

Student Assembly

Student Assembly of Cornell University

Minutes of the October 10, 2024 Meeting

4:45 PM

Room 407, Willard-Straight Hall

I. Call to Order

- a. Chair Z. deRham called the meeting to order at 4:45 PM.
- b. *Members Present:* L. Berinde; S. Chan; Z. deRham; D. Donovan; K. Everett; E. Galperin; D. Gekman; N. Hite; J. Lederman; F. Meng; S. Razzak; I. Rezaka; M. Scali; J. Silverman; D. Suarez; C. Tarala; A. Vinson; S. Zhuang, S. Almosawi, E. Chaudhuri, G. Gonzalez-Mulattieri
- c. *Members Absent:* K. Liu (Excused), C. Flournoy (Proxied by N. Hiles), E. Yao (Proxied by E. Hsu), C. Kim (Proxied by J. Lederman), R. Acharjee (Proxied by S. Razzak)
- d. *Also Present:*

II. Reading of the land acknowledgement

- a. Z. deRham stated the land acknowledgement

III. Approval of the minutes

- a. Z. deRham motioned to approve the minutes from the previous meeting with the correction that the date for the meeting minutes held two sessions ago was inaccurately recorded. The date should be updated from September 25 to September 12 and 19 meeting minutes. This motion was approved by unanimous consent.

IV. Announcements

- a. Z. deRham announced that Caroline Grove is the newly appointed Student Athlete Liaison for the Student Athlete Committee.

V. Reports of Officers, Committees, and Liaisons

- a. Student Health Committee
 1. D. Gekman announced that the Student Health Committee plans to introduce a resolution to place Narcan and drug testing kits for date-rape



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drugs in all on-campus housing units. The resolution is on the First Reading Calendar and will be discussed next week.

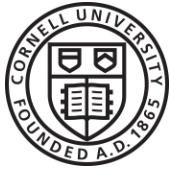
- b. S. Chan shared an update on the email list, which now includes all undergraduates. S. Chan plans to send a newsletter with details on committee applications and the election calendar for committee chairs.
- c. E. Galperin encouraged students with dietary restrictions—whether kosher, halal, allergies, etc.—to join the dining committee, as they aim to improve dining options for those with specific needs.
- d. F. Meng provided an update on the Student Assembly Infrastructure Fund, which has a total budget of \$61,000 for the year to support various projects. F. Meng invited committee members and community members to explore the fund, with open seats available for those interested in contributing to campus improvement projects.

VI. Open Microphone

- a. Speaker 1: Argued that Resolution 8 undermines Israel's ability to self-defend in the Israel-Palestine conflict, is performative, and alienates Jewish students, potentially increasing anti-Semitism on campus.
- b. Speaker 2: Urged the Student Assembly not to approve Resolution 8, citing concerns about campus groups promoting violence in support of Palestine in the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- c. Speaker 3: Suggested commending Israel for its restraint in the Israel-Palestine conflict and recommended postponing Resolution 8 to reduce emotional tension on campus.
- d. Speaker 4: Expressed feeling emotionally affected and unsafe on campus, and proposed that the Student Assembly postpone Resolution 8.
- e. Speaker 5: Stated that movements and protests have disrupted campus life and urged indefinite postponement of Resolution 8, as it may limit student opportunities.
- f. Speaker 6: Objected to tuition funds being used for weapons manufacturing.

VII. Consent Calendar

- a. N. Hite motioned to approve the consent calendar, but the motion faced dissent. A member requested a summary, prompting N. Hite to explain that the funding request



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was for equipment and production costs for an annual show, likely a musical this year. N. Hite emphasized that the request is primarily for one-time purchases that will last 5-10 years.

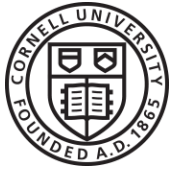
- b. E. Chaudhuri raised concerns about setting a precedent that could lead other underfunded clubs to frequently request Student Assembly funds. N. Hite responded, noting the unique nature of this request as a one-time investment that benefits the entire Cornell community, especially in the current political climate.
- c. Z. deRham clarified that per the governing documents, each organization may request up to \$5,000 per year from the Special Projects fund, and such approvals are within standard limits and budgets, not necessarily setting a dangerous precedent.
- d. M. Scali expressed concern that many Student Assembly members lacked sufficient understanding of the request. He motioned to table the resolution for one week and invite a representative from the organization to provide further clarity. The motion to table and add to the second reading calendar was approved by unanimous consent.

VIII. Presentations

- a. No presentations

IX. Second Readings

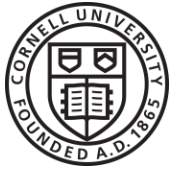
- a. K. Everett motioned for a brief recess to confer with co-sponsors, which was dissented by E. Galperin then denied by the majority.
- b. K. Everett introduced Resolution 8, emphasizing the Student Assembly's role in reflecting student voices and supporting divestment from war-related investments. K. Everett criticized Cornell's investments in weapons manufacturers and urged the Assembly to consider the moral implications and the recent student referendum in favor of divestment.
- c. I. Rezaka highlighted last year's failed divestment resolution as a failure to represent the student body, which had overwhelmingly supported divestment in a referendum. Emphasized the responsibility of representatives to align with student sentiment.
- d. J. Lederman questioned whether the resolution specifically targets Israel, pointing out an error on line 70, which K. Everett clarified as a typo meant to generalize the issue.
- e. E. Chaudhuri raised concerns about the resolution's call for transparency in Cornell's investments, questioning the practicality of disclosing specific financial details. K.



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Everett explained the intent was to increase transparency for students regarding their tuition usage.

- f. E. Galperin challenged the validity of the past referenced referendum by disputing claims about genocide in Gaza. E. Galperin questioned if the referendum, based on alleged misinformation, should still hold weight when considering Resolution 8. K. Everett reiterated that the resolution represents student discomfort with war investments, independent of specific details in the referendum.
- g. F. Meng raised two questions: whether Cornell's endowment actually includes investments in the targeted companies and how tuition funds relate to the endowment. Suggested that cutting these investments might reduce opportunities due to lost returns.
- h. I. Rezaka emphasized the moral issue of investing in war weapons manufacturers, arguing that it is morally reprehensible regardless of economic returns. Noted that university guidelines prioritize moral alignment over monetary gain.
- i. K. Everett stated that research supports claims about Cornell's investments. Explained tuition and endowment are separate and clarified that divestment from war investments wouldn't directly affect tuition but aligns with student interests.
- j. M. Scali clarified that tuition funds are not invested in war weapon manufacturing and emphasized the moral influence of the genocide narrative in the referendum, suggesting it affected voting.
- k. K. Everett suggested speculation on referendum wording isn't productive, reiterating that the resolution is about divestment from weapons manufacturers and should proceed to other assemblies for further review.
- l. Z. deRham noted that student opinion might have shifted since the referendum and urged representatives to poll current constituents for updated views.
- m. E. Galperin asked whether the Iron Dome system, which is defensive, should be defunded as it saves lives. K. Everett responded that educational institutions shouldn't invest in any war weaponry.
- n. I. Rezka reminded that the chair should remain neutral, and questioned voter participation, noting differences between election participation and referendum voting.
- o. Z. deRham stressed the importance of polling current constituents since the student body has changed since the last referendum, and voter turnout then was less than half. Clarified that while representatives are elected by the entire student body, the referendum represents direct student opinion.



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- p. I. Rezaka requested clarification on voter turnout, pointing out that not all students participated in electing the current assembly either, suggesting that current assembly members may not fully represent the student body's will.
- q. Z. deRham responded that, despite the turnout differences, elected representatives are responsible for representing all students, while the referendum provided direct opinions on a specific issue.
- r. D. Gekam questioned the timing of introducing the resolution, emphasizing its overlap with Yom Kippur and the impact on Jewish students who were mourning losses. Gekam highlighted the timing as particularly problematic, considering the emotional toll on the community during this period.
- s. K. Everett explained the timing as an oversight, believing fall break was the following week, and clarified that the resolution took time to ensure thoroughness.
- t. I. Rezaka added that the resolution was ready a week earlier, but due to Rosh Hashanah, it was postponed to the next meeting.
- u. Z. deRham confirmed receiving an email from K. Everett about two weeks ago but reiterated the intent was not to coincide with Jewish holidays.
- v. E. Chaudhuri commented on the divisive nature of the resolution, emphasizing the importance of a neutral perspective and suggesting re-polling the student body to better gauge overall opinion.
- w. F. Meng raised concerns about the feasibility of obtaining specific investment information due to legal constraints and suggested pushing for transparency in the university's reporting rather than urging immediate divestment.
- x. K. Everett reasserted that investments in weapon manufacturers are not aligned with educational values, highlighting the harm associated with funding entities that profit from war.
- y. C. Tarala asked about the potential legal issues with divesting, referencing a prior statement by President Pollock on the topic.
- z. K. Everett responded with research suggesting Cornell's unique status might exempt it from certain legal constraints, and I. Rezaka noted past divestment from other conflicts, indicating this is not unprecedented.
- aa. H. Khan clarified that this resolution is not associated with the BDS movement, framing it as an effort to hold the university accountable to its own standards.
- bb. J. Lederman contested this by highlighting that the resolution indirectly references Israel, suggesting that the resolution falls under the purview of BDS and pointing out the campus tensions it could exacerbate.



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- cc. J. Silverman moved to postpone the resolution indefinitely, but there was dissent and a motion for a roll-call vote by E. Galperin that failed.
 - dd. The final vote resulted in a decision to postpone the resolution indefinitely, with five in favor, six against, and four abstentions.
- X. Third Readings
 - a. No third readings
 - XI. Appointments and Vacancies Calendar
 - a. No appointments or vacancies
 - XII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:08

Respectfully Submitted,
Kennedy Young
Clerk of the Assembly