

March 18, 2021 Minutes of the AMS Governance Committee; 7pm

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/91681615917>

Attendance

Present: Sebastian Cooper (Chair), Danny Liu (SUS), Ryan Wong (VSEUS), Carter MacLean (AUS), Cole Evans (AMS President), Kamil Kanji (student-at-large), Katherine Feng (SUS), Sheldon Goldfarb (Clerk of Council)

Guests: Max Holmes

Regrets:

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm.

Agenda Items

Territorial Acknowledgement

Approval of the Agenda

Moved: Katherine Seconded: Carter

That the agenda be adopted.

[The motion carries.]

Approval of Past Minutes

Moved: Kamil Seconded: Ryan

That the minutes of March 4, 2021 be approved.

[The motion carries.]

Faculty-student senators elections issue

Guest: Max Holmes

Motion from Council:

WHEREAS the decision made by the Elections Committee about elections for UBC-Vancouver, faculty-student senators cannot be reversed for the 2021 Elections; and

WHEREAS Council continues to believe that all student elections at UBC should be run by students as has been the practice for decades;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT AMS Council direct the governance committee to report back with Code amendments to best ensure the following:

THAT AMS Elections, along with constituencies, continues to run student elections for UBC-Vancouver faculty-student senators;

THAT AMS Elections, must meaningfully consult UBC-Vancouver Student Senators and Governors for any changes related to their respective elections;

THAT AMS Elections, must meaningfully consult constituencies for any changes related to their respective faculty-student senator election; and THAT AMS Elections, must seek Council Approval if they plan on not running a UBC-Vancouver Student Senator or Governor election.

Sebastian: Max is a student senator and had discussions with Isabelle, Chief Electoral Officer, about these changes. Here to give us an introduction and share his thoughts.

Carter: I'm running to be a senator. Do I need to recuse myself?

Sebastian: This affects future elections, so no.

Max: Senate is the highest academic governing body. 5 at-large and the rest are 1 per faculty and 2 graduate students. Most years these elections were run by constituencies with help from AMS elections. Registrar's office oversaw them. University Act: governs university, outlines what has to happen for elections. Constituencies couldn't run elections this year because of issues with this; had to be either AMS or UBC. Rules: nominations to the start of elections must be 4 weeks. This has consistently been broken in the past because of a lack of a proper oversight mechanism. AMS should consider negotiating with UBC so undergrad societies can run the elections for their own senators. This year there was actually an increase of candidates; perhaps because there has been a lot of attention on this and there was work done by students to better advertise this. Registrar's office sending out email as opposed to constituencies also helped. Lesson is that UBC should continue to be involved. Another issue is that Code currently requires us to have a contract with UBC to run elections. This isn't followed at the moment (BoG and Senate). To note, this is not required by UBC, only by AMS Code - so we could get rid of this. I would advise consulting the Registrar's office and working with the student senate caucus. As well, every 3 years, UBC does a review of its elections. There will be a consultation as a part of that and that's an opportunity to clarify/revise rules. This year, there weren't resources to run the elections. Clarify who's responsible for running/overseeing elections.

Sebastian: Why was the decision made to let the University run it this year?

Max: Resources, timeline. The decision was made in January. If AMS was going to run elections, it would have been during the AMS general election and run centrally. The current approach of separating at-large and faculty senator elections allows unsuccessful at-large candidates to re-run in their faculty

elections. Want to promote opportunities for people to run. This discussion should have happened earlier. UBC has maybe done the AMS a favour because we might not have had the resources. UBC was uncomfortable having constituencies run it because there were concerns about violating the Universities Act. There are still some people at UBC who want to go back to the old system.

Sheldon: Who wanted to go back to the old system?

Max: A few people at the Registrar's office. Would also say that even if there are issues, there are student senators on the Senate committee who may be allies.

Sheldon: Another concern - constituencies and faculties don't perfectly overlap.

Max: This happens to few senators. Smaller constituencies were less affected by the change. We found a solution to this four years ago. Used to group constituency and faculty senator elections. Simple solution. Maybe there's an IT problem preventing a return to that.

Sheldon: Might be a transitional problem on both UBC's side and the AMS' side. The Committee should hear from Isabelle.

Sebastian: Have reached out to Isabelle. She said she'd provide feedback but is likely busy with post-election work now.

Cole: A proposal is to have all constituency elections at the same time. They currently happen whenever at various points throughout the year. If they can all be coordinated so that most of them happen at the same time, it would be easier to promote all of the elections telling people to vote in the constituency and senate elections at the same time.

Ryan: Solution four years ago was SimplyVoting emailing everyone in a faculty to vote. What was the solution for advertising nominations and campaigns (pre-voting)?

Max: Lots of it was left to the constituency collaboration. UBC emailing people for nominations was helpful. On running all elections at the same time: AMS has talked about this a bit. Some constituencies are definitely not in favour of it - Education, CUS. Senator elections need to happen before the senate term starts.

Danny: The issues could easily be remedied by better training and better oversight. Is AMS elections properly resourced to do this?

Cole: No, the elections committee already has a lot of work to do and don't have that much capacity. Could potentially create more capacity.

Max: Committee has gotten more resources over the years. Transitions are difficult each year. One question is whether the AMS supports AMS Elections otherwise: for example, AMS Communications? How much is this prioritized? AMS elections committee's role has not been defined well. Are they there to oversee or be very closely involved? If too closely involved, should they still oversee appeals? Need to look at resources beyond the committee and its budget too.

Sebastian: Why is it an issue that UBC would run these elections?

Max: UBC senate election rules are very simple. No campaign budgets, endorsements rules, COI rules, etc. Constituencies can do reimbursements and play a role in making elections more fair. Less coordination with constituency elections when run by the University. Long-standing principle of the AMS that students should run student elections and shape the process.

Cole: Issue of reporting - all the positions that report to council, including the Chief Electoral Officer, don't have a direct report and just report into council. There isn't one person to go to. Maybe we should look at giving these roles a report and make the President more like a board chair that provides guidance.

Ryan: Is it possible to get turnout information from UBC?

Max: WebVote results are publicly reported and results are reported to senate publicly.

Ryan: Would like comparison of what UBC and AMS are better at doing when it comes to running the elections.

Max: Would be a good list for the committee to make. Constituencies never ran the elections on their own - was always a collaboration. Senate itself could look at this. There is some benefit of enforcements of campaign rules, which UBC won't do.

Sheldon: AMS takes care of the work after nominations close. Senate deals with nominations and announcing results already.

Sebastian: On the motion from council: were there any changes to how governors were elected this year?

Max: Governor and senate at large elections are run by AMS. Just good to consult with people in the positions. We should utilize the people in the AMS who will be on senate next year to voice concerns to senate.

Ad hoc committee on increasing student engagement

Original proposal:

- *President, Chair*
- *CEO, Vice chair*
- *Govcomm Chair*
- *Student Life chair*
- *3 members of AMS Council*

New proposal (following discussions with the Chief Electoral Officer):

- *Chief Electoral Officer, Chair*

- *AMS President, Vice Chair*
- *One member of Govcomm*
- *One member of Student Life*
- *1 member of AMS Council*
- *2-4 students-at-large*

Sebastian: This was sent to the governance and elections committees. Worked with Isabelle on the new proposed composition.

Katherine: More SaL is a good idea. Did you consult with Student Life?

Sebastian: Spoke with Agam at Steering.

Max: Membership does need to be tweaked. During the elections, we also run senate and governor elections. Should include a current Senator or current / past governor. There tend to be more candidates for those races, should try to understand why that model works. Council should elect chair. CEO doesn't have many hours over summer. Need to include more relevant people including AMS communications as non-voting members. Committees like this tend to include an executive chosen by the executive. Start in May.

Cole: Isabelle brought up time concerns at council. Doesn't make sense to have CEO chair. Makes sense to have someone with more capacity to chair. Someone at council said there's no hurry to get it done over the summer. Disagree, would like to see a report done by committee by the end of summer.

Ryan: You mentioned SL wouldn't have much of a role. This seems like something they should be involved in. Why aren't we just creating a working group or subcommittee?

Sebastian: Conversation with Agam was brief and I think she was trying to respect Council's direction of striking an ad hoc committee. Ad-hoc committee has more freedom to determine membership. Subcommittee may have more restrictions.

Ryan: Why was the decision made to replace committee chairs with any members?

Sebastian: Less restrictive. Chairs only means less opportunity for other members of committees to get involved.

Ryan: Is there any concern for having so many positions be "from a committee" i.e. Executive, Student Life, and Governance Committees. I think this leaves open a possibility for kind of a revolving door of committee members, at least that has been my experience with Execs on Governance Committee this year. Having that revolving door is not very productive for getting stuff done, important to have point people.

Carter: Why is governance committee involved in this? This is an engagement issue.

Sebastian: Council sent it to governance to determine committee composition. Maybe could support with necessary code changes.

Max: Elections committee structure is written into code. Sheldon could be there for support with code changes and carrying changes forward.

Sheldon: I'm happy to be on the committee.

Sebastian: More comments on composition?

Max: Maybe require a grad student for SAL.

Ryan: Make it a policy for members of committees to stay on the committees. 4 SAL.

Kamil: Like members rather than chairs and having more SAL.

Max: Agrees with Ryan and it's probably better for people to stay on the committee. It's not a COI to have it open to the entire exec.

Cole: Exec plays a big role in coordinating things. Potentially unfair to have people intending to run in elections next year on the committee.

Policy I-9: Executive Goal Setting and Reporting Policy

Up for review. Policy: <https://www.ams.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Policy-I-9-exec-goals-february-may-2019.pdf>

Discussion of proposed Code amendments and potential template.

Postponed.

Proposed Code changes

Discussion on proposed changes to bring Code into line with practice and Bylaw changes.

Postponed.

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting is March 25, 2021.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.