COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS
Faculty of Arts and Sciences

28 February 1996

TO: Faculty of Arts and Sciences

FROM: Committee on Nominations and Elections: D. Hoak (chair), M. Chappell, M. Eckhouse, M. Houle, S. Ito, S. Knudson, R. Prosl, A. Reed, A. Ward

RE: Electronic Voting: a change in the Bylaws

At the meeting of the Faculty on Tuesday, March 12, the Committee will move to amend Section 7, Article V of the Bylaws in order to permit voting by computer. The proposed change would mean the end of voting by paper ballots in faculty meetings; in future all voting would take place electronically from computer terminals during a period of one week following the meeting of the Faculty at which nominations close.

Section 7 of Article V reads as follows:

> Sec. 7. Elections shall be held for the Committee on Nominations and Elections in October and tenure shall commence upon election. Terms of all other elected committees shall commence at the beginning of the academic year following election. Elections shall be conducted at meetings of the Faculty.

PROPOSED CHANGE: Delete the last sentence in Sec. 7 ("Elections shall be conducted at meetings of the Faculty.") and insert in its place the following sentence.

> "Elections shall be completed within one week of the meeting of the Faculty at which nominations close."

PURPOSE: The purpose of the proposed change in the Bylaws is to permit voting for committee elections to take place outside meetings of the Faculty, which the Bylaw currently requires. This would allow voting to occur electronically by computer, with subsequent tallying of the ballots by computer. The intent is to make the franchise in practice available to all members of the faculty, including those precluded from attendance at a meeting, and to make the voting process itself more efficient and accurate.

HOW WOULD THE PROCEDURE WORK: Members of the Faculty would access the system through any machine connected to the campus net. The ballot itself would be a WEB application; on the screen it would look just like the paper ballot currently in use. A voter would use a computer mouse to place an "X" in the box next to a candidate's name. When completed, the mouse, also would be used to press the "SUBMIT" button. Those interested may visit a sample ballot at:

http://pooh.chem.wm.edu/~ejd/votetest/vote.html

which means to "open" this location in a web browser.

WHAT IF I ACCIDENTALLY MARK A BALLOT? You may vote as often as you like. The tallying process will count only your last vote.

WHAT IF I ACCIDENTALLY SUBMIT AN INCORRECTLY MARKED BALLOT? If you do not submit a valid ballot -- e.g. one from each category -- this will be detected at the time of submission and the ballot will not be accepted; instead, a brief message indicating the error will be written on the screen, and the voter will be offered another opportunity to submit a valid ballot.

HOW WOULD VOTING IRREGULARITIES BE AVOIDED? No system is perfect. The primary bulwark is the integrity of the Faculty. A password would be issued to members of the Faculty, to authenticate each vote. Votes would be stored in a secure file until counted. Passwords would be stripped from the file before counting.

HOW WOULD RESULTS BE MADE KNOWN TO THE FACULTY? Those elected could be announced on WAMI, and by e-mail to the individual and committee chair, and of course by the Dean at the next faculty meeting.

NB: Nominations may still be made from the floor.