



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly

Minutes of the October 6, 2021 Meeting 12:15-1:30 PM
Zoom

I. Call to Order

- a. Chair J. Withers called the meeting to order at 12:15pm.

II. Roll Call

Members Present [18]: D. Barrett, M. Benda, M. Brooks, J. Creque, H. Depew, J. Duong, B. Fisher, B. Fortenberry, A. Haenlin-Mott, D. Howell, K. Mahoney, E. Miller, A. Mittman, M. Podolec, K. Supron, K. Tannenbaum, J. Townley, J. Withers, L. Zacharias

Members Absent [5]: J. Cannella, M. Cherry, S. Coil, B. Goodell, K. LoParco,

III. Land Acknowledgement

- a. J. Withers stated the Land Acknowledgement.

IV. Approval of September 15, 2021 Minutes

- a. Motion to approve September 15, 2021 minutes was **approved** unanimously.

V. Call for Late Additions to the Agenda

- a. No late additions to the agenda were made.

VI. Business of the Day

- a. EA Resolution 2: Support for Interim Policy 6.3
 - 1. J. Withers gave an overview of the Resolution as support for the policy that romantic relations between students and staff are prohibited. J. Withers asked for any comments or discussion over the Resolution.
 - 2. J. Duong stated that he is unclear what this policy change is attempting to address, referencing pre-existing rules on romantic prohibitions between superiors and authority figures and those under them. J. Duong questioned if this policy was attempting to mirror faculty policy and noted that the policy does create an unnecessary burden on staff, especially young staff. Acknowledging the burden of reporting, J. Duong questioned the practical uses of the Resolution and questioned its necessity.
 - 3. B. Fortenberry stated that there have been situations where students, especially those working alongside Cornell staff in different positions, feel discomfort. B. Fortenberry highlighted that the policy would help students work in a more comfortable environment without worry about any romantic advances. B. Fortenberry stated his support for the policy and the way it creates a safe space for student employees.

4. A. Mittman stated that the objective of Interim Policy 6.3 is to create a bright line on what is acceptable, but that this line does take into account individual circumstances.
5. G. Giambattista stated that Interim Policy 6.3 in particular protects undergraduate students with a rationale that acknowledges the power dynamic and difference in position between students and staff.
6. E. Miller noted that Interim Policy 6.3 also protects the employee from any wrongful accusations or situations that could arise from any sort of this relationship.
7. J. Duong stated that he agrees with B. Fortenberry's sentiments on protecting students, but also highlighted that many policies already address these sort of unequal power dynamics and questioned the blanket approach of this new policy. J. Duong questioned what the policy achieves beyond what previous policies already have done.
8. E. Miller noted that there is a stakeholder review meeting on October 20th where further discussion of Interim Policy 6.3 will take place.
9. B. Fortenberry motioned to postpone a vote on EA R2 to the October 20th meeting. E. Miller seconded the motion. The motion was **approved** unanimously.

b. Liaison Appointments

1. J. Withers stated that there are numerous liaison positions available for appointment and that there were numerous volunteers for some openings.
2. M. LoParco was nominated for appointment as an EA representative for the Transportation Hearing and Appeals Board. B. Fortenberry seconded the nomination. The nomination was **approved** unanimously.
3. M. Podolec was nominated for appointment as a representative for the University Assembly's Campus Committee on Infrastructure, Technology, and the Environment. J. Duong seconded the nomination. The nomination was **approved** unanimously.
4. L. Zacharias was nominated for appointment as an EA representative for the Transportation Hearing and Appeals Board. E. Miller seconded the nomination. The nomination was **approved** unanimously.
5. J. Withers stated that to fill the rest of the staff positions, emails would be sent out to constituents.

c. Special election update from Elections Committee

1. J. Duong stated that as of 10/6, there were 5 people signed up to run for positions. J. Duong emphasized the importance of reaching out to constituents and encouraging them to sign up to run, in particular for academic units, many of which do not currently have any candidates.
2. A. Haenlin-Mott questioned if there were multiple candidates for each seat.
3. J. Duong stated that certain seats have multiple candidates running.
4. J. Withers noted that a call for candidates would be sent out in the next EA newsletter.

VII. Committee Reports and Updates

- a. Executive Committee - A. Haenlin-Mott
 - 1. A. Haenlin-Mott stated that the Committee has been working on many initiatives and issues, such as scheduling and coordinating the President's Address to Staff. A. Haenlin-Mott also stated that the Committee has been working with Mary Opperman on clarifying questions on vacation days and working towards the coming special election.
- b. Employee Welfare Committee - K. Mahoney
 - 1. K. Mahoney stated that most discussion have centered around current topics such as the vaccination requirement and deadline and a pilot program called Restorative Talking Circles that would launch in the spring and allow staff to share experiences in small groups to help create a community of support for staff. K. Mahoney noted that they have also discussed how to support employees that have been forced to work remotely.
 - 2. E. Miller questioned if the Restorative Talking Circles were in relation or replacement of Soup and Hope, a previous program.
 - 3. K. Mahoney stated that she doesn't believe Soup and Hope is being replaced with this new program, highlighting how small the groups are at 10 people or less.
 - 4. J. Withers reiterated K. Mahoney's statement.
- c. Benefits and Policy Committee - B. Goodell
 - 1. B. Goodell was not available today, but sent an update presented by J. Withers.
 - 2. J. Withers stated that Alexis Brubaker from the Compliance Office attended a meeting and elaborated on the Compliance process. J. Withers also noted that the pet policy is being updated to acknowledge service and support animals.
- d. Communications, Outreach and Recognition Committee - E. Miller
 - 1. E. Miller stated that an EA Voice Newsletter would be sent out this week, calling for feedback on Interim Policy 6.3 and calling attention to the special election. E. Miller stated that the Committee has also worked on the launching of the new award for staff integrity and inclusion. E. Miller also asked members to begin considering nominations for the Employee Assembly Employee Appreciation Award.
 - 2. A. Haenlin-Mott questioned the timeframe for the nominations.
 - 3. E. Miller stated that there is not a confirmed date for the President's Address to Staff when the award would be announced, so hopefully nominations will be presented in the next EA meeting on 10/20.
- e. Education Committee - M. Benda
 - 1. M. Benda stated that she has no update.
- f. University Assembly - B. Fortenberry
 - 1. B. Fortenberry stated that Student Assembly discussed delays in financial aid and how over 600 students have yet to receive their financial aid bill, a delay

that occurred in part due to staffing concerns in the office. B. Fortenberry stated that the feasibility of ground-heating and cooling is on track to be tested next year, a change which could improve sustainability. B. Fortenberry noted concerns and discussion over a dual degree program between Cornell and a Chinese school which some people are asking to be dissolved. Finally, B. Fortenberry encouraged more EA members to try and join the UA and give representation.

2. K. Mahoney noted that the CARE Fund Development Committee is being nominated for the One Cornell Award.

VIII. New Business

a. Open Discussion

1. K. Tannenbaum highlighted that President Pollack very notably returned some lost contributions back to staff.
2. B. Fortenberry reiterated K. Tannenbaum's statement.
3. R. White noted that the rationale for the vaccine mandate is that the executive order from the president forces the university to put forth the mandate given the university's reliance on federal funding.

IX. Adjournment

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 1:12pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Office of the Assemblies