



Cornell University
Graduate and Professional
Student Assembly

Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

Minutes of the March 15, 2021 Meeting

5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Zoom Meeting

- I. Call to Order
 - a. D. Dunham called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM
- II. Announcements
 - a. D. Dunham reminded members of President Pollack's planned attendance at the next GPSA meeting (3/29/2021) and encouraged members to attend the next meeting prepared with any questions they had. He also noted that the meetings were not just open to GPSA members but to the entire Graduate and Professional student body.
 - b. D. Dunham stated that the process for Byline Funding Applications would begin soon since recommendations needed to be made for the Student Activity Fee for the upcoming school year. He noted that organizations that were currently Byline-funded or would like to be considered for Byline Funding needed to go through the application process under the guidance of the Appropriations Committee with the ultimate final deadline being in the early Fall of next semester. After the deadline, the Appropriations Committee would have a series of hearings reviewing the applications, followed by the GPSA voting on a Student Activity Fee recommendation no later than the end of the Fall 2021 semester.
 - c. D. Dunham informed members that if they were a Graduate or Professional student working in some capacity on-campus, they should be eligible for vaccination and could receive a University letter attesting to their eligibility.
 - d. D. Dunham reminded members that President Pollack approved GPSA R9 which would grant voting membership to Standing Committee chairperson. Chairperson that were already voting members before would still have only one vote and needed to decide if they wanted to relinquish their regular voting membership or hold on to both positions.
 - e. Lastly, D. Dunham reminded members of the upcoming elections noting that voting members in the Graduate School divisions would be elected on the second to last meeting of the semester (4/12/2021). Elections for Officers and Chairpersons, except for the Appropriations and Finances Committees, would be held at the last meeting (5/3/2021) with members announcing their candidacy at the second to last meeting.
- III. Roll Call
 - i. *Present* [24]: M. Balch, R. Barankevich, H. Bidigare-Curtis, M. Chatterjee, H. Cole, N. Danev, J. Dotzel, M. Drescher, B. Hayes, M. Keefe, D. Kent, K. Krishnan, K. Laurent, C. Liu, S. López, T. Luttermoser, R. Maloney, C.



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O'Connor, C. Ohenewah, A. Pandey, A. Presher, C. Steingard, P. Vinhage, M. Welch

- ii. *Absent* [7]: C. Anklin, M. Cantar, A. Cirillo, C. Day, C. Duell, N. Gonzalez, J. Levin

IV. Presentations

- a. PhDs at Cornell Tech (PACT): On the Student Activity Fee (SAF) – Anthony Poon
 - i. D. Dunham stated that he had talked briefly with A. Poon regarding ongoing issues with the distribution and allocation of the Student Activity Fee to PhD student groups at Cornell Tech and had invited A. Poon to speak on the issue and answer any questions from the GPSA.
 - ii. A. Poon introduced himself as a 5th year PhD student based out of Cornell Tech in New York City. He stated that while Cornell Tech Graduate students would like to continue being part of the GPS community, the ongoing issue regarded the lack of access Cornell Tech-based PhD students had to SAF funds and the activities that those funds provided while in NYC. The activities they did not have access to included departmental activities, Cornell Cinema, and the Big Red Barn. A. Poon stated that his goal for the meeting was to present the concerns of Cornell Tech PhD students, ask for GPSA support, and to work with the GPSA to create a solution that more fairly students at Cornell Tech with access to their Student Activity fees and the events paid from those fees.
 - iii. C. Steingard asked A. Poon if the GPSAFC should have language explicitly excluding Cornell Tech students from Ithaca-based activities and vice versa.
 - 1. A. Poon noted that would not be absolutely necessary given that Cornell Tech students occasionally visited Ithaca and Ithaca students occasionally visited Cornell Tech and that language could alienate students from participating in events when they visit.
 - iv. K. Krishnan asked if there were students that commuted and spent portions of their semester in Ithaca and the other portions in NYC. Additionally, for those students, would they need to indicate their semester plants to the Bursar at the beginning of the semester to have the Student Activity fee allocated accordingly.
 - 1. A. Poon stated that students were required to indicate which campus they would be based out of at the beginning of the semester as a University requirement and could not be based out of both campuses in the duration of one semester.
 - v. T. Luttermoser asked if the preferred solution would be to have Cornell Tech students pay a reduced fee or would the preferred solution be to have all students continue to pay the same amount in fees and have the Cornell Tech campus receive a larger portion of the money. Additionally, T.



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Luttermoser asked if there was a Graduate Student community space similar to the Big Red Barn on the Cornell Tech campus and if creating the type of space would be useful.

1. A. Poon noted that Master's students currently have 100% of the student activity fee they pay reimbursed to an organization at Cornell Tech specifically for Master's students. A. Poon stated that the goal would be to have fees for PhD students partially follow the Master's student's model since Cornell Tech PhD students did benefit from some of the of the events covered by the Student Activity fee.
 2. A. Poon also stated that there was no space equivalent to the Big Red Barn at Cornell Tech and the most similar space was a lounge being created by PACT (PhD students At Cornell Tech).
- vi. C. Steingard noted that for virtual events, the GPSAFC was paying for postage to send anything that needed to be sent for students to participate in those virtual events. C. Steingard asked if Cornell Tech students were taking advantage of the shipping option or were considering the option in the future.
1. A. Poon stated that there had been more cross-campus events due to the virtual nature of the semester, but added that whether or not that continue past the pandemic and students want it to continue is an open question. A. Poon also noted that they would like to work towards a future where cross-campus events continued to be an option, but it would be an unrealistic expectation to assume that future events would be completely fluid.
- vii. D. Dunham gave an overview of the discussion he had with A. Poon on Friday before the meeting and stated that while Mater's students were getting the funds from the Student Activity fee reimbursed by their specific organization, that was not the case for PhD students. He added that the GPSA had been trying for several years to figure out a solution that would equitably distribute funds to PhD students at Cornell Tech. One of the solutions entertained at the Friday meeting was to have a Charter amendment or Byline revision that would allow for distinctions to be made between organizations and groups that Cornell Tech PhD students benefited from and those they did not benefit from. Using the distinction would allow for Cornell Tech students to be reimbursed for a portion of the student activity fee through PACT or another group that could be nominated to manage the funds for Cornell Tech PhD students. D. Dunham stated that the next steps in that solution would be to have a member of the Appropriations or Finance Committee to take point and work out the details of the amendment.



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- viii. N. Danev asked if any Cornell Tech PhD students would be willing to sit on either the Finance or Appropriations Committee to coordinate between the Cornell Tech Campus and the Ithaca campus communities.
 1. A. Poon responded by stating yes and would like PhD students at Cornell Tech to become more familiar and engaged in the processes of the GPSA and Ithaca campus.
 2. D. Dunham expressed the importance having PACT approval for any solution reached by the GPSA since this would be a long-term solution.
- V. Approval of the Meeting Minutes
 - a. Monday, March 1st, 2021
 - i. The meeting minutes were approved unanimously.
- VI. Vacancies and Elections
 - a. UA Representative
 - i. N. Danev self-nominated to serve as the UA Representative and was unanimously elected.
 - b. DISC Chairperson – *No Nominations*
 - c. Masters-At-Large Representative – *No Nominations*
- VII. New Business
 - a. Resolution 14: Instituting the GPSAFC Vice-Chair Position (Submitted by: C. Steingard, GPSAFC Chair)
 - i. C. Steingard introduced the resolution and noted that the purpose of the resolution was to legitimize the GPSAFC Vice Chair position by placing it into the Bylaws and outlining the responsibilities of the position. C. Steingard also stated that the resolution could potentially encourage more members to want to run for the GPSAFC Chair position because they would have a Vice Chair that could assist in fulfilling the committee duties.
 - ii. The resolution was seconded by T. Luttermoser.
 - iii. D. Dunham rose to a point of information, adding that the Vice Chair would share some of the responsibilities of the Chair but in the event of a Chairperson vacancy, the Vice Chair would automatically take over as Chairperson until the GPSA was able to elect a new Chairperson. Additionally, D. Dunham stated that the resolution would allow the Vice Chair to be appointed by the Chairperson and would not need to be approved by the GPSA.
 - iv. N. Danev moved previous question.
 - v. The resolution was approved 21-0-3.
 - b. Resolution 15: Requesting a full, transparent, and ongoing accounting of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the funding of continuing graduate students



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(Submitted by D. Kent – SAC Chair, T. Luttermoser – Voting Member, and M. Eisenlord – Field Representative)

- i. D. Kent introduced the resolution and presented the abstract to members with the overall purpose of the resolution being a request for a transparent report about the availability of funding across the Graduate School. D. Kent also clarified that they were presenting the resolution as members rather than a committee.
- ii. The resolution was seconded.
- iii. A. Poon asked for an elaboration on what types of topics the resolution would ask for or expect a report on.
 1. D. Kent noted that there had been a lot of discussion on the availability of funding for TAs and one area to report on would be the projected funding available for PIs, whether or not all current Graduate School students were likely to find funding in the upcoming semester, and what would be the plan to address the issue. D. Kent also pointed out the specific requests mentioned in the resolution.
 2. T. Luttermoser added that the reports being requested would explicitly provide demographic information on individuals needing time-to-degree extensions, individuals facing funding uncertainty, etc. Given the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on African Americans, First-Generation families, and women faculty, it would be important to see if those disparities were also present at the Graduate School level and to have a better sense of what steps were being taken to address them especially considering the Universities stated commitment to diversity.
- iv. K. Krishnan asked if the resolution was taking Professional students into consideration considering the differences in their funding and if including Professional students would complicate the issue, especially in regard to data collection.
 1. D. Kent stated that it would definitely be appropriate to collect data on Professional students and see the trends there, but it might be worth another consideration.
- v. N. Danev expressed support for the resolution but noted his concern for the execution of the data collection. N. Danev asked if the data collection would be done completely by the Graduate School or by the SAC in coordination with the Graduate School. He also suggested establishing a line of communication with the Graduate School and Professional schools to have a plan in place for how data collection would work.



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1. D. Kent stated that there were no current provisions to establish an ongoing discussion but that it would be a good idea.
- vi. R. Barankevich asked if provisions would also be included to gather feedback from students on the amount of work they were expected to do. R. Barankevich noted that there had been discussion at the last GPSA meeting about students reporting that they were working many more hours than they were supposed to be and were not able to fulfill all of their TA duties because of the amount of classes they had to teach or the work they had to do.
 1. T. Luttermoser stated that although the overload and burnout issues were really important, the funding issue was extremely time-sensitive given the funding decisions would start to be made soon. The goal of focusing on funding was to make sure that Graduate students did not end up lacking funding in the Fall and ending up in unstable housing without food. He added that letting the resolution focus on funding and having the funding reports being sent to the GPSA by June would prevent having resolution with too many aspects leading to none of the tasks being completed. T. Luttermoser also noted that although GPSA R15 did not focus on the other issues, he would definitely be in favor of future resolutions addressing the areas of burnout and work overload among students.
 2. D. Kent echoed T. Luttermoser's sentiments and stated that they did feel the issues of burnout and work overload were important and would be looking at ways to address it in the future.
- vii. M. Welch asked if there was any for the resolution to ask for data on extensions across years of Graduate School students. M. Welch added that there had not been much discussion surrounding how the extensions were cumulative and their effects on those graduating this year and in the coming years. She stated that it would be important to have the side-by-side comparison of extensions and funding.
 1. D. Kent stated that the resolution asked for the time-to-degree extension and drop-out rates of students enrolled during the COVID-19 pandemic for the next six years along with funding information. He also noted that the resolution cited a possible pressure on existing sources of funding being students taking longer to graduate.
- viii. M. Welch asked if there was explicit room in the resolution to ask for the number of people by PhD year in the last year had filed extensions for degree milestones. She added that having an idea of the scope of problems



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Graduate students were facing in terms of extensions to various degree milestones would be very informative.

1. T. Luttermoser expressed support for an amendment adding language to require reports to have information on milestone progress.
- ix. D. Dunham asked if it was important for the resolution to be voted on at the current meeting and sent to President Pollack or if it would be equally effective for it to be sent back to the committee to be brought to another level of the university.
1. T. Luttermoser expressed support for voting on the resolution at the meeting because of its time-sensitive nature, but would understand if members were more comfortable waiting two more weeks because of how late the resolution came in.
- x. M. Welch moved to amend the resolution by inserting “ data on extensions filed to the Graduate School for time to degree milestones (special committee formation, A exams, etc) citing COVID-19 related delays for Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters.” On Line 43 before “AND”.
1. T. Luttermoser moved to adjust the amendment by placing the proposed language after “at a minimum:” on Line 41 because the extensions information should also be broken down by college and demographic information.
 - a. M. Welch accepted the revision to the amendment.
 - b. The amendment was seconded by k. Krishnan.
 - c. The resolution was amended 20-0-4.
- xi. D. Kent asked D. Dunham what he was imagining with sending the resolution back to the committee and passing it on.
1. D. Dunham stated that if there was a particular person at the University that the sponsors would like the information from, sometimes, it could be more effective for resolutions not to be adopted and sent to President Pollack. Instead, the committee or sponsors could schedule a meeting with other administrators to have a discussion about the points of the resolution and work together to achieve the resolutions goal.
 2. N. Danev echoed D. Dunham statements noting that having the ITAP resolution sent back to the committee had been more effective because it lead to discussions with stakeholders and other administrators. However, N. Danev stated that he would vote in favor of the resolution if the sponsors did not want to send it back to the committee.



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3. K. Krishnan noted that the time sensitivity of the resolution would be important to keep in mind in deciding to send the resolution back to the committee or to vote on it.
4. T. Luttermoser stated that the reason behind treating the resolution as a vote was to convey that the GPSA believed the issue was one of broad concern and noted that he did think it would spark meetings with the Graduate School.

xii. The resolution was **approved** 20-0-4.

VIII. Reports of Officers and Committee Updates

a. Executive Committee – N. Danev

- i. N. Danev stated that the Executive Committee had met with the Provost and Dean Boor to discuss potential changes to the ITAP and currently, the Provost's office was discussing the GPSA proposals with the relevant stakeholders in the ITAP office. After discussions, N. Danev stated that he planned to either amend or completely retract the previous ITAP resolution to present a new draft acknowledging the changes and the topics agreed on by the GPSA, Graduate School, and Provost's office.
- ii. N. Danev also stated that the Executive Committee met with the Vice Provost for International Affairs, Executive Director of the Office of Global Learning, the Associate Vice Provost, and Dean Boor to discuss the GPCI section on international students. He noted that the Office of the Vice Provost for International Affairs and the Office of Global Learning had implemented solutions to some of the concerns previously raised in the last GPCI and was working on implementing others. The general idea was to increase communication with international students, increase knowledge about available resources, and increase the amount of overall resources.

b. Communications/DISC – K. Krishnan

- i. K. Krishnan encouraged members to spread the word on open positions, specifically the DISC Chair.
- ii. K. Krishnan also noted that the Building Allyship Series was hosting the last event of the semester on March 17th.

c. Operations – M. Chatterjee

- i. *No Updates*

d. Finance – C. Steingard

- i. C. Steingard noted that she was still working on the resolution for the alcohol policy and mentioned many concerns being brought up from clubs meeting with risk management.

e. Appropriations – A. Pandey

- i. A. Pandey noted that she would share the deadline for Byline funding applications soon. Additionally, she stated that at the end of the semester, if



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there were any excess funds, she would total them to give as a second donation to the Access Fund.

- f. Faculty Teaching – C. Duell
 - i. *No Updates*
 - g. Programming – K. Laurent
 - i. K. Laurent reminded members of the “Build Your Own Wind Chimes” event happening on Thursday and noted that the committee was also working on a few more activities with the Big Red Barn.
 - h. Student Advocacy (SAC) – D. Kent
 - i. D. Kent noted that the committee had spent a lot of time discussing GPSA R15 and was planning on discussing issues of Faculty-Student mentoring, general communication issues with the Graduate School, and framing the SAC as a resource for students to use if they had questions or concerns at the next meeting.
- IX. Breakout Session by Division
- a. D. Dunham stated that the guiding question for divisions to use was whether or not their departments had been adhering to Wellness Day policies to the degree members expect they should be adhering to them.
- X. Open Forum
- a. Wellness Day Adherence
 - i. T. Luttermoser noted the variation in adhering to Wellness Day policies in Life Sciences with some departments communicating clearly and having positive messaging while other departments had a more passive-aggressive stance. T. Luttermoser also stated that there were departments in Life Sciences that were not consistently honoring the policy change stating graduate students were not expected to work on official University holidays.
- XI. Adjournment
- a. The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Auriole C. R. Fassinou
Clerk of the Assembly