



# Cornell University Student Assembly

## Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, January 25, 2018 Meeting  
4:45pm-6:30pm in Willard Straight Hall: Memorial Room

### I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. J. Kim called the meeting to order at 4:47 pm.
- b. Roll Call:
  - i. *Present:* T. Ball, D. Barbaria, A. Chowdhury, O. Corn, R. Cornell, V. Devatha, O. Din, O. Egharevba, H. Hassan, R. Herz, M. Indimine, S. Iruvanti, G. Kaufman, S. Lim, L. Lipschutz, D. Nyakaru, S. Park, G. Park, M. Peralta-Ochoa, S. Romero Zavala, C. Schott, E. Shapiro, J. Sim, M. Valadez, I. Wallace
  - ii. *Absent:* T. Magloire, D. Tokunboh
- c. New Student Assembly members S. Iruvanti, D. Nyakaru, and G. Park were sworn in using the Oath of Office.

### II. Open Microphone

- a. No speakers at the open microphone.

### III. Announcements and Reports

- a. V. Devatha: WSJ update
  - i. Student subscriptions to *The Wall Street Journal* through Cornell have begun.
  - ii. Subscription cost is \$0.35, having originally thought it to have been \$0.75.
- b. V. Devatha: Website forms
  - i. New website is active.
  - ii. Not yet complete, but forms from organizations seeking special funding can be reviewed.
  - iii. Accepting suggestions as to other potential features of the website.
- c. C. Schott: International community
  - i. Martha Pollack has greenlighted a resolution that would improve the financial aid resources, as well as the ability to apply for financial aid, for international students in the Cornell community.

### IV. Presentations

- a. CAPS
  - i. CAPS representative Greg Eells presenting.
  - ii. G. Eells presented data stating that 43% (up from 39%) of Cornell students have some difficulty functioning, such as depression or anxiety.
    1. This figure increases to between 53% and 59% for African-American students, possibly due to systemic intimidation and the like.

- iii. Demand has increased for CAPS' 15-minute assessments 11% since last year and 20% over the last three years.
  1. There has been an increase in staffing in response to the increasing demand.
- iv. G. Eells presented a chart which displays the rise in both student demand for CAPS' services, as well as the resultant rise in available staff.
- v. V. Devatha acknowledged the good in CAPS' increase in staffing, but is still concerned about students' ability to get counseling.
- vi. G. Eells noted that the chart (mentioned in Section IV, Subsection a, Subsection iv) illustrates the disparity between supply of capable professionals at CAPS and student demand.
- vii. There was a question from the floor.
- viii. G. Eells said that CAPS works to direct students to the psychological support that would most help them.
- ix. S. Romero Zavala asked about one of the earlier reported percentages.
- x. G. Eells referenced the percentage of Cornell students that have had some form of contact with CAPS.
- xi. S. Romero Zavala asked how much of that group has undergone long-term psychological care.
- xii. G. Eells said that not many have, and that at the end of a semester, students will often be referred, if necessary, to someone in the community.
- xiii. S. Romero Zavala asked what G. Eells defines as long term
- xiv. G. Eells said that CAPS defines long-term as a time of care exceeding 16 to 18 sessions.
- xv. S. Romero Zavala asked whether or not a student must go to Gannett Health in order to access the service.
- xvi. G. Eells said that while that is an option, it could also be done on one's phone.
- xvii. S. Romero Zavala noted that referring a student in need of psychological care to someone in the Ithaca community is in and of itself a strenuous process for a student, and asks how this is decided.
- xviii. G. Eells said that CAPS begins to hold sessions with students in need within a few days, and referrals are done if the person meeting with the student believes it to be necessary.
- xix. S. Romero Zavala asked a question regarding medical insurance, and mentions that insurance costs are also a hurdle for students to receive their care.
- xx. G. Eells responded in regard to Cornell's student health insurance.
- xxi. M. Valadez asks how many students who take the initial 15-minute assessment are directed off-campus.
- xxii. G. Eells said that it is not an assessment, and that its purpose is to allow CAPS to figure out how to best help the student. As the semester goes on and more students seek help, CAPS' employees get busier.
- xxiii. A member asked how CAPS works toward adequately serving the needs of minority students, particularly black students, who may need help.
- xxiv. G. Eells said that CAPS works hard to hire a diverse staff so as to match the diverse Cornell student body.

- xxv. A member asked whether or not CAPS has worked with organizations similar to itself such as EARS, so as to direct students to the organization that would best help them.
- xxvi. G. Eells responded in the affirmative.
- xxvii. J. Kim requested that G. Eells moves forward with the presentation before answering further questions.
- xxviii. G. Eells continued his presentation, noting that Cornell is not a “suicide school”. G. Eells states that the rate of suicide at Cornell is level with the national collegiate average rate.
- xxix. T. Ball asked if the inability to meet student demand derives from a lack of funding.
- xxx. G. Eells referenced the chart once again that illustrates the disparity between staffing and student demand, and references the overall desire to meet student demand.
- xxxi. T. Ball asked if CAPS has considered bringing mental health professionals in the Ithaca community onto Cornell’s campus on a contract basis.
- xxxii. G. Eells said that this has happened, but it makes more sense for CAPS to hire and train people on their own.
- xxxiii. T. Ball asked if CAPS runs into any issues in regard to the level of care as a result.
- xxxiv. G. Eells said that all of their hires have been licensed by New York State, as the mental health professionals in Ithaca also have.
- xxxv. D. Barbaria asked a question regarding certain student-health related committees and organizations on campus.
- xxxvi. G. Eells clarified that the four organizations in question, to his knowledge, are one and the same.
  - 1. The organization in question is the Student Health Benefits Advisory Committee (henceforth SHBAC).
- xxxvii. D. Barbaria stated that he discovered that the SHBAC meetings were open to the public, and found at the meeting that SHBAC has no formal standing membership from the student body. He inquired whether it was planned going forward for this to remain the case.
- xxxviii. G. Eells said that this was not his area of expertise, but SHBAC values student engagement.
- xxxix. O. Corn inquired whether or not there could be more marketing of the fact that CAPS conducts quick walk-in assessments.
  - xl. G. Eells questioned the overall efficiency of such an endeavor, but mentioned that CAPS does actively encourage students to schedule one of their pre-assessments.
  - xli. O. Corn said that she understands why the 15-minute assessment is in place, but questioned whether or not it could be interpreted as another obstacle for a student seeking help to overcome. She also asked whether or not G. Eells had statistics reporting the percentage of students who need help but do not seek it.
  - xlii. G. Eells said that it is impossible for CAPS to collect that data.
  - xliii. C. Schott asked a question regarding CAPS and international students.
  - xliv. G. Eells spoke about CAPS’ ability to help international students and about some recent hires made by CAPS.

- xliv. D. Nyakaru asked if G. Eells has statistics on the demographics of students who use CAPS against the demographics of the student body as a whole.
- xlvi. G. Eells stated that graduate students use CAPS proportionally more than their representation in the Cornell community.
- xlvii. D. Nyakaru asked if G. Eells had statistics on what students cited as the biggest barrier to getting help.
- xlvi. G. Eells said that the most common answer was wait times, and that the act of care in and of itself is a process that takes time.
- xlix. I. Wallace asked a question regarding the potential external review of Cornell's mental health policies.
  - 1. G. Eells said that external reviews have happened in the past, most recently in 2010, and that the organization that would have conducted the external review did not give specific details as to what potential problems or violations they were looking for.
  - li. G. Park acknowledged that many students would seek psychological help from someone that looks like them, and that certain CAPS staff might be more in demand than others as a result. She asked whether there could be a situation in which a student would have to wait longer due to the higher workload of a more in-demand staff member that they would want to see, and how CAPS would deal with this.
  - lii. G. Eells said that CAPS offers students their preferred staff member as well as the first available, thereby limiting wait times for students in need of help as much as possible.
  - liii. S. Romero Zavala asked whether CAPS has considered implementing a system in which students could seek help by way of Skype calls or other such means.
  - liv. G. Eells stated that "teletherapy" is effective for patients who are unable to get to their therapist in person, but questioned the efficiency of such an endeavor, since it would still require a full-time, fully paid staff member on the part of CAPS, even if CAPS outsourced to find this staff member.
  - lv. S. Romero Zavala asked whether or not the Student Assembly could help CAPS.
  - lvi. G. Eells said that they could, including by continuing dialogue with University leaders. He also said that very little of Cornell University's tuition goes to CAPS, and that he would appreciate more resources.
    - 1. Only a portion of the health fee (part of tuition itself) goes to CAPS.
  - lvii. V. Devatha asked a question regarding SHBAC and its allocations to CAPS.
  - lviii. A member asked what would happen if a student could not pay the copay required for receiving care.
  - lix. G. Eells said that there is a process by which the copay could be waived, and that both pre-assessments and walk-ins are free.

## V. Approval of Minutes

- a. Motion to allow for a two-minute reading period prior to approval of minutes from November 2<sup>nd</sup>, November 9<sup>th</sup>, November 30<sup>th</sup>, and December 1<sup>st</sup> – approved.
- b. Motion to amend the November 9<sup>th</sup> minutes to read "24-0-1" where it currently reads "14-0-1" – approved.

- c. Motion to approve the minutes of November 2<sup>nd</sup>, November 9<sup>th</sup>, November 30<sup>th</sup>, and December 1<sup>st</sup> – approved 25-0-1

**VI. Business of the Day**

- a. Resolution 17: Declaring Support for Wind Development on Campus
  - i. J. Kim mentioned that this resolution was resolved last semester but must be voted on again due to an issue with the audio recording of that meeting.
  - ii. D. Barbaria stated that community members are able to vote on this resolution.
  - iii. Passed 26-0-2 (including community member votes)

**VII. Adjournment**

J. Kim adjourned the meeting at 5:52 pm.

**VIII. Executive Session**

Respectfully Submitted,

*John Hannan*

Clerk of the Assembly