



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly
Minutes of the March 30, 2020 Meeting
12:15-1:30 PM
Zoom

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. Chair Howell called the meeting to order at 12:15pm.
- b. *Members Present:* S. Barry, K. Barth, M. Benda, A. Brooks, J. Cooley, J. Creque, H. Depew, J. Duong, B. Fortenberry, G. Giambattista, B. Goodell, A. Haenlin-Mott, D. Hiner, A. Howell, R. Lochner, K. LoParco, K. Mahoney, J. Michael, R. Miegl, E. Miller, A. Miller, M. Newhart, C. Sanzone, K. Supron, L. Taylor, J. Townley, W. Treat, J. Withers
- c. *Members Absent:* A. Brooks, T. Chams, E. Ivory, A. McCabe, H. Sheldon, C. Wiggers

II. Approval of Minutes

- a. Motion to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2020 – **approved** with no dissent

III. Business of the Day

- a. Annalisa L. Raymer and Sasha Endo: Community Learning and Service Partnerships (CLASP)
 - i. A. Raymer introduced herself as the Director of CLASP, which is a program that promotes adult education for employees and courses for students. Each employee will be partnered with one student and the pair become learning partners. Students act as educational mentors and support their adult learning partner as a peer, co-learner, and co-educator. The focus is on the adult learners' goals.
 - ii. A. Raymer gave an overview of the history of CLASP, which began as a social justice-minded, reciprocal education program founded in 1989-1990 with Al Davidoff, the then president of the relatively new UAW Local 2300, and Human Ecology students in Human Service Studies. The program wanted to address some of the working conditions of service workers at the time and inequality issues. CLASP then moved from Human Ecology to CALS to be a part of the education department. Today, Cornell does not have an education department or education major. As a result, while Cornell offers courses in adult and lifelong learning, they are not required for any degree. Students have little occasion to find CLASP and no extrinsic reason to take part.
 - iii. A. Raymer also gave an overview of the demographics of the participants. Most of the students come from CALS and employees are primarily UAW service workers. However, if there are more students than UAW applicants, they do work with other employees across the university. For employees, CLASP offers core subjects including Adult Basic Education and College Course Study Support. Employees can request to study anything, and computer skills and English improvement services are the most requested. While ESL and English Conversation are both requested frequently, the program has not had the bandwidth to equip students to be teachers of English. A. Raymer also noted that because of its work across diversity, CLASP was awarded the 2019 Perkins Prize for Interracial and Intercultural Peace and Harmony. They were nominated by custodian Holly Austin and recognized for fostering meaningful relationships across differences.
 - iv. A. Raymer provided a [link](#) to a short film about CLASP. She also introduced Sasha Endo who serves as the Liaison for CLASP, facilitating relations among employees, their supervisors, and students. S. Barry is their part-time Program Coordinator and Manager. CLASP also has an arrangement with Facilities for a custodian to have a Professional Development Internship with CLASP for 6 hours per week. A. Raymer is the only full-time faculty.

- v. A. Raymer noted misalignments with the program. For example, there is a misalignment between CLASP's funding and location. The program is located in the Engaged Cornell Hub (EC Hub). However, the EC Hub by design is an expressly student-centered space and employees do not venture into it. CLASP is expected to not only take part in EC Hub events and initiatives, but to pay a cost-share for things that are illegal for CLASP to pay for under its funding restrictions. A. Raymer also noted a misalignment between the nature of the director's responsibilities. As the courses in the adult and lifelong learning curriculum do not fulfill requirements for any majors, CLASP has no natural student stream. In addition, the configuration it takes to keep the courses viable in the academic fabric requires a lot of work staying involved in the department and college affairs. A. Raymer noted that her position is an academic position and is up for promotion. However, their funding from the Employee Benefit Pool is limited to activities which benefit employees. She is in a situation where she needs to be a good academic citizen and fulfill expectations of teaching, student advising, service, and scholarship. However, that is not what the Employee Benefit Pool supports. Allowable costs include staff compensation, event costs, educational resources, and printing costs. Nonallowable costs include expenses that directly benefit students, such as services, refreshments, office supplies, and physical space. The Employee Benefit Pool has been carrying the salary of the faculty position in the interim since the closing of the Education Department. A. Raymer noted that will be very challenging to continue. She emphasized that it would be appropriate for the faculty position to be funded with academic monies.
- vi. A. Raymer asked for ideas about establishing a student stream, obtaining a commitment of academic funding for the faculty position, and relocating the CLASP program to an appropriate location.
- vii. S. Endo shared that CLASP has provided formative experiences for students and valuable learning for employees. She stated that they have worked with employees who did not know how to use Workday and did not know they had a Cornell e-mail address.
- viii.B. Goodell asked what changes the program has done in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - 1. S. Endo replied that she has customized resources to each employee. CLASP cannot require students to continue. She has emailed each employee with online resources that match the topics they were learning. However, they are finding that employees who are learning how to use computers are having a difficult time.

IV. Committee Reports

- a. Executive Committee
 - i. H. Depew gave an overview of the prior COVID-19 forum. They received a great turnout and there were a lot of questions that were unable to be addressed. She is sifting through questions and adding it to the list for the upcoming COVID-19 forum.
- b. Communications and Awards Committee
 - i. C. Sanzone stated the committee has not met due to scheduling conflicts. She noted it seems some of the initiatives the committee was working towards may not happen. She highlighted the [communications](#) sent out by Provost Michael Kotlikoff that morning suspending discretionary spending. C. Sanzone stated she is working to post uplifting stories on Facebook.
 - ii. A. Miller added she had a constituent reach out to her regarding finding a way for the EA representing the greater staff population to thank the Cornell administration. Suggestions included creating a website page or making a Facebook post to allow staff members to comment. The Cornell administration executive team is working around the clock.
 - iii. K. Barth suggested jointly passing a resolution. He put a draft in Box.
- c. Education Committee
 - i. M. Benda stated that the committee discussed the emails they have received for online learning opportunities. She asked C. Sanzone to make a Facebook post promoting CULearn.
 - ii. E. Miller added she participated in a CULearn webinar entitled "Connected Cornell: Community Chat for Staff."

- d. Welfare Committee
 - i. K. Mahoney relayed the committee has nothing to report.
- e. Benefits and Policy Committee
 - i. B. Goodell stated he met with Associate VP of H.R. Allan Bishop, H.R. Subject Specialist Lauran Jacoby, and Director of Benefit Services Gordon Barger to discuss the bereavement policy. They answered some questions and dispelled the notion that Cornell can decide what its insurance will do because it is self-insured.
- f. Elections Committee
 - i. J. Withers stated that she is continuing to work on the resolution to postpone elections. The committee will also discuss the seats as they are now as the EA will not be doing elections soon.

V. New Business

- a. Open Discussion
 - i. Chair Howell noted the [communications](#) that went out regarding the management of the financial impact of COVID-19, which includes a hiring freeze. It is likely there will be new questions and anxieties in response to that email. There will be another all-staff Q&A forum with the university administration. He also thanked K. Barth for taking initiative in the UA and working on a resolution to thank the university leadership. He stated he would like the EA, at minimum, to do a resolution in recognition of the leadership's efforts as quickly as possible to show appreciation.
 - 1. K. Barth noted he copied the initial draft of the UA COVID-19 Response Recognition to the EA Box Resolutions folder. He asked for comments and additional language to be submitted through the Box Comments feature.
 - ii. K. Barth brought up the Cornell Circulator. The SA passed its resolution on February 27 and the GPSA has reached out to him. He stated wanting to take some action by the end of April and suggested having a vote to see if the recommendation will go to the President. However, he understands it may not be a great time to push the recommendation out and if it does go someplace, it may not be taken seriously.
 - iii. L. Taylor gave an update of the UA Codes and Judicial Committee (CJC). The CJC is meeting every week. They finished the first part of the student Code of Conduct violation section and are working on the procedural section outlining what will happen when a violation occurs. The violations section will be sent to the UA for review. They have a draft from the Office of University Counsel and another document they have been working from. They are focusing on blending the different approaches. The plan is to have the procedural section done within the next three weeks, or before the end of April for certain.
 - 1. J. Michael shared concerns about public comment engagement as no one is on campus. When public comment opens, she asked the EA for staff support as a critical mass of public comment is necessary to move it forward.
 - 2. L. Taylor added that the feedback they received was that the Code of Conduct was not something that could be delayed due to the COVID-19 crisis.
 - iv. B. Fortenberry stated that while reading through COVID-19 forum questions, it was clear to him that essential employees is the largest topic. He suggested the EA consider addressing it.
 - 1. H. Depew noted there were a lot of questions on that topic. She asked if the EA wanted to put out a message to essential staff or ask VP Mary Opperman to address the issue in the opening statement of the next forum.
 - 2. Chair Howell suggested speaking with VP Opperman and the panelists offline. There may be a benefit to the EA highlighting what it knows and sees as a critical issue.
 - v. J. Duong stated he received an email from a constituent regarding the Transportation Department's response to parking permit changes. He noted it as a potential issue for the EA to pursue. Parking enforcement other than handicap and emergency services parking have been cancelled. The only way for employees to stop payroll installments or receive a pro-rated refund are for faculty and staff to mail their parking passes back in. J. Duong noted that mailing the pass

back in seems like an added bureaucratic mess for the department as well as a way to discourage it.

1. B. Fortenberry added that if employees mail their permits back in, there is no guarantee of receiving the same permit in the future.
 2. Chair Howell asked J. Duong to take point on the issue and find out more information.
- vi. B. Goodell reiterated VP Opperman's comment during the COVID-19 forum of how Cornell does not have essential employees but essential functions. He also relayed that employees have contacted him with questions regarding the operational changes due to COVID-19. He noted that the last time Cornell implemented a hiring freeze, it also introduced an early retirement package. He questioned whether there will be an early retirement package again and if Cornell is looking at reductions in staff.
1. J. Cooley added that Facilities Management will be laying off 86 tradespeople. They are all temporary workers. However, with the halt to construction mandate, the department and/or university has made the decision to let them all go. One of the workers has worked at Cornell for 24 years. He stated there was no consideration to whether the person has been at Cornell for a long time or whether the work is still something that needs to be done to maintain the campus.
 2. Chair Howell asked EA members with questions regarding the university communications to send them to H. Depew.

VI. Adjournment

- a. Chair Howell adjourned the meeting at 1:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Catherine Tran
Clerk of the Assembly