ELECTIONS TOOLKIT

everything you need to run a great campaign.
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So... you’re considering running in a USC election - that’s very exciting! Whether it be a councillor, faculty president, or USC position, it’s always helpful to have a little background information about this complex organization. Without further ado, let’s get into the basics!

THE BASICS

The USC is an organization that is built for students and by students — and our mission is to enhance the educational experience of all undergraduate and professional students here at Western. We represent over 35,000 students across campus, including:

- Arts and Humanities
- Brescia University College
- Dentistry
- Education
- Engineering
- Information and Media Studies
- Health Science
- Medicine
- Huron University College
- Ivey School of Business
- Kings University College
- Law
- Music
- Science
- Social Science

Each year, student executives, alongside numerous full-time staff and part-time student leaders manage a $30 million budget and four operations, including: the Spoke, the Wave, the Purple Store, and Western Film. As such, the USC is one of the largest student governments in Canada and the largest non-profit organization in London.
EXECUTIVE TEAM

Each year, students run or apply to fill six positions that will form the USC Executive. These positions include: The President, Vice President University Affairs, Vice President External Affairs, Vice President Student Support and Programming, Vice President Governance and Finance, and Vice President Communications and Public Affairs.

**President**
The President and CEO of the University Students’ Council is the main spokesperson for 35,000 undergraduate and professional students on campus. We like to describe them as the person you can always tap on the shoulder to chat about whatever issue may be on your mind. They oversee the complex responsibilities of the executive team and the organization at large — and work, year over year, to ensure that students at Western have the best student experience possible! The USC President is elected at-large by the student body during the USC election period.

**Vice President University Affairs**
The Vice President University Affairs is the expert on all things related to campus life. They conduct research, develop evidence-informed policies, and carry out advocacy to the university’s senior administrators on issues including: sexual and gender-based violence, academics, equity and inclusion, and campus safety. The Vice President University Affairs is elected by the USC Council during the USC’s Annual General Meeting in March.

**Vice President External Affairs**
The Vice President External Affairs knows the ins and outs of all levels of government, including municipal, provincial, and federal. Much like the Vice President University Affairs, they are focused on researching, writing, and lobbying for policies that will improve student life, including: student financial aid, work integrated learning, housing, and transit. The Vice President External Affairs is elected by the USC Council during the USC’s Annual General Meeting in March.

**Vice President Student Support and Programming**
The Vice President Student Support and Programming is focused on improving your student experience. They oversee large scale events, such Orientation Week and PurpleFest, while managing student support networks like Food Support Services and the Peer Support Centre. The Vice President Student Support and Programming is hired by a USC hiring panel.

**Vice President Governance and Finance**
The Vice President Governance and Finance is responsible for managing a $30 million budget while ensuring that the USC’s expansive policies continue serving the student community. Additionally, they oversee the USC’s complex clubs system, totaling over 200 student organizations. The Vice President Governance and Finance is hired by a USC hiring panel.

**Vice President Communications and Public Affairs**
The Vice President Communications and Public Affairs keeps students in the know about all things Western. They oversee the organization’s corporate communications strategy, including digital engagement, branding and campaigns, while managing the organization’s political strategies through media engagements, community relations, and crisis management. The Vice President Communications and Public Affairs is hired by a USC hiring panel.
Council is the USC’s legislative body, where elected representatives from each faculty, affiliate, and professional school can put forth, debate, and carry out motions to improve student life. Each month, Councillors come together to discuss advocacy topics including: gender based violence, equity and inclusion, work integrated learning, and safe spaces.

Together, USC Council: (a) represents the interest of Western’s undergraduate and professional students, (b) establishes terms of reference and methods of accountability for the executive officers, (c) approves the USC’s strategic plans, roadmaps, and budget submissions, and (d) appoints committees, task forces, and advisory boards.

Each Councillor is elected by the student body of their respective faculty, affiliate, or professional program during the USC election period. If you are interested in learning more about the USC Council, visit westernusc.ca/council.

The Board of Directors oversees the corporate side of the USC. Each year, they assess the organization’s financial practices, approve a $30 million budget, and assess any financial risks that may exist. They also play an important role in the development of the strategic plan, as well as review human resources and governance practices.

The Board of Directors hires students whenever positions are opened and applications will be posted on the USC Opportunities webpage. To learn more about the board, visit westernusc.ca/board-of-directors.

The Peer Programs are the USC’s equity-based networks, which aim to develop events, campaigns, research, and advocacy positions to forward diversity and inclusion within the organization and across Western’s campus. The Peer Programs examine students’ issues through an intersectional lens and aim to provide a safe space for students of all backgrounds to build a community.

The Peer Programs network includes:

- Accessibility Committee
- Allyship Network
- Ethnocultural Support Services
- Gender Equality Network
- Indigenous Relations
- International Student Support
- PrideWestern
A platform is essential for any campaign, whether it be for a faculty, club, or USC position. Your platform is where you can outline what you want to accomplish if elected. Further, it is the main point of reference for voters on who you are and what you stand for as a candidate.

The length and depth of your platform depends on the role you are running for, the amount of responsibility or oversight it contains and often correlates with the number of students you aim to represent. For example, becoming a department representative on a faculty council might require you to outline issues specific to students in one particular subject area. Meanwhile, running for USC President means you need to do extra work to familiarize yourself with issues that impact the campus community more broadly.

Regardless of the position you are considering, this guide will outline some key steps towards building a platform as well as considerations when pulling together and presenting your ideas.

Before You Write

Reflect on Your Motivation for Running
One of the first places you should draw inspiration from is yourself. If you’re thinking about running for an elected position, it’s likely because you feel passionately about addressing certain issues, are interested in improving the way things currently are or have the potential to be a strong representative for other students. Before writing your platform, think about what led you to run in the first place and use it to identify who you are and what you stand for in the context of the role you are interested in. You can then take the things you’re passionate about and begin to identify areas of focus for your platform.

Take Note of Current Events
It is always good to be in the loop with what is happening on campus, especially if you are thinking of running for a position in the upcoming election cycle. If you don’t already, start paying special attention to things affecting the constituency you aim to eventually represent. Take note of what has happened and how students responded. This is important for two reasons:
1. **Student needs are ever changing.** What was a ‘hot topic’ issue one year might not be the next. Over time concerns are addressed and new issues arise so keep tabs on what students are talking about because they are likely things you will want to consider addressing in some way within your platform.

2. **Current events will be discussed during the election.** Students want to see candidates address issues that are relevant and affecting their university experience right now. You will likely be questioned on these topics in debates, media interviews, and Q&A sessions throughout the election. Knowing what’s happening and how it’s affecting students as well as having your stances outlined in your platform for students to reference will make you a stronger candidate.

   Additionally, you will be able to more comprehensively flush out your thoughts and plans ahead of time by writing them in your platform. Being able to pull from your own ideas to answer questions or debates during the election will be easier and less stressful.

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**Conduct Consultations**

While identifying your own ideas is a good first step, finding out the wants and needs of your constituents is the biggest challenge in writing your platform. It is important that your platform is informed by many perspectives, especially if you are running for a position that aims to represent students from different faculties or walks of life. One of the ways you can improve your understanding of key issues and identify areas of concern for students is by consulting with students at-large. This could include anyone from your friends, roommates and classmates to student leaders in various faculties, clubs and interest groups. Sitting down with students in an individual or group setting before developing your final platform will help to inform your positions and plans on how to tackle key issues.

Don’t know how to facilitate a consultation? Here are some prompts to get you started:

1. **Ask students what the current issues are that they care about.** This can be broader than the role you are running for, as it allows you to gain an understanding of the current landscape and some of the additional factors affecting students in your potential constituency. It is also a good way to identify things that might not have been talked about in the past. You can leave this open-ended or issue-specific if you have specific things you hope to gain additional perspective on.

2. **Ask students what they like and don’t like about the council, club or organization you are running for, and what they would want to see from the position you are running for.** Before you assume any leadership role, it is important to gain a solid foundation of understanding of the organization or group of people you hope to lead. Oftentimes this includes being critical of what has always been done and thinking about why it maybe is that way and if there is potential for it to improve.

3. **Ask students what makes their Western experience great.** While it is important to address current issues and be critical of potential improvements, there is also value in gaining perspective on the positive aspects of university life. Asking students about the things they love about Western and the specific councils, clubs or organizations they are a part of will be equally informative to your platform and overall campaign, as it might indicate initiatives that should continue or expand.
Writing Your Platform

Introduce Yourself and Your Story
Voters will value getting to know you as a candidate. As someone who aims to represent students, you should consider sharing pieces of your story that led you to run and make you passionate about improving campus life. Doing this can help you relate to voters and convey that you understand the frustrations of your peers. This can be done both in your written platform as well as at debates or other speaking events where you have an opportunity to share more about you as an individual.

Investigate Feasibility
Collecting feedback and input is key for a successful platform that reflects the needs of the student body, however, not every student will understand the scope of the organization or role you are hoping to be elected to and therefore not every suggestion will be feasible. As you put together your platform and begin to specify how you will reach your outlined goals, be sure to not just promise the flashy things, but actually investigate the feasibility of your ideas and ensure they are realistic. This might involve additional consultations or research but it will be worthwhile to know your plan is implementable. Your ideas can and should remain ambitious but doing your research beforehand will allow you to understand the necessary steps on the path to achieving your platform promises.

Connect the Dots
Your role as a candidate is to interpret the things students tell you, either informally or in consultations, and coupled with your knowledge of your desired role and organization, club or council, figure out what it is students want to see and how to make it happen. When students share their frustrations, oftentimes they are partially venting and don’t actually know what they’re hoping to see changed. How your platform can stand out is by identifying pain points within the student body and using your platform to explain how you would address them.

After You Write
Ensure it is Digestible
One of the most difficult components to writing and conveying your platform is doing so in a way that can be interpreted by everyone - from student government veterans to students who might not have a clue what the difference is between the USC and UCC. As you elaborate on your plans in your platform, ensure it is digestible to the average reader and that you are providing enough context to not only inform your audience but engage them and leave them wanting to learn more. You should also think about how to present the information in your platform, oftentimes candidates will section their platforms into ‘pillars’ and organize sub-points within a larger heading. This is only one of many options you could explore that would make it easier for students at-large to read and understand.
Consult with Your Team
If you haven’t read the brief about building your campaign team yet, this is your heads up that regardless of the position you are running for you should always have a few people in your corner to provide advice and perspective. With respect to writing your platform, this can manifest in a number of different ways: you could task your team with talking to different groups of students, doing research on the implementation of your ideas or actually helping to write the document itself. Regardless, at the end of the day, your team will be made up of students so they are a good test group to read your platform and provide feedback.

Make it Available
Once you’ve written the bulk of your platform, consider how you’d like to share it with the student body (i.e. digital copy, website, video, social media, etc.) and ensure you adjust the content accordingly. Your platform is one of your biggest assets in an election, as it is your well-researched and thought-out action plan that speaks to who you are and what you stand for as a candidate. Putting the time into developing a strong platform and ensuring the students voting can access it will help to broadcast your message and elevate your campaign.

Regardless of how the election turns out, writing a platform is an accomplishment. They take passion, diligence, research, consultation, and dedication to put together. Be proud of the work you and your team put into your platform and be thankful for the students and groups that provided valuable feedback and consultation.
Forming Your Campaign Team

Forming a campaign team can be one of the most intimidating steps and can ultimately influence whether or not you are going to run for an elected position. Compiling a team who would work alongside you to achieve your goal of winning the election (without being paid), may feel like an impossible challenge.

There is no perfect template to structure a campaign team and each will be unique from the other. This brief will outline some suggestions to think about when beginning this process and tips that will be helpful to you in the process. Having a solid campaign team will help you feel set up and equipped to run a successful campaign in your respective election.

Forming A Team - Where To Begin?

**Domino Effect**
This process often operates in a domino-esque manner. At the beginning you may have difficulty locating a place to start, but as soon as you knock one down, the momentum will come and you will be off to the races. Often the best place to start is with people you already know and who would likely support your vision of your candidacy, or people who have experienced an election in some form before. Regardless of where you start, the important takeaway is to just start and the rest will come.

**Striking a Balance: Friends and Experts**
While it can be a great idea to have a couple of your friends on this team to provide you with the support you need, it is important to strike a balance between those you know personally and those you think would provide tactical/strategic support to you and your team. Depending on the areas you need particular support in, this can dictate how this balance plays out, and is completely a personal preference. Friends can be a great resource to you (emotionally) and the team, but it is important to ensure you have a clear understanding of the expectations between both of you to ensure that the added stress of the campaign does not interfere with your friendship.
Consult with Former Candidates

Another great resource for beginning this process is to speak with other former candidates (successful or not) as they will have plenty of other insights to provide you with from their own perspectives/experiences. Former student leaders will all have their own spin on the campaign team process, but nonetheless every single one of them are great resources to reach out to, and could provide even further information beyond what is included in this brief.

When in Doubt, Consult it Out

Ultimately, if you have no idea of where to start or who to ask, my advice is to simply begin your consultation process. In this process you will naturally meet more and more people who will either align with your ideas and want to join you, or you will meet people you connect with and will want their given perspective to build out the team you envisioned. By beginning the process of consultation you will both learn more about what you should be including on your platform. Further, you will also meet incredible leaders whom you may have never interacted with before who could also become excellent supporters to your campaign.

Positions To Consider

Build Around You

Again, there is by no means one model for a campaign team that is better than the other, and it is largely to be built around you and what areas you are wanting to particularly focus on or ones you feel may be weaknesses of yourself and could use additional support.

Position Examples

Listed are some positions/areas you will likely want to cover on your team are as follows: A campaign manager, one/two deputy campaign managers, a communications lead (to oversee your overall communications plan as well as social media and branding), a governance (bylaw) lead, an outreach lead, a finance lead, and a policy/research lead. These are common titles/areas that are often quite helpful to have some direct leadership on in order to free you up to operate as a candidate and do what you probably want to do most - talk to students!

Start with a Core and Build Out

Your team will by no means stop at those titles, but a great place to start is setting up your core team and then build it out further with more and more students who want to help on more specific aspects including (but not limited to): graphics, social media, and volunteer management.

Support + Hard Work = Happy Candidate

This is a glimpse at roughly how some teams have approached a team structure, but the main takeaway is to work with people that you know will be willing to work hard especially during a busy time in the elections period and people who you feel will provide support to areas that you need help in most. During the campaign you will be exhausted, and this team will serve as your support system that keeps you going. Ultimately this support system may help you find yourself in your dream role.
Who To Ask?

Where to Look
There are countless places to find incredible leaders who could help you in this process. A few great starting points are to ask: a) people you know who are already invested in elections/student leadership, b) executive members of campus groups (councils, clubs, teams etc.), and c) stand out students in your classes who you have befriended/admire.

Want them to Join? Ask them!
The first few times you ask someone to join your team it will feel awkward and clunky (almost like the first time you asked someone out on a date), but trust that every candidate before has engaged in the exact same process and you will do nothing but become more comfortable overtime. When having these discussions, ensure that you are clear about what you are hoping they can help with and what the commitment will look like on their end. Also, explain why you want them to join.

Overall, asking people to join your team can feel daunting, but my advice is to never shy away from it and in the worst possible case, you have met a new friend who unfortunately does not want to engage directly in your campaign.

Final Tips/Thoughts

Start the Tedious Pieces Early
Do not worry if you are feeling like you are “starting too late” in this process. With that said, building a team sooner than later will do nothing but serve you well as it will allow for you to offload some of the work you would normally have to do, and to also begin many of the other processes that tend to be more tedious/time consuming such as creating a logo/brand, volunteer management, and scheduling.

Ask for Help!
Do not feel bad asking people to help! It may be difficult to understand why someone would donate their time and expertise for no pay to someone they may not even know very well. People will all have their own reasons for supporting you as a candidate, but trust that they are doing so because they believe in you and your ideas and to never take that for granted. Keep meeting new people, and keep asking people that you admire or have heard great things about to chat and see if there is a fit on your team.
Your Team is Never Full
Do not be afraid to pivot and adapt. As you end up deeper into the process and possibly into the campaign itself, the team structure you imagined will need to change and flow as these campaigns are challenging in so many unique ways. If you find someone who you believe will be helpful and a good fit with you and your team, never hesitate to ask them to join you and just find them a role. You never know when an incredible asset to the team will emerge and do not limit yourself to a rigid structure of a team as it should be designed to be adaptable as the process goes on.

Find your Manager
There truly is no time like the present. While you are definitely not “too late” even as you are reading this document, it will be extremely helpful to have a team forming quickly, and most importantly I would urge you to find whoever it is that will be your campaign manager ASAP. This person will be your right hand, and will support you more than you thought another human could. Finding this person early will take an incredible amount of weight off your shoulders so the sooner, the better!

Gratitude
Make sure to thank your team during and after the campaign. They joined your team for various reasons but have been instrumental in supporting your vision and campaign. Remember, they put their time and energy into supporting your vision during their semester so express gratitude to the incredible people who helped build and execute your campaign.
How To: Prep for a Debate

Debates are a great way to highlight why you are running and should answer why students should elect you to a position in leadership. Whether you are running to be your faculty’s next councillor or president, a senator, or vying to be the USC’s incoming VP University Affairs, VP External, or President, you’ll likely have to debate fellow candidates.

If an election race is competitive, election debates will occur during the campaign period with the possibility of multiple debates, especially for the USC Presidential campaign.

Before A Debate

*Understand the Debate Structure*

Before a debate, you need to understand what kind of debate it is. Understand the rules and format of the debate and figure out if the debate will include cross-talk or not. For a Faculty Councillor debate with multiple candidates, there will be less cross-talk and you will have limited opportunities to counter points made by opponents. A debate with fewer candidates and a format that allows all candidates to counter argue will create a different style of debate that you should prepare for.

*Practice*

The best way to prep for a debate is to practice, practice, practice. Have your campaign manager and some campaign members prep with you so you get used to speaking in front of a group. Sit on a chair across like you would in front of an audience and have a mic or object that mimics a microphone to help you get used to the movements. The more you are familiar with even the little things, the more comfortable you will feel.

Have your team come up with questions that are likely to be asked during the debate by both the moderator and students when they get their Q&A period. To make practice beneficial, you need to be able to effectively communicate:

- Key election issues
- Your key messages
- Where you diverge from opponents

If your debate prep allows you to answer hard questions on the hot topics of the election, refine your key platform points, and show how you differ from fellow candidates, you’re more than ready to debate.
During A Debate

Express Your Key Messages
The most important part of a debate is to express your key messages. Be prepared to answer: “why are you running?” and ensure your key messages are reflected in this answer. Your campaign pillars are a great place to start, but make sure you are consistent with expressing what the most important part of your campaign is. No candidate has time to read out their platform, so focus in on the most prominent points and stick to those.

Key messages are short statements of 3-5 words that are easy to remember and summarize the goals of your campaign.

Differentiate Yourself from Candidates
Don’t be afraid to express what makes you different from other candidates. That’s the entire point of the debate! Undecided voters get to see how campaigners differ on key elections issues. If the debate style allows for cross-talk, you can use your counter arguments to express how you and your campaign differs on a particular topic. If there is limited cross-talk, express your point in the answer and try to incorporate why it’s different from other campaigns if time allows it.

Rhetoric and Decorum
Understand your audience and adjust your speaking style accordingly. Speak clearly and concisely. Be passionate and proud of your campaign and express that in your voice (avoid a monotone voice). Use hand gestures, but remember they can also distract your audience if used too frequently. Be respectful and courteous towards the moderator and opponents.

Debates can be mild in nature, or become more heated depending on the candidates and questions. Remember to hold yourself to a high standard of decorum and stay calm during a heated exchange. Take a deep breath before expressing a counter argument and speak with honesty and integrity. Students tend to turn away in frustration with candidates who speak aggressively. Avoid interrupting fellow candidates and any behavior you don’t want reciprocated back towards you. If someone is interrupting your point, express that you would like to finish your interrupted point before the next candidate speaks.
After A Debate

Thank your opponent(s) and the moderator for taking the time to debate. Debates are nerve wracking for all candidates so be kind and proud of yourself! Debates are one of the more difficult parts of a campaign. Recognize how brave it is to put your skills, knowledge, and experience in front of the student body. Students appreciate when candidates are honest, passionate, and proud of their campaign.

**Reflect on your performance**
With your campaign manager and relevant team members, review your performance and ask: what did people like about my performance and what could be improved. This will help you in your preparation for future debates.

**Respond to Points of Information**
If a point or fact was contested during a debate, after the debate, if the fact matters to students and your campaign, make a point to publish or respond to the debate fact in a statement afterward.
Financing Your Campaign

The USC offers candidates’ financial support to fund campaign efforts. This system is managed by the Elections Governance Committee, and you can review the full Campaign Finance Procedures document and By-Law #2 for more details. Whether you are running to be your faculty’s next councillor or president, a senator, or for a USC executive position, you qualify for financial support through a reimbursement system.

Spending Limits

Spending limits for candidates’ campaign expenses and contributions, combined, shall be as follows:

- Each Presidential candidate has a spending limit of $1500
- Each Divisional candidate, excluding Faculty President candidates, has a spending limit of $100
- Each Faculty President candidate has a spending limit of $200
- Each Vice-Presidential candidate has a spending limit of $200
- The spending limit for Senate and Board of Governor candidates shall be determined by the Secretary of the University

All amounts are subject to confirmation by the CRO, or the Secretary of the University for Senate and Board of Governor candidates. Additionally, registered interest parties are eligible for up to 20% of the official side’s allowable spending limit for non-campaign expenses (i.e. research material and administrative costs). See By-Law #2 for further details regarding interest parties.
What's Included In The Spending Limit?

Campaign spending limit = Expenses + Contributions

Expenses
Expenses are any costs incurred to engage in the campaign, such as goods and services. Essentially, anything you need for the campaign and pay for using cash, credit or other currency is an expense.

Contributions
Contributions are any goods, services or privileges, such as rights of use, donated or given to a candidate. Essentially, anything you receive at a discount or for free is a contribution. Contributions must be recorded at fair market value, which is the price someone would have to pay to obtain the same or similar goods and services. Candidates cannot accept cash as contributions. Candidates must also record the name and contact of anyone who provides a contribution.

Fair Market Value Concept
The fair market value is the publicly available price of a good, service or privilege. This means any discounted or donated value must be recorded at the price most people can acquire similar or the same goods, services or privileges for. The fair market value is the sum of expenses and contributions.

For example, your relative owns a printing store and offered to give you campaign signs for free. This is a contribution and it must be recorded at fair market value. If the signs normally sell for $300, then you record a contribution of $300.

Spending Limit and the Fair Market Value Concept
Discounts not available to the general public are also a contribution. For example, a vendor who offers you an exclusive 30% discount is providing a contribution because a member of the general public cannot also receive the discount. If your subtotal is $100, a 30% discount is $30, meaning you pay $70 in cash. Since you paid $70 in cash, this is an expense, and since you received an exclusive $30 discount, this is a contribution. In total, you will record $100 as the fair market value for this transaction.

Remember, both expenses and contributions form your spending limit. Exceeding the spending limit, even through excess contributions, is subject to penalty.
Examples of Acceptable Expenses & Contributions
- At the sole discretion of the Elections Governance Committee and designates:
  - Supplies for campaign (writing utensils, paper, apparel)
  - Printing costs (banners, posters, rave cards)
  - Promotional attire
  - Food at campaign launches and volunteer rallies
  - Space rentals to host events
  - Paid advertising
  - Website domain name
  - Bar cover/wrist bands (exception: alcohol cannot be included with a wrist band)

Unacceptable Expenses & Contributions
- At the sole discretion of the Elections Governance Committee and designates:
  - Alcohol or alcohol voucher
  - Drugs
  - Long-term/fixed assets (i.e. printer, laptop)

Special Considerations
Items used in the campaign must be included at the entire cost, regardless if the item was fully consumed throughout the campaign period. For example, a $10 stationary purchase must be declared at the full $10 cost, regardless if you can still use the stationary after the campaign.

Who helps produce content matters for expenses and contributions. Campaign material and media, including videos, apps, graphics, and website design, do not incur a contribution if a volunteer who does this normally does not charge for their service. If the person who helps is normally paid for their service, then you must record their time as a contribution, regardless if they are a volunteer and you do not pay them. Remember, any expenses, such as subscriptions or materials (i.e. sign frame), must be declared at all times.

Campaign Loans
Candidates may obtain an interest-free loan from the USC up to the spending limit.

Tracking Expenses and Contributions
Tracking expenses and contributions must be done using the Campaign Expense Tracker, which is available on uscelections.ca. You must keep original receipts as this must be submitted for reimbursement. Late submissions are subject to a penalty of 5% per business day.

Reimbursement
Reimbursement = eligible expenses - outstanding loans
Contributions are not reimbursable because no cash was transacted.

Eligible expenses are those that can be verified by an original receipt and approvals by the Elections Governance Committee. Non-acceptable expenses may lead to penalties and non-reimbursement. The Committee may also adjust eligible reimbursements if the candidate is not competing in the spirit and purpose of the election system. If the loan exceeds the reimbursement, this must be repaid to the USC within 30 days of ballot closing.
Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV)

How To: Get-Out-The-Vote

Getting out the vote (GOTV) on election day is one of the most important aspects of your campaign. Elections are decided by the number of votes cast. You can do all of the preparation in the world but none of it matters if people do not vote on election day. Therefore, your GOTV strategy is essential to mobilizing potential voters and ensuring that they submit a ballot.

It is important to remember that your GOTV strategy starts before election day. There are many ways to engage with and mobilize potential voters on and prior to election day. This brief will provide you with numerous GOTV strategies to ensure that your campaign mobilizes potential voters to cast their ballot for YOU!

Beginning of the Campaign

Picking your team
At the beginning of the campaign, try to identify peers across campus who reach different networks and different potential voters. As an elected student leader, you represent all of the students in your constituency. Therefore, it is important to include students from numerous social networks on your team as it will 1) ensure that your platform is representative of the diverse needs of students, AND 2) help you mobilize potential voters from across many social groups on election day.

What does this look like?
Think of peers that would support your campaign by reaching out to their friends or programs through social media or within classes. This process goes hand in hand with creating a campaign team. When you are developing your campaign team, remember that it is both based on the skills that each member brings AND their social network. It is important to remember that you are not always looking for the most popular individuals, rather you want to make sure that your team is covering as much of the social network of your constituency as possible. After you have created your campaign team, make a Facebook group to help organize your GOTV strategy.
During the Campaign

Building relationships across your constituency

It is important that your constituency gets to know you and your platform before election day. The goal of this section is to get your constituency to vote for you.

Create opportunities to interact with students

It's important to make sure that students can put a face to the platform. Try and think of ways to add your personality into your campaign so that voters can get to know YOU! A great way of getting to know your constituents is by speaking with clubs, student groups, and students in residences. Make sure to reach out to club executives and residence councils to try and set up times to speak to different groups of students. The purpose of this stage is to pitch why students should vote for you. When students get to know you and see all of the hard work you have put into the campaign, they will be WAY more excited to vote for you.

Constant and creative online content

Make sure that your campaign is releasing constant and creative online content. This includes content on Instagram, Facebook, Tik Tok, etc. The success of your GOTV campaign will be dependent upon your ability to speak to students on the platforms that they are already using. Therefore, think of your online content as an opportunity to help students get to know you and your platform better. Try and think of new and exciting ways to get people involved and excited by your online content!

Leading up to Election Day

Information Gathering

In order to activate your voter base on election day, you need information. This can take many forms, including creating a list of names, emails, or clubs that have expressed interest in you as a candidate. Importantly, you must make sure that these people can actually vote for you. Likes on a Facebook page don’t always directly translate to votes. Anyone can like a Facebook page, but only certain students can vote for you. Some cohorts you should specifically look out for are Western students (unfortunately your family back home can’t vote for you) and students in your faculty if you are running for faculty representation. This list should be used as your basis for voter activation or election day.

Social Media

Make sure that you have one final push on social media in the days leading up to the election. Highlight your platform points, the reasons why students are voting for you and remind students HOW they can vote. Sharing information on how to vote is an essential part of the final days of the election. Use this to continue to grow your support and collect information up to election day.
Election Day

Social Network Reach
At the beginning of the campaign, you have added people to your team that have different social networks. THIS is the moment to mobilize those networks. Make sure that everyone on their team is messaging their friends and peers with information regarding why they should vote for you as a candidate and resources on how to vote. It is important to make sure this process is organized. You should divide the lists of names, emails and clubs that you have collected to make sure that you are organized in connecting with voters. Information is your most powerful asset on election day - you should keep track of who has contacted each voter and how many times they have been contacted. Ideally, you reach each of these voters two different times on election day to remind them to vote. To make sure you are providing each of these voters with consistent messaging, create a FAQ page that members of your team can use when students ask them questions about voting and your campaign.

Voting Information
At this stage, you are less concerned with highlighting your specific platform points. The goal of election day communications is getting people to actually vote. Therefore, your social media should be dedicated to sharing campaign branded material that provides students with information on how to vote. Sharing voting information and even the actual link to voting are great ways to showcase this information with voters.

Post-Election Day

Friends and Campaign Team
Regardless of the results on election day, remember that before your campaign team was your campaign team, they were your friends and peers. Make sure to be cognizant of all the incredible work that they did because they believe THAT YOU ARE GREAT! Whether or not you won does not change the way they think of you. MAKE SURE that your team knows that you think that THEY ARE GREAT TOO and that you valued everything they did for your campaign. Remember to thank them for all of their help on your campaign.

You Are a Star!
Campaigns are hard and getting students and strangers to vote for you is extremely exciting, scary, intimidating and rewarding. Remember that regardless of the outcome, you will never regret taking a risk and putting yourself out there! The Western community is lucky to have leaders like you.