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Subject: Proposal for increasing student voter turnout for UBC AMS general elections

**Introduction**

The University of British Columbia’s (UBC) high university ranking and large student population, has an established Alma Mater Society (AMS). The AMS represents over fifty thousand students each year over the course of 4-5 years. The executives (student presidents) of AMS ensure that the needs of students are met by the university administration and the provincial and federal governments. The UBC AMS general elections are annual elections held for students to democratically vote for the AMS executives and annual referendums. However, the extremely low student voter turnout rate in UBC concerns the student wellbeing and the standing of AMS as a student body.

**Statement of Problem**

While UBC and its Alma Mater Society (AMS) have made efforts in encouraging students to come out to vote (e.g. allowing wide scale marketing throughout campus in terms of letting campaigners give a speech in lectures, posting posters, rallies, networking events, mass UBC emails, articles, funding campaigning segment through AMS, etc.), the results have not been positive. From 2014-2019, student voter turnout has ranged between a low 20-21%. This is like trying to play a basketball game where only one team member shows up. Furthermore, while acknowledging the pandemic, in 2020 the turnout was 11.6%. Taking part in student elections is imperative in order for students to be aware about their rights and voice their needs for achieving a prosperous university experience.

**Proposed Solution**

There are many methods of increasing student voter turnout. The UBC & AMS administration have already implemented numerous of these methods. However, these existing methods need to need to be further backed up by more incentives, new methods need to be introduced and methods that have not worked out need to be reasoned out. A proposed solution would be to have professors allocate the last five minutes of their lectures to allow students to vote for the AMS elections via their devices just like students are asked to fill in teaching evaluations in lectures. The success in having an applicable number of students who fill out teaching evaluations could be replicated into the AMS election voter turnout. Other solutions that could be looked into are; educating students on the importance of voting via videos, in class speeches, and encouraging campaigners to mention it while campaigning/marketing, having schedules for major an on-campus debates between competitors in student areas e.g. Student Nest, or having multiple ballots in every possible UBC building based on distance rather on just the number of student presence.

**Scope**

To identify previous methods that need improvement and to discover new methods of encouraging students to vote, the following are some of the questions that need to be answered:

1. What does UBC & AMS administration already do well in their efforts of motivating students to come out and vote?
2. What kind of events would students like to see to make the AMS elections seem interesting and worth taking part in?
3. What type of events are students most likely to attend?
4. What venues are students most likely to always pass by?
5. Where do the previous campaigners feel they could have improve/ lacked in order to motive students to vote?
6. What social media platforms & physical forms of marketing are being used to market the elections?
7. Would forming a detailed workshop teaching campaigners “how to campaign” help teach them betters ways of encouraging students to vote?
8. What sort of training is already being received by campaigners?
9. What are the demographics of the students that are most/least likely to vote (E.g. university year, major, etc.)?
10. What resources on campus are already available to students for voting?

**Methods**

To collect the data, I plan on conducting two separate surveys. The first survey will be for pervious campaigners & the newly elected student body (UBC AMS Executives). I will distribute the survey across my network in the AMS student body (i.e. Facebook etc.). The second survey will be for the general student population at UBC. To collect as much data possible I will use UBC student platforms e.g. UBC reddit, Facebook annual batch pages, The Calendar, and AMS Events. In order to conduct more in-depth research I will also conduct interviews with my roommates & UBC students in the Dunbar southland neighbourhood (while maintaining social distancing due to the pandemic restrictions). The interviews will be conducted by asking questions similar to the second survey.

**My Qualifications**

As a former three-year member and 2019 Vice President of Analytics of UBC Red Cross, one of the largest and most active club of AMS, working with the AMS is not new to me. Being part of the AMS network and being up to date with its happenings are usual to be as an active AMS club member. I have also continuously contributed to many UBC student platforms such as the Ubyssey and The Global Lounge, which are both in ties with the AMS. Thus, working on projects regarding this subject matter would not pose a big challenge. Although, I am not an *expert* when it comes to this research question, I have always taken active part in the UBC student community and I am highly motivate to research for answers that will better student life. I also have many friends in my network who are directly involved with AMS and other student elections.

**Conclusion**

University life is one of the most crucial experiences of young adults. It is the transformation that forms the path forward in life as responsible, aware, and cautious human beings. Taking part in student elections in order to be able to have a say in the needs and rights as students is a salient step to having a prosperous university experience. It is crucial that the students are encouraged to take part in AMS elections and are made aware of referendums, changes, and movements at university. AMS executives and UBC administration have to make the conscious effort to convey the purpose and importance of the AMS elections to students. I look forward to launching this project with your approval. It is my intention to provide a solution that will motivate students to come out and vote. With your approval I will begin research at once.