



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly

Minutes of the March 3, 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. Fortenberry, B. Goodell, A. Haenlin-Mott, D. Howell, E. Ivory, R. Lochner, M.

LoParco, K. Mahoney, V. McAuley, J. Michael, A. Miller, E. Miller, M. Newhart, M. Podolec, K. Supron, K. Tannenbaum, J. Townley, J. Withers, L. Zacharias

Members Absent [4]: S. Barry, B. Fisher, N. Siadat, L. Taylor

III. Approval of the minutes from February 17, 2021

- a. The minutes of the February 17, 2021 meeting were **approved** unanimously.

IV. Business of the Day

- a. Cornell University President Martha Pollack Remarks
 - i. M. Pollack stated that any plans for commencement were still undecided. M. Pollack noted that the possibility of a traditional commencement is very unlikely, though there is the chance for some sort of in-person ceremony.
 - ii. M. Pollack highlighted many successes and initiatives currently undergoing at Cornell such as safety and racial equality initiatives, staff diversity initiatives, and the new College of Computer and Information Sciences.
- b. Question and Answer
 - i. M. Pollack asked if any new practices and policies implemented during the pandemic should continue to be carried out as circumstances return to normal.
 - ii. H. Depew expressed hopes for an expanded and more flexible remote work culture at Cornell that could benefit sustainability and mental health and help relieve work-life balance issues.
 - iii. M. Opperman noted that they would be resurveying staff to gauge continued interest in remote work. M. Opperman pointed out that, from what she has gauged, there is little interest in fully remote work, just more flexible remote options.
 - iv. E. Miller noted her appreciation for the continued transparency that Cornell has shown and the way it has helped create a sense of care and importance for employees and expressed her hopes that such transparency and communication could be continued going forward.
 - v. B. Goodell noted that front-line staff greatly appreciated parking flexibility and would want more to be done. B. Goodell also expressed his hopes for the continuation of the forums.

- vi. M. LoParco expressed her agreement with B. Goodell's comments in reflection of the wishes of their constituents.
- vii. E. Miller noted that this year's EA Elections will probably have a large pool of candidates due to the EA's increased spotlight.
- viii. H. Depew mentioned the recent news that vaccines will be distributed to all adults by the end of May and questioned if Cornell would be able to track vaccinations for its employees. H. Depew also questioned the future implications of the vaccine in terms of remote work.
 - 1. Pollack stated that the University is still unsure of any decisions and will not be making any quick decisions until later on when more can be gleaned.
 - 2. M. Opperman stated that once being vaccinated, the University will need to track that data because different standards based on vaccination could later then be applied. The University is currently looking at ways to confidentially and safely store vaccination data.
- ix. B. Goodell questioned if some of the retirement and pay that was retracted due to the pandemic would be refunded for employees or re-applied.
 - 1. M. Pollack stated that the funds have already been re-applied, which is the only reason that Cornell currently has a balanced budget.
- c. Discussion of EA R9: Enabling EA Election Seats and Terms
 - i. J. Duong stated that the resolution is how the Employee Assembly will have 12 seat per year elections. This will be done by shortening the two new at-large seats from three to two-year terms when they get elected this spring until the 2023 elections, where they'll go back to a three-year term. From the other 20 seats, 10 will be chosen at random to get an extra year so that they will be voted in during the 2023 elections.
 - ii. E. Miller emphasized that the 10 seats chosen for an additional year were truly chosen randomly using a random generator for fairness.
 - iii. J. Withers expressed her admiration and support for the Election Committees work coming up with EA R9.
 - iv. M. Cherry and A. Miller both emphasized J. Wither's admiration and appreciation.
- d. Staff Forum Update for March 12th
 - i. H. Depew stated that there would be a large staff forum including people such as President Pollack, M. Opperman, R. Lombardi to talk about the past year during a pandemic. H. Depew also mentioned that work is continuing for a finance forum. P. Schrader will be retiring at the end of the fiscal year but will be joining this forum to talk about the financial implications that Covid has had. H. Depew also mentioned discussions on another potential panel discussion or forum to introduce the broader staff community to new employee assembly members.

V. Committee Reports

- a. Executive Committee – M. LoParco
 - i. M. LoParco stated that the Executive Committee has continued to discuss staff forums and how they could be improved. There has also been discussion over the open seat currently available and how to manage open seats, whether this just be

done through the Executive Committee or done through the full Employee Assembly and Elections Committee. M. LoParco also mentioned discussion over emails from constituents concerning vacation and sick bank, an issue being passed over to the Benefits and Policy Committee for further discussion. There was also discussion over President M. Pollack's visit to the Employee Assembly Meeting.

- b. Communications and Awards Committee – E. Miller
 - i. E. Miller stated that the Employee Assembly Voice Newsletter is now being published every month, and that the Committee has prioritized an increased social media presence on platforms and that, in tandem with the Executive Committee, the Committee has been working on facilitating and promoting staff forums and panel discussions. Data from the Employee Assembly Priorities Poll Collection was also collected at the committee level to help address constituent issues. E. Miller noted that as seen from the Priorities Poll, recognition for other staff members and employees is especially important and should be a top focus moving forward. E. Miller also stated that the redone criteria and rubric on the George Peter Award for Dedicated Service is nearly complete, and that the launch for nominations would be published Monday, March 1, 2021. There is also a subcommittee working on the revision and relaunch of what was formerly known as the Opperman award focusing on leadership, integrity, and inclusion.
 - ii. M. Pollack expressed support over the employee appreciation portal. In terms of ideas for employee appreciation that could be feasible with the currently limited financial resources available, M. Pollack also mentioned a desire to facilitate staff dinners with a diverse group.
 - iii. M. Opperman noted the possibility of silent auctions to have lunches with the president and other senior leaders to help fund the care fund.
 - iv. E. Miller questioned M. Pollack on the idea of an on-campus festival or street fair and expressed concerns that the staff would end up with the brunt of the work.
- c. Education Committee – J. Withers
 - i. J. Withers expressed hopes for the continuation of mental health efforts and an authentic approach to such efforts. J. Withers stated that the Committee hosted the January staff forum on employee educational benefits, and that three additional committee members were added since this last forum. Current Committee efforts are focused on data from the Priorities Poll, as well as gathering more information about new virtual mentoring. Another important item highlighted from the Priorities Poll was a call for clarity around promotional guidelines.
 - ii. H. Depew highlighted how 436 staff members joined the Employee Education Panel
- d. Welfare Committee – K. Mahoney
 - i. K. Mahoney stated that the Committee is working with experts in HR, wellness, and transportation to improve existing programs.
 - ii. M. Opperman expressed thanks towards the Employee Assembly for continued efforts.
- e. Benefits and Policy Committee – B. Goodell
 - i. B. Goodell recapped the policy work that the Committee has initiated such as EA Resolution 7 and EA Resolution 1 and expressed the continued need to clean up and ensure that policies are kept up to date, as well as the need for employees to

be better informed of their benefits. B. Goodell expressed interest in parking as a potential staff benefit, as well as ways to improve staff retention and improve the experiences of remote workers. B. Goodell also questioned the policy director position that is currently being filled to see if the BPC Committee to collaborate with them.

- f. Elections Committee – J. Duong
 - i. J. Duong stated that the Committee has been preparing for Spring Elections for the assemblies as a main focus. Another focus is a transition from two groups of elections to a tripartite system. This transition will be facilitated by expanding membership to the Employee Assembly, moving to three-year terms, and spreading out elections so that there will be around 12 people being elected each year. The Committee has also worked on vacancies.
 - ii. M. Pollack congratulated the Employee Assembly on the clean and smooth elections that the EA’s Elections Committee have managed to pull off each year.

VI. New Business

- a. Open Discussion
 - i. A. Miller highlighted that approval was given for the remainder of fiscal year 21 and fiscal year 22, so if any college unit or department wished to contribute to their appreciation portal budget they could, meaning that monetary recognition will return to the appreciation portal.
 - ii. K. Tannenbaum questioned if recognitions from the appreciation portal are public.
 - 1. E. Miller stated that recognitions weren’t currently public but that she and A. Miller could discuss further. As far as functionality goes, those managing the portal wanted to ensure that both the sender and receiver had the option to consent to public viewing of recognitions.
 - iii. B. Goodell stated that, according to M. Opperman, Cornell will be implementing the carry-over provisions of the healthcare FSA from 2020 accounts to 2021 accounts, and the grace period extension for dependent care accounts will be from 3/15/2021 to 12/31/2021.
 - iv. E. Miller expressed support over the idea of sending kudos to President M. Pollack and M. Opperman through the appreciation portal, as well as previous guest speakers.
 - v. B. Goodell also expressed support for the idea of kudos and expressed his appreciation towards President M. Pollack.
- b. Voting on EA R9: Enabling EA Election Seats and Terms
 - i. B. Goodell moved to vote on EA R9, and K. Supron and E. Miller both seconded the motion. The resolution was **approved** 20-0-0.

VII. Adjournment

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 1:17 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Office of the Assemblies