

## **Election Committee report**

*2008-2009*

submitted by Tom Vogel, chair

The Election Committee ran the two elections required by Senate bylaws: the general election of new senators, and the election of senate officers in the May meeting of the Faculty Senate.

**General election:** In the general election, there were forty senate places open. Four of these places had two nominees and thirty-three of these places had one nominee by the end of nominations (which was extended by one week due to a lack of nominations), and three had no nominees. A total of 635 votes were cast, out of roughly 2500 eligible voters. The three places with no nominees were all won by write-in candidates. In each of these races, several people received a single write-in vote (as it turned out, no person in these races received more than one write-in vote). The election committee arranged the names of the written-in candidates at random, and then contacted these people in that order until someone was found who was willing to serve on the senate. A few of the senate places were listed as one or two year positions rather than three years in an attempt to get closer to the ideal specified in the bylaws of electing a third of each caucus each year, since several of the caucuses have strayed from this ideal. Engineering was farthest out of line, with seven of fifteen places open this year, which led the committee to shorten the terms of two of these places to one year in an attempt to balance this.

The spring general election has also traditionally been used to fill a number of other committees (Faculty Development Leave Committee, University Tenure Mediation, and so on), at the request of the Dean of Faculties. A number of these committees had no nominations and were filled by write-ins in a fashion similar to that used in the senate races. Only one committee had no nomination and no write-in willing to serve (Honor Council, place 2, in the Bush School).

**Irregularities:** The most serious irregularity occurred in place 09 of Liberal Arts. The ballot for this place listed no nominee, however a nomination had been received before the end of the extended nomination period. The election for this place had to be re-run with a corrected ballot. The faulty ballot was due to miscommunication between the Election Committee, the Faculty Senate office, and the office of the Dean of Faculties. Now that the Senate office has access to SurveyMonkey and will presumably be running general elections, this sort of mix-up should be much less likely. The voting procedure prescribed by bylaws was clearly confusing to some voters. For example, some races had more names written in than had a write-in ranked (to vote for a write-in, a voter must not only write the name in, but must also rank that person as their first choice). In such cases, the committee attempted to determine the intent of the voter. Also, in several cases voters wrote in names of candidates who were already on the ballot.

**Executive committee election:** There were no irregularities in the election of the executive committee. As usual, there was a delay while ballots were being counted. The recurring problem of satisfying the bylaws' requirement that no electoral unit may have more than two members on the Executive Committee did not arise this time, since no unit had more than two candidates.

**Recommendations:** Running the elections out of the Senate office should streamline the procedure and reduce confusion. However, the Election Committee should be more aggressive in ensuring the accuracy of the ballots than it has been in the past (I admit that I have been guilty of leaving the proof-reading of ballots to the Dean of Faculties' office). Beyond this, though, I recommend that this year's Election Committee and Bylaws Committee consider amending the bylaws to change the voting procedure. I believe that the point of the current procedure was to eliminate the necessity for run-offs. In the days of senators sitting by ballot boxes on election day, run-offs were impractical. Now that we conduct elections on-line, run-offs are much easier. A possible alternative to our current system is to simply have voters vote for the candidate of their choice, with a run-off between the two top finishers if no one has a majority. Alternatively, the top vote-getter could be the winner even if that

person doesn't have a majority. Either of these systems would lead to less confusion among the voters. A further reason for changing our system is that SurveyMonkey is not set up for the voting by ranking which we currently use. It's extremely difficult to interpret the print-outs which we get from SurveyMonkey, and to correctly apply the procedure given in the bylaws, we need to see every ballot (with names of voters removed, of course).

**Reapportionment:** Following bylaws, the Senate must be reapportioned in December, 2009. For the Election Committee to do this, it must be active and elect a chair in Fall semester of 2009.