



Cornell University Student Assembly

Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, February 21, 2019 Meeting
4:50pm-5:49pm in Memorial Room, Willard Straight Hall

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. V. Devatha called the meeting to order at 4:50 pm.
- b. Roll Call:
 - i. *Present:* M. Adeghe [0], J. Anderson [0], D. Barbaria [0], C. Benedict [0], U. Chukwukere [0], V. Devatha [0], O. Din [2.5], J. Dominguez [0], O. Egharevba [2], C. Huang [0], S. Iruvanti [1], A. Jain [0], K. Kebbeh [1], N. Matolka [0], G. Park [1.5], E. Shapiro [0], M. Shovik [2.25], J. Sim [0], M. Smith [0], M. Stefanko [1], F. Uribe-Rheinbolt [0], K. Wondimu [0], V. Xu [0.75]
 - ii. *Absent:* S. Harshvardhan [2], S. Lim [1], U. Mustafa [2], I. Pavlov [0.25], B. Weintraub [1]

II. Approval of the Minutes

- a. Motion to approve the February 14, 2019 minutes – **approved**.

III. Open Microphone

- a. No speakers at the open microphone.

IV. Oath of Office

- a. K. Wondimu was sworn in using the Oath of Office at 4:56 pm.

V. Announcements and Reports

- a. Student Assembly Elections Calendar Presentation
 - i. Shashank Vura said that he is here to present the SA Elections Calendar for Spring 2019, and that the calendar was finalized in December. He added that some minor changes were made a few weeks ago, and went through the specifics of the calendar.
 - ii. D. Barbaria asked if S. Vura had coordinated with people on the Trustee Nominating Committee (henceforth TNC) regarding how the combined ballot will work.
 - iii. S. Vura said that his understanding is that they will be provided in the same email.
 - iv. D. Barbaria asked if they will use the same debate stage, or if they have planned their own debate independent of the SA candidates debate.

- v. S. Vura said that they will have their own debate as far as he knows, and that he would be open to cohosting should they reach out to him in that regard, but that he doesn't think that it's necessary.
- vi. D. Barbaria asked if S. Vura had been in contact with Cornell Speech and Debate in regard to the debates for President and EVP.
- vii. S. Vura replied in the affirmative.
- viii. V. Devatha asked if someone running for Trustee can run for a Student Assembly position.
- ix. S. Vura replied in the negative, and said that there are rules within governing documents for electing the student trustee that say that the trustee cannot run for another position in shared governance.
- x. E. Shapiro asked if there was anything new in this regard.
- xi. S. Vura said that he can ask them if they want to change it because there is nothing in the SA's governing documents in this regard, and that he wants to confirm that the information he received yesterday is accurate.
- xii. V. Devatha asked if they need to pass the calendar today.
- xiii. D. Barbaria said that the assembly does not pass it, and that the Elections Committee already did so. He added that if they want changes to be made, they need to let the Committee know by next Thursday.
- xiv. S. Vura said that the only changes he can foresee would be changes for times so as not to conflict with prelims.
- xv. D. Barbaria said that he would recommend that they be moved to a Monday or Wednesday so there would not be any conflicting prelims.
- xvi. S. Vura said that that would be feasible.
- xvii. V. Devatha asked if S. Vura would be introducing the emergency amendments later in the meeting.
- xviii. S. Vura replied in the affirmative.
- b. Special Projects Funding Requests
 - i. D. Barbaria said that the Appropriations Committee approved funding (9-0-2) of \$1500 for the South Asian Council for an event in March that will be hosting a speaker, and funding (10-0-1) for Cornell Thrifts' Spring Cleaning event in March, the money for which would mostly go to changing rooms and other things that can be used by the organization in the future. He added that the abstention for the South Asian Council vote was due to someone arriving late.
 - ii. F. Uribe-Rheinbolt asked a question.
 - iii. D. Barbaria said that both organizations were funded at the amount that they requested.

VI. New Business

- a. Resolution 28: Amendment to Spring 2019 Election Rules
 - i. S. Vura moved to overturn the rules temporarily to add this item to the agenda – approved.
 - ii. S. Vura said that, in light of the TNC deciding to hold elections for the student-elected trustee alongside SA elections, he has proposed an elections rule amendment that deals with slates and endorsements between these two elections. He added that this would prohibit candidates and supporters of candidates for trustee from campaigning for and on behalf of SA candidates,

and prevents them from coordinating with them. He also said that this rules change would do the same for candidates for President in regard to Trustee.

- iii. V. Devatha said that he would look favorably upon an amendment that would strike the clause “and supports acting upon their behalf” in the two instances that it appears.
- iv. D. Barbaria moved to amend as above – **amended**.
- v. S. Vura said that he’s just come to put this proposal up for discussion, and that he has no strong position either way, but that it is a discussion that needs to happen.
- vi. D. Barbaria said that he is against this being in the rules since they are two separate offices and entities, and that he does not believe that they would be able to create or enforce section 1 of the amendment. He added that if a student elected trustee nominee were to break that rule, they could not be challenged under SA rules.
 1. The section at the time of this comment read “Candidates for Student-elected Trustee may not campaign with or on behalf of candidates for Student Assembly. They are prohibited from engaging in any coordination of campaigning activities outlined in section D.1 with candidates for Student Assembly”.
- vii. S. Vura said that they were aware of this and intend to speak to the TNC in this regard.
- viii. V. Devatha said that he thinks that it is inappropriate to treat them in different ways.
- ix. D. Barbaria said that they are two different races that will be on the same ballot, and that they can’t make rules concerning what candidates are doing in non-SA elections.
- x. O. Din said that he agrees with D. Barbaria in that he does not agree with the spirit of these amendments, and that he thinks that a lot of people from the get-go were against tying these elections together. He added that he knows people have different thoughts about parties and slates and ballots, but that he is against adding more restrictions.
- xi. G. Park asked if there is a specific scenario that S. Vura is trying to avoid with this amendment.
- xii. S. Vura said that he does not necessarily support this amendment, but that the two scenarios outlined would be that a candidate for trustee who is very popular would decide to endorse certain candidates for SA and campaign alongside them in their campaign literature. He added that some would make the case that such a situation would unfairly impact the results of the SA race, and that if the SA agrees with the interpretation made by D. Barbaria and O. Din that these are separate elections, then that wouldn’t be an issue.
- xiii. G. Park asked if S. Vura is therefore trying to avoid one person affecting another race.
- xiv. S. Vura said that that is the intent of the amendment.
- xv. V. Devatha said that it is important to think about how elections rules are currently structured for President and EVP, in that they cannot “endorse down” but other candidates can “endorse up”.
- xvi. G. Park asked if the controversy is therefore that those are separate things.
- xvii. V. Devatha replied in the affirmative.

- xviii. Conan Gillis asked if people representing an unassociated organization can endorse candidates in both races.
- xix. S. Vura replied in the affirmative, and said that a student organization always has the right to endorse candidates in both races, with the exception of an organization that has someone on its e-board that is also a member of the Elections Committee.
- xx. C. Huang said that she wanted to return to something that V. Devatha talked about earlier, and asked why this amendment only concerns the President and Trustee, and not the EVP.
- xxi. S. Vura said that it is in the spirit that allows candidates to endorse up but not down, and that there are arguments to be made that President and Trustee are on a similar level in shared governance, but that EVP is not on that level. He added that he doesn't think that there's any reason for the EVP to be restrained in that way.
- xxii. V. Devatha said that the EVP is currently allowed to endorse a candidate for President.
- xxiii. F. Uribe-Rheinbolt asked if S. Vura considers President or Trustee to be a higher position.
- xxiv. S. Vura said that that is subjective and very difficult to answer, and that it depends on the subjective answer of what's more important when it comes to shared governance. He added that he would say that they're both the highest ranking of the undergraduate student body in some respect, and so they're on the same plane.
- xxv. F. Uribe-Rheinbolt said that if people believe that the trustee is above the President, then they should strike that part of the amendment, but that if they do not then the strike would be irrelevant.
- xxvi. S. Vura said that if that's what people want, they should make that amendment.
- xxvii. D. Barbaria said that, neither the President nor the EVP can endorse in any SA election at this time. He asked if S. Vura is worried that members of the Elections Committee can endorse the trustee race.
- xxviii. S. Vura replied in the negative, and that this is because the Elections Committee has no influence on that race.
- xxix. O. Din said that he thinks that encapsulates the idea that the trustee race is out of the SA's purview, and that he doesn't think that they should do this even if they could. He added that he thinks that the importance they have in that system necessitates that they be able to endorse each other.
- xxx. There was a motion to vote.
 - 1. D. Barbaria dissented.
- xxxi. J. Dominguez asked if this amendment is assuming that the TNC will go forward with making the election at the same time.
- xxxii. V. Devatha said that the TNC's decision is confirmed.
- xxxiii. The motion to vote was **withdrawn**.
- xxxiv. E. Shapiro said that he would recommend that this be tabled until the SA decides whether people can run for trustee and SA rep.
- xxxv. S. Vura said that the Office of the Assemblies told him that this can't happen, but that he will make sure. He added that the elections process starts

next week, and that they will want the information to be up to date when the rules get handed out, but that E. Shapiro brings up a good point.

- xxxvi. N. Matolka said that he is indifferent, but that he does think that it should be amended to include the EVP. He added that they should wait to see what the situation is with who can run for what.
- xxxvii. O. Din said that he disagrees with tabling it now, and that he feels like this change in election functions is something that the SA was against and that the TNC just did anyway. He added that he doesn't like what the TNC is doing and doesn't want to help them in that regard.
- xxxviii. D. Barbaria said that he doesn't think that they should move to a vote on this until the first part is struck, since he doesn't think that it has a place in the SA's election rules. He added that many members would want to know who they're supporting in an SA race is supporting in the trustee race, and that it is two separate institutions that have rules that we don't completely know yet. He asked if someone who intended to run for EVP and trustee would no longer be able to run.
- xxxix. S. Vura said that this can be solved now by adding a clause that reflects that rule, and asked if they think that students should be able to run for President and Trustee at the same time.
 - xl. V. Devatha said that he would go about this process first by releasing a statement of condemnation toward the TNC because their actions regarding the trustee elections put the SA in a difficult position. He added that when it comes to the way that the President and EVP run for the SA, they concurrently run for that seat and for an Undesignated seat.
 - xli. E. Shapiro asked if they could concurrently run for a college seat instead.
 - xlii. V. Devatha said that he does not think that that would be appropriate.
 - xliii. O. Din asked if people share his feelings that what the TNC did was not okay. He also asked if the SA can move its elections calendar up, and if the SA can amend the rules to automatically add any trustee candidate into the Undesignated race.
 - xliv. J. Anderson said that he does want to point out that this does bias candidates from the SA to run for trustee, and that not everyone who ran for trustee last time came from an SA seat. He added that this would have to be brought before the TNC, and that just because it is in the SA's rules doesn't mean it would happen since they have no jurisdiction in that regard. He also said that it is important to remember that candidates are now being considered in two different ways, and that they might deter candidates from either race, such as a trustee nominee who wouldn't want to sit on the SA.
 - xlv. Adam Klier asked if someone can concurrently hold a trustee position and an SA position.
 - xlvi. J. Anderson replied in the negative.
 - xlvii. Discussion continued in this regard.
 - xlviii. S. Vura said that he echoes J. Anderson's sentiment in that he feels like it puts candidates only running for the Undesignated seat at a disadvantage, and so he doesn't think it's fair for trustee seats to have this provision as well. He added he doesn't feel comfortable answering O. Din's first question at this meeting, and that the SA shouldn't act in bad faith in response to the TNC's bad faith.

- xlix. M. Adeghe asked a question.
 - l. V. Devatha said that, going back to the earlier conversation of President and Trustee being on the same plane, that if a person were running in the trustee race, dropping them into the Undesignated race would complicate things.
 - li. S. Vura said that he regrets that this had to happen right before February break, and that he was only informed of TNC's change yesterday. He added that it was not his intent to make the debate on this so short and rushed.
 - lii. N. Matolka said that this is a very unfortunate situation, and that if they are going to allow trustees to run for Undesignated at the same time, that they will definitely be biased toward one of the races over the other, and that he doesn't think that that would be fair for candidates who really do want an Undesignated seat.
 - liii. S. Vura said that he does have to question the optics of someone simultaneously having posters up asking for votes for both, and that might confuse a lot of voters.
 - liv. E. Shapiro said that this is the way it's currently done for President and EVP, and that he would think it would be exactly the same for Trustee.
 - lv. J. Anderson said that he wants to point out that if they put people in that situation, they will be subject to different rules. He added that there is a question of whether or not someone who broke trustee rules would get removed from the SA race, and that there is an issue of fairness.
 - lvi. D. Barbaria said that this can't be done tonight since they don't know the official language yet, and that it is implied that anything there would trump their rules. He added that they also cannot change to other races at this time, and that the only race aside from President or EVP that's currently conducted by ranked choice is Undesignated. He also said that there is a separate conversation over the next few months to make more elections ranked choice, and that they do have a history of people running for President also campaigning for Undesignated, and that it tends to work due to ranked choice voting. He asked if any language was approved regarding concurrent races in the TNC.
 - lvii. J. Anderson said that he doesn't feel comfortable answering that as someone who's just resigned from the TNC, and that he doesn't know if that information is confidential.
 - lviii. D. Barbaria said that he would be in favor of this until they have more clarity.
 - lix. There was a motion to table.
 - 1. O. Din dissented, saying that he thinks they should go into voting on this right now.
 - 2. D. Barbaria said that a motion to table cannot be dissented against.
 - lx. Motion to table – tabled 14-4-2.
 - lxi. D. Barbaria moved to continue discussion on the resolution even though it's been tabled – approved.
 - lxii. O. Din said that he disagrees with the idea that the SA needs to work in tandem with the TNC, and that he didn't know about this decision until very recently. He added that in terms of people running with two separate rules, if they truly only care about the trustee seat, they can just disregard the SA rules completely.
 - lxiii. Discussion continued in this regard.

- lxiv. V. Devatha said that the way the assembly is going about this discussion implies that they don't have any jurisdiction over the trustee race, but that they have jurisdiction over the SA races, and that he thinks that this is inappropriate. He added that they can't do anything if they automatically add people to their roster, and that they can't and won't disqualify every single trustee candidate.
- lxv. S. Vura said that his concern here is that candidates who actually genuinely want to run for Undesignated would be treated unfairly, regardless of how the SA wants to respond to the TNC.
- lxvi. V. Devatha said that the reason the assembly didn't want this election to be held concurrently was that this leeches the talent pool from the SA, whether that be for potential or current talent. He added that the process is the same as when seven or so people would be running for President or for EVP.
- lxvii. S. Vura said that he thinks that logic could be sound, particularly if this could be used as a bargaining chip if this exists, which may or may not be true. He added that if this is the direction that they want to take, he would be more inclined to support this.
- lxviii. E. Shapiro moved to end this discussion, since the conversation is going in circles and the SA does not know anything at this time – approved.

VII. Adjournment

- a. V. Devatha adjourned the meeting to executive session at 5:49 pm.

VIII. Executive Session

Respectfully Submitted,
John Hannan
Clerk of the Assembly