

Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly

Minutes of the April 17, 2019 Meeting

12:15 PM – 1:30 PM

401, Physical Sciences Building

I. Call to Order

- a. C. Wiggers called the meeting to order at 12:15.
- b. *Members Present:* P. Andersen, K. Barth, M. Benda, T. Chams, C. Dawson, H. Depew, A. Haenlin-Mott, D. Hiner, T. Grove, J. Kruser, L. Johnson-Kelly, K. LoParco, B. Roebal, C. Sanzone, H. Sheldon, A. Sieverding, K. Supron, P. Thompson, C. Wiggers
- c. *Members Absent:* A. Brooks, K. Fitch, A. Hourigan, A. Howell, K. Mahoney, E. Miller
- d. C. Wiggers welcomed Anthony McCabe

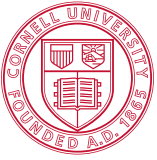
II. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of the EA meeting of April 3rd, 2019 – approved with no dissent.

III. Business of the Day (20 Minutes):

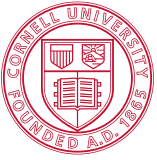
a. Tarek Chams: Time Off Policy

- a. C. Wiggers introduced T. Chams to the assembly
- b. T. Chams introduced the Personal Time Off Policy and stated that it was a collaborative process between HR and Benefits and Policy Committee to decide what is possible and help move the process forward. He stated that the Benefits and Policy Committee presented the options to HR and they have agreed to consider the options.
- c. T. Chams conducted a study of personal time policy accruals for mainly for exempt staff. He noted that the non-exempt staff policy is comparable and that they were not purposefully excluded.
- d. The goal was to compare ivy league institutions and to compare other ivy league institutions to Cornell. The Benefits and Policy Committee suggested looking at institutions within a one-hundred-mile radius. T. Chams also mentioned that this was a conversation with M. Opperman.
- e. Under the current policy, employees must have fourteen years of credit service to reach the maximum annual paid vacation accruals, which is twenty days per year. T. Chams explained that if an employee just started work (less than fourteen years), they would have a week less than employees that have been working for fourteen years or more. At ten years, an employee would accrue a day a year.



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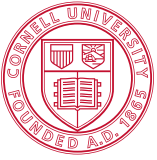
- f. The institutions that were compared to Cornell were: Rochester, Ithaca, Syracuse, and Binghamton. T. Chams reported that HR said that they would not add additional time for employees that had been at Cornell for over fourteen years. However, T. Chams stated that if an employee had been at Cornell for less than fourteen years, they might be able to accelerate their accrual rates.
- g. T. Chams explained the three options of the plan.
 - i. Version One proposes an equal accrual rate for everyone, regardless of duration of employment. The ultimate goal is a more inclusive campus. This version would give employees the same access.
 - ii. Version Two is a faster accrual rate, within five years an employee would receive twenty days per year.
 - iii. Version Three is slightly slower and spans a duration of ten years. Employees would gain one day per two years instead of one day per year. By the tenth year an employee would receive four weeks of vacation.
- h. T. Chams stated that HR would like the Employee Assembly to evaluate the options and to then nominate one of the them and pass the recommendation to HR.
- i. T. Chams asked if there were any questions.
- j. T. Grove inquired about the costs of the new options. T. Chams replied and said that HR did not supply him with a definite cost. He asked HR why they were considering waiting for ten years. T. Chams stated that M. Opperman was open to the new options.
- k. C. Wiggers clarified that the new options would be cost neutral because overall there would be no changes; the rates of accruals would simply increase.
- l. T. Grove responded and stated that in the long-term costs would not rise, but wanted to bring attention to employees that might depart from Cornell. She mentioned fringe benefits again and brought up idea that the costs might be neutralized somewhere else.
- m. T. Chams acknowledged her concern and stated that it was not on the table when talking with HR. He stated that HR was considering the options as an additional benefit.
- n. K. Barth thanked T. Chams for his hard work on the matter. K. Barth shared the feedback that he received from colleagues. Some colleagues stated that they wanted employees to go through the same process that they did in regards to waiting for time off. K. Barth also stated that millennial



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turnover is currently 21% and the national average for turnover is 15% and Cornell's is 9%. These stats came from M. Oppermans' staff forum. K. Barth stated that his personal view and recommendation was giving people more time regardless of the duration of their position. He then thanked T. Chams again.

- o. T. Chams reported on the Work Flexibility talks with M. Artibee and stated that one of the points was moving Cornell past the culture of being stationary at desks. He also stated that Michelle would call benefits, "business practices" because it is a strategic business practice to let employees take an hour to workout, have a flexible time schedule or work remotely. He also stated that there has been some cultural resistance to those practices. He stated that new supervisor has been addressing those issues, but highlighted the fact that more people need to work on changing the culture and embrace the incoming generation.
- p. H. Sheldon raised a comment and a question. He stated that he had millennials in the family and said that they are more flexible their thinking about keeping jobs. He said that that turnover among millennials at Cornell may not be related to not meeting their needs, but rather their culture.
- q. T. Chams responded and said that work life balance affects people's perspectives.
- r. H. Sheldon then asked if retroactive would apply to people already at Cornell.
- s. T. Chams stated that he talked to L. Jacoby from HR about how difficult or easy it would be to implement the change. T. Chams stated it would be a matter of changing the formula in Workday. He confirmed that it would be retroactive and that people would receive what they deserved based on the new rate.
- t. K. Supron asked for clarification between time served and time starting now.
- u. T. Chams responded and said that has mainly been trying to drive the conversation for twenty years and up, but that the Benefits and Policy Committee have been trying to consider everybody and look at the whole population.
- v. K. Supron brought up the issue of employees not taking all the vacation that is available to them because they do not have the time. She reiterated that there must a solution to the systemic problem of not taking all the time off that is available.
- w. T. Chams reiterated the point that taking vacation can actually help employees be more productive.



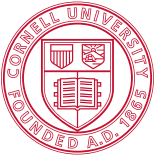
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- x. C. Sanzone shared feedback from some of her constituents that have worked for a long time. She said they were not looking for more vacation days, but different options about how to use the days. For example: the ability to take a sabbatical with the knowledge that their job will be waiting for them. C. Sanzone also discussed the problems that smaller departments face. She stated that the number of people in a department can become a barrier to taking time off due to the fact that employees may feel that there will not be enough coverage with a fewer people.
 - i. She proposed cross training, having departments properly staffed and the ability to have people cover for each other may help alleviate that problem.
- y. C. Sanzone asked if the document could be shared with constituents.
- z. T. Chams confirmed that the document could be shared with constituents and also said that the EA was not voting at this time. He mentioned that the way employees use their time is a slightly different discussion, but there have been discussions about how people use their personal time.
- aa. C. Sanzone read the comments/questions that K. Loparco shared in the Zoom chat.
 - i. I have polled constituents and no one thought this issue was urgent. The bigger issue that was identified was being able to give time to people who need it using a simpler system. For example, being able to go into Workday and give time to an individual using net ids.
 - ii. Does this analysis factor in the week between Christmas and New Years that is paid holiday?
- bb. T. Chams stated that the analysis does not factor in Christmas. He said that the Benefits and Policy Committee is hoping for more feedback from people. He encouraged the continuation of the discussion.
- cc. C. Wiggers thanked T. Chams and the committee for their collaboration and hard-work with colleagues in HR and across campus.

IV. Discussion: Goals or Possible Issues the EA should tackle

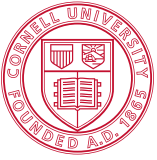
C. Wiggers: Leading Cornell program <https://www.leadingcu2019.com/>

- a. The program consisted of thirty colleagues across campus that participated in two to three months of training with Professor Sam Bacharach from the School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR). The discussion related to the decentralized nature of work at Cornell and the work that can help improve the lives of Cornell staff, faculty, and students.
- b. C. Wiggers' group was tasked with creating ideas that could be brought to senior administration on behalf of Cornell. The three areas of focus were:



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- i. Housing
 - ii. Community
 - iii. Well-being
- c. C. Wiggers said that the housing proposal is a targeted proposal for a four-year pilot looking at Band E and F employees. Several peer institutions have already implemented a similar program. This program is called Cornell Housing Incentive Program (CHIP). CHIP would provide employees with the option to live closer to the Cornell campus should they so choose to.
- d. C. Wiggers also stated that living in Ithaca is expensive and that it is in the top ten most expensive cities to raise a family. 81% of faculty live in Ithaca, 41% of staff live in Ithaca.
- e. C. Wiggers listed examples of other institutions, like the University of Pennsylvania and Syracuse University that have implemented successful housing incentive programs. He reported that the risk to Cornell University would be very low and the cost of the program would be cost neutral to Cornell. Annually, the university loses eight million dollars from band E and F employees that depart.
- f. He then discussed some of the challenges that were reported by staff about finding community. He shared a comment by one employee to highlight his point. He also introduced the idea of helping employees take advantage of the programs that already exist.
- g. C. Wiggers transitioned to the Well-Being segment of the presentation. He stated that there are ninety levels of well-being programs at Cornell and questioned how supervisors can help encourage employees to take advantage of the programs.
- h. C. Wiggers asked for questions and encouraged the EA to look at the website for the full presentation.
- i. A. Sieverding had an inquiry about Band E and F employees were the focus in the study.
- j. C. Wiggers stated that Band E and F were easy to track in regards to recruitment and retention. He also said that the cost of the salary involved was a factor and they felt the if the pilot was too broad, the goal would not be achievable. Therefore, they narrowed the focus to two segments of the university population that could be evaluated.
- k. A. Siverding followed up with the statement that she felt the group of people was much smaller than a group of people in Band C and D.
- l. C. Wiggers responded by saying part the focus was related to what the committee could identify in regards to the cost of the employees leaving. He referenced the eight million dollars that he previously mentioned in terms of attracting and retaining the employees.
- m. P. Andersen raised the question of how Cornell would support employees and if Cornell would become the banker.



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- n. C Wiggers responded and said that they looked at third party lending brokers. He cited an example of a university that recoups what an employee invested on the front end should they leave.
- o. P. Andersen also mentioned student debt and C. Wiggers cited many other factors that might affect employees.
- p. B. Roebel asked if Band E feel into the exempt category. C. Wiggers confirmed that it is Exempt Band E and F

b. H.H. Depew: EA Data Request Template

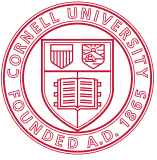
- a. She stated that she is hoping the template will be able to be presented in the next meeting and that a flow chart will be created in order to outline the steps for how data requests come to fruition.

c. C. Sanzone: EA Resolution 5

- a. C. Sanzone introduced this resolution which honors N. Doolittle and the work that she did for the Cornell community, especially for staff members.
- b. C. Wiggles also acknowledged the importance of N. Doolittle's work.

V. Committee Reports

- a. Communications and Awards Committee
 - i. The chair of the committee was not present. No update was given.
- b. Education Committee
 - i. The chair of the committee was not present. No update was given.
- c. Welfare Committee
 - i. The chair of the committee was not present. No update was given.
- d. Transportation Committee
 - i. The chair of the committee was not present.
 - ii. K. Barth offered an update as he attended the previous meeting
 - iii. The committee is looking at flex work (working from home) with the sustainability office to examine the amount of travel to and from work. He also mentioned potential productivity benefits of working in a non-office setting.
 - iv. K. Barth discussed the campus circulator said that it is in the master plan in 2018 and is outlined in the current transportation study. He said that he will meet with B. Brady and R. Huegerich the following day to draft a high-level resolution. He is hoping that it will be implemented in the next three to five years.
- e. Benefits and Policy Committee
 - i. T. Chams stated that M. Artibee will be at the Benefits and Policy Committee meeting the following day. M. Artibee previously



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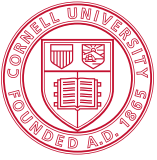
organized a flexibility at the workplace panel. T. Chams reiterated the need for people to take advantage of the programs and encouraged the discussion of what flexibility means to different people.

f. Executive Committee

- i. H. Depew provided an update on the Title IX Training Material meeting.
- ii. The meeting focused on the training material in regards to reporting harassment and the online training “Respect at Cornell” for incoming employees. H. Depew also asked for feedback from the Employee Assembly in regards to their thoughts about training by individual units or a campus wide mandatory training.
- iii. A. Sieverding stated that she believed the trainings should be university wide and required university wide. She said that the decentralization of Cornell is a factor that results in the individual differences between schools.
- iv. H. Sheldon recommended that the management of the department not run the anti-harassment training.
- v. H. Depew said the model that Facility Services used was that that dean and Human Resources worked together. The dean notified employees about the training and Human Resources implemented it.
- vi. L. Johnson-Kelly asked if the training would be required for faculty as well. H. Depew responded that faculty are a part of it, and that they wanted more information about what other peer institutions are doing. L. Johnson-Kelly shared an anecdote to highlight the importance of faculty training.
- vii. P. Andersen also said that she supported training for faculty.
- viii. C. Wiggers thanked L. Johnson-Kelly and P. Andersen for sharing their perspectives.

g. Elections Committee

- i. C. Sanzone stated thanked everyone for their hard work on the elections and stated that an email had been sent out that morning in the weekly staff email. C. Sanzone said that they would be working with G. Giambattista to encourage involvement. There were three submitted applications.
- ii. C. Sanzone also stated that she hopes to present a plan about the George Peter’s award at the next EA meeting.



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- iii. C. Wiggers said that there were twenty-seven started applications and three completed applications for the EA committee elections.
- iv. C. Wiggers thanked the Elections Committee for their work.

VI. New Business (10 Minutes)

- a. Open Discussion:
 - a. A. McCabe asked if issues of tolerance were a problem on campus.
 - b. T. Chams suggested sensitivity training and discussed the problems of having employees report problems if they are not in a position of power. He also said that awareness is important part of the solution and can help bring the conversation forward.
 - c. A. McCabe responded and said that he believed that leaders should be involved with the training. A. McCabe thanked the EA for the opportunity.
 - d. T. Chams brought up the point that leaders should lead by example.
 - e. C. Wiggers thanked T. Chams and A. McCabe for their comments
 - f. H. Sheldon asked a question in regards to the retirement committee holding an election due to the fact that no one has self-identified and they are struggling to replace Peggy.
 - g. C. Wiggers asked for confirmation that they are working with Michelle.
 - h. H. Sheldon confirmed.
 - i. C. Wiggers stated that they would stand by their decision.
 - j. C. Wiggers thanked the EA for their hard work.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:16 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sara DeVault-Feldman
Assembly Coordinator