



Cornell University Student Assembly

Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, August 23, 2018 Meeting
4:46pm-6:21pm in Willard Straight Hall: Memorial Room

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. V. Devatha called the meeting to order at 4:46 pm.
- b. Roll Call:
 - i. *Present at Roll Call:* J. Anderson [0], D. Barbaria [0], V. Devatha [0], O. Din [0], J. Dominguez [0], O. Egharevba [0], A. Hailu [0], S. Harshvardhan [0], N. Hernandez [0], S. Iruvanti [0], K. Kebbeh [0], S. Lim [0], N. Matolka [0], D. Nyakaru [0], M. Peralta-Ochoa [0], E. Shapiro [0], M. Shovik [0], J. Sim [0], F. Uribe-Rheinbolt [0], I. Wallace [0], B. Weintraub [0]
 - ii. *Absent:* A. Jain [0]

II. President Pollack and VP Lombardi

- a. V. Devatha said that he would entertain a motion to amend the agenda such that Open Microphone would take place following President Pollack and VP Lombardi's presentation, as well as to conduct the Oath of Office.
- b. There was a motion to move Open Microphone to follow President Pollack's presentation, and to conduct the Oath of Office before the Open Microphone – approved.
- c. President Martha Pollack said that this past summer was a busy time on the Cornell campus, and that she wanted to give the Student Assembly updates in this regard.
 - i. M. Pollack said that she is currently sorting through the reports from the Presidential Task Force (henceforth PTF) and is considering courses of action. She added that an announcement will be released within the next few weeks that would go through the analysis and give recommendations. She also mentioned that this announcement would direct people to a website regarding the progress of the PTF.
 - ii. M. Pollack said that every single new freshman has been involved in an Intergroup Dialogue Program (henceforth IDP), and that there is validated evidence that those people who go through such a program are better able to communicate. She added that the IDP will be tweaked as needed, and that there is no single solution for the issues the IDP is trying to address but that this program is a big step.
 - iii. M. Pollack addressed comments that there is a desire for more support for professors and TAs to teach in a multicultural classroom.
 - iv. M. Pollack said that the former Psi Upsilon fraternity house has been converted into a Living and Learning Center focused on equity.

- v. M. Pollack said that new staff were introduced in the office of the Dean of Students, as well as new staff in the LGBTQ Support Center and the Asian & Asian American Center.
- vi. M. Pollack said that Cornell must work as a campus to make clear what its values are and what it ascribes to.
- d. J. Anderson said that, in an email sent earlier that morning, M. Pollack noted that one of Cornell's civic responsibilities is to protect freedom of speech. He added that such a commitment can lead to the protection of hate speech and harassment, and asked how this would be dealt with.
- e. M. Pollack said that she agreed with J. Anderson that there is a tension between free speech and hate speech, but that the issue is not black and white. She added that the subcommittee working on this issue made sensible recommendations that allow the university to protect free speech where people can debate ideas and avoid harassment and threatening behavior.
- f. D. Barbaria said that SA Resolution 1 is a resolution made to pass last semester's Appendix B resolution again, and that everything that M. Pollack returned or rejected has been removed from Appendix B. He added that he hopes M. Pollack will accept these changes as soon as possible so that byline organizations can have their guidelines.
- g. M. Pollack asked for clarification as to what Appendix B is.
- h. D. Barbaria said that Appendix B is the text that regulates byline organizations and how they are allowed to use the money they receive from the Student Activity Fee. He also said that M. Pollack returned or rejected four specific amendments to Appendix B, and because of the way the resolution was written, the entire resolution was rejected.
- i. M. Pollack said that she cannot categorically say yes to the new resolution, but that if the things she found problematic were in fact pulled out, then she would be able to. She added that she sometimes feels that the Assembly could be much more efficient if there were to be conversations between her office and the Assembly when thinking about resolutions such as this one.
- j. D. Barbaria said that he hopes to collaborate on the language of the returned portions of Appendix B so that they can be reincluded.
- k. O. Egharevba asked how M. Pollack plans to deal with the rapid influx of students trying to enter the Computer Science (henceforth CS) major. He added that he has seen students have a tough time with course pre-enrollment and professors having to change rooms to allow for a higher number of students. He also said that he is a CS major, and that he knows that it is not possible to enter certain courses in the major unless you're affiliated with the major.
- l. M. Pollack said that O. Egharevba's question was an important one, and it is a difficult problem on not only this but on other university campuses. She added that the provost has given the CS department the authority to hire as many faculty members as possible, but a similar clearance has been given to other CS departments at other universities, as well as at tech companies. She also said that she is sympathetic to the problem, but is unable to provide a simple solution to the problem.
- m. O. Egharevba said that he is aware that some schools do impose a cap on the number of students that can be in certain majors.

- n. M. Pollack said that some universities close the cap and then admit to the major based on GPA, which disincentivizes students from trying interesting courses that the administration would like students to take. She added that it may get to a point where such a course of action is the only one possible, but that it is certainly not an optimal choice.
- o. N. Hernandez said that she had a question regarding IDP, and said that she had heard informal comments from people involved in the discussions that the burden was placed on students from marginalized groups. She asked if this would be considered the gold standard for IDPs moving forward.
- p. M. Pollack said that the staff is cognizant of this issue, and this year's incarnation of the IDPs was an experiment to start to build something. She added that she will receive feedback and the program will be tweaked as needed.
- q. O. Din deferred to M. Peralta-Ochoa.
- r. M. Peralta-Ochoa referenced earlier comments made by M. Pollack regarding an increased presence of Cornell in New York City, and asked about Cornell in NYC's partnership with the Israeli organization Technion.
- s. M. Pollack said that the administration feels strongly that they should partner with faculty from around the world, and that they have a commitment to working with Technion.
- t. J. Anderson said that the hiring of three new CAPS therapists does not address the root problem of mental health on campus. He added that there is a lot of academic rigor and unforgiving faculty at Cornell, and asked why the university is not touching on the real problem, being that the work is too demanding and is therefore the result of the faculty and not the students.
- u. M. Pollack said that she has found that a great number of faculty are concerned with the state of mental health on campus in her conversations with them.
- v. Ryan Lombardi said that the administration would like to improve the climate on campus, especially in the classroom, and that some deans in the college have really stepped forward and made strides in this regard. He added that he knows that many faculty members are being told to acknowledge the stresses and issues of students.
- w. M. Pollack said that there is a monthly faculty lunch occurring soon that she will use to gain a sense of the opinions of other faculty members in this regard.
- x. A reporter from the Cornell Daily Sun asked whether or not there was a timeline yet for the LGBTQ+ and Asian/Asian-American program houses.
- y. R. Lombardi said that he accepted the proposals of the group from the Student Assembly regarding the LGBTQ+ house, and that the current aim is to have that program house open in the fall of 2019. He added that he has not yet received formal proposals regarding the Asian/Asian-American program house and therefore does not have a timeline for it, but that he is looking forward to hearing the proposals.
- z. B. Weintraub said that he has friends who are concerned with the athletic situation on campus being worsened in the near future, since Appel Fields and other North Campus athletic areas being removed to make way for the increased housing on North Campus.
- aa. R. Lombardi said that he would love to come back and discuss this matter further, and that the administration is very cognizant of taking away these fields. He added that those fields remaining will be updated (including but not limited to turfing),

- policies for Jessup Field will be updated, and that they are looking at opportunities on Central Campus for expanding athletic opportunities.
- bb. M. Pollack thanked the Assembly for giving their time.

III. Oath of Office

- a. The Oath of Office was conducted at 5:18 pm.

IV. Open Microphone

- a. No speakers at the open microphone.

V. Announcements and Reports

- a. J. Anderson said that SA Orientation will be on Saturday, September 8th, and that it is expected and mandatory that all members of the Assembly attend. He added that if anyone is unable to attend, he will sit down with them one-on-one to discuss what they missed.
- b. J. Anderson said that the North Campus expansion plan is being put into the works, and that the Residential Student Congress is having discussions in this regard.

VI. Business of the Day II

- a. Resolution 1: Approving Appendix B for the 2018-2020 Byline Cycle
- i. D. Barbaria said that returning members of the SA will find nothing new with this resolution, since it is the same one as from the previous semester. He added that the problem was that, since the whole resolution was a single “Be it therefore resolved,” clause, and some provisions of Appendix B were either returned or rejected, the whole resolution was rejected. He also said that this resolution is all the amendments passed by the previous SA without the rejected or returned clauses. He added that he will soon have revised versions of the returned clauses, but that this resolution must be approved as soon as possible.
 - ii. D. Nyakaru asked what was returned and revoked.
 - iii. D. Barbaria said that one rejected outright was regarding athletics, specifically that Appendix B would have set some guidelines regarding the use of funding that M. Pollack did not believe was in the purview of the Assembly. He added that another was that none of the money from the SAF could be used for salaries and wages, and M. Pollack did not agree with the limiting of organizations’ use of money in this regard.
 - iv. V. Devatha said that he forwarded M. Pollack’s response to the resolution to the rest of the Assembly.
 - v. Motion to vote on Resolution 1 – approved 21-0-1.

VII. New Business & Business of the Day II

- a. Resolution 2: Approval of the 2018-2019 Standing Rules
- i. J. Anderson said that this resolution is the approval of the standing rules that must be approved at the start of each semester. He added that the only changes are that it was made easier to contact J. Sim prior to meetings, and that everything regarding absences is a 24-hour advance email to J. Sim rather than the myriad rules set prior.

- ii. O. Din said that he knows that there are special rules in addition to the standing rules, and whether the two could be combined.
 - iii. J. Anderson said that the special rules are rare instances that come up far less than the standing rules. He added that each member of the Assembly gets three absences.
 - iv. There was a motion to move Resolution 2 to Business of the Day – approved by 2/3rds majority.
 - v. J. Sim moved to amend the resolution such that Line 49 of the standing rules would read “Operations,” and that line 58 of the standing rules would read “Rule 7” – amended.
 - vi. Motion to vote on Resolution 2 – approved 21-0-1.
- b. Resolution 3: Approval of the 2018-2019 Student Assembly Budget
- i. D. Barbaria said that this resolution is required by the standing rules, in that the Assembly must pass a budget by the second week of the semester. He added that the budget has historically been guidelines rather than absolute tenets, and that there was originally an intention to zero the Student Assembly last semester, but it was later decided that the Assembly would be funded \$0.87 per student. He also said that the SA should make sure to pass a resolution to ensure this if it is still the intention.
 - ii. D. Barbaria said that the SA currently has a \$93,000 surplus, and that he allocated \$32,000 of this to be used for the budget, committees, administrative costs, and the like, leaving roughly \$60,000 as a reserve. He said that having a reserve is new and it likely would not be touched. He added that if anyone has any amendments to the resolution, they can be discussed over email at a later time.
 - iii. B. Weintraub asked if the SA is comfortable reducing its reserves to the extent that it is, and if the SA typically has a reserve.
 - iv. D. Barbaria said that the SA has always had some surplus, and that surplus is so large right now because of work done by the SA two years ago. He added that the current plan is to go past 2020 with a smaller surplus.
 - v. V. Devatha said that he would entertain a motion to move Resolution 3 to Business of the Day.
 - vi. Motion to move Resolution 3 to Business of the Day – approved by a 2/3rds majority.
 - vii. Motion to vote on Resolution 3 – approved 21-0-1.
- c. Resolution 4: Amending the Student Assembly Bylaws for Clarity, Efficiency, and Executive Committee Structure
- i. J. Anderson said that this resolution cannot be passed today, but it can be presented. He added that this resolution proposes changes to the rules of the Tri-Council Representative due to a mismatch of how that position is elected versus how SA positions are elected, as well as creating a Vice President of Infrastructure role on the Executive Committee (henceforth Exec).
 - ii. D. Barbaria said that he was initially skeptical of creating a VP Infrastructure role, but that in looking at the Assembly over the past few years, the Student Assembly Infrastructure Fund Committee (henceforth SAIFC) has always in some ways been a failure since it did not have the prestige of other committees, and that making the chair a VP gives the notion that the

- committee is something more. He added that this is one small change that could make the committee successful now and moving into the future.
- iii. V. Devatha said that, as Executive Vice President, J. Anderson needs some sort of support system that reports directly to him, and that he will bring amendments next week in this regard.
 - iv. D. Nyakaru asked a clarifying question.
 - v. B. Weintraub asked if the people being appointed to offices are necessarily SA members.
 - vi. V. Devatha replied in the negative, saying that this has been done on an informal level in the past, but it will now be a formal process, giving increased access to the Assemblies.
 - vii. D. Barbaria said that he will be coming forward with an amendment next week, and that he will speak with SAFC to create an Appropriations Committee subcommittee that would deal with registration of organizations to Orgsync.
 - viii. Tirenolu Onabajo asked if there is a cap on returning members to committees.
 - ix. D. Barbaria said that, historically, no committee has had a cap with the exception of a few such as Exec, and that if there is someone who is approved that the outgoing chair, as well as the outgoing and incoming Internal Operations chairs believe should stay on, then they should. He added that he does not see excessive quantity as being a problem in the future, but if it is, then it would be a good problem to have.
 - x. T. Onabajo said that she acknowledges that D. Barbaria is speaking from experience, but she thinks that since this is a rulebook, the proponents of this resolution should be planning for the future. She added that it would be good to have a number set in place as a cap that would not take away from the autonomy of the new chair.
 - xi. D. Barbaria said that including the new chair in this regard might be better than adding a cap.
 - xii. O. Din had a further comment.
 - xiii. J. Sim expressed concern regarding the creation of a VP Infrastructure, saying that there is the aim to amend for clarity and efficiency, and that he thinks Exec should be a different part. He added that it would be better if the creation of this position were part of a different resolution, and that he thinks there is a difference between the existing roles of VPs on Exec, and that the Assembly needs to discuss this issue more in-depth.
 - xiv. J. Anderson said to separate the creation of this role into a different resolution would be wasting paper, but that J. Sim could call to divide the question next week. He added that the VP Infrastructure would be doing the same amount of work as the other VP positions on Exec, and that the SAIFC oversees a large sum of money that requires a lot of coordination with other organizations.
 - xv. D. Barbaria said that he is okay with the creation of a new VP position because it makes it easier to achieve quorum for Exec, in that four members must be present, but now out of seven instead of six.
 - xvi. V. Devatha **separated the discussion**, and asked if anyone had any further comments regarding the creation of a VP Infrastructure role.

- xvii. I. Wallace said that he believes this position is a good idea because it is a structural addition to the SA which says that the SA cares about the environment and infrastructure. He added that no one on the SA will be present in 2030 when the administration's goal of carbon neutrality is projected to be reached.
- xviii. J. Dominguez said that he shares J. Sim's concerns and thinks there should be more discussion regarding a VP Infrastructure position, and asked whether the SAIFC would be considered a spending arm.
- xix. D. Barbaria said that it is, but with money from endowment, rather than from the SAF.
- xx. J. Dominguez said that, when he thinks of Exec, he thinks of the branches of what SA structure should be, and that when he thinks of a spending arm, he thinks of the VP Finance position. He also said that he does not believe that this position works on Exec, and would give it two spending branches.
- xxi. J. Anderson said that VP Finance and VP Infrastructure have fundamentally different roles and functions, and that the SA needs to find ways to positively impact students in different ways, and show that the Assembly can actually do things that improve students' lives.
- xxii. D. Barbaria said that he does not disagree philosophically with J. Dominguez's point, but that the areas in question are two fundamentally different areas.
- xxiii. J. Sim outlined his concerns in regard to how the role would overlap with other present roles.
- xxiv. J. Anderson said that one of these concerns is the result of an error that was yet to be remedied.
- xxv. O. Din moved to have a strawpoll to gauge whether people want this position.
1. D. Barbaria dissented, saying that this strawpoll might affect how people think other people are thinking.
 2. Motion to have a strawpoll – approved with a majority of 13.
- xxvi. The strawpoll was conducted, with 11 votes of "Yes," 7 votes of "No," and 4 votes of "Unsure" as to the creation of a VP Infrastructure position.
- xxvii. D. Barbaria said that all changes to bylaws require a 2/3rds majority, and that the nays would have the victory at this moment.
- xxviii. J. Anderson said that he would be willing to speak offline with people in regard to this position.
- xxix. V. Devatha asked what J. Anderson feels makes this a more relevant and necessary member of Exec than the chair of a committee such as the Financial Aid Review Committee.
- xxx. J. Anderson said that there are a couple of differences. He said that SAIFC oversees a large sum of money, and that FARC can oversee itself and has the Financial Aid Committee to fall back on, whereas SAIFC has no staff member for guidance. He added that M. Pollack has plans for the future of this campus, and that this position will ultimately, internally and externally, take this role more seriously, and that there is not a lot of institutionalized support for this role.
- xxxi. I. Wallace said that SAIFC can be such a force for good on this campus and does not receive the love that it deserves.

- xxxii. F. Uribe-Rheinbolt said that he agrees that the SA should prioritize infrastructure and the Assembly's ability to shape campus for the future, but that he is concerned as to why this position would look so different from all the other Exec positions. He added that the other positions on Exec seem to all have to do with how the Student Assembly runs, and whether this position is the best way to prioritize infrastructure.
- xxxiii. O. Egharevba said that he agrees that infrastructure should get the prominence that it deserves, but that he is wondering what makes this more important than other committees that don't get Exec positions.
- xxxiv. J. Anderson said that infrastructure makes sense for this position because it has a massive surplus to deal with, as well as being a way for the SA to partner with Cornell to help push students forward in the best way possible. He also said that this is the most permanent way for the Assembly to make positive change on this campus. He asked F. Uribe-Rheinbolt to clarify his question.
- xxxv. F. Uribe-Rheinbolt obliged.
- xxxvi. J. Anderson said that there are things within the purview of a lot of Exec positions that falls off the radar sometimes, and that this permanent seat allows the proposed changes to be realized. He added, as an example, that the VP Finance sits on SAIFC, but that last year's VP Finance went to only two SAIFC meetings. He also said that it is important to show students that the SA cares, and that it may not look substantial in writing, but the VP Infrastructure's responsibilities are very broad in practice.
- xxxvii. D. Barbaria said that it is desirable for SAIFC to be effective and for its chair to have the same access and prestige that the other VP positions have.
- xxxviii. There was a motion to table this discussion – **tabled** with a majority.
- xxxix. There was a motion to table the resolution.
 - 1. There was dissent.
 - 2. The motion to table was **withdrawn**.
- xl. Shivani Parikh said that Line 470 does not reflect an understanding of the listed positions, that the Einaudi Center is an academic organization, and that many of the administrative items present must be changed.
- xli. N. Hernandez said that the issues can be removed.
- xlii. J. Anderson added that since a better diversity portfolio is being built, the Assembly can go back and work on things such as this.
- xliii. S. Lim proposed an amendment.
- xliv. D. Barbaria said that the resolution cannot be amended this week, and that the First Generation Students' Liaison should definitely be listed in the Diversity Committee but was not added.
- xlv. There was a motion to table the resolution – **tabled**.

VIII. Adjournment

- a. V. Devatha adjourned the meeting at 6:21 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
John Hannan
 Clerk of the Assembly