



## Cornell University Employee Assembly

**Cornell Employee Assembly**  
Minutes of the March 28, 2018 Meeting  
12:15-1:30 PM  
KG42 Klarman Hall

### **I. Call to Order**

- a. C. Wiggers called the meeting to order at 12:15pm and welcomed President Martha Pollack, VP Mary Opperman, VP for University Relations Joel Malina, and other guests.
- b. *Members Present:* I. Allen, H. Depew, N. Doolittle, K. Fitch, T. Grove, A. Haenlin-Mott, D. Harris, A. Howell, L. Johnson-Kelly, J. Kruser, K. Mahoney, M. Mosereiff, B. Nicholson, B. Roebal, C. Sanzone, K. Sheils, P. Thompson, S. Vaccaro, C. Wiggers
- c. *Members Absent:* P. Andersen, B. Ayanfodun, M. Carcella, C. Dawson, A. Hourigan, H. Sheldon, S. Willcox
- d. C. Wiggers emphasized that no decisions have been made regarding the recently released report from the Committee on Organizational Structures in the Social Sciences. He asked for patience and stated that they are currently in a fact-finding stage. There will be a process involving stakeholders across the university to weigh options, or to decide if no option will be taken.
- e. President Pollack said when she was interviewing for the presidency, the administration talked about the need to strengthen the social sciences. The provost had an external and internal committee. The internal committee came up with recommendations, and there will be meetings, surveys, and discussions. She assured that no jobs will be lost. The issue has not been pre-judged, and it is not about cost-cutting.
- f. C. Wiggers said there will be guests invited prior to the academic year to answer questions. During his meeting with the administration, he was assured staff will have a part in future discussions.

### **II. Call for Late Additions to the Agenda**

- a. No late additions.

### **III. New Business: Discussion with President Martha Pollack and VP Mary Opperman**

- a. C. Wiggers brought up the two-year waiting period prior to benefits accrual for non-exempt employees. He would like assurance that there will be conversations for HR representatives to look into this issue.
  - i. VP Opperman said Senior Director of Benefit Services and Administration Gordon Barger is a good person of contact. After the two-year period, there is a very generous benefit for support staff, especially retirement benefits. She was not here when the plan moved from the defined benefit plan to the defined contribution plan. There will be a big cost to changing this, but they can open up the conversation to look into this as well as other plan designs.
  - ii. President Pollack said at the university she came from, nobody qualified for those benefits until one year in.
- b. H. Depew said in wake of the sexual assault incident last month and the following email from VP for Student and Campus Life Ryan Lombardi listing resources available, she asked if there has been an assessment of these resources, and if there have been any initiatives for outreach or education for the broader Cornell community.
  - i. President Pollack said there has been a lot of attention towards policies. VP Lombardi's office has worked with groups on campus interested in education and prevention of sexual assault. The incident happened off campus and they do not know who the perpetrator was.

- ii. VP Opperman said it is difficult to know if they have enough resources because these issues are cyclical and at times may seem like there are not enough resources. The Title 9 Office is in her division and the university has been receptive to consistently adding to that area as reports come in. They do a survey every two years and learned that the education programs have been very effective. They get many reports because people now know how to report. As they educate the community, they expect reports to increase, but they have to be realistic about times when they will feel very pressed.
- iii. President Pollack said VP Opperman has deep expertise in the area of sexual harassment and assault. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) has been consulting with her to develop guidelines for the Senate on these issues.
- c. A. Howell asked if there were any certain bills or issues regarding the community and the university as a whole.
  - 1. President Pollack brought up concerns regarding tax legislation that would have had huge repercussions for Cornell, especially on graduate students. The current endowment tax is hurting some of their peers.
  - 2. VP Malina said they have a team in Washington to keep an eye out for dangerous legislative initiatives and gave a brief overview.
    - a. Currently there is nothing harmful that seems to be gaining momentum. The recent conclusion of the FY18 appropriations process was good for Cornell. They are beginning to look at FY19.
    - b. Issues that have not been resolved include DACA students, immigration, tax issues on our colleges subject to the endowment tax, health care, and the regulatory burden that so many of these executive branch agencies pile on businesses and nonprofits. Cornell spends a lot of money to fulfill the regulatory requirements.
    - c. They have three representatives in New York state for issues such as funding for contract colleges and sustainability. Cornell is part of the SUNY funding stream, although the contract colleges are a separate line item. They are looking to make sure the legislature successfully restores some financial aid programs, such as the Direct Institutional “Bundy” Aid. The governor’s proposal had less than robust funding for the aid, but they expect that to be fully restored.
- ii. A. Haenlin-Mott inquired that with so much recent emphasis on school safety, if there were any plans for additional training or safety for students, staff, and visitors.
  - 1. President Pollack said they can always improve educational processes. They offer active shooter training, and tend to get mostly faculty and staff. They are looking into a new video being used around the country. There is a good one at Stanford, so they are seeing if it can be adapted to Cornell. If so, they will make that widely available so those who cannot attend training sessions may watch it. She is open to suggestions, but would not limit it to active shooters.
  - 2. VP Opperman said employees know the campus best and have an understanding of what is possible on an open campus. She encouraged suggestions on training and communication to help prepare the campus in the event something occurs.
- iii. C. Sanzone brought up a concern regarding specialized staff who feel there is nowhere up to go. In her division, there are a lot of specialists, such as graphic artists and video producers honing their craft but not supervising. They are doing performance reviews in Community Relations and as they are improving the work flow, they seem to have a growing disconnect between performance reviews and the outcomes in terms of salary improvement and career advancement. They also received concerns that communication about salary is not equally transparent across units and divisions.
  - 1. President Pollack said communication in a big, distributive place is always a challenge and appreciates hearing where there are communication problems. This issue is in no way only applicable to C. Sanzone’s department.

2. VP Opperman said the conversation about connecting performance reviews to salary increases has been nationwide, and they are trying to decide if that is a reasonable connection. They are constrained across the country, not just at Cornell. They are trying to get people to talk about performance and pay, and they have not been making that exact connection that they used to. Career conversations are much more complicated as jobs have become more diversified, making it harder to see how jobs move. She is open to having a conversation about how the career navigator is and is not helping.
- iv. C. Wiggers thanked the guests for coming.
- v. President Pollack added that she has been here for a year and the overwhelming majority of the faculty rave about the staff. She thanked them for doing a great job.

#### **IV. Break and Updates**

- a. C. Wiggers called for a five-minute break for people to get food.
- b. C. Wiggers called the meeting back to order at 12:51pm. He reminded the EA that they are meeting again next week and gave an update on the UA.
  - i. UA R9: Reinstating the Budget Planning will have an impact on employees as they will be required to have committee members serve. This is going to be a time-consuming responsibility and they motioned to table the decision so they can get more details.
  - ii. UA R10: In Support of the EA R8: Furthering the Institutional Commitment to All LGBTQ+ Members of the Cornell Community was passed. In the past resolution, there is a small wording change in the final “be it resolved” in regard to staff commitment.
  - iii. There will be a notification going out to solicit applications and membership for the University Hearing and Review Boards (UHRB). C. Wiggers said the EA has done a good job of providing support but he would like members to encourage others to volunteer.
    1. G. Giambattista added that the application is currently open on the website. The deadline is Friday and there is a need for staff participants.
    2. J. Kruser added that if members of the Codes and Judicial Committee (CJC) cannot apply.

#### **V. Approval of Minutes**

- a. Motion to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2018 EA meeting – **approved** with no dissent

#### **VI. New Business (Continued)**

- a. Resolution: Promoting Staff Participation in Cornell Climate Change Literacy Goals (Adam Howell)
  - i. A. Howell introduced a resolution that follows up from last November’s report on sustainability. He and Executive Director of the Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Michael Hoffmann put forth this resolution through the Employee Welfare Committee and solicited comments from the literacy working group. It is not meant to indicate problems, but a positive affirmation of support to the work being done to promote campus climate change literacy, especially among employees.
  - ii. J. Kruser reminded the EA they have to wait one week before voting as this is the first time the resolution has been brought to the floor, unless it is moved to Business of the Day. This is to provide time for review and suggestions. This will be moved to Business of the Day at the next meeting and motions to approve the resolution can be voted on.
  - iii. C. Sanzone said she browsed the Climate Action Plan and asked if there is a benchmark or measuring system for climate change literacy.
    1. A. Howell said the benchmark seems to be the proliferation of education opportunities but does not know if there is a current plan to quantitatively measure literacy.
    2. M. Hoffmann added there have been surveys in the past and the response in general is a call for things like this. What is presented is learning outcomes.

3. A. Howell said in keeping with the spirit of following up with future resolutions, this leaves room for a future follow up.
- iv. Liaison for the Student Assembly Christopher Schott recommend the EA to refer this to either the Campus Infrastructure Committee or Campus Welfare Committee as this might be relevant for students as well.
- b. T. Grove said she was on the University Communications Committee and the desire for more transparency came up. The committee proposed to use channels, such as Pawprint and online methods to have an FAQ or a follow-up feature.
  - i. T. Grove said Reginald White is the project manager for all the committees.
  - ii. J. Kruser recommended reaching out to the OA for technical solutions.

## **VII. Committee Reports**

- a. Elections Committee
  - i. P. Thompson said they have closed submission for candidates and will go over applications and packets. Candidates will be able to ask her logistical questions.
- b. Communications Committee
  - i. C. Sanzone said they are doing support for the election. A constituent member on the committee is working on ideas for big events, or a calendar of events where they may get some participation, a table, or info sessions. There are a few coming up in the coming months. They are also working on updating imagery in the brochure and preparing for that.
  - ii. J. Kruser suggested putting that on the Box calendar.
  - iii. C. Sanzone said they have also been talking about ways to use the remaining budget. Suggestions included divvying up the remainder among representatives and have them submit a plan tailored to their respective groups on how funds will be used.
- c. Education Committee
  - i. M. Mosereiff said they are going to highlight staff members in or have graduated from the EDP program. They are also doing a Q&A platform for staff members to answer questions in a way that can be informal and informational at the same time.
- d. C. Wiggers thanked everyone who came out to join the EA and P. Thompson led the election nominees to a different room.
- e. A. Howell gave an update from the Campus Welfare Committee regarding the smoking referendum. There will be a survey.
- f. The EA had a discussion about empowerment and the culture on campus.
- g. T. Grove announced that the George Peter Award for Dedicated Service will be on March 29, 2018 at 8:30am in the Ambulatory Computer Lab C2-609 and asked members to attend.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

- a. J. Kruser adjourned the meeting at 1:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Catherine Tran*  
Clerk of the Assembly