



## Cornell University Employee Assembly

### Cornell Employee Assembly Minutes of the February 17, 2021 Meeting 12:15-1:30 PM Zoom

#### I. Call to Order

- a. Chair H. Depew called the meeting to order at 12:15pm.

#### II. Roll Call

- a. *Members Present* [24]: J. Cannella, M. Cherry, J. Creque, H. Depew, J. Duong, B. Fortenberry, B. Goodell, A. Haenlin-Mott, D. Howell, E. Ivory, R. Lochner, M. LoParco, K. Mahoney, V. McAuley, J. Michael, A. Miller, E. Miller, M. Newhart, M. Podolec, N. Siadat, K. Supron, K. Tannenbaum, L. Taylor, J. Withers
- b. *Members Absent* [4]: S. Barry, B. Fisher, J. Townley, L. Zacharias

#### III. Approval of the minutes from February 3, 2021

- a. The meeting minutes were **approved** unanimously.

#### IV. Business of the Day

- a. Discussion of EA R7: Postponing Spring 2021 Elections
  - i. N. Siadat introduced the resolution noting that it was consistent with the University challenges and calendar dates being pushed, and the University Assembly also postponing their organizational meeting similar to last year. N. Siadat added that the resolution would allow the EA to keep in line with the UA's postponement especially since EA Bylaws had an April 15 deadline for the organizational meeting. Therefore, postponing the organizational meeting would require a resolution.
  - ii. B. Goodell noted that the resolution passed by unanimous consent at the Elections Committee meeting.
  - iii. J. Withers informed N. Siadat that the UA approved their schedule on February 16<sup>th</sup> and set May 11<sup>th</sup> as their new organizational meeting date.
- b. Discussion of EA R8: Updates to The George Peter Award for Dedicated Service
  - i. E. Miller stated that the resolution was revised and approved at the Communications Committee meeting on February 16<sup>th</sup>. E. Miller noted that the resolution was not introducing any major changes to the George Peter Award for Dedicated Service, but it would update and clarify some of the information regarding the award; E. Miller also informed the assembly that the goal would be to launch the award on March 1<sup>st</sup> if all members were in agreement. E. Miller stated that The George Peter Award for Dedicated Service was the longest running and most prestigious University-wide peer-nominated award for staff and since its inception in 1980, the award had been conferred to over 190 Cornell employees. A major change being introduced by the resolution regarded the wording for staff eligibility to ensure that selected employees had been committed to the University for a minimum of five years to represent the prestige associated with the award. Another change introduced was a refinement in the selection criteria. E. Miller concluded by stating that given the recent feedback from the Priorities Poll, recognizing peers and employees going above and beyond was critical.

- ii. H. Depew echoed E. Miller's comments adding that given the current morale, staff member recognition was crucial.
- c. Staff Forums Update
  - i. H. Depew stated that there was an upcoming staff forum originally titled "Civil Discourse" but has since then changed to "Community Building, Engaging in Difficult Conversations". The focus of the forum would be to give staff members tips and tools in considering how to engage with others in conversations, especially with more divisive and difficult topics. H. Depew added that a faculty member would be joining in as well to talk about civil discourse in the context of Free Speech. H. Depew also stated that another forum was in the works for the one-year milestone of the pandemic and the goal would be to get senior administrators in attendance to give a review of the year as well as a look towards the future. H. Depew also stated that a potential finance staff forum was being planned with EVP and CFO J. DeStefano and VP P. Streeter. She noted that P. Streeter would be retiring at the end of the fiscal year so the forum would be a good time to hear from him and thank him for all of his service while hearing the financial updates.
  - ii. E. Miller noted that if EA R7 were to pass, there would be possibility for an EA forum for election candidates and added that it would be a great opportunity for a forum.
  - iii. N. Siadat echoed E. Miller and added that it would be something the Elections Committee would be discussing and the focus prior to the elections would be initiatives to publicize the seats up for election.

## V. Committee Reports

- a. Executive Committee – M. LoParco
  - i. M. LoParco stated that the committee had met on February 11<sup>th</sup> and J. Duong had discussed the Colleague Network Group and provided the committee with dates for several panels. The Disability and Veterans group panel would be on March 17<sup>th</sup> and the LGBTQ+ panel would be on April 7<sup>th</sup>. She noted that the committee had discussed having D. Maas (Associate Director of the Office of Emergency Management) at the meeting but there was a scheduling conflict. However, the committee would try fitting him into a different meeting for members to ask questions regarding weather policies, especially for remote workers. M. LoParco also stated that the committee talked about the upcoming staff forums and noted that it would be great to clarify the roles relating to the forums and who would be taking the lead. There were also discussions on the Qualtrics Retreat Feedback Form and M. LoParco noted that all of the feedback would be shared with the assembly.
  - ii. E. Miller proposed the idea of taking volunteers who may want to take on these roles from the full EA body and it would allow new members to participate.
  - iii. H. Depew stated that at the moment, she moderated the forums, and the Q&A portion was moderated by the Vice Chair but expressed support for E. Miller's proposal. H. Depew encouraged any members that were interested in moderating to reach out to her. H. Depew also mentioned that she had spoken with G. Giambattista about making a template for the staff forum process, noting that it would be particularly useful for new Executive Committee and EA members.
- b. Communications and Awards Committee – E. Miller
  - i. E. Miller stated that the February EA Voice newsletter had been released and featured B. Fortenberry along with an article about Student and Campus Life that highlighted their accomplishments during Spring move-in. The target date for the next newsletter would

- be March 15<sup>th</sup>. E. Miller stated that the recent committee meetings had focused heavily on awards and recognition following the retreat because of staff burn-out and needed to be recognized for their efforts. The committee was also starting revisions on the Opperman Award which would be renamed and relaunched. Additionally, there will be guests at the March 3<sup>rd</sup> EA meeting to discuss current University appreciation programs.
- ii. H. Depew noted that she had received a lot of positive feedback on the February newsletter.
  - c. Education Committee – J. Withers
    - i. J. Withers noted that A. Mack from organizational development had joined the committee and E. Ivory agreed to switch to a non-voting role. J. Withers also mentioned that the committee had a staff member join as well.
  - d. Welfare Committee – K. Mahoney
    - i. K. Mahoney noted that the committee had a great discussion following-up on the Belonging at Cornell Survey data. The committee was also planning on inviting A. Winfield to discuss an action plan for using the data results. K. Mahoney added that the committee discussed the work-from-home transition. Lastly, she noted that the committee was planning on moving forward on partnering with HR on some of the upcoming initiatives like the University memorial event in April, pushing for Staff Wellness Days, and a possible “Pandemic Anniversary Event”.
  - e. Benefits and Policy Committee – B. Goodell
    - i. B. Goodell noted that the BPC was planning to meet on February 23<sup>rd</sup> and had a packed agenda.
  - f. Elections Committee – N. Siadat
    - i. N. Siadat stated that the committee would be meeting bi-weekly and that a discussion topic that came up at the most recent meeting was signature requirements especially in light of the pandemic and what concerns could raise the barriers to access for frontline workers.

## VI. New Business

- a. Voting on EA R7: Postponing Spring 2021 Elections
  - i. N. Siadat moved to vote on EA R7, and E. Miller seconded the motion. The resolution was **approved** 23-0-2.
- b. Voting on EA R8: Updates to The George Peter Award for Dedicated Service
  - i. E. Miller moved to vote on EA R8, and B. Goodell seconded the motion. The resolution was **approved** 23-0-2.
- c. Open Discussion
  - i. March 3<sup>rd</sup> EA Meeting
    1. E. Miller noted that President Pollack would be at the next EA meeting and reminded members to be ready with committee reports and any questions they may have for her. H. Depew echoed E. Miller’s comments, noting that it would be a great opportunity for engagement.
  - ii. LGBTQ+ Colleague Network Group
    1. J. Cannella noted that the LGBTQ+ Colleague Network members were excited to come talk to the EA and asked EA members if they had any questions they would like the group to be prepared to answer.
    2. H. Depew pointed out that in the data from the Belonging at Cornell Survey, most individuals across demographics reported belonging at a relatively similar rate except for the People with Disabilities group and Transgender Non-Binary who

reported lower rates. H. Depew stated that her question for the group would be how the EA could support those in marginalized groups and what were some potential paths forward to help groups that did not feel like they belonged.

- a. J. Cannella stated that there wasn't any certainty that the LGBTQ+ CNG board could answer that question due to not having access to the full results of the survey.
  - b. H. Depew stated that at the heart of it, her main inquiry would be to find out what the EA could do if there were glaring issues in terms of belonging at Cornell.
3. E. Miller noted that she would love to be more in the loop about LGBTQ+ CNG events and would also be willing to utilize EA communication channels to share the information.
    - a. J. Cannella noted that it would be a great idea and added that the LGBTQ+ CNG had discussed having more events geared towards allies.
  4. A. Haenlin-Mott stated that there were many opportunities for discussion with the LGBTQ+ and Disability CNG's regardless of the data but the data would be helpful in steering the discussion.
- iii. University Response to Storms
    1. K. Tannenbaum asked for a status update on where the EA was in terms of addressing the University's response to inclement weather.
    2. H. Depew stated that the Executive Committee was planning on inviting D. Maas (Associate Director of the Office of Emergency Management) to an EA meeting to discuss how inclement weather decisions were made and what factors went into the decisions. H. Depew added that if the assembly had additional questions after the visit, the topic could be assigned to a committee to take a closer look at it.

## **VII. Adjournment**

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 1:06pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Office of the Assemblies