



Cornell University Student Assembly

Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, March 22, 2018 Meeting
4:48pm-6:17pm in 251 Malott Hall

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. J. Kim called the meeting to order at 4:48 pm.
- b. Roll Call:
 - i. *Present*: T. Ball [0.5], D. Barbaria [0], A. Chowdhury [2], O. Corn [1], R. Cornell [2.5], V. Devatha [1], O. Din [2], D. Engelson [0], N. Hernandez [0], R. Herz [5], M. Indimine [1.5], G. Kaufman [0], J. Kim [1], L. Lipschutz [4.75], D. Nyakaru [1], G. Park [0], M. Peralta-Ochoa [2], E. Shapiro [1], J. Sim [1], M. Valadez [1], A. Viswanathan [0], I. Wallace [1]
 - ii. *Absent*: O. Egharevba (*Excused*) [1], H. Hassan (*Excused*) [3], S. Iruvanti (*Excused*) [0], S. Lim (*Excused*) [0], S. Park (*Unexcused*) [2.75], C. Schott (*Excused*) [1.25]

II. Open Microphone

- a. No speakers at the open microphone.

III. Approval of the Minutes:

- a. March 15th Minutes
 - i. Joseph Anderson moved to amend D. Nyakaru's name to the "*Present*" list in Roll Call.
 1. D. Barbaria said that he will make the necessary changes at a later time.
 - ii. O. Corn moved to approve the March 15th minutes – **approved**.

IV. Announcements & Reports

- a. Potential PTF Update
 - i. J. Kim said that the Presidential Task Force has not gotten back to him.

V. CUTonight Funding Appeals

- a. CUTonight
 - i. J. Kim said that CUTonight had not come to the Assembly meeting.
 - ii. T. Ball asked if the process could begin with Slope Day funding.
 - iii. G. Kaufman said that it would be possible to write a resolution in that regard and pass it before the end of the meeting.
 - iv. G. Kaufman said that a lot has happened in regard to CUTonight within the past hour. He explained that CUTonight had decided to reverse course and grant funding to certain organizations previously denied, and asked

representatives from organizations who received no email explaining as such to speak.

1. A representative from Collective X said that they received partial funding.
 2. A representative from Señoritas Latinas Unidas Sorority, Inc. (henceforth SLU) said that they originally requested \$4000, but there was concern about the price per head, and they therefore offered an alternative, downsized budget.
 3. G. Kaufman recommended that the aforementioned organizations consider applying to the Student Assembly Special Projects Funding for funding these events. He also said that CUTonight very recently updated the relevant parties in regard to their decision to grant appeals. He added that the Student Assembly was not consulted in this regard.
 4. A representative of another organization began to speak.
 5. G. Kaufman recommended that this organization also apply for Special Projects Funding. He also said that since CUTonight has refused to show up to the meeting, he was unable to speak on how much money they are able to allocate, as there is only so much that he can do.
 6. A representative of La Asociación Latina (henceforth LAL) spoke.
 7. G. Kaufman said that he and the representative of LAL could speak after the meeting in regard to how to get Special Projects Funding.
- v. G. Kaufman said that, within the past hour, CUTonight has reversed all their decisions in regard to those organizations that were granted funding without consulting anyone on the Assembly. He also said that they elected not to come to the meeting, and that he shares the disappointment of members of organizations who applied to CUTonight for funding.
- vi. G. Kaufman explained that he found out last Monday that CUTonight denied funding to certain organizations who had previously been granted funding, and that even though they had stated multiple times in applications and in their charter that there would be hearings, that they denied requests for hearings each and every time.
- vii. G. Kaufman said that one organization reached out to the advisor of CUTonight and asked why they had not received funding, and received an extremely problematic message in response.
1. The organization in question is Black Students United, and the relevant text of the email read: “As it stands, ‘It’s a Black Affair’ is an event targeted towards a very specific subset of Cornell’s population (Black students)”.
- viii. G. Kaufman said that he reached out to the advisor and president of CUTonight and expressed his concerns, to which they responded that their interpretation of diversity is to appeal to all students generally, which G. Kaufman views as problematic. He added that the way CUTonight has operated in this regard falls short of the Student Assembly’s expectations, and that the Assembly will likely have to overturn CUTonight’s decisions. He further explained that representatives of CUTonight said that they would come to the meeting to contest this, which they were welcome to do.

- ix. G. Kaufman said that he expected to have a debate with CUTonight today, but that CUTonight said that they would not be in attendance only 30 minutes prior. He said that he has lost one-hundred percent of his faith in this organization being a good steward of the Student Activity Fee. He again asked for people from organizations denied funding to speak.
- x. Barbara Cruz of LAL said that she is angry that CUTonight has not come to the meeting. She added that she had heard about the email previously mentioned by G. Kaufman, and that it is problematic not to consider black and Latinx students as diverse.
- xi. B. Cruz said that there is more to diversity than race or ethnicity, including political thought, socioeconomic status, and gender. She added that LAL represents 12% of the student body, and that LAL's purpose of having their event is very important. She also said that CUTonight will not explain upfront why an organization was denied funding, and that the additional inquiry necessary is also a detrimental barrier.
- xii. B. Cruz said the nature of funding is also problematic, since there are only one or two funding cycles, and that the application discriminates against smaller organizations. She added that LAL is trying to be as inclusive as possible.
- xiii. Traci Celestin of Black Student United said that her organization had received a disturbing and discriminatory email from the commissioner of CUTonight. She then read the email.
 - 1. The email in question is the same one as referenced earlier by G. Kaufman and B. Cruz, and reads: "CUTonight above all else is an organizations dedicated to sponsoring late-night recreational/social events appealing to students of all backgrounds. As it stands, 'It's a Black Affair' is an event targeted towards a very specific subset of Cornell's population (Black students). While your event is open for all students on campus, we as an organization are looking to celebrate diversity in a way that is appealing for all students on campus".
- xiv. T. Celestin said that the event is inclusive and not just for black students, and asked why CUTonight has chosen not to come to these events so as to learn more about them. She added that it seemed as though the representatives of CUTonight deemed the event as a "black event" without actually reading BSU's proposal.
- xv. A representative of SLU said that she is sympathetic to the fact that CUTonight had a larger than normal influx of applications in this funding cycle, but also recognizes that every organization applying was entitled to a hearing. She added that the most alarming part of the basis on which CUTonight declined to fund SLU, citing an email from a commissioner of CUTonight. She also said that CUTonight is not suited to label women of color as not being "diverse enough".
 - 1. The email in question read as follows: "The event encourages black and Hispanic women to go to the event, but does not encourage members from all groups of people on Cornell's campus of every race and gender".
- xvi. O. Corn said that she was appalled at the comments with which she was presented. She added that she does not believe that CUTonight should be

receiving funding, also saying that it should possibly be put on hiatus, or its e-board members should be forced to step down.

- xvii. O. Corn said that she does not trust this organization with the money that the Assembly grants to them, since they have proved that they cannot use it effectively without being racist.
- xviii. V. Devatha read a statement from C. Schott.
 - 1. C. Schott said in his statement that refusing to fund organizations because they only celebrate a specific identity is problematic, and further marginalizes minorities. He also said that there are laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination, and outlined his proposals on how to proceed in this regard, which are as follows.
 - a. Charge CUTonight with an Appendix B violation.
 - b. Have CUTonight enter into a cooperative dialogue in order to prevent repetition of these events.
 - c. Incorporate diversity training into CUTonight.
- xix. R. Herz said that it is critical that CUTonight's funding be revoked, stating her disgust with the aforementioned emails, and recommended putting CUTonight on hiatus for at least the next two years, as well as creating an ad-hoc committee to deal with CUTonight's budget and funding organizations that originally asked CUTonight for funding.
- xx. T. Celestin commended the Appropriations Committee in regard to these events, and said that a long-term solution could be to train decision-makers on how to assess what form a proper funding hearing takes.
- xxi. R. Herz said that it would not be the Appropriations Committee that would deal with the money, and that it would be a new committee that is in place for two years. She added that there would be a great deal of oversight in regard to funding.
- xxii. A community member voiced his support in switching out membership of CUTonight. He also said that the Student Assembly is already perceived as bureaucratic, and that putting more on the Assembly's plate in this regard will not help anyone in the long term.
- xxiii. M. Peralta-Ochoa said that he is tired of Cornell not calling things as they are, saying that CUTonight's decisions were blatantly racist. He also said that he believes that the e-board must be held responsible, and that it is cowardly that they did not attend the Assembly meeting.
- xxiv. M. Valadez asked how it is possible for CUTonight to celebrate diversity while denying funds to these organizations, and said that the organization cannot be trusted to administer the funds that they have. She voiced her support for hearing from affected organizations to brainstorm a way to move forward.
- xxv. O. Din said that he does not trust CUTonight to fund organizations, and said that the Assembly should focus on what the actual tangible outcomes of this meeting should be. He voiced his support for seeing a new makeup of the CUTonight body.
- xxvi. G. Kaufman said that he believes that appeals should be examined holistically, and that the Assembly cannot force CUTonight to amend their charter without initiating an Appendix B violation. He also said that the ways of bringing about change would be either through the Appendix B violation

or to tell CUTonight that this will happen unless the organization changes its charter and allows the Assembly to appoint new members.

- xxvii. O. Corn asked whether or not the Assembly could clarify that those who are currently on could not be reappointed as a commissioner.
- xxviii. G. Kaufman said that such a thing would be doable if the Assembly were to amend their charter.
- xxix. S. Park asked whether or not the representatives of CUTonight explained why they did not come to the Assembly meeting.
- xxx. J. Kim said that the email sent to him contained only one line, saying “We will not come”.
- xxxi. A representative of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity (henceforth APA) said that the conversation about insight is very important, and said that the advisor is also not doing a good job.
- xxxii. G. Kaufman said that the advisor is new to campus, and that he does not know what level of oversight or defense she could provide.
- xxxiii. B. Cruz said that it is problematic that organizations can only appeal through discrimination.
- xxxiv. A community member said that these events that organizations request CUTonight to fund are typically reoccurring, and that reoccurring events should have a stable source of funding.
- xxxv. S. Park suggested requesting more funding, saying that the Assembly cannot give more than is requested.
- xxxvi. N. Hernandez said that the Assembly should focus on what they can do. She also said that it is imperative that CUTonight be restructured and that their e-board step down, that CUTonight’s members look up the definition of diversity, and that everyone involved go through training.
- xxxvii. N. Hernandez requested that organizations seeking funding reach out to G. Kaufman, saying that the Assembly can make sure these events happen, whether through Assembly funding or not.
- xxxviii. Travis Cabbell suggested coming up with a different mechanism outside of the Student Assembly so that organizations do not have to request the same event and apply for the same things every year.
- xxxix. A. Viswanathan said that he is concerned about the structure of how CUTonight makes their decisions, and asked why reoccurring events cannot be internalized into these organizations’ yearly funding.
 - xl. M. Valadez said that this is a structural issue.
 - xli. Brandt Thrower of LAL said that his organization received \$7000 for the entire year, which is roughly \$4.00 for each member of their constituency. He said that the event that they requested CUTonight to fund costs \$4000 alone, which stands as more than half of their yearly budget.
 - 1. LAL represents roughly 1600 students on campus.
 - xl.ii. A. Viswanathan clarified that he meant for organizations to not have to keep reapplying for the same events when he earlier referenced internalizing these costs.
 - xl.iii. D. Nyakaru said that community members who came in today have been working for the entire year to support their communities, and that the bigger issue at hand is the equitable distribution of funding. She added that the Assembly must create more permanent solutions.

- xliv. D. Barbaria said that byline funding is set until 2020, and that the numbers allocated to ALANA and other organizations are set. He also said that he does not believe that the Assembly has the ability to be the primary manager of these funds, and that they do not have the size to have what would essentially be multiple appropriations committees.
- xlv. D. Barbaria said that he is fine with the Assembly removing CUTonight's funding and using it for special projects funding, but that they also must set up a better organization that works outside of the Student Assembly.
- xlvi. J. Kim asked for O. Corn to clarify her proposal.
- xlvii. O. Corn said that it would essentially be CUTonight, the goings-on of which would be constantly monitored by the Student Assembly.
- xlvi. D. Barbaria said that there were oversight mechanisms in CUTonight's charter, and that the issue at hand is the use of existing rules, not remaking them.
- xlix. A community member asked whether or not this issue only came up last week.
 - 1. G. Kaufman said that he was not included in any prior correspondence, and was not aware that he was expected to be part of this process.
 - li. R. Cornell said that this problem should not have even arose, and echoed the sentiments raised earlier by D. Nyakaru. She added that this cannot happen again, and that CUTonight must be completely restructured and reorganized. She also said that CUTonight should not be qualifying an event as diverse, and that diversity *of* events is also important.
 - lii. Kelly Song of the Cornell Ballroom Club said that she spoke to the advisor of CUTonight, who said that she reached out to the Student Assembly prior to their initial funding decisions. She asked if this was true and how proactive the SA would be in these decisions.
 - liii. G. Kaufman said that he received no such email.
- liv. D. Engelson said that the bigger issue at hand is to keep byline organizations more accountable, and CUTonight's absence speaks louder than anything they could have said had they come to the meeting. He also said that taking away funding will not change the bigger issue, and that he is in favor of putting diversity training in place.
- lv. Shivani Parikh said that it is not right that the organization leaders present had to come in and waste two hours of their time since CUTonight did not come to the meeting. She added that it is not right that the leader of any financial committee be appointed by the chair, since it would mean that students of color are at the mercy of the political prejudices of that chair, especially considering the lack of women, students of color, and women of color on the Assembly body.
- lvi. G. Kaufman asked if she would like for there to be a direct election for CUTonight commissioners.
 - 1. S. Parikh replied in the affirmative, saying that this is especially important considering that CUTonight receives \$120,000 in budget.
 - 2. V. Devatha said that he is concerned that organizations cannot appeal in cases of poor funding decisions, and that there are numerous problems with CUTonight's charter and its structure. He added that he personally does not believe that replacing the e-board

of CUTonight will be enough, and that the organization should be eliminated and replaced with a better funding structure to create a more diverse commissioner system. He also said that the Student Assembly must do a more thorough review of organizations' charters.

- lvii. G. Park asked whether the Assembly has any jurisdiction to hold CUTonight accountable to now hold appeals for every organization that applied for funding.
- lviii. There was a reply in the affirmative.
- lix. G. Park said that it takes an excessive amount of time to fill out the application for funding from CUTonight.
- lx. A. Viswanathan said that CUTonight has three things included in their Appendix B, and that since one of them was to have hearings for applying organizations, and that no hearings were held, that the Assembly should have every right to eliminate CUTonight.
- lxi. O. Din said that he has five action items to list.
 - 1. Change the leadership of CUTonight.
 - 2. Make the Student Assembly e-board position on CUTonight be open to any Assembly member, not just the Vice President of Finance.
 - 3. Change CUTonight's internal appeals process.
 - 4. Create an amalgam of events as one byline organization to ensure each event gets long-term funding.
 - 5. Keep discussion as open as possible about an Appendix B resolution, since the Assembly has a habit to not do so in regard to resolutions.
- lxii. V. Devatha inquired about the feasibility of O. Din's fifth action item.
- lxiii. G. Kaufman said that it was feasible through byline funding.
- lxiv. M. Valadez asked whether this would create a completely new organization.
- lxv. G. Kaufman said that he did not necessarily endorse this idea, but simply commented on its feasibility.
- lxvi. M. Valadez said that 1500 signatures are necessary for a completely new organization to get on byline funding.
- lxvii. V. Devatha asked whether or not members would be willing to create a ad-hoc committee on the issue at hand.
- lxviii. There were replies in the affirmative.
- lxix. S. Park said that it is imperative that the Assembly and CUTonight have a conversation at some point, and that the Assembly should hear what they have to say before taking certain suggested actions.
- lxx. G. Kaufman said that they made known what they wanted to say by not coming to the meeting.
- lxxi. S. Park said that it is not optional for the Assembly to talk to CUTonight before banning the organization.
- lxxii. G. Kaufman moved to have the Student Assembly formally condemn the CUTonight Funding Commission for the handling of the fourth cycle funding requests.
- lxxiii. R. Herz asked what condemning the organization would actually do.
- lxxiv. G. Kaufman said that it would be a formal statement sent to CUTonight.
- lxxv. R. Herz asked whether there would be further action in the future in this regard if the Assembly elects to condemn CUTonight.

- lxxvi. G. Kaufman replied in the affirmative.
- lxxvii. Motion to formally condemn CUTonight in regard to their handling of the fourth cycle funding requests – approved 19-0-1.

VI. Business of the Day:

- a. Resolution 38: Reinstating Statement Policy
 - i. N. Hernandez said that this is the third week that this resolution has been on the agenda and that Dr. Joseph Burke still has not come to the meeting, and said that she would be fine with discussion on the resolution without his presence if other members were as well.
 - ii. D. Barbaria asked if there was anything time-sensitive in the resolution.
 - iii. N. Hernandez replied in the negative.
 - iv. There was a motion to table – tabled unanimously.
- b. D. Barbaria said that G. Kaufman has resigned from the Trustee Nominating Committee, and that there is now therefore a vacancy that will be filled via executive session.

VII. Adjournment

- a. J. Kim adjourned the meeting at 6:17 pm.

VIII. Executive Session

Respectfully Submitted,
John Hannan,
Clerk of the Assembly