



February 14, 2019
AMS Council

SCD245-19

This letter is intended to serve as a justification document for why the AMS Elections Committee wishes to suspend section IX (A)(2)(6)(a) “as determined by the Elections Committee no later than January 15”, in addition to Section IX (A)(2)(9)(a,b,c) that requires dates for reimbursement and campaign expenditure levels be set by January 15th of each year. The Elections Committee wishes to suspend only the requirement that the campaign period, campaign expenditures, and reimbursement levels be published by January 15th.

The AMS Elections committee is bound to follow the AMS Code of Procedure when running AMS Executive races, and is bound to follow the University Act when running UBC Senate and Board of Governor races. Section 44 of the University Act requires four weeks in between the end of nominations and the end voting, known as the end of elections. The schedule originally proposed by the AMS Elections Committee was as follows: Nominations close on Friday, February 15th, campaigning runs from Monday, February 25th to Friday, March 8th, and voting run from Monday, March 4th to Friday, March 8th. This schedule only allows for three weeks in between end of nominations and the end of voting. This error was brought to my attention after the last regularly scheduled council meeting on February 6th, 2019, so could not have been addressed previously.

The solution proposed by the Elections Committee is as follows: Nominations close on Friday, February 15th, campaigning runs from Monday, February 25th to Friday, March 15th, and voting runs from Monday, March 11th to Friday, March 15th. This option is favourable to the Elections Committee because it adheres to the University Act. In addition, it does not require the Elections Committee to reschedule many social events and/or debates. A one week voting period is favourable to the Chief Returning Officer, Polling Officers, and Polling Clerks, who are running physical polling stations at different locations from 11 am to 8:30 pm daily. It has been identified as a serious drain on the Elections Committee’s staff and budget to proceed with a two week voting period. While the Elections Committee recognizes the burden of a three week campaigning period on candidates, a longer period to engage with candidates is ultimately to the benefit of voters. As such, we propose amending our maximum campaign expenditures and maximum reimbursement levels to compensate for additional campaign materials required for an additional week.

The Elections Committee has identified other options, and deemed them unsuitable. They are as follows:

1) Separate the Board of Governors and Senate ballot from the AMS Executive ballot into two separate ballots. This option would run the Board of Governors and Senate race as follows: Nominations close Friday, February 15th, campaigning runs from Monday, February 25th to Friday, March 15th, and voting runs from Monday, March 11th to Friday, March 15th. The AMS Executive race would run on the original timeline. This option would force candidates for these races to have a three week campaign period, while other candidates would have a two week campaign period. This is an unfair advantage in the opinion of the Elections Committee. In addition, many candidates who run for Senate also run for AMS Executive, and as the campaign periods would differ, they would require two different sets of campaign materials. Without suspending code, the Elections Committee is unable to alter the campaign expenditures or reimbursement levels to compensate for extended campaigning period. The Elections Committee would be forced to mandate those candidates running in two races take down their AMS Executive campaign materials after that race finished on Friday, March 8th, and monitor that all digital materials were altered. The Elections Committee is committed to ensuring a high turnout rate of voters is achieved, and two separate ballots is detrimental to that goal.

2) Disallow campaigning during voting week. This option would run on one ballot, with all races. It would run as follows: Nominations close Friday, February 15th, campaigning runs from Monday, February 25th to Friday, March 8th, voting runs from Monday, March 11th to Friday, March 15th. This option is not favourable to the Elections Committee as it disallows voters from accessing information from candidates during the period they require it the most. Voters have a right and responsibility to ask questions from candidates and request materials. A separated voting and campaign periods would require extreme vigilance from the Elections Committee, as all physical and digital campaign materials would need to be removed.

Another, similar option is as follows: Nominations close Friday, February 15th, campaigning runs from Monday, February 25th - Friday, March 8th, voting runs from Monday, March 4th to Friday, March 15th. This option complies with current AMS Code of Procedures and the University Act, but again is not favourable to the Elections Committee. A longer voting period would likely be beneficial for turnout rates and voters, but disallowing campaigning during the second week of voting is detrimental for the reasons above. In addition, a two week voting period is a significant drain on Elections Committee resources.

3) Declare nominations for Senate and Board of Governor races received after February 8th to be invalid. The Elections Committee is not fully aware of the viability of this option, as discussions with the Registrar about this specifically have not occurred. This is not favourable to the Elections Committee as it unduly punishes candidates who are not familiar with the University Act, and assumed the information put on the nomination forms was accurate. UBC is within its rights to run Senate and Board of

Governor elections separately, without affiliation to the AMS, and this is also unfavourable to the Elections Committee. Many past Elections Administrators have worked on developing and maintaining the relationship with UBC, and the Elections Committee values the current relationship. Ongoing communication with UBC will ensure this issue does not arise in the future.

The Elections Committee considered all possible options, and concluded that the option proposed in the introduction to this letter is the most favourable to voters, candidates and the Elections Committee. All options have benefits and downsides, and the Elections Committee is confident that the proposal is the most equitable for all.

Sincerely,
The Elections Committee

Halla Bertrand, Elections Administrator
Madeleine Gustavson, Chief Returning Officer
Zahra Karim, Communications Officer
Justice Tuccaro, Events Officer
Isabelle Ava-Pointon, Polling Officer
David Yang, Polling Officer