Cornell University
Student Assembly

Cornell University Student Assembly
Minutes of the Thursday, September 13, 2018 Meeting
4:49pm-6:30pm in Willard Straight Hall Memorial Room

I. Call to Order & Roll Call
a. V. Devatha called the meeting to order at 4:47 pm.
b. Roll Call:
   i. *Present*: 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], A. Jain [0], K. Kebbeh [0], S. Lim [0], N. Matolka [0], D. Nyakaru [0], G. Park [0], M. Peralta-Ochoa [0.5], E. Shapiro [0], M. Shovik [0], J. Sim [0], F. Uribe-Rheinbolt [0], I. Wallace [0], B. Weintraub [0]
   ii. *Absent*: None.

II. Approval of the Minutes
a. Motion to approve the September 6th minutes – approved.

III. Announcements and Reports I
a. Edem Dzodzomenyo said that the parliamentary procedure quiz for SA members is being moved to next week.
b. V. Devatha said that the Open Microphone would be moved such that it takes place following the presentation from Mary Beth Grant and Joe Scaffido.

IV. Presentation from Mary Beth Grant and Joe Scaffido
a. Mary Beth Grant introduced herself, and said that she is here today to talk about the partnership that the Office of the Dean of Students and the Assembly has, and how that relationship can be improved. She added that her office appreciates the help of students in making sure they are thinking things through carefully. She also explained the function of the EMPT and the ERF form.
b. O. Din said that many students have deep concerns about the way certain things regarding security at events, and that many students are wondering what the need of the policy is. He added that many events have been run for years without police presence, and that police presence would change the atmosphere of many events.
c. M. Grant said that these are processes, not policies, and that it is not a new process but one that there seems to have been a gap in the knowledge of. She added that there have been many events with and without police presence in previous years, and that this will not change, but it ensures that all members of the EMPT have a chance to discuss the issue. She also said that these processes have existed for years, and that she doesn't expect them to change.

d. O. Din said that the former threshold of expected attendees to have to send an ERF form was over 200, and that number has now been reduced to over 50. He asked, since CUPD can say no to certain events through the ERF, if the CUPD would be suddenly able to shut down events.

e. M. Grant said that she would be sure to take this feedback back, and that every now and again an event cannot be approved, but that such an instance is rare since everyone on the EMPT is for the success of students.

f. N. Hernandez referenced M. Grant's earlier comments regarding an email, and said that many people she had spoken to did not receive an email. She asked how students were picked to receive the email, and why it was sent during finals week when students would be less likely to participate in a forum.
   i. The aforementioned email was, according to M. Grant, sent to 10,000 students detailing proposed changes and inviting them to a forum for feedback.

g. M. Grant said that the email was sent via Orgsync, and that there were three forums in the weeks following the email being sent. She added that the EMPT wanted to make sure that they knew what they wanted to communicate prior to communicating, and that those who attended the forums know that they were trying to gather more information. She also said that they tried to schedule the information sessions such that the times did not conflict with finals.

h. Community member Cristian Gonzales said that, to him, the crux of the problem is how events are classified as "controversial", and the lack of student input in this regard. He added that many student groups cannot afford the requisite security fees, and asked how an event is determined as controversial.

i. M. Grant said that the EMPT is trying to elaborate more on what could be considered controversial, and that all safety implications must be considered. She added that it's very important to the university that they are not shying away from controversial issues or from any topic, and that they want to make sure that students engaging in different viewpoints are heard, and that everyone involved is safe.

j. Dean of Students Vijay Pendakur said that this is a key issue for a lot of people in the room, including himself, and that the EMPT process is not to address subject matter, but to manage crowd safety and fire safety. He added that a person filing for an event regarding Palestine wouldn't automatically get flagged, but an event with 500 or more expected attendees and a speaker talking about controversial things, then that event would flag, as it always would have.

k. Ashwin Viswanathan asked what impact M. Grant thinks this will have on the student voice. He said that this introduces a convoluted system where a student has to appeal to nonstudents and possibly pay from their own organization's funds for security. He also asked what the decision-making process was in this regard, as opposed to having Cornell as a whole fund it.

l. M. Grant said that the decision as to who pays for security is an upper-level decision, and is not hers to make. She added that the hope is that the student voice would be amplified because they have events that are carefully planned and successful.

m. A. Viswanathan asked what the purpose of this is if students cannot always put on the events that they want to.

n. M. Grant said that this is part of the reason why they wanted to get the communication out so that people would be able to make choices regarding the events they want to have, and that there are lots of ways to have different

conversations. She added that there is sometimes a big cost to having a person come to Cornell, but there can also be a conversation over Zoom that is engaging and not as costly, and that she encourages students' ingenuity to make sure their voices are still being heard.

o. A representative of the Cornell Daily Sun asked if there was any discussion of the university chipping in for security. He also asked if the lawsuit resulting from the 2016 stabbing of Anthony Nazaire on Cornell's campus factored into the decision to streamline the registration process.

p. M. Grant said that there were very few changes to the process, and that one is that $1000 will be given by the university when there are unexpected security costs. She added that, in regard to the tragedy of 2016, the safety of Cornell students is always paramount and that it wasn't in specific relation to anything.

q. D. Barbaria said that he wanted to start by making sure that everyone who has seen the security grid knows what is being changed. He added that a lot of organizations had not been following this process which has been in place for many years, and that it could come to pass that the SAF as voted on previously cannot cover the increased security costs. He asked that M. Grant and J. Scaffido meet with the heads of SAFC and other byline organizations in the future for better communication.

r. M. Grant thanked D. Barbaria for encouraging organizations to send in the ERF since it helps the EMPT, and thanked him for his suggestions.

s. Community member Brendan Dodd said that the speaker fee policy is ridiculous, and that by putting a price tag on free speech, Cornell shows no interest in being held to the standards that they claim to espouse. He added that this new policy means that organizations such as Cornell Republicans and Cornell Political Union might have to close events to the public or cancel them entirely to avoid security fees. He also said that organizations such as those aforementioned want to invite speakers, meaning that its members must dig into the organization or even personal funds, which hurts students, especially low-income students, the most. He asked what the university will do to ensure that security fees are avoidable. He also said that security fees would automatically increase if there is a protest at the event, and how students could avoid others from using a "hecklers' veto" to prevent events from happening.

t. M. Grant asked B. Dodd to clarify his questions.

u. B. Dodd obliged.

v. M. Grant said that B. Dodd's second question is a different process that is in place, which she would be happy to speak with him about offline. She also said that students already engage in ways to leverage their money to afford bigger events than they would otherwise, such as partnerships between groups, organizations, departments, and the like. She added that the role for the EMPT has been to make sure that there is a process to plan all events, but trying to make sure that there is event planning, and that the EMPT does not get involved in topics or financial aspects.

w. Michael Jeong asked what measures the EMPT has of tracking down events on campus, and to what extent they will be tracking them down, since it was said earlier that many events should have submitted ERF forms but did not. He also asked to what extent students should be in fear of getting shut down because they were unaware of this reason to pay a fee. He said that a week ago, all 563 organizations who submitted a budget to SAFC had a different cost on the table than there is now,

and that costs decreased. He asked that if the EMPT is going to change information on the website without warning or telling anyone, then how are students meant to trust the EMPT to make sure student organizations are able to pay costs, even after all of them budget for different costs.

      i.   M. Jeong is the co-chair of SAFC.

x. M. Grant said that the EMPT found an error in their estimated costs and corrected it. She also said that M. Jeong's question regarding the tracking down of events is coming from a perspective that is the opposite of what the EMPT is coming from, and that they want to make sure everyone is working together to make sure that everyone knows what the processes are, and that she does not expect people to be defiant.

y. M. Jeong said that he thinks M. Grant completely missed the point, and that organizations do not feel as positive as M. Grant because of the blurred lines surrounding controversial issues. He asked how organizations are meant to know if they need the money instead of sitting in fear about getting cancelled. He added that it doesn't seem like the EMPT is promising students anything, and organizations take it as sitting in fear about events getting shut down, and he asked what will be done about that.

z. M. Grant said that she thinks students just heard a big promise from V. Pendakur already that some events will be at zero cost this year so that people can start discussing these events and needs now.

aa. M. Jeong said that if the EMPT website is changing because of its mistakes when all 563 organizations submitting budgets factored the old costs into their SAFC funding, there is no way for he and his co-chair to do anything about it. He asked how the EMPT can be trusted when these changes are made and no one is notified about them.

bb. M. Grant said that she does not believe that this will be the first or last mistake she has ever made.

cc. M. Jeong asked what the EMPT will do for organizations that budgeted for the previous amounts, since all of the affected organizations are going to come to SAFC, who will have to cover for the EMPT's mistake.

dd. M. Grant asked to speak about this offline.

ee. D. Barbaria said that it is ridiculous that the co-chairs of SAFC were not given any information in this regard, and that al organizations should have exact numbers.

ff. A community member said that an important issue that hasn't been brought up is security presence at these events, and that the problem is that a lot are being attended by students of color, who have the right to feel unsafe around police, and asked how students can know the administration did not implement this to silence students on campus.

gg. M. Grant said that the depths of the complexities of the relationships between people of color and police should not be minimized, and that this is not an attempt to silence people of color on this campus, but a way to make sure that all events are safe.

hh. Community member Zelia Gonzales said that she doesn't think anyone here will disagree that students want safe events, but that their problem is that the EMPT's definition of safe is different from students' definition, and that calling it safe is a copout. She added that the problem is funding, which disproportionately affects students of color and low-income students. She also said that her organization is

budgeted at $1000, and that security fees will take a fourth of this budget, and that the organization is held back by financial burdens. She added that they are limiting the events that her organization wants to do, and that it may have been unfair to put you in here today because you clearly do not have all the answers, and that this looks like a copout by the administration.

ii. V. Pendakur said that he appreciates Z. Gonzales' point, and that he would love to elevate these concerns to the president's office, and that this meta-issue cannot be solved with the people in this room.

jj. Z. Gonzales said that this must be postponed until this question is figured out, and that it is not fair that this meta-issue is still a problem now.

kk. V. Pendakur said that part of the idea of freezing the three cells of the security grid is that those areas are the real sticking point, whereas the other columns involve costs which had been going on for years.

ll. Z. Gonzales asked that the freeze go on for longer then, and that a semester is not enough. She asked that the freeze continue until the problems are figured out.

mm. V. Pendakur said that he agreed, and that the aforementioned areas would be frozen until the issues are figured out.

nn. E. Shapiro said that he is on the executive board of the Cornell University Program Board (henceforth CUPB), and that security is necessary at all of their events. He added that last semester, their costs were $480 for an elevated security event at Bailey Hall, and such an event's security now costs $1,344. He asked why this change was made and where this new cost comes from.

oo. M. Grant said that the event in question might have been Type A, rather than Type B.

pp. E. Shapiro replied in the negative, saying that the event hosted Dan Harmon, who is a high-profle figure.

    i. Dan Harmon is the creator of the television show *Community* and co-creator of the television show *Rick and Morty*.

qq. J. Scaffido said that a Type B event implies additional security for the actual artist in addition to that provided by CUPD.

rr. A community member asked why a controversial event would be a criterion for an event to get flagged if content is not the main reason that events historically get flagged. She also asked whether or not it would be best for streamlining if only criteria that were easily quantified were included.

ss. A representative from the Cornell Daily Sun asked how the EMPT will be evaluating needs and concerns of students since there are no students on the EMPT.

tt. M. Grant said that for each event, students are involved in the discussion because students are the event planners, and that if there were a student who was planning an event with a particular focus, that student will likely know the needs of their community. She added that the EMPT is not trying to exclude students, and that anyone is welcome at the EMPT meetings, but that the students who are most interested and valuable to planning a given event are already part of the process.

uu. G. Park said that the EMPT and students clearly have different ideas about what constitutes a controversial event, and asked how it can be assured that the definition is clear for everyone applying and evaluating, and how transparency can be guaranteed.

vv. M. Grant said that the term was not defined in the past, and that the EMPT has made an attempt to define it on the website. She added that it is not regarding the content of the event, but is around the process.

ww. G. Park asked if there has been any student involvement in the process about defining controversial.

xx. M. Grant said that there has not been, but that student input is welcome.

yy. G. Park said that student input has obviously been minimal, and asked what ideas the EMPT has for increasing student involvement and letting students know when changes are being made.

zz. M. Grant said that she has been struck by the gaps in communication, and that V. Pendakur said that he wants to have student involvement around the whole process. She added that they are open to other ideas as well.

aaa. G. Park said that she asks that there be more student involvement going forward.

bbb. O. Egharevba asked how the EMPT sees students getting involved in the event planning process. He added that priorities can fade over time, especially across future assemblies.

ccc. M. Grant said that she thinks there are a couple of ways, such as the groups that will be assembled, and she invited students to have direct communication with her and J. Scaffido.

ddd. D. Nyakaru said that this process puts a lot of burden on students, particularly marginalized students, and asked if there is any way this can be removed such that the onus of safety would not be on the students and the administration would be taking a role in student safety.

eee. M. Grant said that these processes do take the burden off of students, and that without the ERF it puts the student organizer in a position in which they have to take on more of the burden than they would otherwise.

fff. A representative of the Cornell Daily Sun asked if there has been any plan to strike this down entirely or to redraft it due to the student backlash.

ggg. M. Grant asked whether the representative was referring to the process in its entirety or only the new pieces.

hhh. The representative clarified that she was referring to the new pieces.

iii. M. Grant asked which of the new pieces the representative had in mind.

jjj. The representative said that she was asking about any of them.

kkk. M. Grant said that as they are meeting and talking during the moratorium on Type A security fees, they will make sure to talk about them. She added that she is not saying that they will be revoked, but that it will be discussed.

lll. Tireniolu Onabajo asked why M. Grant is opposed to striking the changes down if the policy is essentially only applicable to Type B and Type C security events, which did not change.

mmm. M. Grant said that she is not opposed to striking it down, and that such a decision is not up to her.

nnn. T. Onabajo said that she hopes the EMPT will be having these larger conversations.

ooo. M. Grant said that the reason that V. Pendakur spoke about removing those three areas was because they seem to have the biggest impact, and the other types of events have already been going through this process.

V. Open Microphone

a. No speakers at the open microphone.

VI. Announcements and Reports II
a. T. Onabajo said that the CWC had not yet had its first meeting since it was still seeking new members, and that its first meeting would be next week.
b. D. Barbaria moved to amend the agenda such that an executive session would be added to discuss some other business.

VII. New Business
a. Resolution 7: Denouncing University Guideline Related to Event Security
 i. There was a motion to move Resolution 7 to Business of the Day.
  1. O. Din dissented, saying that this would not be allowed since the resolution is a charter change.
 ii. O. Din said that it was clear from the previous discussion that students are opposed to the new policy, and that it will have a huge impact. He added that the criteria for needing to submit an ERF form, which were formerly very high, are now much lower. He also said that the proponents of this resolution want to fight the policy through an Appendix B change that would dictate that no byline money can go to security fees. He added that the main way the university is having security paid for is through students, and that the Assembly has the oversight to say that they do not want student money to go to that.
 iii. E. Shapiro said that he does not believe that this should be a charter change, and that a lot of events need money for security and should not have to come to the SA to ask for approval, such as those run by CUPB or Cornell Republicans. He added that J. Scaffido said that Type B events are for those events where guests bring private security, which almost never happens, and that most organizations' events fall into Type A. He also said that this change would not affect between 95% and 99% of organizations.
 iv. K. Kebbeh said that Cornell Republicans isn't a qualified example to use since they receive $2 million in outside funding, and that Cornell Republicans could theoretically pay for everyone's security fees.
 v. O. Din said that he sees where E. Shapiro is coming from, but that he disagrees. He added that the resolution has a stipulation that allows organizations on byline funding to request funding for security, so that the fees would only be given in cases where the Assembly sees the need for security.
 vi. E. Shapiro said that this places an undue burden on organizations like CUPB to have to come to the SA every few weeks to request security funding.
 vii. O. Din said that such a thing is probably just one of the costs to do what the Assembly has to do, and that every organization would have huge burdens otherwise.
 viii. E. Shapiro said that most organizations would have Type A events, the security fees of which were frozen until a later time.
 ix. O. Din said that the Assembly does not lose anything by passing this.
 x. E. Shapiro said that this resolution would place a burden on his organization, CUPB.

xi. D. Barbaria said that the SA cannot pass any amendments until the prior Appendix B amendments are accepted or rejected, and that this amendment does not affect the university's process, since it does not say that EMPT cannot require students to pay.

xii. O. Din said that D. Barbaria made a good point, and that a big role of this resolution is to put pressure on the administration. He added that the proponents of the resolution know the President probably will not accept it, but that they must voice student concerns and that this is an avenue to do that. He also said that, until next week when the resolution will likely be voted on, Assembly members should use the resolution as a conversation starter, and that language of the resolution can be changed next week.

xiii. D. Nyakaru asked whether the term "SAF money" is used in reference to things such as the Slope Day Programming Board.

xiv. J. Anderson said that he wants to make the point that some byline organizations do not use CUPD for security, and that the charter amendment would not affect some byline orgs. He added that, if anything, this charter amendment should look to how byline organizations can get money for events.

xv. F. Uribe-Rheinbolt said that it is not true that these changes will not affect most organizations, since there are now requirements for any event that has an expected attendance greater than 50 or any late-night event, and that does affect many organizations and will change some dynamics. He added that he would ask if the proponents of the resolution would consider not rejecting all four of the new policies, since the $1000 for security might work in students' favor.

xvi. N. Matolka said that his understanding is that the $1000 is more of an insurance policy, and that it does not go to the security itself.

xvii. Motion to table Resolution 7 – tabled.

VIII. Adjournment

a. V. Devatha adjourned the meeting at 6:23 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
John Hannan
Clerk of the Assembly.