

Cornell University
Graduate and Professional
Student Assembly

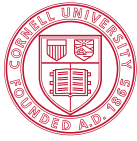
Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

Minutes of the February 15, 2021 Meeting

5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Zoom Meeting

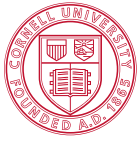
- I. Call to Order
 - a. D. Dunham called the meeting to order at 5:32 PM
- II. Roll Call
 - i. *Present* [22]: C. Anklin, M. Balch, R. Barankevich, H. Bidigare-Curtis, M. Cantar, M. Chatterjee, H. Cole, C. Day, J. Dotzel, M. Drescher, C. Duell, N. Gonzalez, M. Keefe, K. Laurent, J. Levin, S. López, T. Luttermoser, R. Maloney, C. O'Connor, C. Ohenewah, P. Vinhage, M. Welch
 - ii. *Absent* [3]: A. Cirillo, C. Liu, A. Presher,
- III. Approval of the Meeting Minutes
 - a. Monday, February 1st, 2021
 - i. The meeting minutes were **approved** unanimously.
- IV. Presentations
 - a. Dr. Charles Van Loan, Dean of Faculty: Anti-Racism Initiative Progress (see Office of the Assemblies website for presentation PowerPoint)
 - i. A. Johnson voiced concerns about having faculty be required to do some of the anti-racism training within their fields, noting that the goal would be to not have faculty who were doing and saying overtly racist things and would not buy into the mission of anti-racism involved in the trainings. However, excluding those faculty members who generally had more time on their hands, would put pressure on particularly younger faculty members of color who should be using their time on research and trying to get tenure. A. Johnson added that the initiative could not include all professors but the set of professors who would do the best job at it were already the most burdened. A. Johnson asked why the initiative did not include adding additional faculty lines that would have the “Center” and running anti-racism trainings as part of their responsibilities and why it would not make sense to hire more individuals doing anti-racist scholarship.
 - ii. C. Van Loan noted that the Faculty Senate could only put forth powerful arguments and then hopefully, the Deans and Provosts would respond with the appropriate resources. C. Van Loan agreed with A. Johnson that not all faculty would be willing to talk about the structural racism that may exist in their fields but stated that the purpose of the initiative was to provide a basic training for faculty so that they could teach their course without creating issues. C. Van Loan also stated that there would be tools that department chairs could have available to them including requiring faculty to take certain



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training before being able to hire students in their labs and other general tasks that come up in the life of a professor that would not be permitted without the training. He also stated that it was possible for faculty to become more entrenched in their views if they were forced to do the training and the way to go around that would be to make the trainings extremely interesting. He concluded by saying that this topic received the most criticism in the Faculty Senate, but the mood had changed in response to the events of Summer 2020 and noted that this would be an opportunity to institute change.

- iii. A. Johnson expressed worry about having faculty talking to students within their department about anti-racism and leading discussions especially given the time demands on younger faculty. A. Johnson also stated that with the momentum behind anti-racism initiatives, now would be the time to make big demands of the administration including adding additional faculty lines to further the initiative.
- iv. C. Van Loan stated that unlike past plans towards anti-racism in which the Faculty would meet and draft a proposal to convey to the administration, the administration had asked for the recommendations. He added that with the topic of anti-racism on people's minds now more than ever, real progress could be made.
- v. E. Maloney asked if current faculty and staff would work at the "Center" or if new faculty and staff would be hired.
- vi. C. Van Loan stated that most "Centers" on-campus, depending on their size, were staffed by faculty and that would most likely be followed by the anti-racism "Center" as well with a director who would be a faculty member. He also added that in terms of extra hiring's, the number of faculty doing that sort of work would need to increase. The job of the Faculty Senate was to define what the "Center" would do and then, when it came time for the administration to fund it, the details of increasing the number of lines and budget would need to be worked-out.
- vii. E. Maloney asked if diversity would be increased within the new faculty line applications and review of new hires.
- viii. C. Van Loan noted that faculty were hired into departments and that the real role of the "Center" in terms of diverse hiring's was that it would attract faculty into those departments by serving as an exciting and vibrant place for research.
- ix. L. Davis-Frost asked C. Van Loan to elaborate on the composition of the committees, how individuals were selected to serve on the committees, and why President Pollack directed the committee to talk about anti-racism issues.



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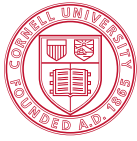
- x. C. Van Loan said that President Pollack directed the committee to talk about anti-racism issues because education research fell under the province of the faculty and Faculty Senate was the place where ideas could be promoted to address the research and teaching aspects, especially in-terms of educational requirements for students. He mentioned that the alternative would be to have the Provost set-up an ad hoc committee to address the issue. In addressing the composition of the committees, he noted that the Senate had used "Do Better Cornell" and had also called various other centers who suggested students, to get students involved. The committees varied in size but had roughly 15 faculty and with the "Center" committee being the largest, it had six to seven students serving on it. C. Van Loan also expressed how surprised he was that students were more interested in the "Center" than in the education requirements.
- xi. L. Davis-Frost stated that since the whole initiative was put forth because of the "Do Better Cornell" demands this past summer, a lot of students were interested in the "Center" committee because many Black students wanted a space for Black students to be able to operate and supported on campus, which.
- xii. C. Van Loan emphasized the importance of physical spaces and their ability to foster collaboration, adding that having a building as the "Center" would be a powerful concept.

V. Elections, Vacancies, and Appointments

a. Finance Chair

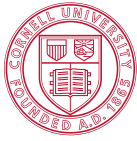
- i. D. Dunham expressed the importance of having a Finance chair and noted that the role of the committee was to ensure organization budgets were being approved and handling all the financial aspects of the GPSA. He stated that A. Johnson had been serving as Interim Chair because the assembly had been unable to find someone willing to take on the role. He also noted that he and A. Johnson had been in communication with administrators and Dean Boor to talk about short-term and long-term changes to the position to make it more manageable.
- ii. A. Johnson conveyed to the assembly that as of earlier afternoon, there had been a nomination for C. Steingard to serve in the position. A. Johnson stated that after talking with C. Steingard about the roles and responsibilities of the highly administrative position, she would like to move forward and confirm C. Steingard.
- iii. C. Steingard introduced herself and with no objections or other nominations for the position, was appointed by the Executive Committee to serve as Chair of the Finance Committee.

b. Student Advocacy Chair



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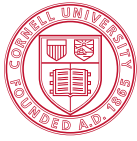
- i. D. Dunham stated that the role of the Student Advocacy committee was to work on issues related to finances, stipend levels, mental and physical health, childcare, and general well-being of Graduate and Professional students. He also noted that the committee was currently empty and expressed the importance of starting it.
 - ii. D. Kent introduced and nominated himself for the Chair position; there were no other nominations or objections, and D. Kent was appointed as the Student Advocacy Chair by the Executive Committee.
 - c. DISC Chair – *No Nominations*
 - i. K. Krishnan noted that she had talked with one individual who was interested and needed more time to decide.
 - d. Masters-At-Large Voting Member – *No Nominations*
- VI. Unfinished Business
 - a. Resolution 9: Extending Voting Membership to Standing Committee Chairpersons – Sponsored by D. Dunham
 - i. N. Danev noted that 19 votes in favor were needed to pass the resolution.
 - ii. A. Johnson rose to a point of order and asked D. Dunham to give a two-sentence summary of the resolution.
 - iii. D. Dunham stated that the resolution was a Charter amendment that would extend voting membership to all committee chairpersons and would require a two-thirds majority vote of the entire membership. He added that with a total of 25 voting seats filled, the resolution would need at least 17 votes to pass.
 - iv. D. Dunham moved to amend the resolution by inserting "Be it further resolved that the following §4.04.D be inserted after line 206: Voting Members shall be limited to one vote, even if that member holds multiple ex officio voting member positions" after line 41. D. Dunham stated that the amendment would address the issue of individuals who were Chairing multiple committees and limiting their vote to one.
 - 1. D. Dunham moved previous question to vote on the amendment.
 - 2. The resolution was amended 19-0-2.
 - v. D. Dunham moved previous question on the resolution as amended.
 - vi. The resolution was approved 20-0-1.
 - vii. D. Dunham added that the Charter amendment would not go into effect until it was approved by President Pollack.
- VII. New Business
 - a. Resolution 12: Addressing the ITAP and University Policy 1.3 – Sponsored by N. Danev, K. Krishnan, L. Davis-Frost, and C. Ohenewah
 - i. N. Danev introduced the resolution and gave background information on the ITAP. He noted that the ITAP and University Policy 1.3 were identified



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as major problems in the GPCI for international students. N. Danev also stated that there had been reports related to the ITAP about racism and xenophobia and expressed that the GPSA should strongly and unambiguously condemn that type of behavior.

- ii. N. Danev told assembly members that he would not ask for a vote on the resolution at the meeting and asked the assembly to send the resolution back to the Sponsoring Committee, the Executive Committee. He stated that this would allow him to introduce a motion to task the sponsors of the resolution to meet with the Provost who was willing to work with the sponsors on the resolution. Once an agreement was reached with the Provost and his office, a more powerful resolution supported by the sponsors and the Provost could be voted on. N. Danev added that the collaboration with the Provost would make the resolution acknowledge the work done with the Provost rather than serve as a list of demands from the GPSA.
- iii. The resolution was seconded by C. Duell.
- iv. A. Johnson rose to a point of clarification and asked if the vote would be for sending the resolution to the Executive Committee as outlined by N. Danev.
- v. D. Dunham stated that once the discussion on the resolution was complete, the Assembly would make a motion to refer the resolution to the Executive Committee as stated by N. Danev.
- vi. M. Cantar asked N. Danev to clarify what the goal of the resolution was, whether it was to get rid of the ITAP requirement or modify the consequences of students not passing.
- vii. N. Danev stated that the goal of resolution would be to completely modify the ITAP process and streamline it while removing the subjectiveness instead of targeting any students that might be international. N. Danev added that the modified ITAP would be a voluntary process and would be more transparent.
- viii. K. Krishnan pointed out that the Graduate School already had a minimum requirement students have to meet, either passing the TOEFL or TEFL, before applying for admission to any Cornell program. The ITAP was an added requirement on top of the TOEFL or TEFL and it was not clear why there was a higher requirement for teaching.
- ix. N. Danev also stated that the sponsors had been discussing with Dean Boor about similar programs at peer institutions and noted that there were definitely lots of ideas for possible modifications of the ITAP. N. Danev also stated that at the very least though, the goal of modifications to the ITAO would help ensure that international students were never blindsided about the ITAP.



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- x. N. Danev motioned for the resolution to be sent back to the Executive Committee and that the sponsors, or their designees, be tasked with meeting the provost to discuss and work further on amending the resolution to come to an agreement.

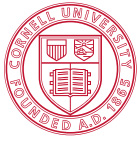
- 1. The motion was seconded by J. Levin and passed; the resolution was referred to the committee.

VIII. Breakout Session by Division

- a. Seeking nominations for GPSA Vacancies:
 - i. Faculty Senate
 - ii. Employee Assembly
 - iii. University Assembly Campus Infrastructure Committee (CIC)
 - iv. University Assembly Campus Welfare Committee (CWC)

IX. Reports of Officers and Committee Updates

- a. Executive Committee – N. Danev
 - i. No Updates
- b. Communications – K. Krishnan
 - i. K. Krishnan noted that she was working on putting more items on the website and would also be advertising remaining open positions on social media. K. Krishnan also stated that the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) was looking for members and encouraged assembly members to consider joining.
- c. Operations – M. Chatterjee
 - i. M. Chatterjee encouraged members to come forward if they were interested in joining a committee.
- d. Finance – *Vacant*
 - i. No Updates
- e. Appropriations – A. Pandey
 - i. No Updates
- f. DISC – *Vacant*
 - i. K. Krishnan noted that one of the DISC events that was still occurring was the Building Allyship series and noted that one would be happening on February 24th from 12 to 1:30 pm on allyship with the LGBTQ community.
- g. Faculty Teaching – C. Duell
 - i. C. Duell encouraged members that were interested to reach out to him and also noted that members that were interested and had signed-up should be hearing from him soon.
- h. Programming – N. Danev
 - i. N. Danev noted that the Programming Board was currently working with Cornell Chimes to organize a “Build Your Own Wind Chimes” event and would be sending out the information over the listserv. N. Danev also



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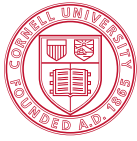
expressed that all voting members were required to be on a committee with all other members strongly encouraged to be on a committee as well.

- i. Student Advocacy – *Vacant*
 - i. No Updates

X. Open Forum

a. The Impact of the Pandemic on Research

- i. M. Chatterjee noted that the impacts of the pandemic on research was a talked about topic in his Division Breakout Room (Life Sciences) and asked how the pandemic impacted the work of assembly members. M. Chatterjee also asked members what the University could do to help students navigate those problems going forward as well as what the University could do to make amends for what had been lost.
- ii. M. O'Leary expressed that she and a significant majority of her department, English, believed that the University should be working much harder in tandem with the Graduate school and graduate students to not only assess the needs of the specific student populations but to aggressively push for at least a full year extension in time-to-degree funding and the degree timeline in general. M. O'Leary also added that it was ridiculous for the University to expect students to carry on as usual despite the fact that many students were missing huge amounts of time in going to archives and missing library materials. Additionally, there were also significant impacts on mental health and overall levels of productivity. M. O'Leary firmly stated that there needed to be an assessment of extending time-to-degree for all graduate students affected by the pandemic in their time-to-degree timeline.
- iii. N. Danev moved to extend the meeting time by 10 minutes to 7:10 PM. The motion was seconded and approved with no objections.
- iv. K. Krishnan and M. O'Leary conveyed to the assembly that there would be a Graduate Student Town Hall on February 16th that Dean Boor and the Provost of Graduate Education would be attending.
- v. M. Chatterjee asked members what the best way would be to gauge interest for time-to-degree extensions would be. M. Chatterjee also encouraged members to talk to students in their departments on the issue and then formalize from there.
- vi. D. Dunham noted that it would also be helpful for students to quantify the research cost over the past year in terms of the financial costs and the setback.
- vii. A. Johnson noted that the assembly already did have statistics quantifying research losses during the start of the pandemic.
- viii. T. Luttermoser followed-up on A. Johnson's statement noting that the statistics from the survey showed that even 2-3 months into the pandemic,



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students were already struggling with decreased research productivity, increased rates of housing insecurity, and increased rates of food insecurity with no improvements in the past 10 months.

- ix. M. Chatterjee stated that the survey was mainly student-driven and expressed that moving on, the surveys should also have substantial Graduate School input.
 - x. A. Johnson noted that one of the statistical findings from the survey was that more than half of respondents believed their time-to-degree would be delayed by a semester or more.
 - xi. M. O'Leary noted that the job market had imploded and that there were virtually no jobs, especially in the humanities. M. O'Leary noted that keeping the potentially long field recovery of jobs in mind would also be critical in thinking about time-to degree extensions. M. O'Leary stated that the extension would not just be for degrees but also for health insurance and each students ability to settle in one place for longer than 1-2 year visiting positions.
 - xii. D. Dunham encouraged members to have students in their department meet to discuss the particular challenges affecting the discipline, but solutions would ultimately have to come from the University.
- b. Renaming Goldwin Smith Hall
- i. D. Dunham conveyed to the assembly that UA was putting forward a resolution on the question of renaming Goldwin Smith Hall because of Goldwin Smith's reprehensible anti-Semitic, Imperialist, anti-feminist views. D. Dunham noted that the University had stripped him of his honorary titles but rejected the proposal of renaming Goldwin Smith Hall.
 - ii. M. O'Leary expressed strong support for renaming the building and stated that keeping the name would be actively hostile for the many students and community members who walk into the building and have office space in it.
 - iii. T. Luttermoser stated that it was weird and negative for the University to recognize that he should not have his name on honorary chairs because of how misogynistic and anti-feminist he was but leave his name on the building.

XI. Adjournment

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Auriole C. R. Fassinou
Clerk of the Assembly