



# Cornell University Employee Assembly

**Cornell Employee Assembly**  
Minutes of the December 18, 2019 Meeting  
12:15-1:30 PM  
Physical Science Building 401

## I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. Chair Howell called the meeting to order at 12:18pm.
- b. *Members Present:* A. Howell, H. Depew, E. Miller, K. Barth, A. Sieverding, A. Haenlin-Mott, J. Withers, H. Sheldon, C. Sanzone, A. Miller, J. Creque, J. Townley, B. Goodell, G. Giambattista, W. Treat
- c. *Members Absent:* K. Mahoney, B. Fortenberry, K. Supron, K. LoParco, D. Hiner, R. Lochner, L. Taylor, A. Brooks, M. Newhart, R. Miegler, S. Barry, T. Chams, A. McCabe, C. Wiggers, M. Benda, J. Michael, J. Cooley, E. Ivory, J. Duong

## II. Approval of Minutes

- a. Motion to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2019 meeting – **approved** with no dissent

## III. Business of the Day

- i. Priority Poll Review: Presentation by C. Sanzone and H. Depew along with Q&A
  1. C. Sanzone and H. Depew gave an overview of the 2019 Priorities Poll Summary Report. In Fall 2019, the EA conducted a poll of Cornell staff members, asking “What do you think should be the EA’s top priority this year?”. The EA received 618 responses, representing about 8% of the staff body. This response rate was 176% greater than the response rate from 2017 when the EA conducted a similar poll. 321 comments were submitted in the poll. The two priorities that received the most votes were: “Employee health and wellbeing” and “Parking and transportation.” H. Depew outlined employee suggestions for improvement by category. For health and wellbeing, some suggestions included offering fitness classes, mobile mammograms on campus, and extending health/wellness options to remote employees. Moving forward, committee chairs will be given detailed commentary from the poll to work through the feedback within their committees.
  2. H. Depew addressed concerns regarding a disconnect certain units, such as the College of Veterinary Medicine, may feel. Last year, the EA partnered with HR to hold sessions entitled Staff Conversations. During a session at the College of Veterinary Medicine, staff mentioned that they did not have a dedicated space for lunch. Through a partnership with the College of Veterinary Medicine, they were able to find and dedicate a break room. The EA provided them with a coffee machine. As the EA receives feedback, it will look to partner with other units to support staff members.
  3. C. Sanzone noted that a lot of the topics covered in the comments intersected. There were a few suggestions to better distribute the wellness and fitness offerings across campus. This topic is one where comments tied together health and wellbeing with parking and transportation. Staff members who want to go somewhere during their lunch breaks, such as to a fitness class, reported not being able to do so due to the time constraints of getting around campus and back in time.
  4. H. Depew introduced the transportation theme. Parking, transportation, and TCAT issues continue to be a problem. Individuals have reported that these problems impact not just work, but wellness. Others have also mentioned needs for inter-campus transportation and streamlining transportation. H. Depew outlined some suggestions, including finding a way to deal with temporary overflow parking for weekday events, investigating intra-campus transportation options to connect the central campus with outlying areas, and looking into

income-based fee structures for parking permits. H. Depew recommended thinking about how the EA can communicate some of the suggestions. In addition, existing resources already cover some of the recommendations listed and she suggested featuring some free resources in the newsletters.

5. H. Depew introduced the next theme of staff education and professional development opportunities. She highlighted having more opportunities and better ways to publicize existing opportunities. Some suggestions include increased cross-training and mentorship opportunities, allowing staff to participate in learning opportunities not necessarily job-related, and having a budget for each department to spend towards professional development. H. Depew noted that some of these suggestions exist in some form, and she suggested improving on them or having conversations on how they can do so. Another key theme in employee feedback was that supervisor support was key to employee wellbeing. Many employees say their supervisor is not supportive and individuals have mentioned not being able to take advantage of classes. H. Depew acknowledged that supervisor support can vary from unit to unit. Some suggestions for improvement include a digital dashboard showing a range of options. H. Depew noted that VP Mary Opperman sent out an email regarding restructuring online resources for better access to opportunities. She suggested talking with VP Opperman to learn about the initiatives underway.
6. A. Sieverding highlighted the lack of uniform availability of opportunities to staff. There are different applications of available resources by different supervisors and individuals. She has heard this problem brought up in numerous areas, such as benefits and release time. She suggested finding incentives or implementing requirements for supervisors to permit or encourage employees to find resources.  
J. Townley added that the Geneva campus was listed as having non-adequate wellness offerings. The campus has been working on the issue. Last week, she worked with a place outside of Cornell that offered fitness and yoga options. A carpool system was set up. J. Townley suggested looking into implementing a similar system.
7. Chair Howell asked the EA to view the Priorities Poll results as another resource. H. Depew will be working with Director of HR Analytics Linda Croll Howell. He encouraged EA members to find creative ways to get some ideas out of the results.
8. H. Depew noted that the report should not be shared outside of the EA for now. If the EA finds there is a need to share the information with other units, they can have a conversation on how it should be disseminated. The hope for the EA is to read through the report and formulate a plan for some of the issues.

#### **IV. Committee Reports**

- a. Communications & Awards Committee
  - i. C. Sanzone noted her goal was to aim for a higher response rate the next time the EA does the Priorities Poll again. Her plan is to share snapshots of upcoming progress or discussions that is happening or will happen in committees. For the Spring, she wants to convey that the EA is working on some of these priorities. When employees see that the EA is acting on the responses, they will be even more eager to follow up when asked for more feedback. She is finalizing the end of the year newsletter, which will include a brief summary of the results. The committee also met last week and decided to order grocery-style tote bags for promotional items. She is in contact with vendors for pricing and options. The committee is also working on opening up the George Peter Award for the Spring.
- b. Education Committee
  - i. J. Withers relayed that representatives from the Community Learning and Service Partnership (CLASP) program met with the committee and presented.
- c. Welfare Committee
  - i. Committee has not met.
- d. Benefits and Policy Committee

- i. A. Sieverding shared that the committee met with Associate VP of HR Allan Bishop and others, including Director of Benefit Services and Administration Gordon Barger, Director of Compensation Kim Babuka, and Senior Consultant Lauren Jacoby. The team provided updates on the committee's inquiries over the past year. K. Babuka provided details on career movement statistics at Cornell and demonstrated that the school is within the benchmarks established by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). The committee also received an update on equitable hiring processes when considering job requirements and experience. Concerns were raised about whether someone with a Bachelor's degree would be preferred regardless of experience. The team debunked that notion to a degree and stated that they do try to be as equitable and inclusive as possible. However, A. Sieverding noted that she was surprised to find that local units could list job descriptions with basic requirements that exceeds that at the university level. In addition, job positions are not always posted. The team also provided an update on the paid time off survey that T. Chams had been discussing last semester. A. Bishop responded that there is no current dollar figure and is working on establishing that. His team is looking into the cost impact and does not have anything to report yet. While there is no timeframe for providing a response, they will continue working on it. They also discussed the possibility of broadening the definition of how family structure is defined in the bereavement policy. The committee ran out of time and did not finish its discussion, but will continue it at the next meeting.
- ii. E. Miller added that it was a positive meeting as HR had heard their concerns and is actively working on them.
- iii. J. Townley asked whether the date of December 24 being added to the Holiday Break has ever been discussed. She received many comments surrounding that issue and noted that other colleges, such as Ithaca College, have the 24<sup>th</sup> included in their breaks.
  1. A. Miller responded that there is a policy covered under Holiday Break allowing six days off. If Christmas Eve falls on a Monday or Friday, they consider the costs of opening the campus up for a day when a lot of the staff will not be there. However, if Christmas Eve falls on any other day of the week, it is not equitable to give staff the day off. This year, they had two days on campus and staff came to work for those two days. On the topic of religion, if they give Christmas Eve off, it will open up other doors with other religious communities on campus.
- e. Executive Committee
  - i. H. Depew reiterated that the Priorities Poll results are out. She asked EA members to get in touch with any questions. H. Depew also reminded the EA that President Martha Pollack will be coming to the EA on February 5, 2020. As they go through committee reports, she asked the EA to use the information from the feedback to support or drive the conversations. In addition, the EA does not have any presenters on the upcoming schedule. She asked EA members with suggestions for presenters to reach out. The committee will continue working with L. Croll Howell to determine next steps with the Priorities Poll results.
- f. Elections Committee
  - i. Nothing to report.

## V. New Business

- a. Open Discussion
  - i. K. Barth announced that the UA Codes and Judicial Committee completed its first draft of the Campus Code of Conduct. It is posted on the UA website and is open for public comment. K. Barth lauded the completion as a major milestone that has been in the works for a long time.
  - ii. C. Sanzone suggested sending the link out with a summary of what has been going on to the staff in a newsletter.
    1. G. Giambattista added the UA is the body to put out the draft for public comment. There will be robust communications about the changes after the break so the community has an opportunity to review it.

- iii. J. Creque asked for an update about the Talent Marketplace feature on Workday where employees can find opportunities for different skillsets.
  - 1. Chair Howell noted that the feature is out and open for everyone.
- iv. J. Withers brought up A. Haenlin-Mott's point from a previous meeting regarding having a place for essential employees to spend the night during dangerous weather conditions.
  - 1. C. Sanzone noted the issue would be unit-specific. She highlighted the importance of ensuring that people are not taking unnecessary risks. She also wondered whether there is a number to call or anything they can do if staff are stuck on campus. If there is anything to publicize, she would be happy to cover it.
  - 2. Chair Howell noted this would be a good project to revisit.

**VI. Adjournment**

- a. Chair Howell adjourned the meeting at 1:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Catherine Tran*

Clerk of the Assembly