**MINUTES**

**Graduate & Professional Student Assembly**

**February 10, 2014**

**Warren Hall Room 401**

**5:30 - 7:00 P.M.**

1. **Welcome and Introductions**
   1. **Introduction of voting members, 1 min.**

M. Dumas called the meeting to order at 5:34pm

Voting members present: D. Bunck, A. Bybee-Finley, M. Carignano, M. Chen, G. Danies Turano, J. De Castro, F. Doerflinger, M. Dumas, S. Hsieh, A. M’nebhi, A. Moore, E. Murnane, E. Newbury, A. Powell, I. Small, T. Sorg, C Yao

Voting members absent: Siddhartha Sinha

1. **Approval of the Minutes -- January 27, 2014, 1 min.**

The minutes were approved as printed.

1. **Guests** 
   1. **Darrick Evensen and Ross Gitlin, Student-Elected Trustees, 10 min.**

Ross Gitlin was not present at the meeting. D. Evensen announced he came to talk about student governance in regards to a position on the Cornell Board of Trustees. He went on to describe the role of the board of trustees and mentioned the GPSA may have heard of the board and their duties at the last meeting when the resolution on divestment was discussed.

He then announced the position of student trustee is a 2-year position and he will be stepping down. Some of the roles of the boards are to set an annual budget/financial plan, administer endowment, and approve capital projects. However, the Board’s main goal is to set long term goals and visions about Cornell. He then further explained how the election of Graduate and Professional Student Trustee is carried out and what the position entails. The candidates need a certain number of petition signatures to run for the position. There will be two weeks of campaigning and then a 2-day online voting period. All students (undergraduates, graduates, and professional) vote in the election. Only graduate and professional students can run for the position. The student trustee has a responsibility of 10-15 hours a week with 4 major meetings annually. The trustee must act in the best interest of the university, but especially focus on expressing the views of graduate and professional students. The individual is also responsible for corresponding with the leadership of Cornell as well as serve on 3-4 trustee committees.

D. Evensen said he thought the position is worth all the time the trustee must put in since the individual gets to shape Cornell’s future at a different level, network with the trustees, and experience academia in unique ways and get involved in intimate aspects.

Anyone interested in running for the position can contacts Evensen or Gitlin (current student trustees) for more information. He then opened the floor to questions by the members.

* 1. **Ulysses Smith, Juliana Batista, & Nicholas Vasko, Student Assembly, 10 min.**

Ulysses announced the SA members were present that day before the GPSA to discuss the incident of Cinco de Octobre that occurred last Fall and the resolution that was produced in the SA to encourage community standards and accountability. He then turned the discussion over to the sponsors of the resolution. The sponsors talked briefly about the ‘incident’ and then talked about Resolution 9. The sponsors wanted to discuss the resolution before the GPSA in an effort to unite all 4 assemblies. The main purpose of the resolution was to have the SA recognize this incident did happen and to include such information on the Respect @ Cornell webpage to inform all students off such incidents. The webpage has an online program that students will participate in as a part of President Skorton’s plan to raise awareness on diversity. The program on the webpage is similar to Tapestry that every undergraduate student is expected to attend. The resolution especially wants graduate student TA’s to be part of this program so they can be aware of and capable of recognizing such bias. The sponsors were present to seek GPSA’s support and advice on how to move forward with the resolution. The floor was opened to questions and concerns.

In a response to one of the questions, the sponsors shared that during the investigation, the SA found that Ezra’s Army, responsible for the incident, is not a registered organization and is predominantly undergraduates. The system failed when the staff at the physical education department did not recognize the issue and the immorality associated with it. Due to this reason, the resolution especially targets the teaching staff. C. Yao commented the program was not well tailored to Cornell at all and quality was not high. It also did not address a lot of questions and concerns that come up during the PowerPoint on the webpage for Respect @ Cornell. U. Smith pointed out there are three clauses of the resolution-mainly geared towards staff. The third clause is to work with all assemblies to create a program that gears particularly towards Cornell.

If more concerns, email the leadership and all information will be forwarded to the sponsors of the resolution.

1. **Reports of Officers and Committee Updates, 10 min.**
   1. **Executive Committee (M. Dumas)**

M. Dumas reminded everyone to sign up for Cornell Alerts mass notification settings on student center for texts and emails such as the one announcing a temporary shutdown due to inclement weather last week.

C. Yao then talked about available committee positions and E. Newbury is still working on issues that concern the GPSA such as gym hours. Anyone interested in working on these issues can email her.

* 1. **Appropriations (I. Small)**

I. Small announced that the activity fee will be addressed and discussed on February 24th. He will send out the appendix before the next meeting and GPSA can discuss further, if needed.

* 1. **Communications (G. Choe)**

A new project undertaken by the Communications committee is “Take a Break” Coffee Hours which will be held on Monday 2pm-3pm at the Big Red Barn. This Coffee Hour will serve as a GPSA interface with administration and resources.

* 1. **Finance Commission (D. Kuhlmann)**

D. Kuhlmann announced the committee met last Thursday for the February meeting. They allocated an additional $20,000 and are now left with $70,000 in their budget. The committee has another meeting on March 6th. Any requests for funding will be due before that and annual budgets for the following year will be due end of April. He will have more specific information for the assembly by the next meeting.

* 1. **Graduate & Professional Student Programming Board (K. Bybee Finley)**

There is an interschool mixer on February 27th, 7pm-10pm. All graduate and professional students welcome. Additionally, the Grad Ball will be held on April 26th.

* 1. **Student Advocacy (F. Doerflinger)**

The committee has a Dine and Discuss event coming up where the topic of discussion will be risk management.

* 1. **Faculty Awards (A. Powell)**

The communications planning is ongoing for the nomination period.

* 1. **Diversity & International Students (C. Carter)**

The committee met Wednesday. C. Carter announced the Cornell Cinema screening of *Many Rivers to Cross* at Willard Straight. There will also be a panel after the movie to discuss.

The committee discussed and started brainstorming on activities concerning diversity issues.

1. **New Business** 
   1. **R. 7 – A Resolution to Amend the Bylaws Concerning GPSA External Committee  Appointments, 2 min.**

C. Yao informed the GPSA the bylaws have not been updated for a long time and this resolution is merely amending the bylaws to update it and include new external committees and exclude obsolete committees. N. Baran pointed out 50% of the voting members must vote yes to approve the resolution since it is an amendment of the bylaws and not of the charter.

T. Sorg proposed an amendment to the resolution that corrected some of the grammatical and punctuation errors. It was noted the simple adjustments were grammatical and did not change the change the character of the resolution.

A motion to move to accept by acclamation was proposed by D. Evensen. The resolution passed with a vote of 16-0.

* 1. **R. 8 -- Cornell Investment and Divestment Strategies for a Sustainable Future, 20 min.**

J. Bergfalk thanked everyone for giving thought to the resolution. He provided additional background on the resolution and further updates since the last meeting. The proposed actions of the resolution are climate neutrality by 2035 and divestment from the 200 companies with the largest carbon reserves. According to J. Bergfalk, it is a duty of the students to contest and fight climate change and prevent species endangerment. The Graduate Assembly of University of California, Berkeley voted yes to a divestment resolution similar in nature to Resolution 8 and Bergfalk urged Cornell GPSA to follow in their footsteps. D. Bunck spoke up to say not all financial responsibilities are completely addressed in the resolution. He does not think divestment from the 200 companies work out. It is every individual that is contributing to the carbon footprint. He also said one of the other problems was that nothing in the resolution mentions the end result and how the companies that do start to invest in renewables will be addressed once they take action. Todd Sorg commented on how the 200 companies are not mentioned by name in the resolution itself.

Todd Sorg proposed grammatical and punctuation amendments to the resolution.

D. Evensen commented on what David Skorton and the trustees thought about the resolution and what they mentioned in the University Assembly meeting. The trustees are concerned these are the companies that invest in undergraduate and graduate research and the resolution will negatively harm University relations with these companies. Jimmy O’Day, a post doctorate student in chemistry, commented most people think that we will be pushing away the companies by taking away investment. However, according to him, not once have these companies invested in research at the undergraduate or graduate level and the resolution will not negatively affect the University research investment.

The resolution was then moved to a vote. The resolution passed with a vote of 16-1.

* 1. **R. 9 -- Workers Compensation for Graduate Students, 20 min.**

Paul Berry informed the GPSA for the last 6 months, the sponsors of this resolution have been trying to figure out what happens if a graduate student gets injured in a work related issue and the liability of the university in such a case. They have been unable to get a direct answer. This entire process and research into the policies led to this resolution. He then moved into discussing the timeline of events that led to this resolution. It started with a serious injury on campus in summer 2013. On November 12th, an advocacy meeting was requested to discuss polices and this meeting took place a month later, on December 5th.

He gave a brief overview of the background of policies of the State of New York on such an issue and the New York policies on workers compensation were shared. He noted that most importantly, no one party is determined to be at fault. The employer is obligated to purchase coverage for the employees and post a notice of coverage in the work place. P. Berry said the advocacy meeting was very vague and did not answer a lot of answers and they were asked to inquire with the graduate school. They finally found out workers’ compensation does not cover graduate students. Other graduate students, such as those in SUNY, are covered by the university insurance.

On January 21st, a letter was sent to the university administrators asking about their current policies and the legal justification behind excluding graduate students from this coverage.

On a further note, a meeting is scheduled with university administrators for February 17th. The concluding thoughts were no clarification has been offered on official policy and Cornell has both a legal and moral obligation to provide graduate students with benefits in case of a serious injury. F. Doerflinger clarified the university never explicitly states graduate students are faculty and the graduate students always feel as if they are treading the line between student and faculty.

He then opened the floor to any questions and concerns. He was asked about undergraduate coverage. P. Berry said some students are covered under work-study but he did not specifically want to go into that since that was not the purpose of the resolution. E. Newbury said she fears the administration reaction to Line 33 that calls on the University to purchase workers’ compensation for graduate students. N. Baran said it might not be as controversial since the GPSA cannot expect it other than to ask for it. The biggest task is researching how the Federal Board addresses workers’ compensations.

T. Sorg asked for clarification on whether professional students are only mentioned briefly. N. Baran responded professional students are more clearly classified as students and do not work in labs as much. P. Berry said professional students might even be covered in certain cases. J. Allen clarified in case of an injury, a Crisis Manager from the Graduate School are assigned to the case to provide accommodations and flexibility support. They work with the department/ field to help the students. She does not want the students to think they will not be offered any help in case of a crisis. However, she announced that she is impressed with persistence of the sponsors.

T. Sorg proposed a series of grammatical and punctuation amendments to the resolution. The meeting was extended for 10 minutes to address the resolution.

T. Sorg proposed an amendment to add another clause to include the fact other New York State Universities do provide workers compensations for their graduate students. N. Baran said she was not comfortable with including this clause in writing it since other universities are not explicitly clear about providing compensation and that SUNY is a public university as opposed to a private university. D. Evensen clarified Cornell is considered a private entity despite have a contract with the State. There was a motion to vote on the amendment to include the clause and the amendment did not pass with a vote of 1-13.

E. Newbury proposed to table the resolution till the next meeting since the sponsors will have a meeting with the administration and a lot of questions and concerns will be addressed during that meeting. There was no second for the proposition and the meeting moved to a vote on resolution.The resolution passed with a vote of 16-0.

1. **Open Forum, 5 min.**

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting without going into open forum.

M. Dumas adjourned the meeting at 7:06 pm.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Aastha Wadhwa**