



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly

Minutes of the January 19th, 2022 Meeting 12:15-1:30 PM
Zoom

I. Call to Order

- a. Chair J. Withers called the meeting to order at 12:15pm.

II. Roll Call

Members Present [19]: D. Barrett, M. Benda, M. Cherry, S. Coil, J. Creque, J. Duong, A. Durant, B. Fortenberry, A. Haenlin-Mott, D. Howell, K. Mahoney, A. Mittman, E. Miller, S. Resue, J. Stewart, K. Supron, K. Tannenbaum, J. Townley, J. Withers
Members Absent [9]: M. Brooks, J. Cannella, J. Chandler, H. Depew, B. Fisher, B. Goodell, K. LoParco, A. Schafft, L. Zacharias

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

- a. J. Withers stated the Land Acknowledgement.

IV. Approval of the December 15th, 2021 Minutes

- a. Motion to approve the December 15, 2021 minutes was **approved** unanimously.

V. Business of the Day

- a. Cornell University President Martha Pollack Remarks
 1. J. Withers asked M. Pollack what she was most looking forward to next semester.
 2. M. Pollack responded that she is looking forward to new pathways of learning and research such as progress for expansion of financial aid and the new School of Public Policy or the opening of the new dining hall on North campus. M. Pollack stated that despite the pandemic, lots of incredible work has occurred at Cornell as well.
 3. J. Withers reiterated the question for M. Opperman to answer as well.
 4. M. Opperman stated that she is looking forward to her son and family moving back to the Ithaca area.
 5. M. Pollack acknowledged the many frustrations people have felt, especially given the last month's Omicron variant and large COVID-19 spike but emphasized how much different of a position this is in comparison to the initial events 2 years ago thanks to information, science, and preparation. M. Pollack stated Cornell's commitment to following science, noting Cornell's mass testing system and its quick response in December. M. Pollack stated that COVID-19 will not be eliminated, but that through science we will be able to eventually live alongside COVID-19 with much less disruption.
 6. M. Pollack noted Cornell's responsibility of protecting more vulnerable individuals in the area and community by mitigating spread. M. Pollack also

reiterated Cornell's responsibility to creating a world-class education and experience for its students.

7. M. Pollack stated that modeling has predicted a large increase in COVID-19 cases once students return onto campus, but also that the modeling predicts very little serious illness among the community if everyone does their part, noting repeated arrival testing, the 2 weeks of online classes at the start of the semester, and staggered arrival times among students.
 8. M. Pollack stated that research has indicated high-quality masks such as surgical masks are proven to be much more effective at preventing transmission, and that these masks will be available and accessible for the community at all the testing sites and at some departments.
 9. M. Pollack acknowledged that no solution will be found agreeable by everyone, but that the plan they've laid out utilizes all our resources and knowledge to create an incredible experience for the community that aligns with Cornell's mission.
- b. Cornell University President Marth Pollock Q&A
1. J. Withers noted that A. Haenlin-Mott would read out pre-submitted questions.
 2. A. Haenlin-Mott read a pre-submitted question asking if there were any plans to address campus community morale in coming weeks and offer support for individuals responsible for executing such activities for others, especially given the constant and seemingly never-ending stress of the pandemic.
 3. M. Pollack acknowledged how exhausting and distressing the pandemic has been. M. Pollack noted that she is unsure what kind of plans the question could be referring to, but that Cornell has continued to work on staff acknowledgement and online programming. M. Pollack also stated that programs to support employees could put burden on others who had to facilitate said programs, and that navigating the situation is very difficult.
 4. M. Opperman further stated that Cornell tried to offer many programs for staff such as the football game and dinner in the Fall, but that given current pandemic circumstances such events do not translate well into a different format. M. Opperman stated that certain units, especially given the circumstances, will receive recognition to celebrate many heroic efforts throughout the community.
 5. A. Haenlin-Mott read a pre-submitted question asking what Cornell would look to change about job expectations in the coming years to allow staff to meet and exceed expectations and efforts, especially given how much these expectations have shifted over the last decade and the lack of standardization across departments.
 6. M. Pollack thanked whomsoever asked the question for their recognition of the lack of universality across departments due to department specificities. M. Pollack reiterated the importance of employer and employee flexibility in the face of constant uncertainty, a need greatly demonstrated through the last 2 years of the pandemic.
 7. A. Haenlin-Mott read a pre-submitted question asking what M. Pollack would like to see the Employee Assembly focus on this semester.

8. M. Pollack stated that she'd encourage the Employee Assembly to focus on what's positive about working at Cornell and help draw in new talented staff, especially considering talent shortages.
9. A. Haenlin-Mott read a pre-submitted question asking whether a Cornell job fair for internal candidates would ever be considered in-person or virtually.
10. M. Pollack stated that she knows there is support for this sort of an event and that she will put this into her notes for the next time she sees HR to ruminate on.
11. M. Opperman noted that currently Cornell has over 40% of openings being filled through internal candidates, and that Cornell will continue to attempt to make these openings promoted and available.
12. A. Haenlin-Mott read a pre-submitted question asking for more information on the search for the new VP and CHRO.
13. M. Pollack stated that recruitment for these positions has begun headed by M. Pollack's Chief of Staff and that a search firm has been hired to ensure we reach the top candidates. M. Pollack also thanked M. Opperman for all her 25 years of work and service to Cornell but stated her confidence in finding people to fill her shoes.
14. A. Haenlin-Mott read a pre-submitted question asking how vaccination booster requirements for staff will be enforced and inquiring on the idea of further vaccination clinics made available on campus.
15. M. Pollack stated that there were very few employees who did not comply by obtaining either a vaccine or an exemption, and that those employees were terminated. M. Pollack stated that January 31st is the deadline to submit documentation of a booster shot (if eligible at that date) or applying for an exemption. M. Pollack also noted that Cornell set up many vaccine clinics in the fall that were vastly underutilized, so there are currently no plans for further on-campus clinics.
16. M. Opperman added that, in comparison to the initial vaccine where there was more concern over the question of compliance, Cornell administration believes that many already received their booster vaccination but just haven't yet uploaded documentation due to some technological difficulties.
17. A. Haenlin-Mott read a pre-submitted question asking for recommendations on staff who need to enforce mask-requirements on students.
18. M. Pollack agreed with the difficulty in making these interactions, also noting that this issue isn't simply limited to students but staff and faculty as well. M. Pollack encouraged these interactions to be friendly, matter of fact, and polite.
19. M. Opperman stated that if there is someone who consistently uses masks correctly, depart the situation and turn it over for handling by a supervisor.
20. A. Haenlin-Mott read a pre-submitted question commending Cornell's efforts to fight the pandemic but expressing concerns over such mandates and their effects on staff, drawing example from staff using their own paid time off due to feeling symptoms from the booster shot.

21. M. Pollack stated that back in 2020, all staff were given an additional 10 sick days, and that afterwards, the state instituted COVID-19 pay which doesn't affect PTO. M. Pollack noted that Cornell offers 4 hours of paid time for employees to go get the booster shot.
22. M. Opperman stated that the administration has been tracking the PTO banks and have not seen an effect due to the booster shot.
23. A. Haenlin-Mott read a pre-submitted question asking about the possibility of additional boosters in the future and the potential effects that could occur on someone's immune system.
24. M. Pollack stated that all the decisions that have been made have been done by seriously following science and medical professionals, and that there have been no discussions on any further booster shots.
25. M. Opperman stated that the situation also could bear likeness to the way we treat the flu now with yearly flu shots.
26. A. Haenlin-Mott stated a question asking for what Cornell can do to boost internet services to increase access for high-speed internet in the community.
27. M. Pollack stated her pride in working last year on the Reimagine New York Commission to advise the New York state on important investments, noting that the top recommendation to the governor was the need to provide more reliable broadband services.
28. A. Haenlin-Mott stated a question asking if there are any plans to re-instate a retirement incentive.
29. M. Pollack stated that there is not one at this time.
30. A. Haenlin-Mott stated a question asking how many employees were affected by the vacation-time reset.
31. M. Opperman stated that yearly, about 13% of employees lose some time after the vacation time reset.

VI. Committee Reports and Updates

- a. Executive Committee - A. Haenlin-Mott
 1. A. Haenlin-Mott stated that the Committee has been working to fill the EA meeting calendar with lots of guest speakers and has also been working towards a potential town hall. A. Haenlin-Mott also noted that the Committee works with the Office of the Assemblies to facilitate questions that come into the Office that are relevant to staff.
- b. Communications, Outreach, and Recognition Committee - E. Miller
 1. E. Miller stated that the Committee has focused on recognition heavily, noting the launch for nominations for the new Award on Staff Integrity and Inclusion that ended up yielding 14 strong nominations. E. Miller noted that the nominated candidates spanned a very diverse field, from those working on the NYC campus to those working from eCornell, and that a winner should be selected in the next few weeks.
 2. E. Miller stated that right after the Award on Staff Integrity and Inclusion is also the call for nominations for the George Peter Award, and that the Committee has

- been partnering with A. Miller in HR to coordinate schedules.
3. E. Miller stated that the Communications and Outreach subcommittee has been working on ideas for the relaunch of the Employee Assembly website to update content to better serve constituents.
- c. Employee Welfare Committee - K. Mahoney
 1. K. Mahoney stated that the Committee has been brainstorming initiatives for the Spring surrounding welfare considerations and the concerns of the staff. K. Mahoney noted the work B. Fortenberry's subcommittee has been doing for the enhancement of the employee onboarding process and noted the launch of a new initiative to frame what it means to work and be a part of Cornell.
 2. M. Pollack expressed enthusiasm to hear more about this initiative, noting both her and M. Opperman's own desires to create a more compassionate workspace for employees.
 - d. Education and Development Committee - M. Benda
 1. M. Benda stated that during 2021, the employee degree program recorded one of its highest participation rates, with 35 people graduating. M. Benda stated that the Committee met with L. Howell to get metrics such as the rate of degree-holding employees and such. However, as this data is recorded through Workday profiles, which many staff still have not filled out, the data isn't entirely representative. M. Benda stated that the Committee would be working to push employees to complete their Workday profiles.
 2. M. Benda stated that the Committee also discussed different recognition and development programs such as Staff Development Day or a spotlight for disability accommodations for staff taking classes.
 - e. Benefits and Policy Committee - B. Goodell
 1. J. Withers stated that at the previous Committee meeting, there were discussions surrounding the Retirement Contribution policy, the Whistleblower Protection policy, and the Catastrophic Leave policy. J. Withers noted that L. Jacoby has also been attending meetings, which has been helpful for answering questions and concerns the Committee has quickly.
 - f. Elections Committee - M. Cherry
 1. M. Cherry stated her thanks for J. Duong for heading the Fall special election and noted that there are currently 11 held seats coming up for election this Spring, as well as 1-2 potential vacant seats.

VII. New Business

- a. No new business.

VIII. Adjournment

- a. B. Fortenberry motioned to adjourn. E. Miller seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 1:23.

Respectfully Submitted,
Office of the Assemblies