

More election controversy hits College Hill



Meghan Malette

by Hunter Gavin

Just days after the UNB Student Union spring elections were cancelled, more election-related controversy has transpired on College Hill. The St. Thomas University Student Union was forced to extend its nomination period and postpone voting due to a series of disqualifications and penalties handed out by Chief Electoral Officer Caitlin Mahoney -- most relating to the use of Facebook as a campaign tool.

The nomination period, originally slated to close on February 16, was extended until the morning of February 21. Voting, originally scheduled for February 26 and 27, has been pushed back to February 28 and March 1.

The first action from Mahoney came on the evening of February 13, when she disqualified Brad Conley, a current off-campus representative who had intended to run for the position of SU President, for what she determined to be a violation of Section 5 of the Student Union bylaws.

This section reads: "The campaign period, shall not begin until after the nominations have been closed, and shall continue no later than 11:59 pm on the day immediately preceding the election." Mahoney said Conley violated this section by sending an e-mail to the presidents of STU's various clubs and societies.

In the email, Mahoney said, "Mr. Conley explicitly declared himself a candidate in the upcoming elections and requested input for a supposed platform. The fact that he declared himself a candidate and communicated with several organized bodies on campus means that there is no doubt that this is an act of active campaigning." She added that disqualifying Conley was the only appropriate course of action.

A week prior to this email, Conley declared himself a Presidential candidate in an interview in the Aquinian. Mahoney took no action over this earlier declaration.

However, this was not the only incident to spark controversy. In the same press release in which Mahoney declared Conley's ineligibility, she tackled the issue of candidates using Facebook. She noted that Samantha Baker would be disqualified from the

election, again under Section 5 of the By-Laws.

Baker was running for VP Student Life, but was deemed to be campaigning outside the campaign period for starting her own Facebook group. Through the use of an "electronic resource" -- which was actually Facebook -- Mahoney said that Baker had "actively communicated to a large body of students her intention to run and also [requested] their support." The only course of action, Mahoney claimed, was disqualification.

In addition, incumbent SU President Colin Banks, who is seeking re-election, was penalized for allowing another person to campaign on his behalf outside of the appropriate period. Banks became a member of the Facebook group "Re-Elect Colin Banks for SU President" and made no efforts to abolish the group. As a response to this violation, Mahoney has prohibited Banks from putting up posters and distributing loose materials on campus for the duration of the campaign period.

This penalty raised some eyebrows, especially since Conley and Baker had been disqualified for similar violations. "Mr. Banks will not be disqualified for his actions because he did not explicitly call for support so it cannot be determined beyond a reasonable doubt that he was actively campaigning," Mahoney claimed. "However," she added, "some level of discipline is required to equalize campaigning opportunities, but disqualification is not appropriate."

Another candidate in the race for President, Laura Nelson-Hamilton, was also penalized for having a Facebook group in her name. Her penalty is much less harsh than those received by the other three, as Nelson-Hamilton is only prohibited from putting up posters, distributing loose materials, or using electronic resources for the first 24 hours of the campaign period.

Normally, such reactions by the CEO would not be subject to such scrutiny, especially with regards to Baker, Banks, and Nelson-Hamilton. However, three days before the

penalties with regards to Facebook were handed out, Mahoney said in an interview with the Aquinian that as CEO she had no jurisdiction over activity on the internet. She then proceeded to hand out penalties, and retract her comments regarding the use of Facebook in the next issue of the Aquinian.

Mahoney responded, "in saying I had no jurisdiction over the internet I was mistaken. Upon further examination of the bylaws it was determined that although I do not have jurisdiction over the internet during the campaign period, it is my responsibility to ensure that no campaigning takes place outside of the campaign period." Since Nelson-Hamilton had not created her Facebook group until after Mahoney's original comments, her penalty was less strict.

For his part, Conley attempted to appeal the CEO's ruling regarding his disqualification. As per a clause in the bylaw, a petition signed by 20 percent of the STU student body would force the SU to review the CEO's decision. Conley successfully collected over 550 signatures in a week -- a span including a snow day and a full weekend, all while Conley was at a school-sanctioned conference in Boston. But after an emergency SU meeting on Wednesday, February 21, he was told that the petition was not accepted.

The reason given was that the pages of the petition were not correctly formatted.

If able to collect signatures from 30% of the student population, Conley would be able to force a referendum. However, since his original petition was not accepted on questionable grounds, Conley is now forced to collect another 20% petition, followed by a 30% petition. According to Conley, work on the petitions has already begun.

Since both Conley and Baker were disqualified from running for President and VP Student Life, respectively, they have joined races for other positions. Conley is now running for VP Education, while Baker is running for VP Administration.

Correction

Due to a technical error Rafael Velázquez was not contacted by the Brunswickan as stated in last weeks article 'Election Cancelled'.

V-Day and the Vagina Monologues

by Heather Elliot

Many people have heard about The Vagina Monologues over the years. Some have seen the movie version, some have watched a performance as part of one of the three campaigns (Worldwide, College, Commercial), and some still have no idea what the play is about, and haven't heard of the campaigns.

Eve Ensler wrote "The Vagina Monologues" after interviewing over 200 women about their experiences as women. The play then went on to win an Obie Award. The easiest way to explain the V-Day campaigns is to pass on the description given from the website (www.vday.org).

"V-Day is a global movement to stop violence against women and girls. V-Day is a catalyst that promotes creative events to increase awareness, raise money and revitalize the spirit of existing anti-violence organizations. V-Day generates broader attention for the fight to stop violence against women and girls, including rape, battery, incest, female genital mutilation (FGM) and sexual slavery."

Through V-Day campaigns, local volunteers and college students produce annual benefit performances of The Vagina Monologues to raise awareness and funds for anti-violence groups within their own communities. In 2006, over 2700 V-Day benefit events took place produced by volunteer activists in the U.S. and around the world, educating millions of people about the reality of violence against women and girls.

Performance is just the beginning. V-Day stages large-scale benefits and produces innovative gatherings, films and campaigns to educate and change social attitudes towards violence against women including: the documentary Until the Violence Stops; community briefings on the missing and murdered women of Juárez, Mexico; the December 2003 V-Day delega-

tion trip to Israel, Palestine, Egypt and Jordan; the Afghan Women's Summit; the March 2004 delegation to India; the Stop Rape Contest; the Indian Country Project; and Love Your Tree. In June 2006, V-Day launched a two-week festival of theatre, spoken word, performance and community events called Until the Violence Stops: NYC, which invited thousands of New Yorkers to make New York City the safest place on earth for women and girls. During the two-week festival, UNTIL THE VIOLENCE STOPS: NYC welcomed 2,000 runners in Prospect Park running to demand an end to violence, witnessed 50 actresses and over 100 writers contributing their genius, time and talent to sold out events, and reached millions through media and a citywide subway and bus campaign.

In Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, V-Day commits ongoing support to build movements and anti-violence networks. Working with local organizations, V-Day provided hard-won funding that helped open the first shelters for women in Egypt and Iraq, sponsored annual workshops and three national campaigns in Afghanistan, convened the "Confronting Violence" conference of South Asian women leaders, and donated satellite phones to Afghan women to keep lines of communication open and action plans moving forward. Through the Karama program based out of Cairo, V-Day works in-depth to build networks ending violence against women and girls in Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

The V-Day movement is growing at a rapid pace throughout the world, in 90 countries from Europe to Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, and all of North America. V-Day, a non-profit corporation, distributes funds to

grassroots, national and international organizations and programs that work to stop violence against women and girls. In 2001, V-Day was named one of Worth Magazine's 100 Best Charities and in 2006 one of Marie Claire Magazine's Top Ten Charities. In nine years, the V-Day movement has raised over \$40 million.

The 'V' in V-Day stands for "Victory, Valentine and Vagina."

This year the theme is "reclaiming peace," with a spotlight on women dealing with the horrors of living in conflict zones. Just being near conflict zones is dangerous enough for both sexes, but women often have to live with the violence, such as multiple rapes, they have to endure. Reclaiming peace is something that I hope both women and men strive toward in all situations.

This year on campus, the UNB Sexuality Centre is producing a benefit production of The Vagina Monologues. UNB is one of 40 Canadian Universities to be involved. The show is this Wednesday, February 28th at 7 pm in Dineen Auditorium, Head Hall (H C13). Tickets will be on sale in the Head Hall lobby at 6:30 pm. They are \$5 or \$4 with an item donation for the women staying at our charity of choice, Gignoo Transition House, Inc. Gignoo is the ONLY transition house for aboriginal women in the entire province of New Brunswick, and is right here in Fredericton. We will be donating back 10 percent of proceeds to the V-Day campaign as well.

Come see real women of UNB tell the real stories of women from around the world, sometimes hilarious, sometimes heartbreaking, but always real. Reclaim Peace. Stop the Violence. Spread the Word.

Any questions? Drop by the Sexuality Centre, Rm. 203 in the SUB or e-mail sexuality@unb.ca

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