



Cornell University Student Assembly

Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, February 7, 2019 Meeting
4:52pm-5:30pm in Memorial Room, Willard Straight Hall

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. V. Devatha called the meeting to order at 4:52 pm.
- b. Roll Call
 - i. *Present:* J. Anderson [0], D. Barbaria [0], V. Devatha [0], O. Din [2.5], J. Dominguez [0], O. Egharevba [2], S. Harshvardhan [2], C. Huang [0], S. Iruvanti [1], A. Jain [0], K. Kebbeh [1], S. Lim [0.5], N. Matolka [0], U. Mustafa [1], G. Park [1.5], I. Pavlov [0.25], E. Shapiro [0], M. Shovik [1.25], J. Sim [0], F. Uribe-Rheinbolt [0], B. Weintraub [0], V. Xu [0.75]
 - ii. *Absent:* M. Smith [0], M. Stefanko [1]

II. Approval of the Minutes

- a. Motion to approve the January 31st. 2019 minutes – approved.

III. Open Microphone

- a. No speakers at the open microphone.

IV. Announcements and Reports

- a. V. Devatha said that this would be a short meeting, and that assembly members would therefore fill out their initiative forms following the meeting. He added that Sprint Planning would be on Sunday from 10 am to 12 pm in the Cook seminar room, and that there would likely be Ithaca Bakery provided at this meeting.
- b. D. Barbaria said that the Director of Elections normally announces the number of candidates in an upcoming election, but that he is absent today. He asked V. Devatha if he would give the announcement of the number of candidates.
- c. V. Devatha said that there are five candidates for the First Generation seat, five candidates for the two Minority seats, and two candidates for the LGBTQ+ seat.
- d. J. Anderson asked that anyone who knows anyone who serves on the academic integrity boards in their respective colleges to put him in contact with those people.
- e. V. Devatha said that attendance will be taken at Sprint Planning, and that the information requested of members for the newsletter is due today.
- f. S. Lim said that if any assembly member is working on something that requires student body input, they should make a Qualtrics and send it to her so that she can put it in the newsletter.

V. Business of the Day

- a. Resolution 18: Reinstating the Publication of Median Grades

- i. O. Egharevba said that this was introduced last semester and that he received numerous suggestions, including from the Dean of Faculty, and that they agreed that the best way to move forward with this is for him to serve as a point person on this issue. He added that he's trying to modify this such that the SA supports the discussion and investigation of this issue.
- ii. V. Devatha asked whether or not O. Egharevba intends to pass this resolution as-is.
- iii. O. Egharevba said that he intends to amend it.
- iv. V. Devatha asked if O. Egharevba would like to start discussion by making the amendments.
- v. O. Egharevba moved to amend the resolution.
 1. Amend "Recommendation" in the upper right-hand box to "Sense-of-the-Body".
 2. Amend the abstract such that "reinstate the semesterly publication of median grade reports" such that it reads "encourage the Faculty Senate to investigate the possibility of publishing median grade reports".
 3. Amend lines 44 and 45 such that it reads "Be it therefore resolved, that the Student Assembly encourages the Faculty Senate to investigate the possibility of reinstating the semesterly reporting of median grades".
- vi. G. Park asked if O. Egharevba would intend for this information to be included on the course roster.
- vii. O. Egharevba replied in the affirmative.
- viii. G. Park said that she thinks that this steers the student in the wrong direction, and that going to college is not just a means to get to another school. She added that students are here to learn, and that she doesn't think this is the right way to nudge students to want to learn rather than just receive an easy A.
- ix. O. Egharevba said that with publication of median grades, he is trying to improve academic transparency, especially in regard to other universities that do publish this information. He added that he agrees that education shouldn't just be about grades, but it's not like this hasn't been done before, and that they are trying to reason how to do this in a way that it won't all be about getting an easy A. He also said that this is just an investigation, and that they would like to look into this further and open a dialogue.
- x. G. Park said that with the median grade posted on the course roster, it encourages students to pick higher median grades, and that she doesn't think that this is the right way to do this. She added that the Faculty Senate voted to stop this publication of median grades to stop the bias and concerns regarding grade inflation, and that the fact that time has passed does not mean that these concerns won't return. She asked if O. Egharevba has received a response from the Faculty Senate.
- xi. O. Egharevba said that he has not contacted them yet, and that the Dean of Faculty directed him elsewhere in their conversation in this regard. He added that, in 1998, the Faculty Senate voted to put the median grades online and to post the median grades in student transcripts, but that the technology to put median grades on transcripts was not available at that time, and so it led

to the phenomenon that G. Park referenced. He also said that now that the technology exists, he believes that it is worthwhile to, at the minimum, think about reinstating this and think about how academic transcripts can be approved.

- xii. B. Weintraub asked what the process for holding a strawpoll of assembly members would entail.
- xiii. V. Devatha said that it would just be a motion.
- xiv. B. Weintraub moved to hold a strawpoll.
 - 1. V. Devatha ruled the motion dilatory.
- xv. J. Dominguez said that he feels like Cornell would be reluctant to reinstate this after overturning it in 2011, and that he thinks that this is similar to libertarian paternalism in that it would entice students to pick classes based on median grades. He added that he knows that this happens anyway, but by publishing the information and making it available, this would have a much larger effect that he thinks would have a negative impact on the school curriculum. He asked what the exigency and benefit of publishing median grades in, and said that the resolution does not go in-depth on this.
- xvi. O. Egharevba said that one of the benefits that he and the Academic Policy Committee (henceforth APC) have spoken about is that it would relieve stress from students in regard to what has to be done to achieve a certain grade. He added that it improves transparency as a whole since students don't get a lot of information about these things, such as evaluations, median grades, and so on.
- xvii. J. Dominguez asked if publishing syllabi further in advance would be a better solution.
- xviii. O. Egharevba said that he isn't sure that such an endeavor would address the same issue, and that it's not like this hasn't been done before.
- xix. J. Dominguez said that he sympathizes with transparency concerns, but that he does not see the necessity for the student body to get that transparency.
- xx. O. Egharevba thanked J. Dominguez for his comment.
- xxi. V. Devatha said that this discussion would move to have two assembly speakers and one response from O. Egharevba to speed up discussion.
- xxii. N. Matolka said that he is indifferent to this, and asked if O. Egharevba could elaborate more on the content of the conversations he's been having with faculty regarding what would happen after this passes.
- xxiii. D. Barbaria said that he thinks that this is a fantastic change to the resolution, since it no longer forces the SA to answer whether or not they like median grades, and that there is never anything wrong with asking for data collection. He added that they are asking for a big favor, but when this happens, they give them a lot of power, and that it is important that more be added to the resolved clauses regarding the specifics of this discussion and research. He also said that it is important that they tell them what to do, and asked if O. Egharevba had anything in mind in this regard.
- xxiv. O. Egharevba said that he has not expanded the circle of people to whom he has spoken, but that he plans to in the near future. He added that he thinks that the concerns brought up by D. Barbaria could be elaborated on, and that they already have what's being investigated confirmed, and that other things

to decide would be who they want to be involved, how the assembly should be involved, and that these are things worth discussing.

- xxv. D. Barbaria asked if O. Egharevba had anything specific in mind.
- xxvi. O. Egharevba said that he would like to expand his base beyond undergraduate students.
- xxvii. D. Barbaria said that having specifics would be ideal.
- xxviii. V. Devatha said that this can be dealt with offline, and that it sounds like they're not ready to vote on this resolution today, and that there will be many intricacies added to this that need to be worked on, and that they can do that on Sunday or after this meeting.
- xxix. O. Egharevba said that this should be done after this meeting.
- xxx. D. Barbaria said that this change is fantastic, and that they do not need an answer from the online discussion, just the questions that they want to ask, but that they do need to add more.
- xxxi. There was a motion to table the resolution.
 - 1. There was a dissent.
- xxxii. G. Park said that she has an important concern that she would like to address first.
- xxxiii. O. Egharevba said that he wants everyone to get their thoughts out before they take this offline.
- xxxiv. I. Pavlov said that she thinks that a lot of the problems the assembly had with this resolution last time have been resolved, and thanked O. Egharevba for putting his time into this. She asked if he could briefly elaborate on the second perambulatory clause.
 - 1. This clause reads "Whereas, in May 2011, the Faculty Senate voted to cease the publication of median grades out of concerns regarding grade inflation; and"
- xxxv. O. Egharevba said that this is just context on the situation, and that they decided this because of a study that said that students tend to choose courses with higher median grades when those median grades weren't included on their transcript.
- xxxvi. I. Pavlov asked how many Faculty Senate members O. Egharevba thinks still have that concern.
- xxxvii. O. Egharevba said that he is trying to find that out.
- xxxviii. S. Lim said that they can go more into this on Sunday, and asked if O. Egharevba has plans to gather student sentiment.
- xxxix. O. Egharevba replied in the affirmative.
 - xl. S. Iruvanti asked if there was a reason they decided to stop publishing median grades.
 - xli. O. Egharevba said that it was over a 2007 study on the effect of median grades on Cornell students, and that at that time they were not published on transcripts. He added that data at the time reflected that students picked classes with higher median grades, but that they can now put median grades on transcripts, so that data is, in his opinion, no longer valid. He also said that they need to evaluate this from a fresh perspective.
 - xlii. S. Lim repeated her question.
 - xliii. O. Egharevba replied in the affirmative.

- xliv. G. Park said that she thinks that, for some classes, there are grade fluctuations when it comes to the median, and that performance can change from year to year, and that median might offer incorrect information. She added that she knows that O. Egharevba is still developing the resolution, but that she thinks that this is important to keep in mind. She also said that the students should not be misinformed.
- xlv. Motion to amend the resolution – amended.
- xlvi. Motion to table the resolution – tabled 20-0-1.
- b. Resolution 24: Updating the Non-Discrimination Clause
 - i. J. Anderson said that this is a fairly simple change, and went through the resolution.
 - ii. There was a motion to vote.
 - 1. There was a dissent.
 - 2. The motion to vote was withdrawn.
 - iii. D. Barbaria said that he thinks that it would be vital for the new language in the clause to be highlighted or bolded.
 - iv. J. Anderson moved to amend the resolution.
 - 1. The words “military status” will be bolded on lines 26 and 32-33.
 - 2. The words “predisposing genetic characteristics” will be bolded on lines 26 and 33.
 - 3. The words “familial status” will be bolded on lines 26 and 33.
 - 4. The words “domestic violence victim status” will be bolded on lines 26-27 and 33-34.
 - v. D. Barbaria called the question on the amendment, but then withdrew his motion.
 - vi. D. Barbaria moved to amend the amendment such that the word “creed” would be highlighted on lines 26 and 32 in addition to all the previous changes of the amendment.
 - vii. Motion to amend the amendment – amended.
 - viii. D. Barbaria called the question on the amendment.
 - ix. Motion to amend – amended.
 - x. J. Dominguez moved for unanimous consent on the motion to vote.
 - xi. Motion to vote on the resolution – approved 19-0-1.
 - xii. V. Devatha said that J. Dominguez moved for unanimous consent on the motion to vote, not the vote itself.

VI. Adjournment

- a. V. Devatha moved the meeting to Executive Session at 5:30 pm.

VII. Executive Session

Respectfully Submitted,
John Hannan
Clerk of the Assembly