



# Office of the Vice-President, External Affairs

## 2015 Federal Elections Voter Engagement Report

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## Introduction

The October 2015 Federal Elections provided an invaluable opportunity to the AMS. Through the Champion the Vote campaign, which was designed to be a non-partisan get-out-the-vote campaign (GOTV), the VP External Office sought to achieve the following goals: 1) promote voting and the lifelong habit of voting, 2) create dialogue with students about federal issues, 3) raise the profile of UBC students as voting constituents. This final goal is perhaps the most important aspect of any GOTV campaign that the AMS runs. When UBC students are engaged, vocal, and participatory in voting, the needs and demands of students are taken more seriously. This can be expected to yield better results in future lobbying efforts.

Any questions about this report can be forwarded to Jude Crasta, AMS Vice-President, External Affairs at [vpexternal@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:vpexternal@ams.ubc.ca).

## Outreach

Because of the already high levels of natural interest in the Federal Elections, the Champion the Vote campaign focused its outreach efforts on simplifying the process of voting, and attempting to engage students in dialogue on federal issues. Simplifying the process of voting involved publishing accessible information about how to register and vote, as well as working with Elections Canada to run one of their pilot programs: all-riding polling stations for university campuses, including one at UBC. To help build dialogue on federal issues, the campaign relied on events that promoted discussion around Federal Elections issues. Through events, approximately 1,400 students were engaged, and the total reach of our website was approximately 3,600 individual hits.

## Partners

Such strong outreach would not have been possible without the support of our partners both on-campus and off-campus. Elections Canada was an indispensable supporter throughout the process, working with us not only to establish the UBC Polling Station, but also to provide us with student-focused guides and material on how to vote. Nonprofit groups like Samara and Fair Vote Canada also helped us with training our volunteer team and helping frame discussion around electoral reform, respectively. The AMS Businesses also made an incredible contribution when they agreed to use ‘Champion the Vote’ coffee collars that included information on when and where to vote. In total, AMS Businesses distributed 24,000 Champion the Vote coffee collars. Finally, the campaign also worked with campus political party clubs to help spread information about the events the campaign was hosting and details on how UBC students could vote. Unfortunately, because the Green Party Club was deconstituted over a year ago, and the Conservative Party Club was unresponsive, only the Campus NDP and Campus Young Liberals worked collaboratively with the campaign.

## Events

Event	# Recurrences	Turnout	Venue
Terry Talk Bar Talks	1	~60 people	The Pit Pub
Improv Night	1	~40 people	The Pit Pub
National Debates Screening	2	~70 people/debate	The Pit Pub
Quadra Candidates Debate	1	~100 people	Agora
Elections Night Party	1	~250 people	The Pit Pub
Coffee for Commuters	2	~400 people/event	East Mall & University Blvd.

### 1) Terry Talk Bar Talk

The event was hosted in The Pit with the help of AMS Events and Terry Talks. A panel of four professors, most from the political science department, discussed the shifting dynamic in the election and the importance of youth in these particular elections especially. Half of the time was spent answering pre-planned questions, and the other half was spent answering questions from the crowd. The question period was especially successful, with a high level of thoughtful engagement with the issues.

### 2) UBC Improv Club Night

The Improv Night was a show hosted in the Nest Black-Box Theatre. The UBC Improv Club performed for an hour. The show was purposefully hosted after the SAC Wine and Cheese, which encouraged many club executives to attend. It is worth noting that the Blackbox Theatre, while an excellent venue for performances, did not attract a lot of walk-in traffic, and also became extremely warm during the performance.

### 3) National Debates Screening

In partnership with The Pit, the VP External Office hosted two debate screenings. We found these events to be among the most successful of the campaign, with both a high turnout and high degree of engagement. Material hand-outs, including rave-cards and stickers, were particularly successful at the event.

### 4) Quadra Candidates Debate

The Quadra Candidates Debate was hosted in the Agora of the Nest with the collaboration of the GSS. The debate hosted the candidates from the NDP, Liberal, and Green Party, as well as an independent candidate. The open area of the Agora provided an ideal location for the event, as it attracted a lot of students who were just passing through the Nest – the venue is definitely recommended for similar events in the future.

### 5) Elections Night Party

The Elections Night Party was a live broadcast of the elections results, hosted in the Pit Pub, where the media screens were used to stream the news coverage. No tickets were required for entry, and this event saw the largest turnout of any event in the campaign, with the Pit being nearly full, and run out of seating. Although there was a concern that the event could have gotten rowdy as a result of the election outcomes

### 6) Coffee for Commuters

The VPX team hosted two Coffee for Commuter events throughout the Champion the Vote campaign. The first one was scheduled for the day that the all-riding opened for voting, and the second one was on general Election Day. We set up the stand and tent at the base of the

waterfall fountain, on University Boulevard, outside the bookstore. From this location, it was easy to encourage students to either go directly to voting, or to stop by to vote after their classes. This location also allowed us to talk to large numbers of commuter students, who are typically harder to reach in on-campus campaigns. We distributed approximately 400 cups of coffee each of the two mornings we held the events.

## Voter Turnout

Recent results published by Statistics Canada reveal that voter turnout in all age groups increased in the 2015 Elections compared to the 2011 Elections, with the greatest increases being seen in younger age-groups.

Age Group	Voter Turnout 2011 (%)	Voter Turnout 2015 (%)	Increase (Percentage Point)
18 to 24	54.6	66.9	12.3
25 to 34	58.7	69.8	11.1
35 to 44	64.9	74.5	9.6
45 to 54	73.2	78.7	5.5
55 to 64	80.3	83.3	3
65 to 74	84.4	85.5	1.1
75 +	78.6	79.6	1

*Voter Turnout Information by Statistics Canada*

Unfortunately, no data is currently available about age group turnout at individual polling stations, and therefore, there is no way of knowing precisely how many students voted at the UBC All-Riding Polling Station. Conversations had with student voters by the Champion the Vote staff and volunteer team however suggest that the voting station on campus made voting significantly more accessible to UBC students. Students reported that not only was the polling station conveniently located, but also allowed many of them to vote in their home-ridings, making the voting process far easier for them.

## Financials

The Champion the Vote campaign was paid for by the Federal Election Campaign Reserve Fund, which the VP External Office applied for funds from prior to the campaign. The reserve fund holds \$10,000 and is regularly replenished every four years. This budget however turned out to vastly over-estimate the cost of campaign, as the total cost of the campaign totaled only **\$5,356.**<sup>73</sup>, nearly \$4,000 below the projected cost. The majority of money saved was through lower costs for catering events, significant discounts on all of the printed material, and the cancelation of our BBQ event. The low cost of the Champion the Vote campaign also ensures that the Federal Elections Fund will need less replenishing for the next election.

## Summary and Conclusions

The 2015 Federal Elections saw an amazing surge in voter turnout, especially in the typical university student age-ranges. This high voter turnout is highly advantageous to UBC students, as it shifts a larger priority on youth issues and builds a lifelong habit of voting. The VP External Office wholeheartedly recommends to future administrations that efforts are made to install polling stations at UBC for both federal and provincial elections. The increase in voting seen this year illustrates amazing progress, but it cannot be taken for granted in future elections, where a strong push will be needed to continue the trend.

