

Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

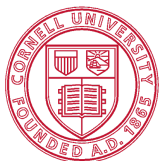
Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

Minutes of the February 26th, 2018 Meeting

5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

Bache Auditorium, Malott Hall

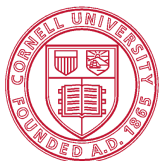
- I. Call to Order
 - a. E. Winarto called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm.
 - b. *Members Present:* K. Angierski, A. Gagnon, J. Goldberg, R. Harrison, S. Hesse, M. Jodlowski, G. Kanter, C. Little, A. Loiben, T. McCann, E. Michel, A. Schofield, C. Stambuk, W. Zhang.
 - c. *Members Absent:* C. Cannarozzo, A. Viarruel.
- II. Approval of the Minutes
 - a. The minutes from the February 12th meeting were approved by unanimous consent.
- III. Presentations
 - a. Samantha Adams gave an update on Maplewood. They have two student employment opportunities: marketing outreach assistants and graduate community assistants. There will be programming including community potlocks, cooking classes, and designated dissertation writing times. Maplewood will be pet friendly. Ten month leases will be available. Contact: ithaca@edrtrust.com
 - i. M. Battaglia asked if they are you looking at how to accommodate professional schools, for instance with their different exam schedules.
 - ii. S. Adams: we're hoping GCAs can help us figure that out.
 - iii. M. Munasinghe asked what percent of beds are filled.
 - iv. S. Adams: fifteen percent.
 - v. M. Munasinghe asked what is the strategy to reach new students.
 - vi. S. Adams: it depends on the program, they will be at events for admitted students. They are working with the Graduate School and Professional Schools to send out information.
 - vii. A. Natarajan thanked EDR for incorporating so many student comments. He asked what the hourly wage is for GCAs under this system.
 - viii. S. Adams: if a student is in a 3 bedroom and they work 14 hours they'll make their rent.



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- ix. A. Natarajan asked how does this support international students who can't pay the deposit.
- x. S. Adams: about 80 percent of all residents are paying the deposit, as for the second question they are still looking into it.
- xi. J. Kent-Dobias: even with a 20% discount on rent, Maplewood is still more expensive. He asked if there is a plan to raise wages to cover rent and cover the cost of graduate life.
- xii. S. Adams: Maplewood is considerably less expensive than colleegetown and we set the rents with Cornell, but we'll look into it.
- xiii. M. Munasinghe asked how students with families are charged.
- xiv. S. Adams: we do rent by the bed. Occupancy is determined by fair housing laws. We will look into that too.
- xv. A question from the audience asked why do renters have to pay the full month of August (even though occupancy starts August 20).
- xvi. S. Adams: we figure out rent from August 20 to July 31 and divide that by 12 so all payments are equal.
- xvii. A question from the audience asked does this count as Cornell housing (so international students can work there).
- xviii. S. Adams: unfortunately you do have to be able to work in the U.S. to work at Maplewood, they are talking to Cornell about this though.
- xix. M. Munasinghe stated the administration is aware of the problem and they are trying to find a solution.
- b. A. Loiben then made his presentation on the GPSA Structure Discussion (see attachment in 2/26/18 meeting packet).
 - i. A. Loiben summarized the duties of field members, voting members, tier 3 and 4 organizations, and where they come from.
 - ii. He gave a summary of the current structure of the GPSA and its issues.
 - iii. The attachment to the 2/26/18 meeting packet lists some example ideas for ways to address these problems and others. The Executive Committee is open to ideas.

IV. Division Breakouts

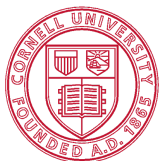


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- a. Professional Schools discussed creating a standing committee for the professional schools to increase their advocacy. They also suggested that having a guide book for new members could be helpful.
- b. Social Sciences discussed general outreach techniques/reaching out to certain field organizations, holding an orientation for new field reps, and having field reps attend committee meetings instead of GPSA meetings.
- c. Life Sciences discussed maybe having a committee meet and greet in the second GPSA meeting of the year (so field reps can see all of them at once).
- d. Arts and Humanities discussed the difficulties field reps have communicating with their fields. They are strongly in favor of having field reps vote. They thought hopefully allowing field reps to vote would address apathy. They mentioned that shrinking the scope of the GPSA might be a good thing.
- e. Physical sciences discussed field rep voting, rethinking quorum, and if the same reps need to come every meeting or if different reps can take their place.
- f. The Executive committee noted that they will come back to this in division breakouts and Operations and Staffing meetings.

V. Committee Updates

- a. Executive: nothing to report.
- b. Communications: nothing to report.
- c. Appropriations: meeting this Friday (3/2) at 6pm 132 Morison.
- d. Finance: February budget review meeting right now!
- e. Student Advocacy: next SAC meeting will be Monday March 5th. Email bmk76 with questions.
- f. Diversity and International Students: they are looking at international student language proficiency requirements. Email epl49 with questions.
- g. Programming Board: nothing to report.
- h. Faculty Awards: nothing to report.
- i. General Committee: nothing to report.
- j. Consensual Relationship Policy Committee: they are coming to the next GPSA meeting. The committee will be meeting Thursday (3/1), Day Hall 305, at 3pm.



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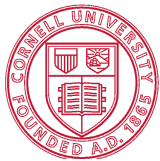
- k. Graduate School: there are tax tips in the Monday Grad Announcements. The Graduate School is also looking at English language proficiency for international students.
- l. A motion was made to amend the Agenda to place Open Forum directly after Committee updates, there was no dissent.
- m. Operations and Staffing: they will be continuing the restructuring conversation in their next meeting (rescheduled to 3/9 due to snow day). They will post a follow up of what happened at the meeting.

VI. Open Forum

- a. The Ezra Box team gave a presentation. Their platform is a new way to store belongings during breaks. They want to utilize space that is unused during breaks at 50% of the cost of current options. It's like airbnb. Their goal is to benefit the community and help low-income students. They plan to launch in late March or early April.
- b. A. Natarajan made a statement thanking all the members of the GPSA for the work they do in making Cornell a better place, and he asked everyone to join in a round of applause for this reason.
- c. D. Brown is looking to recruit GRFs and TAs for a Trustee reception on March 21st. They want to discuss GRFs' and TAs' other duties besides teaching (i.e. supporting students through tough times). Email dpb73 with questions.

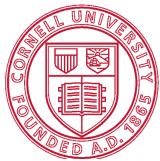
VII. New Business

- a. Introduction of **Resolution 10**:
 - i. J. Goldberg: This resolution comes out of recent events (the removal of a GPSA appointee from a UA committee). This is a grievance with the UA over the fact that they can revoke a GPSA appointee to a UA committee themselves, without consulting the GPSA. This seems to infringe on the autonomy of the GPSA. That mechanism where the UA removed the appointee was just crafted in the last year.
 - ii. M. Battaglia stated he is still confused about exactly what happened with the complaint and why. He stated that GPSA members are being asked to condemn an action but we don't know what the action was.



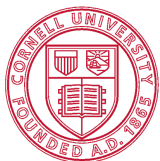
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- iii. J. Goldberg: the GPSA appointed an individual to a UA committee. They can revoke a member of their committees even if that member was appointed by another assembly. What this is condemning is that the UA can veto our appointments.
- iv. M. Battaglia stated the mechanism is dated 2015 so it's more than a year old. He asked what do our documents say about removing an appointee.
- v. J. Goldberg: we don't have a lot of substance about what we do when we want to remove someone. We can ask them to resign, but that is it.
- vi. A question from the audience asked what is to stop the UA from removing elected or appointed members to their committees from other assemblies.
- vii. J. Goldberg: it's my understanding that they could do that.
- viii. G. Kaufman (UA Chair) stated that the UA is okay with changing their procedures, but that he would prefer that they have a healthy dialogue rather than be sidelined by a resolution.
- ix. A. Waymack stated it is her understanding that the Office of the Assemblies counseled against the removal.
- x. B. Howarth (UA member) stated that they spent two and a half months debating what to do about this complaint. He thinks we should explore better ways to do this in the future. That said, in the end it was a unanimous decision by the UA Executive Committee.
- xi. J. Kent-Dobias: this (bringing forward resolutions) is our method for making decisions as a body. The way we decide to raise something with the UA is by voting on it.
- xii. M. Jodlowski: this whole thing was ridiculous. If the complaint was being reviewed by the UA we should have known. She stated she is angry that we didn't know this.
- xiii. A motion was made to move into discussion, there was no dissent.
- xiv. J. Anderson (Campus Welfare Committee Chair) stated he thinks this is a conversation that can be solved by dialogue. A resolution gets sent to the President; it's possible for the UA and the GPSA to sit down and work this out. He stated this Resolution is childish and that this is why people hate the Assemblies (because there is unnecessary drama).



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- xv. J. Goldberg stated he has been doing the work for six years. He gets that the performance of politics can be crappy, but the idea that this is substituting for the work he has put in is not ok.
- xvi. E. Law stated we can make motions that aren't resolutions if the body wants to investigate an issue in anyway, they don't have to be resolutions. He doesn't believe that promulgating this resolution is helpful for the assemblies.
- xvii. C. Little stated that because some of the matters are confidential, we can't make a fully informed decision on the resolution.
- xviii. M. Battaglia asked if each assembly is sovereign and has control over internal committees, why can't the UA do this. He still doesn't understand what this is about. He asked what is going on here and why was this action was taken.
- xix. J. Goldberg stated a lot of the conversations "we" have is a very small "we". It's a small group of people making these decisions in shared governance in general. A small number of people having non public discussions about who should be going where and doing what. We need to have these conversations here, in the open.
- xx. M. Battaglia asked what was the rationale for the UA Executive Committee taking this action.
- xxi. G. Kaufman stated they feel uncomfortable talking about this in a public setting. He would only feel comfortable if the affected individuals would be ok with that. He said they don't want to embarass anybody and that's the reason they didn't consult everybody.
- xxii. A. Natarajan: it seems obvious we need to revisit the UA's process. He doesn't like the last resolved clause in Resolution 10 because it implicates the GPSA Executive Committee unfairly. He is strongly against pointing fingers at our own members: we're only as strong as we are together.
- xxiii. A motion was made to extend the meeting by five minutes, there was no dissent.
- xxiv. M. Battaglia motioned to table the resolution indefinitely. The Resolution was **Tabled** by a vote of 10-1-5.



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b. Introduction of **Resolution 11**

- i. R. Harrison introduced Resolution 11 and read a statement (attached at the end of these Minutes) calling for the need to institute clear standards of conduct and implement fair processes for resolving complaints.
- ii. A motion was made to extend the meeting by five minutes, there was no dissent.
- iii. E. Law stated that Robert's Rules lays out a policy for dealing with complaints, but we haven't been following it. He thinks it's not quite right to start from "we don't have a procedure," because Robert's Rules does have one whether we want to use it or not.
- iv. R. Harrison clarified that she didn't think people shouldn't talk about this outside of the GPSA, but rather it seems that the main incident in question was a piece of drama that should have been handled outside of the GPSA. In the incidents she highlighted, we haven't followed the procedures that may exist in Robert's Rules.
- v. M. Battaglia stated we need to fix this because we don't have a process for dealing with complaints.
- vi. R. Harrison stated that's the fundamental outcome of this; we need to have a procedure.
- vii. S. Bossert stated he felt like this is bringing this to the President's eyes and highlighting that we don't know how to address this. He doesn't know if this is constructive.
- viii. M. Battaglia motioned to **table** discussion of Resolution 11 and the rest of the agenda until the next meeting and to adjourn right now, there was no dissent.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:09pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Matthew Ferraro
Clerk of the Assembly

Rebecca Harrison
Statement on GPSA Resolution 11
February 26, 2018

If nothing else, the incident Jesse speaks to highlights the GPSA governing documents' lack of standards or procedures for handling conduct issues among our membership. While this precedent is something we wish we didn't need, its absence has opened our Assemblies to perceptions and accusations of unfairness and illegitimacy.

Within the Assemblies, myself and other voting members are very frustrated with how ad hoc process was used against one of our colleagues in the January 29 meeting. An incident that could probably have been addressed more efficiently over a beer than in vague reference to Robert's Rules, the incident in question was not explained well to voting members, who were asked for permission to let the Operations and Staffing Committee create an arbitrary process for discipline. When we pushed back about the ambiguity, the cause was simply dropped from GPSA discussion via email and addressed independently and quietly by the UA.

This is not the first time our lack of disciplinary process has caused difficulties.

For example, we very recently had a voting member asked to resign because of inappropriate sexual comments. I only found out about this because of rumor after the fact, which, as a voting member, I find unacceptable. What if this particular voting member had not agreed to resign when their resignation was requested? What procedures would we have needed to move forward with disciplining the member? I don't think any of our limited policies – which more thoroughly address unseating of members because of lacking participation than because of behavior that does not represent our constituents – are satisfactory.

I personally know of many people who are frustrated with these issues, and how, at present, this lack of process been indirectly been used to undermine work being done to address the issue of hate speech in the code of conduct. We need to remember that this was an initiative requested at the behest of *our constituents*: Constituents who have since all but given up on shared governance.

It's also important to reflect on our history of shared governance at Cornell University, which arose from student unrest on campus nearly 50 years ago. Because of the hard work and activism of many students before us, we are quite privileged to have even the little access we do to participate in decisions about the University. Before returning to Cornell for graduate school, I started my program at an institution where the very idea of having the ear of the President and the Board was unthinkable.

I happen to know that many members of the administration, at many levels, think that what is currently happening in our Assembly – resulting from our lack of process – is an embarrassment. When President Pollack, who has expressed both her support – and increasing reservation – for shared governance potentially sees us as kids just playing government, we are potentially very quickly squandering the voice we do have. I hope this resolution can be a step towards taking our work and our constituents more seriously ourselves.