



# Cornell University Student Assembly

## Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Meeting  
4:48pm-5:53pm in Memorial Room, Willard Straight  
Hall

- I. Call to Order & Roll Call**
  - a. J. Anderson called the meeting to order at 4:48 pm.
  - b. Roll Call:
    - i. Present: M. Adeghe, J. Anderson, C. Benedict, U. Chukwukere, J. Clancy, O. Egharevba, J. Feit, M. Haddad, C. Huang, J. Kroll, Y. Li, G. Martin, N. Matolka, I. Pavlov, L. Smith, P. Solovyeva, B. Weintraub, K. Wondimu, V. Xu, J. Youngblood
    - ii. Absent:
- II. Approval of the Minutes**
  - a. Motion to approve the August 29<sup>th</sup> minutes – approved.
- III. Open Microphone**
  - a. No speakers on the open microphone.
- IV. Announcements and Reports**
  - a. J. Anderson said that the presentation by President Martha Pollack and VP Ryan Lombardi will be happening at 5 pm, and that they will move to other portions of the meeting until that time.
  - b. C. Huang said that SA Orientation is this coming Sunday and was originally scheduled to start at 10:00 am but will start instead at 12:00 pm and run until 4:00 pm. She added that they will have lunch delivered, and that the Coffee Chats are happening tomorrow in the Wendy Purcell Lounge in the Robert Purcell Community Center with RSC and Class Councils.
  - c. I. Pavlov said that they would be taking headshots after this meeting, and commended the assembly members on how they looked.
  - d. M. Adeghe asked if it was necessary to take the headshots on West Campus, and said that she has something to do right after this on Central Campus and that she would therefore prefer not to walk up and down the Slope.
  - e. I. Pavlov said that she would prefer for all of the photos to be matching, and said that she doesn't want to do all of them up on Central. She then said that she would take them on Central.
  - f. John Hannan asked that any assembly members missing a placard let him know.
- V. Business of the Day I**
  - a. Resolution 2: Amending the Student Assembly Bylaws
    - i. C. Huang presented the resolution.
    - ii. U. Chukwukere said that he wanted to talk about Article 1, Section 3, Part A of the bylaws with regard to the Greek Tri-Council, and that it says that there

will be a different representative from each council each semester. He added that he spoke with MGFC, and that around this time last year, they sent out a memorandum saying that their values do not align with the Tri-Council as a whole and that they would like an ex-officio member of their own each semester.

- iii. J. Anderson said that M. Pollack is here, and that they will therefore take a break and let her settle in.

## **VI. Presentation**

### **a. President Pollack and VP Lombardi**

- i. J. Anderson said that they will follow the standard format of M. Pollack giving an introduction and then opening up to questions.
- ii. M. Pollack welcomed everyone back to campus and said that it is the beginning of the year with a lot of exciting things going on. She added that she does not know how many assembly members have been involved with the active learning initiative, but that they have been doing those in a number of classes and studying the impact, and that they have seen dramatically improved learning outcomes and higher enjoyment. She also said that their pilot data shows a closing of the achievement gap, and that they have received \$5 million dollars to improve this in the future. She added that this is very exciting for her coming from an educational perspective, and that this advantages students coming from less-resourced high schools. She also said that they would like to mention that the second cohort of students in the Milstein Program has matriculated, and that when this program is fully rolled out, it will be 100 students across four years receiving some computer science training and then being sent down to Cornell Tech two summers to give a humanistic perspective there. She added that they will try and grow it over time, and that they have two new departments in Data Science and Computational Biology, which is indicative of Cornell's ability to work across boundaries, and that there are concentrations available in these departments. She also said that she would like to talk about student life, and that as they know, mental health is a huge topic on Cornell's campus and across the country, and that they have done a lot already but that they know that there is a lot more they can do. She added that they have come to the conclusion that they need to be thinking about this very holistically, and that they are working on an internal review and an external review concerning wellness more broadly and that these will be made public in the spring. She also said that there are now same-day 25-minute sessions within 24 hours of contact at Cornell Health, and that there are increased follow-up care options, and that they do continue to increase staff and care about physical health in addition to mental health. She added that they do not have the same kind of specialists in Ithaca as would be available in a large city, and that there is a new telehealth program that provides tele-visits from Cornell medicine specialists in New York City, which will hopefully be helpful for students. She also said that they are now opening a new food pantry staffed largely by students and will be available to any students, faculty, or staff. She added that she received so much feedback and input with regard to the Core Values Statement which she greatly appreciates, and that she hopes that assembly members refer back to these core values as often as she does. She also said

that she wanted to remind everyone that at the end of last year, they announced that they would be doing away with security fees for events unless they exceed \$1000, and that they did this to show their commitment to free speech. She added that the Campus Code of Conduct is under the primary authority of the University Assembly, who is very serious about making progress, but that not much progress was made in the last two years, and that she thinks that there is a real commitment on both sides to get a document. She also said that they announced a new Greek letter policy a little over a year ago and that changes have been made since then, and that the most meaningful change is probably that the investigations will be by a third party that they are recruiting now. She added that the scorecard program was delayed a bit, but that it is now accessible and online, and can be found by looking up “Cornell chapter performance scorecard,” and that they have made great progress for having live-in academic advisors. She also said that she knows that many assembly members have been up to North Campus and seen the construction, and that this will create two new housing sites, one of which will have 1200 beds for first-year students and the other with 800 beds for sophomores. She added that the sophomore housing is projected to open in 2021 and that the first-year housing with a new dining hall is projected to open in 2022, and that this will let them meet their goal of guaranteed and required housing for sophomores, and will also let them expand their class size by 700 across four years, and that they hope that it will also reduce market pressures. She also said that they were designed with sustainability in mind and to connect with their renewable energy systems, and that they are also adding solar panels in combination with the other sustainability efforts that they have, and that their net electricity usage will be lower than it is now even after the new housing opens.

- iii. I. Pavlov thanked M. Pollack and R. Lombardi for coming in, and asked if they will see any expansion for mental health resources for victims of sexual violence this year.
- iv. R. Lombardi said that they are working with the Skorton Center for increasing victim advocacy and prevention tactics, and that they piloted a program last year that was very successful with students, and that he would love to speak with I. Pavlov in this regard.
- v. C. Benedict asked if the university would be taking a more active role with regard to the Cayuga Nation.
- vi. M. Pollack said that they have Akwe:kon and the Native American Studies program, and expressed confusion with regard to the nature of C. Benedict’s question.
- vii. C. Benedict clarified with regard to the expansion on North Campus and research regarding the Nation and its territory.
- viii. M. Pollack said that they do try to be responsive to the community, and that certainly when they do research they try to be extremely responsive and work with the community and not on it, and that with regard to environmental issues they want to work with the broader community.
- ix. R. Lombardi said that they did meet with faculty in the AIISP program and the membership of Akwe:kon to make sure that their interface with the space was as respectful as possible and to make adjustments as necessary, and that

- he recognizes that that does not specifically address the Cayuga Nation.
- x. C. Benedict asked if they know what time the construction on North Campus is supposed to start at in the morning.
  - xi. R. Lombardi said it is supposed to start around 7:30 or 8:00 am, and asked if this was not the case.
  - xii. C. Benedict said that it is normally starting around 6:00 am.
  - xiii. R. Lombardi asked if that noise is coming from vehicles or from construction.
  - xiv. C. Benedict said that it is typically both.
  - xv. I. Pavlov said that people in her house have reported this in the past.
  - xvi. J. Clancy said that part of Cornell's commitment to being carbon-neutral by 2035 is earth-source heating, and asked what the timeframe for the test well is.
  - xvii. M. Pollack said that this gives her an opportunity to reiterate how committed Cornell is to sustainability, and that they are down 36% from 2008 with regard to overall energy usage, and that this is hard to do relative to their peers considering their location, and that their number-one idea is the earth-source heating. She added that they do not yet have results, and that she does not know how long it will take, and that it is an exercise that involves stages of sort, with preliminary tests that continue to go deeper. She also said that they are trying to develop plan-Bs in the meantime.
  - xviii. U. Chukwukere asked what efforts there are to expand residence halls that already exist on North Campus.
  - xix. R. Lombardi said that this project is very important for the reasons that M. Pollack already mentioned, and that they do have a lot of deferred maintenance but that they also have so little space that they can't renovate any of those spaces right now, since they would have to be decommissioned for the work to be done. He added that if they did that today, there would be nowhere for the displaced students to go, so once the new ones are open, they can start working on the others, and that they have been working on a 20-year plan to touch each residence hall on North Campus.
  - xx. A representative from the Cornell Daily Sun asked what progress has been made with the bias task force.
  - xxi. M. Pollack said that there were two task forces, one being the Presidential Task Force on campus climate, and the other being to diversify faculty, and that they took all of the recommendations and sorted them, and put them into four categories, being things already done, things to be done right away, things that should be done at a later date, and things that are aspirational. She added that there is a webpage on the Cornell page, and that it is a big spreadsheet that is a way to inform the whole community on things done, things being done, and so on. She also said that she can give a few examples, and that there are more things that they are doing, but they put the IDP experience into orientation for freshmen, got positive feedback, and then did an analysis, which gave very positive self-reported data, and that one of the additions made this year was to expand the program to other groups including first-year law students. She added that they also opened dedicated housing for LGBTQ+ students in Mews Hall, and that from the faculty they created a course on teaching in multicultural classrooms, and that they heard

both from students that they want faculty to understand what it's like for them and from faculty that they want to be better teachers. She also said that there are even a number of staff activities like mentoring programs, and that she could go on but that she encourages people to look up the webpage.

- xxii. B. Weintraub said that he had two questions, asked about a document released a year ago that referenced increasing Cornell's footprint in New York City, and asked about additional efforts regarding the administration and the 2020 presidential election.
- xxiii. M. Pollack said that they are trying to expand their New York City footprint, and that there is enormous enthusiasm for this among students and faculty, and that they have funded some research projects in NYC that may or may not collaborate with their NYC campus, such as impact on wildlife and pairing their law and medical schools to help provide care to asylum seekers in this country. She added that they have an increasing number of programs in NYC, and that they took some space at 52<sup>nd</sup> street to provide a hub for classes that choose to travel south and visit NYC for a day. She also said that she is excited about planning a "festival of ideas" on Roosevelt Island for the fall of 2020 that focuses on digital technology, especially with regard to how it helps and hurts society. She added that they have significantly upgraded the ny.cornell.edu page.
- xxiv. R. Lombardi said that, with regard to voter registration, a year ago they ramped up their efforts within the public service center at Cornell, and that they have people mobilizing to get people to vote, and that they are really trying to beef that up. He added that they're trying to increase involvement this year as they approach the 2020 election, and that there was an appreciable increase in voting from 2012 through 2018.
- xxv. M. Pollack said that voting is incredibly important, and that she does not care what anyone's politics are, and that those people who do not make their voices heard have no right to complain. She added that politics are very important in this world, and that it is important for everyone to vote, and that younger generations still vote at lower rates than older generations, and that they will keep working on getting students voting.
- xxvi. O. Egharevba said that there has been a lot of demand for CS courses at Cornell, which has been the national trend, and that he recalled an article from the Sun about the crowded office hours that had an overflow crowd in the hallway of Rhodes Hall, and that he was one of those students but for a different class. He added that he has seen the effect of the current hires, and asked what the long-term plan is to make CS more sustainable, since he knows that other schools have GPA cutoffs and caps on the major.
- xxvii. M. Pollack said that this is a critical question, and that O. Egharevba won't be satisfied with her answer because she doesn't have a good one, and that every university is drowning in students taking CS classes, and so every college is hiring all sorts of new PhDs, who industry is also sucking up, and so it is difficult if not impossible to get them. She added that they are also not in an urban area so they do not have the opportunity to hire people working in industry as part-timers, and that some schools have capped the CS major and put in GPA cutoffs, but that the faculty have resisted that for good reason. She also said that such things have never been done at Cornell,

and that students should have the right to choose, and that many schools that have done that have also seen a drop in diversity in that field which is the last thing that they want. She added that she wishes that she had a better answer.

- xxviii. O. Egharevba said that this is a problem at public schools too, and that there are not enough math and science students.
- xxix. M. Pollack said that they are working on this.
- xxx. G. Martin said that he wanted to thank M. Pollack and R. Lombardi for the work done with mental health on campus, and that they came with a call to action when they heard from students and faculty that there was an issue.
- xxxi. M. Pollack said that the credit should go to R. Lombardi, since he spearheaded it.

## VII. New Business

- a. M. Adeghe asked why the budget resolution isn't on the agenda.
- b. J. Anderson said that it was approved at the last meeting.
- c. O. Egharevba moved to amend the agenda to present Resolution 4 before Resolution 2 – **amended**.
- d. Resolution 4: Creating an ad-hoc Committee for SAFC Transformation
  - i. J. Anderson explained what SAFC is, what the resolution does, and what form the committee would take.
  - ii. Heather Huh said that she is one of the co-chairs of SAFC, and that her other co-chair couldn't make it today, and that there are so many areas of opportunity in which SAFC can change, and with the introduction of CampusGroups, this is a nice place to start. She added that with the help of the SA and with J. Anderson they have people so eager to make changes, and that their goal is to create a better environment for student organizations. She also said that this committee will steer that goal, and that she can see a lot of things actually getting done, rather than just talked about.
  - iii. J. Anderson provided further context for SAFC.
  - iv. O. Egharevba asked whether or not the SA VP for Finance should be an ex-officio member on this committee.
  - v. J. Anderson said that all of the Executive Committee will be ex-officio on this committee.
  - vi. I. Pavlov said that she thinks that this resolution is fantastic, and asked if the two SAFC co-chairs will be the ones solely in charge of choosing the other two SAFC members.
  - vii. H. Huh replied in the affirmative and said that the co-chairs worked directly with the commissioners, and that they are choosing people who are highly involved throughout campus and have a different mindset than just from the SAFC.
  - viii. V. Xu thanked the sponsors for working on this, and said that she knows that the Appropriations Committee (henceforth AppsCom) has a function to cut out repetitive events to lower costs, and asked if this can all be done without raising the Student Activities Fee (henceforth SAF).
  - ix. J. Anderson said that they will try, and such a thing is ultimately up to the assembly, and that things such as FORC can be addressed in the bylaws. He added that he is sure that duplicative organizations will be looked at.
  - x. J. Youngblood asked how they are going to solicit feedback from presidents

and treasurers of organizations that work through SAFC, and asked if this would be a plan.

- xi. H. Huh said that most of them primarily communicate with Terry Ector or the co-chairs, and that they get a lot of emails and feedback every day, and that they would be very transparent with clubs. She added that they can also create a feedback form.
- xii. J. Anderson said that he thinks that there is a lot of energy around campus overall surrounding this.
- xiii. There was a motion to vote.
  1. There was a dissent.
  2. The motion was **withdrawn**.
- xiv. J. Feit said that this is a huge responsibility, and that he appreciates V. Xu's point regarding the SAF, and asked if they can come up with alternatives if the only way to obtain more money is to raise the SAF.
- xv. J. Anderson said that the amount of money is finite and allocated to them by AppsCom, and that at the end of the day, the money for student activities is fixed on campus since they inject the money into the system, and that there are many administrative units for university organizations and SAFC mostly deals with independent organizations, and that unfortunately, more money for independent organizations mostly comes from SAFC itself.
- xvi. J. Feit asked if the cap can be expanded, and said that he understands that it is fixed.
- xvii. J. Anderson said that the way to expand it is raising the SAF.
- xxviii. J. Feit asked if this is the only way.
- xix. J. Anderson said that it is literally the only way.
- xx. There was a motion to vote.
  1. There was a dissent.
  2. The motion was **withdrawn**.
- xxi. A representative from the Sun asked if there are ideas to address the incentive organizations have to spend unnecessary funds to maintain their tier.
- xxii. J. Anderson asked if the representative was asking if they currently have those ideas.
- xxiii. The representative said that he asked if that issue would be addressed.
- xxiv. J. Anderson replied in the affirmative, and said that they are not coming in with firm policy proposals, but that that issue would certainly be addressed.
- xxv. The representative asked when this would happen.
- xxvi. J. Anderson said that all of the changes have to be ratified in Spring 2020.
- xxvii. The representative asked when that would exactly be.
- xxviii. J. Anderson said that it would be at the end of the school year.
- xxix. There was a motion to vote on the resolution – **approved** 19-0-1.

## VIII. Business of the Day II

- a. Resolution 2: Amending the Student Assembly Bylaws
  - i. U. Chukwukere reiterated his prior point regarding MGFC, and said that he thinks that it would be best for each council to have their own liaison.
  - ii. C. Huang asked if MGFC said how they would like for their liaison to be chosen if they want their own ex-officio liaison.
  - iii. U. Chukwukere said that he is unsure but that he can ask again.

- iv. C. Huang said that that would be great, and that if he can get official language they would want, it would be very helpful.
- v. O. Egharevba referenced the clause on line 52 referring to the website.
- vi. J. Anderson said that they made those changes last week, and that they are not yet reflected in the bylaws, but they are reflected in last week's minutes.
- vii. P. Solovyeva said that people have spoken to her about the fact that Dyson is growing but has no representation on the Student Assembly, and asked if that can be addressed.
- viii. J. Anderson said that changes to the organizational structure are in charter, and said that such a change would require a resolution other than this, and asked that she talk to Deborah Nyakaru about this after the meeting.
- ix. U. Chukwukere asked when he would have to get the language regarding MGFC by.
- x. J. Anderson said that it would have to be today.
- xi. M. Adeghe said that since MGFC is currently a part of Tri-Council regardless of whether they want to be, and such a change would therefore be giving them an additional liaison.
- xii. U. Chukwukere said that they are officially still in, and that the change will happen pretty soon, but that he feels like it would be best that each council have their own ex-officio member here rather than a Tri-Council representative.
- xiii. J. Anderson said that they only get the Tri-Council representative in some semesters, and that the Tri-Council does not feel like it is necessary in others.
- xiv. M. Adeghe said that she is not trying to downplay the importance of this, but that she does not know if it holds as much weight as one might think, and that she doesn't think that it would be wrong to wait a while.
- xv. J. Anderson said that approving bylaws today does not prohibit them from changes later in the semester.
- xvi. Ian Wallace said that bylaws can be edited at any point in the semester.
- xvii. C. Huang said that throughout the year, amendments can be added to the bylaws, but the changes that such amendments result in won't go into effect until the following semester.
- xviii. There was a motion to vote on the resolution – **approved** 17-0-3.

**IX. Executive Session**

- a. J. Anderson moved the meeting to Executive Session at 5:53 pm.

**X. Adjournment**

Respectfully Submitted,  
*John Hannan*  
Clerk of the Assembly