



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly

Minutes of the March 17, 2021 Meeting 12:15-1:30 PM
Zoom

I. Call to Order

- a. Chair H. Depew called the meeting to order at 12:15pm.

II. Roll Call

Members Present [24]: J. Cannella, M. Cherry, J. Creque, H. Depew, J. Duong, B. Fisher, B. Fortenberry, B. Goodell, A. Haenlin-Mott, E. Ivory, R. Lochner, M. LoParco, V. McAuley, J. Michael, A. Miller, E. Miller, M. Newhart, M. Podolec, N. Siadat, K. Supron, L. Taylor, J. Townley, J. Withers, L. Zacharias
Members Absent [4]: S. Barry, D. Howell, K. Mahoney, K. Tannenbaum

III. Approval of the minutes from March 3, 2021

- a. Motion to review minutes. J. Withers noted a correction in the minutes that should be made. Approval of the minutes of the March 3, 2021 meeting was pushed to the next meeting on April 7, 2021.

IV. Business of the Day

- a. Disability CNG Presentation- Erin Sember-Chase and Aubrey Lang
 - i. A. Lang shared a PowerPoint presentation representing Cornell University's Disability Colleague Network Group (DCNG). A. Lang introduced the group, its mission of raising awareness and support for those with disabilities, and the ways in which the group work to support and create opportunities for the community.
 - ii. A. Lang defined disabilities as physical or mental impairments which can limit major life activities and present themselves in many forms, both visible and not apparent. A. Lang highlighted different resources for assistance.
 - iii. E. Sember-Chase highlighted a concern of how employees with disabilities reported a less positive campus experience, a concern backed up by data from Cornell Survey Results and lived experiences of those with disabilities.
 - iv. E. Sember-Chase made suggestions on how the EA could support employees with disabilities, suggestions primarily centered on the EA asking more questions to understand why employees with disabilities might be having less positive experiences such as:
 1. How is the disability identity viewed on campus?
 2. Is disability explicitly included in diversity and inclusion efforts?
 3. What makes an employee feel valued and a sense of belonging?
 4. How can we show employees with disabilities that the University cares about their workplace experience?
 5. Where does the responsibility for improving campus climate lie?

- v. E. Sember-Chase noted that one of the reasons that the population of those with disabilities at Cornell seems minor and unimportant is that many have non-visible disabilities.
- vi. H. Depew expressed thanks towards E. Sember-Chase and A. Lang for presenting.
- vii. B. Goodell pointed out a statement E. Sember-Chase had made that there was almost a 20% difference in positive campus experience between those with disabilities and those without, as reported from Cornell Survey Results. B. Goodell asked if this value was taken from those with known disabilities on campus, highlighting how many on campus had unknown disabilities as well.
 - 1. E. Sember-Chase stated that her department took this survey, and that from her division, 20% identified as having a disability.
 - 2. E. Sember-Chase then noted that for questions on topics such as career growth or feeling valued, there was as much as a 20% discrepancy between those identifying as disabled and those who didn't.
 - 3. A. Lang noted that various other communities and departments have also run similar surveys, and that in HR, where another survey was done, the same sort of trends that E. Sember-Chase noted were also found.
 - 4. A. Lang noted that she and E. Sember-Chase especially appreciate being reached out to and sought out for their experience and expertise because they want to be viewed as assets, not liabilities.
- viii. A. Haenlin-Mott expressed thanks for the presentation, especially noting how with age, many experience disabilities more frequently. Haenlin-Mott expressed how the EA would be very open and look forward to further discussion and work down in tandem with the DCNG.
- ix. J. Duong thanked E. Sember-Chase and A. Lang for coming. J. Duong stated that as the University moves away from Covid-19 procedure and returns to campus, it is important that the University continues to provide the sort of accommodations that have been available during the pandemic. J. Duong noted the importance of ensuring that a split between those working at home and on campus- a two separate worlds situation -isn't created and an inclusive environment can be fostered.
 - 1. E. Sember-Chase thanked J. Duong.
 - 2. A. Lang agreed that some individuals with disabilities preferred work at home and would hope to see continued accommodations, while other individuals would prefer to return to campus, highlighting how this is not a one-size-fits-all sort of situation.
 - 3. A. Lang also highlighted how mental health, especially veteran mental health, was also important, and thanked any veterans present for their service.
 - 4. E. Sember-Chase noted the difference between diversity and inclusion and highlighted J. Duong's sentiments on integration.
- x. M. Podolec questioned how, as EA representative's she and others could ask some of the better, deeper questions to see why people don't feel comfortable.
 - 1. E. Sember-Chase expressed hopes that the EA and the power of its connections, especially its pipeline to the administration, could raise awareness to these issues. E. Sember-Chase noted that the disabled

community wants a seat at the table for discussions and wants to be considered when talking about inclusion and diversity.

2. A. Lang noted that having resources available, and making sure people know that these resources are available, is especially important. Those in positions of power have a responsibility to remind people of these resources and make them readily available.
- xi. A. Haenlin-Mott emphasized the importance of recognizing the role that obvious or non-obvious disabilities have when serving on search committees for hiring or promotions.
- xii. H. Depew affirmed that there will be more opportunities for partnership and future engagements with the DCNG.
- b. Veterans CNG Presentation- Debra Howell and Jase Baese
 - i. J. Baese thanked E. Sember-Chase and A. Lang for their presentation and stated his intent to present primarily on the activities that the VCNG does. J. Baese stated that the VCNG created a website on many veteran's memorials on campus, and also stated the VCNG's intention to engage a variety of populations, not simply veterans. J. Baese also stated that the VCNG helped sponsor the creation of the Cornell University Undergraduate Veterans.
 - ii. J. Baese highlighted University undergraduate veteran recruitment efforts, noting the addition of a staff member to support undergraduate veterans. J. Baese also highlighted other collaborative efforts with ROTC cadets, as well as other initiatives such as veteran job fairs, regional Spartan runs, and Friday flag runs.
 - iii. J. Baese noted that Tompkins County was the only county in the state without its own veteran services staff member, but that a year and a half ago the position was created and someone was hired. J. Baese expressed excitement over having this connection through which efforts and activities could be mutually supported.
 - iv. J. Duong thanked J. Baese for coming and asked if there were any unique challenges veteran staff might face at Cornell that the EA might not think about or be aware of.
 1. J. Baese stated that as all individuals are unique, a specific challenge would be difficult to note. However, J. Baese noted that as people return to more normal circumstances as the effects of the pandemic slow, the veteran community would be a good place to look at for guidance as people who are used to going from a very complicated situation to normal. The veteran community could be helpful talking with people about returning to normal and returning to more normal relationships with people.
 - v. A. Lang thanked J. Baese for speaking at the meeting. A. Lang emphasized that the VCNG is not just for veterans, expressing great thanks towards the VCNG for helping her learn more about the veteran experience after her brother became a Wounded Warrior.
 - vi. E. Sember-Chase returned to the question J. Duong posed to J. Baese and noted that from her experience, many veterans did not see themselves reflected in disability services or accommodations and did not believe they applied to themselves.
 1. J. Baese echoed E. Sember-Chase's sentiments.

- vii. B. Goodell raised concern over veteran family members and questioned what sort of outreach was available for them, as well as what outreach had been done to veteran families.
 - 1. J. Baese stated that outreach was an important part of the VCNG's work, and that many of the organizations which the VCNG is connected with have a family component
- viii. H. Depew thanked the presenters for speaking at the meeting.
- c. Staff Forum Debrief and Updates
 - i. H. Depew asked for the EA members' opinions on the staff forum and mentioned future plans for a possible financial forum, as well as possible plans for a forum to meet candidates for the upcoming election.
 - ii. B. Goodell expressed concern with the candidate staff forum due to its timing at noon on a Friday, as most of the building care workers leave at 12:30 on Friday and thus were not able to have a good look.
 - iii. H. Depew agreed with B. Goodell's concerns and noted that no details were finalized yet.

V. Committee Reports

- a. Executive Committee – M. LoParco
 - i. M. LoParco stated that the Executive Committee met March 11th and discussed the agenda for the meeting, K. Supron's proposal for having community relations at an upcoming meeting, as well as staff development day. Staff development day would focus on giving employees the chance to work on the modules due in September in CULearn.
- b. Communications and Awards Committee – E. Miller
 - i. E. Miller stated that the Communications and Awards Committee met March 16th with CLASP to see how they could continue to partner with them. CLASP, a class that undergraduate students can register for and then work with employees in, will be putting together a task force with the ultimate goal of creating an advisory board and are seeking volunteers.
 - ii. E. Miller stated that nominations for the George Peter award are under way, and an award prize package is being developed to accompany the award. A new criteria for the award formerly known as the Opperman award has also been drafted.
 - iii. E. Miller stated that the Communications Committee would be partnering with the Elections Committee for outreach for the Spring Elections.
- c. Education Committee – J. Withers
 - i. J. Withers stated that there was the idea of partnering with the Student Assembly to help promote CLASP, noting the attendance of SA Rep C. Tempelman at the meeting. J. Withers stated that the Education Committee had a presentation about the virtual mentoring program in Workday, which is currently being used as a pilot program in 5 units but will hopefully be released to everyone by Summer or Fall.
 - ii. C. Tempelman stated that the director of CLASP would be speaking at a future SA meeting and encouraged attendance if interested in learning more about CLASP.
- d. Welfare Committee – K. Mahoney

- i. B. Goodell stated that the Welfare Committee discussed M. Pollack's EA visit, the Belonging at Cornell survey, work life when Cornell returns to in-person, and more.
- ii. E. Miller motioned to extend the meeting to 1:45. B. Goodell seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.
- iii. B. Goodell noted that there was talk of having a Covid-19 Memorial Day that would probably be set on April 29th at 12pm.
- e. Benefits and Policy Committee – B. Goodell
 - i. B. Goodell stated that the Benefits and Policy Committee had a meeting yesterday and followed up on numerous correspondents, especially correspondents about contract college benefits. B. Goodell noted that the University doesn't have much say about contract college benefits as that is more handled with the state. B. Goodell stated that M. Opperman got back to their inquiry on reactivation planning. M. Opperman promised to reach out to the EA to ensure they had representation when a committee is formed.
 - ii. B. Goodell stated that a policy director position will be posted.
- f. Elections Committee – J. Duong
 - i. N. Siadat stated that he has been working with E. Miller to confirm communications plans for the elections. The only other major work for the Elections Committee this elections cycle is finalizing the rules for the 2021 elections. N. Siadat expressed hopes of talking about the candidate forum during open discussion.

VI. New Business

- a. A. Miller announced that the nomination cycle for the President's Awards for Employee Excellence were launched on Monday.
- b. H. Depew motioned to adjourn the meeting at 1:39 pm. B. Goodell seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

VII. Adjournment

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 1:39 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Office of the Assemblies