



## Cornell University Employee Assembly

### Cornell Employee Assembly

Minutes of the April 7, 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* [20]: J. Cannella, J. Creque, H. Depew, J. Duong, B. Fortenberry, A. Haenlin-Mott, E. Ivory, R. Lochner, K. Mahoney, V. McAuley, J. Michael, A. Miller, E. Miller, M. Newhart, N. Siadat, K. Supron, K. Tannenbaum, L. Taylor, J. Townley, J. Withers

*Members Absent* [8]: S. Barry, M. Cherry, B. Fisher, B. Goodell, D. Howell, K. Loparco, M. Podolec, L. Zacharias

#### III. Approval of the minutes from March 3, 2021 and March 17, 2021

- a. Motion to approve March 3, 2021 minutes approved unanimously.
- b. Motion to approve March 17, 2021 minutes approved unanimously.

#### IV. Business of the Day

- a. CNG Presentation- LGBTQ+ - Sue Brightly and Anthony Sis
  - i. S. Brightly gave background on the LGBTQ+ CNG and things it has done such as lunches and guest speakers to build community. She highlighted the need for a sense of safety and belonging for a group of people who typically already feel isolated. From a survey done by the CNG, goals for emphasis include more socializing, information sharing, and self-care.
  - ii. J. Cannella emphasized the CNG's current attempts on reaching out to allies and highlighting that one does not need to identify as LGBTQ+ to be part of the CNG. J. Cannella also detailed the community service and other outreach the group has done and questioned possible beneficial partnerships between the EA and the CNG.
    1. E. Miller stated that, as chair of Communications for the EA, she could promote any events or activities done by the CNG.
    2. J. Cannella noted that the CNG is attempting to partner with the LGBT Resource Center, which has a staff newsletter. J. Cannella also supported E. Miller's statement and suggested a place for CNG monthly updates in the newsletter.
  - iii. E. Miller expressed excitement on getting more involved with the CNGs and highlighted a lack of awareness on openness of CNGs for those who fall outside the titles of the CNGs.

1. J. Cannella highlighted a “Did You Know” session the CNG would be hosting that would help emphasize that one wouldn’t necessarily need to be part of a niche identity to join a group.
- iv. H. Depew thanked J. Cannella and S. Brightly and emphasized the potential for further collaboration between the EA and the LGBTA+ CNG.
- v. B. Korson inquired about having a possible town-hall style event in the future where all CNGs can be promoted and release details on how to get involved.
  1. J. Cannella agreed that this would be a great idea.
  2. S. Brightly noted that the openness of the CNGs is questionable, especially considering that historically for the LGBTQ+ CNG, a lot of people aren’t out yet or are still questioning and may not be comfortable having other colleagues know. Since the CNGs provide a safe space, parameters for joining and attending certain events are hazy and unsure.
- vi. R. White stated that, as chair for the Men of Color CNG, the tension between welcoming allies and creating a safe space is an important conversation to have within individual groups before returning to the EA to evaluate what broader involvement really looks like.
- vii. E. Miller stated that S. Brightly’s and R. White’s points make sense, and that having a staff forum on the CNGs would allow them to be highlighted while controlling openness and involvement.
- viii. J. Cannella supported B. Korson’s idea of a staff forum for all the CNGs, as well as R. White and E. Miller’s points. J. Cannella then questioned if the EA had anything as a priority that the LGBTQ+ CNG could help with.
  1. K. Mahoney stated that discussion and presentations over the Community at Cornell data would happen, and that invitations to CNG leadership or members to attend could be extended.
  2. H. Depew stated that, for any opportunities such as a staff forum or other events, partnering with the CNG is definitely possible to both work through issues and get messaging out.
- ix. A. Haenlin-Mott stated that the staff forum would be an initiative to bring awareness, but that another option for more initiatives could include working through the Employee Welfare Committee. A. Haenlin-Mott noted that awareness and inclusion is not simply an initiative, but an ongoing conversation that should blend into all the work that is done.
  1. J. Cannella supported A. Haenlin-Mott’s statement. J. Cannella noted that Christopher Luan from the LGBT Resource Center would welcome staff helping out with events such as Lavender Graduation.
- x. H. Depew thanked J. Cannella and S. Brightly for presenting.
- b. Ithaca Asian American Association (IAAA) and Asian and Asian American Center (A3C) Update – Hei Hei Depew
  - i. H. Depew highlighted the March 16 Atlanta shootings and the rise in anti-Asian violence and hate crime across the country as xenophobia and racism has grown. The Executive Committee has had productive conversations with the IAAA and A3C about partnering. H. Depew stated that a Being Asian at Cornell series will be hosted and hopefully released by May. H. Depew also stated that there has been conversation with the A3C about a staff forum on the history of anti-Asian

violence.

- ii. R. White expressed support for a staff forum and expressed a need to support all members of the community and find ways for the community to understand implications for things that happen both nationally and locally.

## V. Committee Reports

- a. Executive Committee – H. Depew
  - i. H. Depew stated that lots of work has been done with the A3C talking about potential partnerships and that the Executive Committee is having discussions for a finance staff forum where the budget and the future of fiscal year 22 could be discussed. H. Depew noted that election preparations are underway.
- b. Communications and Awards Committee – E. Miller
  - i. E. Miller stated that the nomination period for the George Peter award has been extended, and that there have been about 16-17 nominations thus far. Prizes were also secured to go to the award winner. The not Opperman award is also in the final stages of getting revamped with new criteria. E. Miller also encouraged employees to use the appreciation portal.
  - ii. E. Miller stated that the EA newsletter will be getting published, and that it highlights the CNGs that have visited during EA meetings, as well as sustainability month. The Communications Committee has also been working with the Elections Committee to promote elections.
  - iii. J. Cannella questioned if there was a tentative schedule for all the CNGs presenting at an EA meeting, and inquired if it might be better to highlight all the CNGs at once in comparison to doing some little by little.
    - 1. J. Duong stated that not all CNGs have been reached out to yet due to the coming end of term that limits availability.
- c. Education Committee – J. Withers
  - i. J. Withers stated that CLASP would end up presenting to the SA in the Fall instead, and that she would pass on updates to her successor.
  - ii. C. Templeman stated CLASP is currently working on post-pandemic plans and that either she or her successor will keep the EA updated.
- d. Welfare Committee – K. Mahoney
  - i. K. Mahoney stated that discussions for a hybrid work approach have continued, as well as discussions over the Belonging at Cornell survey data. There will be announcements about events including the remembrance event, an inclusion excellence summit, and spring programming from wellness focusing on mental health and movement.
  - ii. K. Mahoney noted that coordinating transportation for Cornell as a vaccination distribution site would also be coming soon.
  - iii. J. Withers stated that information about virtual mentoring is currently available in Workday and is being tested in 5 schools across campus, with the hope of being expanded to the rest of campus by Fall.
- e. Benefits and Policy Committee – B. Goodell
  - i. K. Tannenbaum stated that an official meeting for the Benefits and Policy Committee has not happened since the last meeting since chair B. Goodell is on break.

- f. Elections Committee – N. Siadat
- i. N. Siadat thanked those involved with supporting the current election cycle and was particularly grateful for the unprecedented outreach effort this year.
  - ii. N. Siadat stated that showings for the election were not as hoped for. A third of the races have candidates with none being contested, and two thirds of the seats will be vacant going forward. N. Siadat stated that an EA priority should be to promote the role of the EA and its relevance to staff. Furthermore, many staff members are just burnt out after a terrible and long year. People are stretched thin, which N. Siadat believed played a role in the low election turnout.
  - iii. K. Tannenbaum questioned if there was space in the timeline to extend the registration process for candidates. K. Tannenbaum stated that the candidate signature requirement could be perceived as a barrier to entry.
    1. N. Siadat agreed with K. Tannenbaum, stating that a signature requirement was a barrier to entry. However, getting signatures and attending the mandatory candidate information meeting, particularly online, is a very minimal requirement when asking another to make a major commitment to join the EA.
  - iv. W. Treat informed the EA that last year, the sudden move online caused the signature requirement, normally done physically through paper, to be waived. W. Treat also referenced SA election signature requirements for comparison.
    1. C. Templeman stated that the signature requirement is a big burden that is made bigger when done online.
    2. K. Tannenbaum noted that the SA, in comparison to the EA, serves a very different population, and as such, the atmosphere of the assemblies varies. The EA is more flexible and built into the workflow, while participation in the SA is done more out of the way. K. Tannenbaum also questioned if there was more data on election turnout from previous years.
  - v. J. Creque suggested that instead of extending the registration deadline, the EA members could promote and recruit people to fill the vacant seats. This would give them the chance to get experience and gain interest to run for a seat in the next election cycle for a much higher turnout next time.
  - vi. G. Giambattista stated, in response to K. Tannenbaum’s inquiry on election data and metrics, all elections are tracked. There have typically been very few uncontested elections, but the threshold for gathering petition signatures is not new, so it is questionable and should be examined if the threshold had an impact on election turnout.
  - vii. B. Fortenberry stated that he has gotten responses emphasizing that the commitment and the term for a seat in the EA is daunting and echoed J. Creque’s point on the possibility of having people join to create membership without as significant an expectation put onto them.
  - viii. H. Depew noted that last year, without a signature requirement, there was lots of participation including contested elections and increased voter participation despite it being an online election. H. Depew questioned if the signature requirement was mandatory and questioned if taking it away could gain more participation.
    1. J. Withers stated that N. Siadat’s report was insightful, echoing his sentiment

- on how burnt-out people are. J. Withers stated that this year could just be considered a different year and that she supported J. Creque's approach.
2. J. Cannella questioned if it would be possible to create a motion to waive the signature requirement while staff are still working remotely.
  3. N. Siadat questioned if the EA, considering that two thirds of seats would be vacant, to call a special election to fill those seats without signature requirements. N. Siadat acknowledged that it would be unfair to waive this requirement after having those already running gather all the signatures.
  4. J. Creque stated that, as a compromise, it might be good to allow people to contest for a chance to run if they don't get the minimum number of signatures.
  5. E. Miller stated her opinion that, considering how small the pool of candidates for the election is, signatures are not a hugely important aspect of the election. E. Miller echoed J. Creque's approach of cutting loses and continuing on.
  6. G. Giambattista stated, in response to N. Siadat's inquiry, that special elections have been called in the Fall after the new assembly has been seated to fill vacancies. It would be difficult for the Office of the Assemblies to run another election right away before the end of the academic term, but it could be done. Furthermore, G. Giambattista stated there may be amendments to the election rules to include or exclude parameters.
  7. J. Duong echoed E. Miller's perspective that it is questionable if the signature requirement was the reason behind such low participation in this year's election.
  8. A. Haenlin-Mott stated that, from her experience running for a seat, the signature requirement wasn't very daunting in her perspective. A. Haenlin-Mott questioned if promotion was a factor for the low turnout.
  - ix. J. Creque stated that an information session could be hosted to encourage election participation.
  - x. J. Cannella noted that COVID-19 protocols are still realities, and that these realities should be considered.
  - xi. H. Depew motioned to extend the meeting to 1:35. N. Siadat seconded that motion. The motion was **approved**.
  - xii. J. Cannella agreed that information sessions would be helpful but highlighted the reality that despite unprecedented advertisement and 8000 employees, there is a singular guest at the current EA meeting, reflecting a crucial lack of interest and involvement.
  - xiii. E. Miller stated that the EA should work to present to other groups and give more explanation about the EA and its messaging.

## **VI. New Business**

- a. A. Miller announced that the President's Awards for Employee Excellence is in its nominations cycle and asked that word could be spread. A. Miller also announced that Bring your Child to Work day, renamed Cornell Kids at Home, is launching the week of April 12.
- b. J. Creque questioned if the EA had facilitated the EA announcements in the Employee Well-Being newsletter.

1. E. Miller affirmed that this was done by the Communications Committee.

**VII. Adjournment**

a. The meeting was adjourned at 1:34 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Office of the Assemblies