



Cornell University
Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly
Minutes of the December 15, 2021 Meeting 12:15-1:30 PM
Zoom

I. Call to Order

- a. Chair J. Withers called the meeting to order at 12:17 PM.

II. Roll Call

Members Present [19]: M. Benda, J. Creque, J. Duong, A. Durant, B. Fortenberry, B. Goodell, A. Haenlin-Mott, D. Howell, K. LoParco, K. Mahoney, E. Miller, A. Mittman, S. Resue, A. Schafft, J. Stewart, K. Supron, K. Tannenbaum, J. Withers, L. Zacharias
Members Absent [8]: D. Barrett, M. Brooks, J. Cannella, J. Chandler, M. Cherry, H. Depew, B. Fisher, J. Townley

III. Land Acknowledgement of the Gayogoho:nō (Cayuga Nation)

- a. J. Withers stated the Land Acknowledgement.

IV. Approval of the December 1, 2021 Minutes

- a. Motion to approve the December 1, 2021 was **approved** unanimously.

V. Business of the Day

- a. J. Withers acknowledged that the past couple of days have been a little unsettling and staff is tired, expressed disappointment that the University was at alert level red, and recognized that the alert level makes things feel exponentially worse.
 1. E. Miller mentioned that she received multiple messages due to the national news outlets stating that Cornell had shutdown. She questioned how she was feeling in the moment and that she was a little disappointed and a bit shocked at the coverage.
 2. A. Schafft appreciated J. Wither's note in the EA Voice and found comfort in the message.
 3. B. Goodell also mentioned that staff was misled by what was reported via the news and that it was difficult to explain to staff that it was inaccurate and they had to still come to work.
 4. K. Tannenbaum also expressed appreciation for J. Wither's note in the EA Voice and inquired about how staff are being supported by going back to remote work.
 5. M. Benda clarified that the Veterinary hospital is not closed and it is business as usual.
 6. K. Supron stated that it is alarming with the drastic increase in cases in a short period of time. She further stated that it is newsworthy given the massive amount of testing that is being conducted and she appreciated the monitoring provided by the University and the foresight to be out in front with decision-making.

7. K. LoParco expressed concern that students were allowed to go home for Thanksgiving break and then return while a new variant had been identified. She mentioned that she felt it was a decision that wasn't very well thought as to the implications.
8. K. Supron mentioned that the variant was identified over Thanksgiving break and the decision to bring students back was made before the identification of the variant.
9. A. Haenlin Mott mentioned that the main concern was that news outlets reported that campus was closed while in actuality it was not.

VI. Committee Reports and Updates

- a. Executive Committee - A. Haenlin-Mott
 1. A. Haenlin-Mott stated that today's guest, Liz Davis Frost, will be rescheduled to a future meeting. She informed members of the visit by President Pollack and Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer Opperman on January 19, 2022. The rationale for the early date in the spring semester is due to scheduling. A. Haenlin-Mott indicated that a Qualtrics survey will be distributed to assembly members to gather questions to be shared with the Office of the President and with VP and CHRO Opperman in advance of the January 19 meeting.
- b. Communications, Outreach and Recognition Committee – E. Miller
 1. E. Miller mentioned that the December EA Voice was distributed on December 15. She indicated that the January newsletter will be sent shortly after staff return from Winter Break. She mentioned that the focus will be a push for promoting the Award for Staff Integrity and Inclusion and if any committee chairs have items they would like to have included or highlighted to contact her.
 2. E. Miller stated that the outreach subcommittee has been working with the Office of the Assemblies on website changes and potential revisions. She informed the assembly members that there is an upcoming migration to a new version of Drupal so revisions or changes would be implemented after the migration.
 3. E. Miller informed assembly members that the awards and recognition subcommittee has been working on the new Award for Staff Integrity and Inclusion and the deadline for nominations is January 7, 2022. She further stated that at the conclusion of the timeline for the Award for Staff Integrity and Inclusion, the subcommittee would be starting work on promoting the George Peter Award for Dedicated Service. The intent is to have the nominations for the Award for Staff Integrity and Inclusion to take place during the fall semester and the nominations for the George Peter Award for Dedicated Service to take place during the spring semester.
 4. E. Miller thanked A. Miller in Human Resources for setting up the Employee Appreciation Portal with a link to the information for the Award for Staff Integrity and Inclusion.
- c. Education and Development Committee – M. Benda
 1. M. Benda mentioned the committee met this past Monday with Linda Croll-Howell, Director of HR Analytics, and Maria Wolf. They provided information

on the number of staff that hold degrees, participate in the Employee Degree Program, take advantage of tuition assistance, and take a course or class while employed at Cornell. L. Croll-Howell indicated that the data isn't completely accurate as a percentage of staff do not complete their professional profile via Workday and she suggested a spotlight on the Workday Professional Profile section.

2. M. Benda informed the members that M. Wolf did a demonstration on the Connections platform and there is a staff development date on January 11.
 3. Additionally, M. Benda mentioned that Jim Sheridan in Organizational and Workforce Development is retiring and Marcus Brooks as been named as his replacement.
 4. Lastly, M. Benda mentioned that A. Mittman and E. Ivory are working on an article for the EA Newsletter to announce disability accommodations resources for staff who take classes.
- d. Benefits and Policy Committee - B. Goodell
1. B. Goodell stated that the Committee met on Tuesday, December 14 and discussion items included items from the priorities poll and highlights from the Employee Assembly retreat. He mentioned that some of the items discussed included policies on sustainability, changes to the retirement contribution policy, expansion of options for gifting vacation time and donations for catastrophic leave, health insurance disparities, and expansion of the policy for protection for whistleblowers.
 2. B. Goodell announced that there is a vacant seat on the Benefits and Policy Committee due to a member leaving Cornell for an outside position.
 3. B. Goodell mentioned that future discussions will include a possible resolution for the return of money that Cornell withheld from retirement contributions for Endowed employees and wages for Statutory employees.
 4. B. Goodell informed members that the Benefits and Policy Committee would not be meeting again until February due to his being out for knee surgery.
- e. Employee Welfare Committee – K. Mahoney
1. B. Fortenberry informed the assembly about work being done by a subcommittee of the Employee Welfare Committee related to the onboarding process and areas of concern or improvement.
 2. K. Mahoney informed the assembly about efforts within Human Resources related to the employee lifecycle experience and how to improve employee engagement and support.
 3. K. Mahoney asked about an update regarding the CARE Fund.
 4. M. Benda indicated that there have been some generous donors and that there is currently a can drive taking place at Lansing Recycling.
 5. J. Withers informed members that the CARE Fund has an ambassador program and that ambassadors are willing to give presentations to departments and units.
 6. E. Miller stated that staff and employees can donate to the CARE Fund through payroll deduction.
 7. K. Tannenbaum agreed that payroll deduction is an easy means to make a donation and that the funds can add up quickly.

VII. Liaison Reports

- a. University Assembly - B. Fortenberry
 1. J. Withers mentioned that the University Assembly has not met since December 1 as they take a break while students are away on break.
- b. Faculty Senate - J. Creque
 1. J. Creque stated that the Faculty Senate met in the prior week and they are working on a part-time bachelor's program for individuals interested in getting a degree through the Office of Continuing Education. She further mentioned that it is in very early planning stages and to keep an eye out for further development.

VIII. New Business

- a. K. Tannenbaum expressed her concern about staff being on campus in order to perform non-essential tasks due to not having enough work to do remotely. K. Tannenbaum stated that she would like to see something from University administration that reminds departments that things have changed and working in person has changed from the previous time that campus essentially shut down.
- b. L. Zacharias mentioned an email from M. Opperman asking supervisors to be flexible with remote work options. K. Tannenbaum indicated that she was not aware of the email and that she would follow up with L. Zacharias for further information.
- c. J. Withers mentioned that there was a question in chat regarding the part-time bachelors degree and whether it would be online or in person. J. Creque stated via chat that she felt it would be flexible; however, it is still being finalized.
- d. B. Goodell mentioned that following COVID protocols (social distancing, eating meals alone, completing the Daily Check) are all measures that should be followed during this current elevated alert level.
- e. J. Withers mentioned that there were a few comments in chat that the message from M. Opperman may not have made it to all staff. She indicated that there was a lot of messaging at varied levels that was sent out about the elevated alert level so there may have been some miscommunication or confusion.
- f. B. Goodell expressed his appreciation to fellow assembly members and committee members for the work and efforts that are continually taking place and that the work being done by the Employee Assembly is appreciated by his constituents and the Cornell community as a whole.
- g. K. Tannenbaum also expressed her appreciation and gratitude for the work of the Employee Assembly and that the assembly has offered her opportunities to voice her concerns and those of her constituents.
- h. G. Giambattista expressed her gratitude to the Assembly for the work it does in the name of shared governance at Cornell.
- i. K. Mahoney indicated that it would be beneficial to let M. Opperman know that her communication didn't make it past those individuals who received it. K. Mahoney also expressed concern that senior leadership relies on communication to supervisors and in turn the supervisors communicating the information to their staff and it doesn't happen quickly or as much as they believe. K. Mahoney felt it would be valuable feedback to M. Opperman that many of the assembly members hadn't heard from their senior leaders.

- j. E. Miller agreed to K. Mahoney's point that information doesn't always get distributed as desired. E. Miller provided an example that the Workforce Wellbeing is sent to HR representatives to be distributed to staff and that she had to ask to be put on the list directly as she wasn't receiving the information.

IX. Adjournment

- a. E. Miller motioned to adjourn. K. Tannenbaum seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Treat
Senior Coordinator, Office of the Assemblies