

To the Columbia College community:

We sincerely hope that everyone is staying safe in the midst of this unprecedented time. We would like to inform you that the Columbia Elections Commission (CEC) and the Executive Board of the Columbia College Student Council (CCSC) have made the decision to postpone the planned Divestment Referendum until the fall semester, or whenever campus returns to its normal operation.

We have not arrived at this decision lightly. The CEC and the CCSC Executive Board closely examined the CCSC Constitution and considered the feasibility of holding a contentious referendum during a global pandemic, among many other factors. We believe it is important to share our analysis of three key clauses from the CCSC Constitution that guided our decision.

First, while the CCSC Constitution states, “In normal circumstances, voting on the question shall occur during the next election period, including special election periods,” it is plainly obvious that these are not normal circumstances. Columbia College students are no longer living on campus and are separated by thousands of miles as they care for family members and continue taking online classes. We recognize that participation is an essential element of this referendum process (Article VII), and that participation does not only include voting; participation involves engaging in a campus-wide dialogue whereby both proponents and opponents have an opportunity to express their views. We do not believe that students would be able to equitably participate in this manner, especially given disparities in access to WiFi and other resources.

Second, CCSC is constitutionally charged to foster “cohesiveness and community among the entire undergraduate population,” and we do not believe that subjecting the Columbia College student body to a contentious discussion during these perilous times would align with this ideal. We are especially concerned about the toll that such a divisive conversation would take on Columbia College students who are already struggling to balance academic obligations with pressing family matters.

Third, Article VII of the CCSC Constitution states, “When CCSC sets the date the vote must take place within the academic year that the resolution becomes eligible to appear on the ballot.” However, this section only applies when CCSC deems the question “particularly pressing” and votes to hold the referendum on a specific “date or set of dates.” CCSC never took this additional step, so the administration of the referendum still lies with the CEC and is not subject to these temporal constraints.

We have made the decision to elect Executive Board candidates for the 2020-2021 school year, and you may view our elections schedule [here](#). We will be in touch with more information about voting in the coming week, and we hope that everyone is healthy and safe.

Best regards,
Columbia Elections Commission (CEC)
Executive Board, Columbia College Student Council (CCSC)