



Cornell University University Assembly

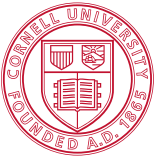
Cornell University Assembly

Minutes of the January 21, 2020 Meeting

4:30 PM – 6:00 PM

401 Physical Sciences Building

- I. Call to Order
 - a. Call to Order
 - i. R. Howarth called the meeting to order at 4:30pm
 - b. Roll Call
 - i. *Present:* J. Anderson, A. Barrientos-Gomez, K. Barth, R. Bense, M. Haddad, D. Hiner, R. Howarth, A. Howell, E. Loew, G. Martin, R. Mensah, J. Pea, C. Van Loan
 - ii. *Members not Present at Roll Call:* J. Bogdanowicz, S. Chin, L. Kenney, Tomas Reuning, P. Thompson
- II. Call for Late Additions to the Agenda
 - a. There were no late additions to the agenda
- III. Business of the Day
 - a. Provost M. Kotlikoff
 - i. R. Burgess presented on Cornell University's energy sustainability efforts. R. Burgess announced that as of last year, the university was rated as the top Ivy League University in terms of sustainability. He stated that the university had set a goal to achieve carbon neutrality as of 2050 and accelerate that movement in 2035. The goal was set with a strategy in mind of the most effective method of reducing the university's carbon footprint. An important question addressed in the move to reduce the carbon footprint was that of developing ideal methods for making the best use of the current facilities on campus and overall reducing the use of unnecessary energy expenditure. Creating new facilities would lead to increased carbon footprint.
 - ii. R. Burgess stated that a "Quadruple Bottom Line" was being applied to increase the pace at which the university was moving towards carbon neutrality. The four bottom lines were determining the university's impact on the planet, determining the impact of on individuals on campus and outwards, the impact on prosperity, and lastly, the impact on the academic mission and how the university's actions aligned with it. The idea would be to operate with the four criteria's in mind.
 - iii. Starting from the university's baseline of 260,000 metric tons of CO₂, there has been a 35% reduction in the baseline carbon footprint. The remaining 65% would be addressed through high-performance LEED certified



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- buildings, converting the energy distribution system from steam to hot water, moving towards a renewable heat supply, and movement of electricity towards a renewable source.
- iv. The vision of the future associated with the net neutral carbon footprint would include high-performance buildings, hot-water distribution system, renewables providing electricity (PV, wind, water, etc.), and the lake providing cooling.
 - v. R. Burgess stated that the Cornell Sustainable Council was composed of a leadership team that would report to the provost. The council also had three committees that looked at various aspects of the steps needed to reduce carbon emissions.
 - vi. R. Howarth spoke on the task of the Carbon Neutral Campus Committee.
 - vii. C. Levine said that the Education and Engagement committee has talked about educating those visiting campus on Cornell's commitment to thinking about and understanding climate.
 - viii. R. Burgess stated that the Campus Operations Committee was focusing on transportation on campus and how to reduce the transportation footprint. To increase individual's desire to walk or take the bus more often, the transportation means would have to improve. The two main transportation goals would need to focus on transportation to and from campus as well as transportation access around campus. Another focus point is that of the university's dining operation and food waste. Saving food from being thrown out would have a lot of upstream advantages
 - ix. G. Martin thank R. Burgess for presenting. G. Martin also asked if Cornell or the Sustainable Cornell Council was working closely with the Cayuga Nation or the Haudenosaunee Confederacy on environmental issues and if not why?
 1. Provost M. Kotlikoff stated that he did not know of any specific outreach on the energy/carbon reduction area to the Cayuga Nation. Suggestions on how to do in a practical manner would be welcomed.
 - x. K. Barth said that it was interesting to know that of the 15,000 undergraduates enrolled at Cornell, 9,500 were enrolled in a sustainability related course. This shows that sustainability was and continues to be important to students. K. Barth asked if the NCRE (North Campus Residential Expansion) was going to implement a rooftop solar program?
 1. R. Burgess stated that the new building to be built as part of the NCRE would have rooftop solar which would offset approximately



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35% of the electrical use of the new buildings. It would be structured as a Power Purchasing Agreement.

- xi. R. Mensah asked that if the earth-source heat option is not viable, what affect would it have on the 2035 plan?
 1. R. Burgess stated that there would be a need for a source, distribution, and facilities and each facet was being worked on in parallel. If the distribution system was setup to work on hot water, then the source of the hot water could be Earth-source heat, larger scale heat pumps, solar heat, etc. There was a potential for a variation of different heat sources, but Earth-source heat was chosen primarily. If the Earth-source heat option was not viable, then a different heat source would be needed. If a flow could be attained and an increase in water temperature, then decisions would need to be made on related to possible hybrid systems or a a heat-pump based solution. M. Kotlikoff stated that there would be some benefit from the current approach, but the key idea would be focusing on continuing in an efficient manner with the district system in mind.
 2. K. Barth stated that the 2035 goal was to have 11% of the university's energy and carbon footprint come from high-performance buildings, 9% would come from steam to hot-water distribution, 37% from the renewable heat supply with Earth-source heat being the primary objective, 9% from supplementary heat, 3% from onsite renewables such as the rooftop solar, and 31% from offsite renewable electricity.
- b. Approval of the minutes (December 3, 2019)
 - i. A member of the University Assembly moved to approve the minutes.
 1. The motion was seconded. There was no discussion, the minutes of the December 3, 2019 meeting were **approved** unanimously.
- c. Divestment Resolution – A. Howell
 - i. C. Levine highlighted the points of the white paper with the points supporting divestment. C. Levine stated that a point has been reached where 11,000 scientists are classifying the current moment a climate emergency because we are nearing the tipping point for extreme and irreversible warming with consequences such as mass-species extinction, uninhabitable temperatures, rising oceans, and ongoing droughts and wildfires. These consequences would prompt a need for human migration and starvation on large scales. Unless a change is made swiftly, we would see unprecedented suffering in the coming decade. C. Levine said that the CIC had come to the



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conclusion that divestment was an action that Cornell should take as soon as possible. The Board of Trustees conveyed that divestment was an action only to be taken if a company's actions/inactions were morally reprehensible and deserving of condemnation. Additionally, the Board of Trustees had conveyed that divestment should only be considered if the divestment would have a meaningful impact on correcting the specified harm and would not result in disproportionate offsetting of societal consequences or the company in question contributes to harm so great it would be inconsistent with the goals and principles of the university.

- ii. The CIC is persuaded that all the aforementioned criteria set by the Board of Trustees is met by fossil-fuel companies. C. Levine stated that the CIC had found a clear case for moral reprehensibility which lies in the fact that fossil fuel companies knew about the connection between carbon emissions and global warming engaged in a deliberate campaign of doubt and misinformation. In the 1970's, Exxon scientists warned that fossil fuels could cause irreversible and catastrophic events. However, Exxon spent millions of dollars on a campaign aimed at casting doubt on the link between fossil fuels and climate change. All of the major fossil fuel companies hid what knowledge they had on the connection between fossil fuels and climate change. The CIC also found a case for injurious impact. In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated that to keep the planet from warming to unprecedented levels, there would be a need to reduce fossil fuel usage worldwide. However, fossil fuel companies are insisting on expanding production of oil and gas. Shell and Exxon mobile were planning on producing 35% more oil by 2030 with millions of dollars being spent on lobbying for new rights to mine and drill.
- iii. C. Levine stated that these particular companies were contributing the most to the climate change predicament. Fossil fuel use generates 70% of worldwide carbon emissions with 90 corporations being responsible for 66% of all greenhouse gas emissions. The next question asked by the Board of Trustees was that of whether or not divestment would make a difference and have a material impact. C. Levine stated that it was clear to her that investments in the fossil fuel industry had been a bad decision for the past decade while fossil fuel portfolios had been outperforming each year.
- iv. The CIC was persuaded by the idea of harm great enough to go against the goals of the university. The first goal was that of teaching young minds to prepare them for the future. Conversely, the university's lack of divestment was wreaking havoc on the future of its students. The university's second



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important mission was that of research and producing truth for the public interest. However, at the same time, the university is investing money in companies that have poured money into campaigns aimed at hiding the truth of the consequences of fossil fuels. Divesting would allow Cornell University to be the first Ivy league university to do so and thus promote an image of being a university focused on sustainability. C. Levine stated that the CIC is asking the Board of Trustees to divest in an orderly manner and as quick as possible.

- v. A. Howell stated that 97% of climate researchers were actively publishing on the reality of climate change and the fact that it's human-driven. The university has an opportunity to be the first Ivy League university to divest and should do so.
 1. R. Howarth stated that as of November of 2019, 99.5% of scientists were in agreement on climate change and its affects. R. Howarth asked A. Howell if the divestment resolution was being formally introduced.
 2. A. Howell moved to introduce the motion to the University Assembly floor. The motion was seconded, approved, and opened up for discussion.
 - a. C. Van Loan asked about what type of response could the Board of Trustees give once presented with the resolution from all assemblies. What would be the method of following-up and having proof that the university did divest?
 - i. C. Levine stated that the announcement itself of divestment makes an impact despite a lack of follow-through by the trustees. C. Levine also said that the trustees had no obligation to convey to the assemblies, information related to the investments so the trustees would have to hold each other accountable on the promise of divestments.
 - b. A. Howell stated that the trustees would deliberate on whether the criteria were met or not and decide from there.
 - c. C. Van Loan asked what the press release was from the University of California Board of Trustees when they decided to divest.
 - i. C. Levine stated that the article that announced the news was not from the Board of Trustees but from their financial officers.



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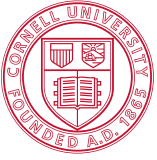
- d. R. Bensel stated that more examples of moral reprehensibility on the part of the fossil fuel companies would help strengthen the case of divestment by making parallels. R. Bensel also asked why the Cornell investment portfolio was not open for inspection.
 - i. C. Levine stated that in the private university sector, it was a trend to not allow the university portfolio to be open for inspection.
- e. R. Howarth asked C. Van Loan if the discussion and comments could be continued online and a vote be taken at the next meeting.
- f. C. Van Loan stated that the Employee Assembly and the Faculty Senate were voting on similar divestment resolutions and asked what the status of the GPSA and SA resolutions was. Additionally, were there other groups outside the assemblies structure with their own ideas on divestment.
- g. A. Barrientos-Gomez said that the GPSA was working on a resolution and J. Anderson said that the SA was working on a similar resolution in coordination with another body.
- h. R. Howarth asked if an online discussion would of interest to everyone.
- i. C. Van Loan stated that the website was already setup for an online discussion.

d. Committees Report

i. Codes Judicial Committee

1. Update – R. Bensel

- a. R. Bensel stated that draft of the first section of the campus code had been forwarded to M. Pollack. The next item of business for the CJC would be completing the Procedural section of the Campus Code.
- b. J. Anderson stated that it was important to understand the details on the page but there were also large structural questions that the CJC had been tackling. J. Anderson stated that when the University Assembly sees the code, any member should reach out to a member of the CJC committee to ask what the committee was thinking when they wrote specific aspects.



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- c. R. Bensel stated that the large question was that of the sororities and fraternities and that was moving on a separate timeline with a set of guidelines.
- d. J. Anderson stated that a large structural question was that of the role of the JA in the code.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Auriole C. R. Fassinou
Clerk of the Assembly