



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly
Minutes of the September 4, 2019 Meeting
12:15-1:30 PM
Physical Science Building 401

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. Chair Howell called the meeting to order at 12:15pm. He welcomed President Martha Pollack, Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer Mary Opperman, Vice President for University Relations Joel Malina, and Chief of Staff and Special Counsel to the President Kelly Cunningham.
- b. *Members Present:* K. Barth, M. Benda, A. Brooks, J. Cooley, H. Depew, D. Hiner, B. Fortenberry, A. Howell, K. LoParco, A. McCabe, J. Michael, E. Miller, C. Sanzone, H. Sheldon, A. Sieverding, K. Supron, L. Taylor, C. Wiggers, J. Withers
- c. *Members Absent:* T. Chams, B. Goodell, A. Haenlin-Mott, R. Lochner, K. Mahoney

II. Approval of Minutes

- a. K. Barth made a motion to approve the minutes of the EA meetings of June 19, 2019 and July 29, 2019 – **approved** with no dissent

III. Committee Reports

- a. Communications, Outreach, and Recognition Committee
 - i. C. Sanzone reported that the committee spent the summer coordinating outreach events for staff. Members assisted at High Five Red Day and partnered with Manager of Employee Outreach and Events, Cheryl McGraw, to sponsor the first Lunchtime Lawn Game. Recently, the committee did a tabling event and cosponsored Staff Development Day with great results. This month, the committee will be focusing on planning and promoting the President's Address to Staff event. In conjunction, members will be doing the first award of the year, the EA Appreciation Award. The committee will also be launching nominations for the George Peter Award this fall. They look forward to working with HR on better outreach with new members.
- b. Education Committee
 - i. M. Benda reported the committee met in July and will be meeting again next week. They are looking at promoting programs, such as eCornell, Tuition Aid Program, and Employee Degree Program (EDP). For EDP, they found last year that only 146 employees were enrolled in the graduate program and 13 in the undergraduate program. They are working on interviewing and publicizing success stories to promote EDP. They are also looking at publicizing Workday tools and making CULearn multilingual. The committee also wants to spread more knowledge on Cornell, and M. Benda suggested tours or classes to learn about Cornell's history and traditions. She also highlighted an effort to mentor new employees during onboarding.
- c. Benefits and Policy Committee
 - i. A. Sieverding reported the committee has not met yet. She hopes the committee will continue working on issues raised last year, such as concerns around the equal accessibility of Cornell benefits and possible revisions to the vacation policy for newer employees. In addition, while the EA has a representative for employees new to Cornell, the committee believes employees would also benefit from a position representing employees who have been at Cornell for a longer time, such as 15 or 20 years.
- d. Executive Committee

- i. H. Depew reported the committee is focused on the President's Address to Staff and has finalized a time, space, and location. They are working on drafting materials to send over to President Pollack's office, and is hoping to continue building on issues raised the previous year. Last year, the committee worked with units across campus, including Transportation, Title IX, and Accreditation. They learned they needed to better equip EA members with tools, especially for outreach and issue resolutions. With the OA, the committee developed the Issue Resolution Decision Tree, which outlines processes for unit engagement, research, and shared governance. H. Depew reported that the EA is looking at distributing it to other assemblies. The committee also worked on a communications checklist.
- e. Elections Committee
 - i. J. Withers stated the committee is looking to fill incidental vacancies. The EA will be voting on candidates later this meeting. Their first meeting will be next week and they hope to have all the EA seats filled.
- f. Welfare Committee
 - i. K. Mahoney was not present. Chair Howell stated the EA will send an update to President Pollack on this committee.

IV. Business of the Day

- i. President Pollack Presentation & Questions
 - 1. President Pollack thanked the committee chairs for the reports. She lauded C. Sanzone for working on outreach to new staff and suggested folding the new Core Values into it. She also suggested M. Benda reach out to Isaac Kramnick, a longtime faculty member well-versed in Cornell history. She also expressed support to H. Depew for working across boundaries. She hopes the Issue Resolution Decision Tree can assist with curbing duplication of assembly efforts across campus. She also thanked the EA for participating in move-in, for which she received great feedback. President Pollack then gave some updates.
 - a. Academic distinction highlights investing in faculty, building on excellence, promoting cross-disciplinary research, and attracting the best students. Last year, there were over 49,000 applicants for 3,200 positions. President Pollack stated the demand may be too high and she does not want to discourage students. She gave an overview of recent fellows, inductees, and award recipients. Funded research is also up 7%. The provost has supported radical collaborations on bringing faculty together, including a digital agriculture initiative. There is also a new Institute of Politics and Global Affairs in Washington D.C.
 - b. Educational verve includes making education exciting, innovative, and effective. Discipline-based educational researchers who are tenured faculty have been studying the outcomes of active learning initiatives, which feature hands-on learning with faculty and teaching assistants. The data continues to show great results, with people reporting higher levels of enjoyment and confidence. In addition, the gap between students from high and low-resource high schools and communities has been closing. President Pollack also reported that a new donation of \$5 million has allowed for more grant proposals. Engaged Cornell is also thriving and has set targets. President Pollack also highlighted Cornell's China center.
 - c. The North Campus Residential Expansion is underway with plans to build 12,000 new beds, including a sophomore site and a new dining hall. This project will help bolster the on-campus housing supply and allow for surge spaces. All freshmen and sophomores will be required to live on campus. The expansion will allow Cornell to grow the incoming class and put market pressure on the Ithaca housing market to lower cost and improve quality. The project has also been conducted with

sustainability in mind. By the time the project is finished, campus energy will actually be lower than it is today.

- d. The Core Values have been codified and articulated.
- e. The UA has direct responsibility over the Campus Code of Conduct. While it did not make much progress over the past two years, she reported good conversations with the new chair of the UA, Bob Howarth. The Chair of the UA Codes and Judicial Committee Logan Kenney has been working with the General Counsel on a draft. They are taking it to the UA for refinement and are working on a new code no later than the end of this year.

2. Questions from the EA

- a. Regarding the Campus Code of Conduct, K. Barth stated that response to the draft code was that it should be a student code. He asked President Pollack for her view on breaking the code apart.
 - (i) M. Pollack replied that most campuses have a student code of conduct and another for staff and faculty. Overwhelmingly, abuses of the code apply to students. Part of why the code is so complicated and unreadable is because it tries to include different processes for the two groups. In addition, behavioral expectations that should be in the code are already mostly built into faculty and staff policies. She suggested it may be cleaner to separate the two. Updating the code is not about taking away faculty, student, or staff rights. An area where there is an issue is the reporting line of the Judicial Administrator, who reports to a committee with a rotating chair. She does not have oversight of that, and is interested in having a small authority there.
- b. H. Sheldon asked President Pollack to expand on her long-term and short-term focuses.
 - (i) M. Pollack stated that her priorities for the coming year include the social sciences initiative and external education. Cornell now has the Verizon Executive Education Center in NYC. She reported a need for better coordination and technology utilization. She is also interested in tightening connections and connecting campuses, including with Cornell Tech in NYC. Another focus is changing Cornell's culture of compliance. It has been hit with several federal investigations.
- c. H. Depew asked how President Pollack has applied the Core Values.
 - (i) President Pollack iterated two uses for the Core Values: giving newcomers a sense of community expectations and making decisions when there is a clash between values. In a university setting, clashes around free speech and having a welcoming community is an issue that repeatedly comes up.
- d. C. Sanzone stated that to take pressure off local housing and make housing more affordable, leases were made available at Maplewood Apartments to staff. She asked what the response was and how many staff would move closer to Cornell if it were more affordable to do so.
 - (i) VP Opperman confirmed a number of apartments were made available to faculty and staff. However, they were not all used and the rest went to students. This is only the second year they have done this and she anticipates an uptick. A housing survey a few years ago found split interests. Those with families outside of Ithaca are interested in transportation opportunities, while newer employees not geographically connected in familial ways are much more interested in renting closer to campus. There is room for both.

ii. Update on President's Address to Staff

- 1. H. Depew reported the President's Address to Staff will be on October 10, 2019 from 1-2pm at Schwartz Auditorium in Rockefeller Hall. The Executive Committee is working

- on identifying issues to ask President Pollack to touch on and will provide communication to her office next week.
2. Chair Howell added it would be great if the EA could fill the room and have some volunteers. He noted the event is being held at a different time than usual. He asked members to relay event details to their constituents. A full lunch may not be provided, but those details will be finalized soon.
 - a. A. Sieverding asked if there was a reason for the time switch.
 - b. Chair Howell explained scheduling issues with President Pollack's office.
 - c. G. Giambattista added the president typically does the event during Fall Break, but is unavailable at that time this year. It was difficult to find a venue not being used for an academic space outside of this break time. However, this venue is just as big as the usual venue.
 3. M. Benda suggested offering lunch as an incentive to attend.
 - a. K Loparco stated that lunch is not typically given out until after the event. However, with it being so late, it is a huge chunk of the EA budget potentially going to waste.
 - b. H. Sheldon suggested giving out dining services coupons for ice cream in lieu of lunch.
 - c. B. Fotenberry works in Cornell Dining, which is always looking for opportunities to partner.
 4. A. Howell reported the EA made a request for HR to send out a notice asking supervisors to allow their employees to attend the event.
- iii. Elections
1. Chair Howell made a motion to move into executive session at 12:56pm – **passed** with no dissent.
 2. All EA candidates were voted in unanimously.
 - a. Jackie Creque – College of Veterinary Medicine Representative
 - b. Ashley Miller – Division of Human Resources Representative
 - c. Mary Newhart – College of Arts and Sciences Representative
 - d. Emily Ivory – College of Engineering/Computer Information Sciences Representative
 3. EA members went around and gave brief introductions of themselves.

V. New Business

- a. Open Discussion
 - i. Chair Howell asked for 6-10 EA volunteers to attend the HR focus group on Thursday, September 12 from 12-1pm. Lunch will be served and topics will include employee issues and experiences. He will follow up with a better synopsis of what the dialogue will be.
 - ii. C. Wiggers stated that two faculty prizes for diversity and inclusion were announced in April with awards of \$15,000 each. He asked why there is not a similar recognition towards staff and highlighted this as an opportunity to recognize employees doing a lot of groundwork in these areas. He asked whether awards, aside from the Cook Awards, have gone towards the appreciation portal points. If so, he asked whether the EA would ask the university to consider turning some of the recognition for staff into cash prizes, which would open up spending options besides shopping on Amazon.
 1. EA member stated that the James A. Perkins Prize for Interracial and Intercultural Peace and Harmony is a \$5,000 prize. She knows of staff colleagues who have won it.
- iii. K. Barth reported the UA is launching a tobacco survey. Cornell is one of the last few campuses without a tobacco ban. The UA is requesting the EA's help, specifically C. Sanzone and the Communications Committee, to ensure the survey question on Qualtrics gets out. He asked the EA for help in ensuring that the voices of dining hall workers, grounds workers, hourly employees, and unionized employees will be heard. The UA is concerned

that workers who do not spend much time in front of a computer will not be able to have their input taken into account.

1. EA member stated he has a lot of constituents who fall under that category. He suggested launching a QR code to allow smartphone-users quick access without a computer.
- iv. G. Giambattista introduced the OA members and highlighted her office as a resource for the EA.

VI. Adjournment

- a. Chair Howell adjourned the meeting at 1:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Catherine Tran

Clerk of the Assembly