Feedback Policy aligns the election process with UWSA's value of accessibility, anti-oppressive leadership, authentic representation, outreach and engagement, organizational integrity, empathy, and continual reflection. Feedback will help us understand our strengths and weaknesses and help build a better election process.</p>

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<p>The Chief Electoral Commissioner (CEC) position needs better support to do their job effectively. Some options would be:</p> <p>a. Divide responsibilities between a staff person and a student hired on contract.</p>	<p><b>Creation of two new roles of Election Campaign Facilitators (ECFs):</b> ECFs act on behalf of the UWSA Membership to support electoral candidates and volunteers through the elections process, to facilitate the collaborative creation of the UWSA Election Campaign, and to mediate conflicts that arise throughout the electoral process.</p>	<p>The creation of ECF positions will help support the CEC during elections and offer candidates additional support with conflict resolution, campaigning, and promotion.</p>
<p>The Chief Electoral Commissioner (CEC) position needs better support to do their job effectively. Some options would be:</p> <p>d) Ensure that the CEC has a body they can go to for advice. Ensure that the body can respond to issues and complaints that arose in past campaigns.</p>	<p><b>Modifications to the Chief Election Commissioner's role:</b> The CEC now works with ECFs and is accountable to the Election Accountability Board (EAB). Their primary duty is to focus on election logistics like the candidate and referendum nomination process, manage offline polling, digital voting, and ballot counting, and announce the election results.</p>	<p>The CEC's workload will now be split into three positions which will help the CEC focus on organizing a fair and transparent nominations and voting process. Since their duties do not include mediation of campaigning disputes, they will not be in conflict with candidates during the campaign period. In case of disputes, the CEC can also go to the EAB for advice.</p>
<p>The Chief Electoral Commissioner (CEC) position needs better support to do their job effectively. Some options would be:</p> <p>d) Ensure that the CEC has a body they can go to for advice. Ensure that the body can respond to issues and complaints that arose in past campaigns.</p>	<p><b>EAB replaces Referenda and Elections By-law Interpretation and Transparent Enforcement Board (REBLITE) Board:</b> Questions, concerns, and complaints arising from CEC or ECFs' interpretation of the By-Laws may be directed to the chair of the EAB. The CEC and ECFs are accountable to and supported by the EAB.</p>	<p>The EAB will now support the CEC and ECFs in conflict resolution. EAB does not need formal complaint to meet, the ECFs and CEC can also call on them for guidance. If conflict between a candidate and the CEC/ECF escalates, the complaint will be directed to the EAB. Only the EAB can enforce consequences on candidates, taking the onus off of the CEC and ECFs.</p>

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<p>Consider separating campaign priorities and election slate priorities. There are some priorities like systemic racism and tuition that could be long term priorities. The campaigns could be endorsed by the student body every year through a referendum separate from the election of Executive and Board.</p>	<p><b>Removal of slates and collusion between candidates:</b> The amended by-laws remove the option for candidates to register as slates to shift the focus from individual agendas to student and organizational priorities.</p>	<p>Removal of slates will align the election process to UWSA values of organizational integrity. This will support the collaborative creation of a UWSA campaign between all candidates that focuses on students' needs over individual or slate campaigns. This will allow for elected directors and executives to work on achievable, long-term goals instead of annual ones. Removing the slate system and creating a new process of appeal and accountability that center mediation and learning and discourage combativeness also resonates with the value of Anti-oppressive Leadership.</p>

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<p>Do a mini campaign school in the Fall or January of each year where candidates can learn how to run a political campaign that does not cause harm. Some of the mini classes can be about: how to manage social media; the potential impact of social media; how to identify and address a concern throughout the election process and recognizing harmful behavior.</p>	<p><b>Creation of All Candidates' Training and Preparation (ACTP) Week:</b> During the ACTP Week on Week 3 of the election cycle, ECFs will hold training and preparation sessions for all candidates that cover topics like collaborative governance, UWSA mission and vision, internal structure and operations, UWSA Ambassadorship Policies, election rules, non-profit board regulations, duties and privileges; how to campaign; and conflict mediation and resolution. The ECFs will also collaborate with election participants in the creation of the UWSA Election Campaign.</p>	<p>The ACTP Week will allow for ECFs to support candidates in campaign development, promotion, and understanding the election process. Candidates will be able to learn about the UWSA and student body's short and long-term objectives and align their vision to that of the organization. The goal of the ACTP week is to help candidates participate in a successful, collaborative campaign, and feel prepared to take on the roles they are running for.</p>

This report is meant to be the beginning of a long process of restructuring the organization to make it truly decolonial and create a safe space for discussion. The implemented reforms will be periodically reviewed by the Board and updated as needed. Please provide your feedback here: [UWSA Reforms Feedback](#)