



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly Minutes of the June 17, 2020 Meeting 12:15-1:30 PM Zoom

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. Chair A. Howell called the meeting to order at 12:15pm.
- b. Additionally, due to several non-EA members joining the meeting, Chair Howell asked assembly members to rename their Zoom display name with the letters “EA” in front of their name so he could easily distinguish between member and non-members.
- c. *Members Present:* S. Barry, K. Barth, A. Brooks, M. Benda, 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, C. Wiggers, J. Withers
- d. *Members Absent:* T. Chams, E. Ivory, A. McCabe, V. McAuley

II. Approval of Minutes

- a. Motion to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2020—approved with no dissent

III. Business of the Day

- a. Discussion about the 6/9/20 EA meeting and Staff Feedback
 - i. A. Howell informed the members that the Office of the Assemblies was going to share a link for this meeting’s meeting packet which includes minutes from June 9, 2020 meeting, as well as a summary of feedback received.
 - ii. K. LoParco asked if individuals could please rename themselves to display their name rather than their phone number or net ID in order to be identifiable for speaker’s list.
 - iii. K. Supron expressed her thanks to the Employee Assembly Executive Committee and the Office of the Assemblies for allowing us to invite fellow staff members to participate in the discussion. It is a testament of the EA being a conduit of communication to staff members during a difficult time.
 - iv. L. Taylor concurred with K. Supron’s gratitude. She also stated that she reviewed the feedback on the website and questioned whether or not the assembly would be able to effectively address the feedback during the context of this meeting.
 - v. A. Howell responded that it was his understanding that is what they were going to do as a group during today’s meeting. He also stated that the nature of everything right now is so fluid that there one has to balance expediency with thoroughness.
 - vi. J. Withers stated that it would be great if the EA found a way to better communicate that meetings are happening and how staff can find them. She suggested working with C. Sanzone about something going in the EA newsletter.
 - vii. A. Howell responded that there is definite interest in the meetings and it is a challenge when things get rescheduled or moved. He did express appreciation for everyone’s flexibility and getting the information out to their constituents and indicated that meeting information could be sent via e-blasts in addition to being posted on the EA Facebook page and regular newsletter then deferred to C. Sanzone for further details.

- viii. C. Sanzone stating that the meeting on June 9, 2020 was a bit unique in that there aren't normally scheduling changes or meetings being pushed up and so late in the day. She then added that the next newsletter is being held while awaiting confirmation of a series of staff forums that are being scheduled during the summer. Finally, she acknowledged the suggestion from the Office of the Assemblies to remind individuals of the opt-in mailing on the OA website and asked members to promote that to their constituents. Anyone who subscribes to that list gets agenda notifications and information about any changes in meetings details.
- ix. A. Howell inquired if it would be possible for the communications committee to come up with a very simple digital flyer that promotes the list so that members could share with their networks and contacts, given the interest that has been generated.
- x. B. Goodell stated that the Benefits and Policy Committee met on June 16, 2020 and had a discussion about the Faculty Senate resolution. He further stated that some committee members felt that the EA should something similar and that some of the committee members have already started writing a resolution. He indicated he is in favor of drafting a resolution in support of opposition of salary cuts, retirement cuts and furloughs instead of layoffs.
- xi. B. Goodell also stated that there are many alternatives that we should tap into first and he thinks that there are assets that are being tapped into. With regard to the faculty senate proposals, there are some concerns he had with some of the comments and they are worth reading. With regard to the feedback from the June 9th presentation, he agreed with L. Taylor that there isn't time to go through it all during this meeting but maybe in the future.
- xii. B. Goodell also expressed concern and agreed with J. Duong's statement from the last meeting about what happened in 2009 and lessons learned. He stated that he has heard Mary mention that she's seen the staff numbers from 2009 return; however, he doesn't think all those staff members have returned for frontline workers. There have been some positions created, but they are still down 40 to 60 people in building care alone and those numbers have not returned. He feels there are still a lot of unanswered questions.
- xiii. A. Howell indicated that the Faculty Senate resolution is on the agenda under new business; however, it dovetails with the current discussion and that the assembly should continue this discussion.
- xiv. C. Sanzone offered a couple of thoughts on L. Taylor's comment about what the EA should do with all of this. She proposed a separate or in tandem with the resolution for the EA and additionally a working group to go through the feedback received and write a response to be presented to the EA at the next meeting. This would take into account the feedback received from staff and break down the solutions that were presented along with concerns or other nuances.
- xv. C. Sanzone additionally commented on why is only the staff targeted for salary cuts. She understood the reasons provided and that faculty promotions and tenure decisions would move forward as scheduled. However, when talking about broad across the board salary cuts, we're all employees of the university. So what was the staff only targeted and if that were spread out, it would be a smaller impact on each individual.
- xvi. C. Sanzone also commented on B. Goodell's point about how staff has grown back to its size. She was concerned about some of these comments that it may be perceived as just extra people and unnecessary positions and maybe there are some efficiencies that need to be looked for. She had concern reconciling that with feedback from staff stating that they feel overworked. They've never had so much on their plate, just more and more

with the whole “do more with less” approach. She would like to figure out where people have been added and if there are certain areas where we need more help and to target them so that people can be moved around.

- xvii. C. Sanzone also mentioned that some of the concern in the feedback regarding the retirement cuts and how the older staff members may be particularly put at a disadvantage as they are on their last few years of retirement gains and saving for their nest egg.
- xviii. A. Howell thanks C. Sanzone for her comments and reiterated that it would be helpful to assign a working group to give responses to the proposed cost savings measures in a step by step breakdown either in tandem with or separate from the Faculty Senate resolution. He also mentioned specific responses to the staffing size comments. He stated that these proposals would be implemented by the university soon so the EA would need to decide on a deadline for a response to the proposed cost saving measures.
- xix. R. Lochner echoed C. Sanzone’s suggestion of a working group to deep dive into the feedback. He also mentioned some of the feedback that he has received from his constituents about the retirement cuts and that even through the projections were provided by Paul Streeter, there is still uncertainty with what’s going to official so he suggested some kind of concerned contingency plan just for moving forward.
- xx. H. Depew informed the EA that the Faculty Senate was voting on a proposed resolution today in support of continued employment on all staff that would maintain the staff employment level. Additionally, this resolution will ask for a commitment from senior leadership to make the necessary changes and implement different strategies to ensure that staff are protected throughout this difficult time.
- xxi. H. Depew stated that due to the staff feedback received, a similar resolution or a resolution in support of the Faculty Senate resolution would be very important. She also stated that timing is of the essence as the next EA meeting is on July 1 and the board of trustees is meeting on June 26 so it has a short turnaround time.
- xxii. H. Depew indicated that she has shared this information with Bob Howarth, Chair of the University Assembly, and Pilar Thompson, Vice Chair of the University Assembly, and they may show support for it as well.
- xxiii. H. Depew mentioned that some of the comments and feedback on the Faculty Senate resolution indicate that there might be issues with how to implement and maintain certain levels of employment and that it reduced the degree of freedom to make budgetary cuts to allow the university to move forward. There is also some feedback with regard to how the colleges would implement this policy if staff levels are to be maintained throughout this crisis.
- xxiv. A. Howell reminded the assembly that there is capability to add additional meetings as needed to discuss these issues.
- xxv. B. Fortenberry reiterated his concerns voiced during the meeting with Paul Streeter that a lot of the individuals listed have a huge impact on his organization and Student and Campus Life as well as others. He mentioned that replacing the words Faculty Senate with Employee Assembly really doesn’t address the concern as it only asks the university to consider remaining employed staff.
- xxvi. B. Fortenberry also agreed that the retirement fund and reduction in salaries is huge and that the furloughs would greatly impact people and there is no scenario at this time that we know that those who will get furloughed come fall semester would receive any assistance.

- xxvii. A. Howell confirmed B. Fortenberry's suggestion that the EA thank the Faculty Senate for their work and effort, yet develop a different resolution from the EA.
- xxviii. M. Benda asked if anyone knew if there were going to be faculty cuts like staff. Her perspective is that were given the same presentation but she wanted to know if anyone knew for sure if the cuts were going to affect faculty as well.
- xxix. A. Howell stated that the Faculty Senate was provided with the same presentation and information during their meeting on June 9 as the Employee Assembly was given.
- xxx. M. Benda asked that they would also be having salary cuts or a retirement reduction.
- xxxi. A. Howell believed that is correct and asked the other members if anyone can speak to that.
- xxxii. K. Mahoney stated that the information was online.
- xxxiii. B. Goodell stated in the brief overview of budget shortfalls that it included both faculty and staff in both the retirement and salary cuts.
- xxxiv. M. Benda supported an EA resolution and would like some sort of recognition for all the comments that people took, just some sort of acknowledgment. There was an overwhelming response that people want a choice of whether they get a salary reduction or retirement reduction.
- xxxv. B. Goodell informed the assembly that J. Duong and R. Miegl have already started work on a resolution using the faculty resolution as a guideline.
- xxxvi. A. Howell stated that there were no more individuals on the speakers list. He informed the assembly that he, H. Depew, and Jeremy Kruser have a leadership meeting with Mary Opperman on June 18th and they will be 100% clarity on the status of the cuts and if they are holistic to the entire population.
- xxxvii. H. Depew stated that there was some conversation in chat with regard to SIP and then salary cuts and reminded the assembly that endowed and contract college employees operate differently. There won't be a reduction in retirement to contract college employees because the state provides funding so that is the reasoning for the salary cut instead.
- xxxviii. A. Howell clarified that a path forward would include the option of creating a resolution outlining specific responses and thanked C. Sanzone for the reminder that a resolution could be voted on electronically. An alternative option would be to adopt the Faculty Senate resolution with EA information and move it forward that way.
- xxxix. A. Howell recognized that H. Depew and R. Lochner are willing to be a part of a working group to review the feedback. He received confirmation from B. Goodell about a Benefit and Policy Committee meeting to discuss and work on a resolution.
- xl. A. Howell asked for a vote from the assembly if they are in agreement with the Benefits and Policy Committee taking the lead on this —approved with no dissent.
- xli. A. Haenlin-Mott provided clarification for the non-EA members that BPC stands for Benefits and Policy Committee

IV. New Business

a. Open Discussion

- i. A. Howell informed the members about the Faculty Senate resolution supporting staff and staff jobs and asked the Office of the Assemblies to provide the link to the resolution in the Zoom chat.
- ii. A. Howell stated that this goes in tandem with what the Benefits and Policy Committee is doing; however, this is a good time to affirm support for their resolution.

- iii. C. Sanzone expressed concern that she would need more information about how faculty and staff are being treated with regard to the different cost saving measures before she could endorse anything.
- iv. R. Miegler stated that he and J. Duong were working off the language of the Faculty Senate resolution and adding information about salary benefits as well.
- v. A. Howell indicated that a complimentary resolution would invoke some sort of affirmation in that the EA is in agreement with the sentiment of protecting staff jobs.
- vi. E. Edmondson, a member of the audience, asked about the time for the next EA meeting.
- vii. A. Howell stated that they would have to wait and see when the Benefits and Policy Committee would have a draft resolution and response ready and then schedule something as soon as possible after.
- viii. A. Howell stated to the members of the audience to join the EA listserv to get information about meetings and events.
- ix. D. Bazley, another member of the audience, stated that he has not been keeping up with the issues or proposed actions; however, he wondered if it might be an option for everyone to take a 1% salary cut to make up for the shortfall with minimal disruption to anyone.
- x. A. Howell response that he believed that the across the board cut proposals apply to faculty and staff and that he would get confirmation on that. He also stated that he has not heard of a broad base percentage cut to salaries in general.
- xi. K. Tannenbaum, an audience member, admitted that while she knew the EA existed, she didn't particularly pay attention to what it did or how much impact it has on the university until she brought a policy concern to the Benefits and Policy Committee and became a committee member. She would advocate that broader reach be given to staff as a whole, giving the example of the webinars with Mary Opperman.
- xii. E. Edmondson suggested the possibility of surrogates in each unit who could disseminate information to make sure all are participants.
- xiii. A. Howell recognized the suggestion and informed the audience that all of the EA members represent a college or unit/division and to reach out to the appropriate EA member for more information.

V. Adjournment

- a. Chair Howell adjourned the meeting at 1:39pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Wendy Treat

Senior Coordinator, Office of the Assemblies