



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly
Minutes of the April 15, 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, A. McCabe, J. Michael, R. Miegler, E. Miller, A. Miller, M. Newhart, C. Sanzone, H. Sheldon, K. Supron, L. Taylor, J. Townley, C. Tran, W. Treat, C. Wiggers, J. Withers
- c. *Members Absent:* T. Chams, E. Ivory

II. Approval of Minutes

- a. Motion to approve the minutes of the March 30, 2020 – **approved** with no dissent

III. Business of the Day

- a. Accreditation Committee: Michael Fontaine and Marin Clarkberg
 - i. M. Clarkberg introduced her and M. Fontaine as the co-chairs of Cornell's reaccreditation effort to keep the university in good standing with its accrediting body. She stated that accreditation previously occurred every 10 years, but is now on an eight-year cycle. They are coming up against a visit to the Cornell campus hopefully in October. She explained that university accreditation is a process of peer review carried out through a private, nonprofit organization instead of a government entity. The rationale behind this is to keep the government out of evaluations. They work with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Accreditation is voluntary, but it is required in order for students to gain access to federal funding, including federal grants and loan programs. Cornell has been accredited since 1921, and the review covers the entire university, including Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City and instructional activities around the world.
 - ii. M. Clarkberg noted the seven standards in the accreditation process.
 1. Mission and Goals
 2. Ethics and Integrity
 3. Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience
 4. Support of the Student Experience
 5. Educational Effectiveness Assessment
 6. Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement
 7. Governance, Leadership, and Administration
 - iii. M. Clarkberg gave an overview of the committee's timeline with a goal of having a team of peer evaluators visiting the Ithaca campus from October 11-14. As preparation, the committee completed a 180-page self-study that is posted online. They are working to incorporate comments. M. Clarkberg added that if they had been on the regular timeline, the committee would have been doing outreach now. While the rollout has derailed

alongside the original timeline, the committee will be proceeding to seek more community input down the line. The committee also expects to add an appendix on their response to COVID-19.

- iv. A. Howell asked M. Clarkberg how she foresees the overall timeline being delayed or altered.
 - 1. M. Clarkberg responded that the strong preference was to stay with the same timeline if possible. If they cannot have the guests on campus in October, they may be weighing what it means to have a virtual visit.
- v. H. Depew noted that it is unlikely Cornell will lose its accreditation. However, she asked if there were instances of other institutions that have lost accreditation.
 - 1. M. Clarkberg replied that some colleges do lose accreditation. Last time Cornell did accreditation 10 years ago, the outcome was that we had to follow up with a report two years later addressing student learning outcomes and progress. That is not an unlikely outcome this time. Below that, colleges can be put on warning or notice, or have to do in-person visits.
- b. EA R6: Postponing Spring 2020 elections and Extending Expiring Seats
 - i. J. Withers introduced EA R6 to postpone elections until the Fall. The resolution also includes a task for her to keep an eye on the operating status of the university and make recommendations as needed. The Elections Committee also seeks to establish a Membership Task Force to review terms, seats, best use of At-Large seats, and appropriate total size and make recommendations no later than 12 weeks after passage of the resolution. J. Withers explained that this was in response to J. Duong's questions about representing the College of Business and EA discussions a month ago about the at-large seats and the size of the assembly as a whole along with other issues.
 - ii. E. Miller suggested introducing the task force in a separate resolution from the timeline of the elections. She added it seemed like a separate issue, and one they have discussed in multiple EA meetings. While delaying the election is something the EA can vote on now, the task force is something that can be developed. E. Miller also suggested looking into a representative for employees who have been at Cornell for over 20 years.
 - 1. J. Withers noted she has the 20 Years Representative on her list.
 - 2. A. Howell stated that under normal circumstances, he would agree with E. Miller's point. However, they are in a situation where their workload and ability to meet is made more difficult. The EA only has a few meetings left, so he supports combining the two issues.
 - iii. A. Howell made a call to the question for EA R6.
 - 1. Seconded by K. Barth.
 - 2. EA R6 **passed** unanimously with a vote of 25 in favor.
- c. EA R7: Bereavement Policy
 - i. B. Goodell introduced EA R7 to add a more inclusive definition of family to the University's Funeral Leave Policy 6.9, pg. 15 and to incorporate a reasonable number of days off for travel to and from funeral services. The resolution seeks to have the policy consider surrogate parents as immediate family members. It also seeks to give employees a maximum of five paid time off days for funerals of immediate relatives who are more than 100 miles away, and a maximum of three for the funeral of other relatives who are more than 100 miles away. He noted concerns that the bereavement policy did not account for today's family structures. The Committee met with constituents and university administrators to talk about family structures. The committee

also looked at and compared policies at other institutions. For example, Harvard's policy allows longer time for emotional difficulty and travel logistics.

- ii. J. Withers asked for the rationale behind not extending the definition of family members past surrogate parents.
 - 1. B. Goodell replied that the main focus was on surrogate parents and the committee was weighing how much change they could realistically make. However, it is something they could discuss.
- iii. E. Miller noted that she is in favor of the policies from other universities including household members as immediate family. It is important to note that oftentimes people are not necessarily married but are living together in a committed relationship.
- iv. J. Cooley stated his opposition to changing the policy. The policy is not accompanied by required documentation and his concern is that it expanding definitions may elicit further misuse.
 - 1. B. Goodell noted incidents of abuse is very hard to find out and even with the current policy, they cannot tell if there is abuse or not.
 - 2. K. Loparco supported the resolution as a way to level the playing field for employees in the face of unequal supervisors. Education for supervisors is subjective. She urged that they need to set a precedent showing they are an inclusive institution. If employees identify a family member who may not be a blood relative, it should be respected.
 - 3. A. Haenlin-Mott added there is a consistency issue across the board. There is a level of potential abuse for all policies, but she supported giving the benefit of the doubt to employees and doing what they can to hold them accountable.
 - 4. J. Cooley responded that regarding consistency, allowing interpretation will allow for more inconsistency. The policy applies to a huge body, and his reasoning for consistency is to not make many changes.
 - 5. B. Goodell stated that this issue came up when he met with Cornell administration to discuss the implementation of such a policy. Senior Consultant in H.R. Luran Jacoby noted things H.R. could do at their level to ensure such a policy could be more universally implemented and educated on.
 - 6. C. Wiggers made a motion to table EA R7.
 - a. Seconded by K. Barth.
 - b. Vote to table EA R7 – **tabled** with a vote of 19-0-1.
- d. COVID-19 Forum Discussion
 - i. A. Howell stated a decision was made in consultation with VP Mary Opperman to pause the COVID-19 Forum discussions. They will see if there will be new information and discuss new ideas, including whether they should consider topical forums.
 - ii. M. Benda stated she would like to see another forum soon. She has concerns with furloughing and financial problems with the college.
 - iii. E. Miller noted another forum if there is no new information to share may not be worth it as a lot of questions are being repeated. She added that she would like to see more direct interaction during the forums but does not have a suggestion on how to do so. The staged meeting of the questions seems premeditated and she would like to see some sort of more open interaction.
 - 1. A. Howell stated the format is partially due to problems, such as bombing, profanity, and disruptions. However, he can ask if there is a way to make it more interactive.

- iv. W. Treat asked for a follow-up on information for questions that had been asked, such as sending in the parking pass to Transportation.
 - 1. A. Howell noted H. Depew will be addressing that topic during Committee Reports.
- v. L. Taylor asked if it is possible to be in regular contact with VP Opperman and ask her to schedule something when they do have more information.
 - 1. A. Howell relayed that VP Opperman is committed to bringing new information as soon as they have it. They can ask for a specific timeframe on when they may do so, but he is unsure if they will give one.
- vi. H. Depew added that it does not seem VP Opperman is planning on cancel any future forums.
- vii. A. Haenlin-Mott noted that the EA is only one mode of communication for VP Opperman. Implementation will be multi-modal as well.

IV. Committee Reports

- a. Executive Committee
 - i. H. Depew noted there was an inquiry on whether a blanket suspension of payroll deductions for parking permits would be possible. After working with Director of Transportation Services Bridgette Brady, VP of Facilities & Campus Services Rick Burgess communicated it was not possible to suspend all permits for payment holders due to revenue issues, which covers salaries, TCAT payments, and garage debt payments. The deadline in March to submit permits will be extended to May. For those renewing in June, deductions will be in August.
 - 1. K. Mahoney added Transportation has agreed to not exempt staff from taking their places back in the lot if they choose to turn in their parking permits now.
 - 2. B. Fortenberry commented that putting an unfair burden on staff to pay for salaries is an appalling answer. He asked to continue the conversation.
- b. Communications and Awards Committee
 - i. Ran out of time at end of meeting.
- c. Education Committee
 - i. Ran out of time at end of meeting.
- d. Welfare Committee
 - i. Ran out of time at end of meeting.
- e. Benefits and Policy Committee
 - i. Ran out of time at end of meeting.
- f. Elections Committee
 - i. Ran out of time at end of meeting.

V. New Business

- a. Open Discussion
 - i. Ran out of time at end of meeting.

VI. Adjournment

- a. Chair Howell adjourned the meeting at 1:34pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Catherine Tran
Clerk of the Assembly