S.A. Resolution #21

Requiring a Community Member Chair the Research and Accountability Committee to Increase Constituent Accountability

ABSTRACT: The resolution seeks to provide more opportunities for the community to hold the Student Assembly accountable by changing the Committee of Research & Accountability so that it is chaired by a non-Student Assembly member of the Cornell undergraduate community.


Whereas, the creation of the Vice President of Research & Accountability (VP of RA) position and its respective committee were adopted and implemented by the Student Assembly on 1/23/2020;

Whereas, the VP of RA and its respective committee were created in an effort to increase accountability amongst members of the Student Assembly and its committees;

Whereas, the ethos of the VP of RA and Committee of RA was to create an unbiased arm of the Student Assembly tasked with handling matters of internal Student Assembly affairs, general body attendance, resolution voting, liaison role accountability, committee attendance, committee conduct, and general representative accountability, among other things;

Whereas, there cannot exist an unbiased member of the Student Assembly in regards to internal affairs, as the nature of the Student Assembly lends itself to internal politics;

Whereas, due to internal politics within the Student Assembly, some members cannot currently turn to the VP of RA, leaving a gap in who can seek accountability measures and who cannot;

Whereas, due to internal politics within the Student Assembly, the VP of RA is not always a neutral party regarding the matters that can be brought to the Committee of RA;

Whereas, there is general discontent among the student community with how the Student Assembly operates;

Whereas, we believe that our constituents should have the power to hold us accountable;

Originally Presented on: December 6th, 2020
Type of Action: Internal Policy
Status/Result: Business of the Day
Whereas, the Student Assembly wants to provide the community with more opportunities to hold their student government accountable;

Therefore be it resolved, the Cornell Student Assembly remove the executive position of Vice President of Research & Accountability and amend the Research & Accountability committee to be chaired by a non-Student Assembly member of the the Cornell undergraduate community;

Be it further resolved, that the Student Assembly Bylaws, Article II, Section 1 be amended to read:

The officers of the SA shall be a President, an Executive Vice President, a Vice President of Internal Operations, a Vice President for Finance, a Vice President of External Affairs, a Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, a Vice President of Research & Accountability; a Director of Elections, a Parliamentarian, and an Executive Archivist. These officers shall perform the duties prescribed by this Charter and by the parliamentary authority adopted by the SA.

Be it further resolved, that the Student Assembly Bylaws, Article III, Section 7 be amended to remove:

Article 7: Vice President of Research & Accountability:

1. The responsibilities of the Vice President of Research & Accountability are as follows:
2. Chair the Research & Accountability Committee;
3. Establish the working rules of the Research & Accountability Committee that are distributed to the entire Student Assembly (including committee members) and undergraduate students elected directly to the University Assembly to ensure transparency;
4. To lead the inquiries and/or fact finding actions at the behest of the Research & Accountability Committee with as much discretion and anonymity as possible and used when needed;
5. To, when necessary, report finding and recommendations for actions to be made to the Student Assembly;
6. Work in conjunction with the Vice President of Internal Operation to oversee all attendance and outreach requirements;
7. Work with the Parliamentary and Executive Archivist to annually evaluate the appropriation of college seats, the creation of positions, and the overall composition of the Student Assembly;
8. Work in conjunction with the Vice President of Finance to assist, if needed, with accountability of Byline funded organizations including: funding/spending research and Appendix B recommendations;
9. Work with the Vice President of External to coordinate any public release of reports, if deemed necessary and in the most appropriate way possible.
Be it further resolved, that the Student Assembly Standing Rules, Section 2, Subsection B, Rule 10 be amended to remove:

10. At the discretion of the Vice President of Research & Accountability—requests can be issued in order to appear before the Committee to any and all Student Assembly members or directly elected undergraduate representatives to the UA in efforts to further a fact finding action or inquiry as seen needed by the Research & Accountability Committee.

Be it further resolved, that the Student Assembly Bylaws, Article V, Section 3 be amended to remove and read:

The Executive Board shall hold meetings at least once a week during the academic year. Special meetings of the Board may be called by the Executive Vice President and shall be called upon the written request of five members of the board.

Be it further resolved, that the Committee of Research & Accountability be amended by removing from the Student Assembly Bylaws, Article VI, Section 3, Subsection F to be:

Research & Accountability Committee - The committee will pursue any necessary accountability and research concerns of SA members and directly elected undergraduate representatives to the UA. Research and accountability concerns consist of, but are not limited to: general body attendance, resolution voting, liaison role accountability, committee attendance, committee conduct, and general representative accountability. The committee will also evaluate all requests submitted by community members that are against any SA member, SA committees, or directly elected undergraduate representatives to the UA. The Vice President of Research and Accountability shall serve as chair with a vote only in the event of a tie. The chair position can be held by any non-Student Assembly member of the Cornell undergraduate student population and the committee will be under the supervision of Executive Vice President. The committee shall consist of ten voting members, four of which are current SA members and/or directly elected undergraduate representatives to the UA and six undergraduate community members. The chair shall only vote in the event of a tie. The composition of the committee can change for specific meeting types, in which members of the SA Executive Committee or other student representatives can be given an ex-officio status—this is to be voted on by the RA committee as a whole and only when initially decided on by the Chair. The committee has the obligation, if decided upon, to conference any SA member, directly elected undergraduate representative to the UA, S.A. affiliated committee, or Committee Chair if they have received a notice from any member of the Cornell Community. The committee is restricted from passing resolutions due to the necessary impartial nature of the committee. However, after a full inquiry or fact finding action—a written report may be presented to the SA, which will include a brief summary of the situation being investigated and any necessary actions the committee recommends. The requester's name and others that are not SA members or directly elected undergraduate representatives to the UA shall be redacted from the report if permission from
any the individual(s) is not given. Adoption of the (possible) recommendation(s) requires a three quarters majority vote of SA voting members. Rejection of the (possible) recommendation(s) requires three quarters of SA voting members. If recommendation or report are not approved or rejected, it will be tabled indefinitely. The **Vice President of Research and Accountability** **committee chair** shall present reports to the SA at both the requester(s), RA Committee’s, and Chair’s discretion.

**Be it further resolved**, that the Student Assembly Election Rules, Article 1, Section B, Subsection 6 be amended to remove:

10. No previous or current holder(s) of the Cornell Student Assembly Vice President of Research and Accountability are eligible to run for President of the Student Assembly.

**Be it further resolved**, that the Student Assembly Bylaws, Article II, Section 2 be amended to remove and read:

The SA will, as soon as possible after the spring election, hold an organizational and planning meeting in executive session. At this meeting, the voting members will elect from among themselves the offices of Vice President of Internal Operations, Vice President for Finance, a Vice President of External Affairs, a Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, **and a Vice President of Research and Accountability**. At this meeting or a meeting soon after, the voting members will elect from the Cornell community (student, employee, faculty, alumnus living in Ithaca) the office of Director of Elections. Self-nomination will be in order in each of the elected offices. Elected officers should be approved by a majority vote of SA members present at organizational meeting. Additionally, at this meeting or a meeting soon after the members will affirm the appointments of Parliamentary and Executive Archivist. The offices of Parliamentary and Executive Archivist will be appointed by the SA President. Each nominee for the respective offices shall be subject to majority approval of the SA voting members. The newly elected officers will undertake the responsibilities of their position at the start of their term on the SA. Elections for officers shall be by secret ballots. SA voting members may have one vote for each position to be filled but may not vote for any one individual twice on any ballot.

**Be it further resolved**, that any numbering or lettering changed by these above amendments in the Student Assembly Bylaws, Student Assembly Standing Rules, and/or the Student Assembly Election Rules be amended to allow for correct sequential order and aestheticism;

**Be it finally resolved**, that the election process for the Research and Accountability Committee Chair position, will take effect after the elections in the Spring of 2021 for the 2021-2022
academic year, similar to a timeline of electing all other committee chairs. That being said, the
next holder of the Research & Accountability Committee Chair position will be elected in a
special election to be held during the first week of the Spring 2021 semester based on a majority
vote of the entire Student Assembly for the duration of the Spring 2021 semester. Further, the
new Research & Accountability Committee Chair appointed in the first week of Spring 2021 will
have full discretion in staffing their committee for the semester.

Respectfully Submitted,

Moriah Adeghe ‘21
Director of Elections, Student Assembly

Laila Abd Elmagid ‘21
Vice President of Internal Operations, Student Assembly

Uche Chukwukere ‘21
Vice President of Finance, Student Assembly

Michael Stefanko ‘21
Parliamentarian, Student Assembly

Maria Silaban ‘21
Executive Archivist, Student Assembly

Tomás Reuning ‘21
LGBTQIA+ Representative At-Large, Student Assembly

Selam Woldai ‘23
Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, Student Assembly

Noah Watson ‘22
Executive Vice President, Student Assembly

Estefania Perez ‘21
Arts and Sciences Representative, Student Assembly

Morgan Baker ‘23
Vice President of External Affairs, Student Assembly

Lucy Contreras ‘21
First Generation Students Liaison At-Large, Student Assembly

Mardiya Shardow ‘23
Dyson School of Business Representative At-Large, Student Assembly
Jenniviv Bansah ‘23
School of Hotel Administration Representative, Student Assembly
Katarina Bentley ‘23
Womxn’s Issues Liaison At-Large, Student Assembly
Amari Lampert ‘24
Freshman Representative, Student Assembly
Bennett Sherr ‘21
Undergraduate Representative to the University Assembly, University Assembly
Savanna Lim ‘21
College of Architecture, Art & Planning Representative, Student Assembly
Lucas Smith ‘22
Undesignated At-Large Representative, Student Assembly
Valeria Valencia ‘23
Minority Students Liaison At-Large, Student Assembly
Anuli Ononye ‘22
Student Advocate, Office of the Student Advocate
(Reviewed by: Executive Committee, 5-0-2, 12/04/2020)