



Cornell University
Graduate and Professional
Student Assembly

Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

Minutes of the December 07, 2020 Meeting

5:30 PM – 7:00 PM (motioned to be extended to 7:30 PM)

Zoom Meeting

- I. Call to Order
 - a. D. Dunham called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM
- II. Announcements
 - a. GPSA Appointment Vacancies
 - i. GPSA-liaison to the Faculty Senate and the Employee Assembly
 1. D. Dunham noted that the GPSA needed to appoint two members to serve in the liaison role, one liaison for the Faculty Senate and the second for the Employee Assembly (EA). The role of the liaisons would be to attend the meetings for the respective governing bodies, answer any questions the Faculty Senate or EA has about GPSA affairs, and to attend the GPSA general meetings to give GPSA members the opportunity to ask questions about the EA and Faculty Senate affairs.
 - ii. Public Safety Advisory Committee
 1. D. Dunham stated that the current GPSA appointee for the Public Safety Advisory Committee was N. Rogers who stated that he would be willing to continue with the committee through the end of the Spring semester. However, N. Rogers had conveyed to D. Dunham that if any member were interested in taking over the position, he would relinquish it. D. Dunham added that the committee was currently working on reforming, advising, and answering over the CUPD which were important topics for many community members.
 - iii. University Assembly Campus Infrastructure Committee (CIC)
 1. D. Dunham stated that the assembly also needed to appoint an individual to the CIC who would attend the CIC meetings.
 - iv. University Assembly Campus Welfare Committee (CWC)
 1. Another vacancy conveyed to the assembly was in the CWC. D. Dunham noted that the GPSA needed to make two appointments to the CWC. One of the appointees would need to be a GPSA member and the second could be either a GPSA member or a non-member. Both appointees would attend the CWC meetings.
 - v. Academic Policies and Advising Implementation Committee
 1. D. Dunham noted that the GPSA needed to appoint one individual to the committee.
 - vi. Student Library Advising Council (SLAC)



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1. D. Dunham noted that the GPSA needed to appoint one individual to the committee. The role of the council included, “building a knowledgeable network for Cornell and helping promote the library as a leader in resources and technology”. He stated that all the committees had regularly schedule meetings, usually every other week and directed members to contact the GPSA VP of Operations, M. Chatterjee.
 - vii. Campus Planning Committee (CPC)
 1. D. Dunham noted that the GPSA also needed to appoint an individual to the CPC. The appointment was generally for two years with this being the first year but due to no nominations, there was still a vacancy. D. Dunham encouraged members to reach out if they were interested in being involved in University committees and added that the CPC was involved in the physical planning on campus (including master planning, land use and physical development, and environmental planning and design), transportation planning (including circulation and parking infrastructure), and new construction and renovations as they relate to the overall planning characteristics of the campus and integrity of the physical planet. D. Dunham stated that the committee played an important role on campus and that it would be important to have GPSA representation on it.
 - viii. D. Dunham directed members to contact M. Chatterjee or any member of the Executive Committee if they had questions about any of the committees or were interested in being appointed.
- III. Roll Call
- i. *Present:* M. Balch, R. Barankevich, A. Bidjarano, M. Chatterjee, H. Cole, P. Cole, J. Dotzel, C. Duell, M. Keefe, K. Laurent, T. Luttermoser, K. Masters, C. O'Connor, M. Schoeffler, E. Schoenly, P. Vinhage, M. Welch
 - ii. *Absent:* K. Beras, H. Bidigare-Curtis, M. Cantar, A. Cirillo, S. López, R. Maloney, C. Ohenewah, M. Sturgeon
- IV. Approval of the Meeting Minutes
- a. Monday, November 23rd, 2020
 - i. N. Danev motioned to approve the minutes; the motion was seconded. The minutes were **approved** unanimously.
- V. Presentations
- a. International Teaching Assistant Program (ITAP) Survey Findings – N. Danev
 - i. N. Danev noted that the GPSA had distributed a survey to the Graduate and Professional students on November 10th, 2020 due to the GPCI finding the ITAP (International Teaching Assistant Program) to be a major issue for



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many Graduate and Professional students. N. Danev stated that the ITAP was specific to Cornell and acted as a vetting process to determine the English speaking sufficiency of “international students”. However, it was unclear as to which groups of individuals were required to participate in the program with their reports of American citizens being asked to participate simply because they had a last name that sounded Hispanic or they were from Puerto Rico. N. Danev added that there had also been reports of student who were international but were not asked to participate because they were white and had names that sounded more English. The GPCI decided to look into the issue by reaching out to the office responsible for administering the program but the office did not specify the process for determining individuals who should be in the program.

- ii. N. Danev stated that the ITAP survey was administered to gain more information on the survey and within the first week, they had received approximately 230 responses with 90.5% of respondents believing that the ITAP needed to be changed and 46% of those respondents believing that it should be discontinued. N. Danev presented the findings from the ITAP Survey Summary and Raw Data Report (see Office of Assemblies website for report). N. Danev also added that 64.1% of respondents believed that the ITAP placed an undue burden on international students and told a personal story about receiving an email stating he needed to pass the ITAP’s English Language Assessment while preparing to move to Cornell in the middle of the Pandemic. He added that he could imagine many students being stressed given the global circumstances and having to move across the world in the middle of a pandemic all while not knowing if their position would be guaranteed.
- iii. N. Danev suggested that the GPSA should look into the results of the survey in greater detail and then propose a resolution in February that could be sent out to President Pollack along with taking actionable steps to repair the deeply flawed process. He also mentioned that the ITAP was currently undergoing internal revision, but the process was unfortunately excluding students from it.
- iv. M. Balch asked if there were any indications to what direction the administration was leaning with the ITAP despite the restructuring being internal.
 1. N. Danev responded that there had not been any indications of direction.

VI. Motion to Extend Meeting to 120 minutes

- i. N. Danev stated that he had already previously notified the members about the motion and officially moved to extend the meeting to 7:30pm. The



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motion was seconded and by general consensus, the regular orders of the day were set aside, and the meeting time was moved to 7:30pm.

VII. Elections

- a. Student Advocacy Committee Chair (*No Nominations*)
- b. Finance Commission Chair
 - i. D. Dunham conveyed to the assembly that A. Johnson's term as Finance Commission Chair was about to end. He added that the committee played a pivotal role in one of the most important functions of the GPSA.
 - ii. A. Johnson stated that the Finance Commission was responsible for taking part of the activity fee and allocating it to different groups so they could spend it on what they needed to. The Finance Commission played a role in setting the rules of how money could be spent and checking that the rules were being followed. A. Johnson added that the role of Finance Chair included leading a committee of around 10 people, working with those individuals to go through all of the budgets submitted by organizations, and checking to make sure the organizations were following the rules. She added that position was a good way to have a sense of everything that different clubs were doing on campus and was also helpful in building leadership skills due to the committee management and interfacing with administrators.
 - iii. A. Pandey asked how many hours per week would the Finance Commission Chair invest.
 1. A. Johnson noted that it varied by week with the average around five hours. She added that she had spent much more time during the beginning of the pandemic when the rules were rewritten to be more pandemic-friendly. Additionally, another time-consuming process was the tier increase requests. She noted that many groups were capped at a maximum amount of money they could request based on previous usage and need and at the beginning of a new academic year, many groups would request to go up a tier. The last substantial time commitment mentioned by A. Johnson was revision of the Finance Commission guidelines.
 - iv. N. Danev pointed out that the Finance Commission Chair position was one of the most important roles in the GPSA and it would be essential to find someone to fill the role.
 - v. D. Dunham echoed N. Danev's comments and expressed his appreciation for the work A. Johnson did along with the other members of the Finance Commission.
 - vi. A. Johnson also noted that she would help the new Chair through the transition and the first few meetings.



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- vii. A. Pandey nominated herself for the position and asked if she could do both Finance Commission Chair and the Appropriations Committee Chair.
 - viii. D. Dunham stated that it was not advisable but noted that there were no specific rules against doing both.
 - ix. A. Pandey stated that at this point in time, there were not many activities occurring and since both committees were not as intense right now, they could come together as one assignment.
 - x. D. Dunham noted that since both of these were committees, A. Pandey would be working with other people and added that since there were no objections, she could nominate herself for the Finance Commission Chair role.
 - xi. A. Pandey was elected as the Finance Commission Chair with 25 votes in favor and 1 opposed.
 - c. M. Eng. Voting Member (*No Nominations*)
- VIII. Unfinished Business
- a. Resolution 5: Internal Budget – Sponsored by A. Pandey
 - i. A. Pandey reviewed the proposed amendments based on the previous meetings discussions. The first amendment was changing “GPSA Resolution 6” to “GPSA Resolution 5” on Line 1. The second amendment involved changing the allocated budget for the Student Advocacy Committee from \$1300 to \$650 on Line 12. The third amendment involved increasing the Faculty Awards Budget from \$300 to \$750 on Line 13 based on previous experience and the shortage of funds. The fourth amendment involved replacing the text on Lines 35-40 with,

“WHEREAS, in the light of the pandemic and shifting of all GPSA activities to a remote setting, graduate students have experienced additional financial stress and changed home technology needs; and
WHEREAS, the GPSA will set aside \$2200 for a fund to help support graduate students’ home technology needs, the exact distribution of which will be determined in collaboration with the Graduate School and other relevant offices; and”
 - ii. D. Dunham rose to a point of information noting that he was unable to get specific data from the administrators of the Access Fund about what kinds of needs there were but stated that he would get the information by Thursday. D. Dunham also added that the administrators did seem optimistic and pleased with the idea that they could receive extra funding from the GPSA. Based on that, he conveyed that he thought the language in Amendment 4 of the resolution was accurate because it did not need to



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name the Access Fund, but it could be put aside and if the Access Fund needed the money, it could be appropriated by the GPSA, as necessary.

iii. Amendment 1:

1. The amendment was adopted by general consensus.

iv. Amendment 2:

1. The amendment was seconded by M. Chatterjee. D. Dunham called the question on the amendment. The amendment was adopted with 11 votes in favor and none against.

v. Amendment 3:

1. The amendment was seconded.
2. N. Danev moved to suspend the Bylaw requiring an absolute majority to pass a resolution for the remainder of the meeting.
 - a. D. Dunham stated that the Bylaw rules that protected the rights of members who were absent could not be suspended especially considering there were members of the assembly currently absent. He added that he was sympathetic with the motion because he did not think it was necessary to have an absolute majority to pass every resolution, but, nevertheless. The Bylaws could not be suspended.
3. C. Duell reiterated that the reason for the Faculty Awards budget increase was that in the chance that physical events could be held in May or June, without the increase, the in-person events would not be possible.
4. D. Dunham moved the question on the amendment. The amendment was adopted with 13 votes in favor and one against.

vi. Amendment 4:

1. The motion was seconded by N. Danev and with no discussion, D. Dunham moved previous question. The amendment was adopted with 16 votes in favor and none against.

vii. N. Danev moved previous question on Resolution 5. GPSA Resolution 5 – Internal Budget was **approved** unanimously.

IX. Breakout Session by Division

- a. D. Dunham noted that the Johnson School Division had a vacant voting member position they could elect by their own methods during the breakout. D. Dunham also encouraged members to get feedback from the field representatives about the resolutions that were on the table for the meeting and how they should vote.

X. New Business

- a. N. Danev moved to appeal D. Dunham's previous decision to not suspend the Bylaws.



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- i. D. Dunham noted that the motion required a majority vote and was not debatable. He added that voting in favor would support the original decision while voting in opposition would repeal the original decision.
 - ii. K. Krishnan asked if only voting members were allowed to vote.
 1. D. Dunham responded yes. He added that the motion could be reconsidered as well.
 - iii. The motion **failed** with 7 votes in favor and 7 votes opposed. The absolute voting majority rule was maintained. D. Dunham told the assembly members that a motion could be made to repeal the decision though as long as the motion was made by an individual who was on the prevailing side of the vote – voted in favor.
- b. Resolution 7: Teaching Modality – Sponsored by M. Chatterjee
- i. M. Chatterjee introduced the resolution stating that in the Fall when the University decided to use a hybrid model, faculty and students were allowed to choose the instruction mode to teach in and take, respectively. However, Graduate TAs were not given the option to choose which mode of instruction they could TA for. The official way for Graduate TAs to go around the lack of agency was through petitioning Student Disability Services (SDS). However, many student organizations petitioned the Graduate School noting that the policy was not equitable for all Graduate students because they would have to disclose their health conditions to SDS and possibly faculty even if they were not comfortable doing so. M. Chatterjee noted that several departments (Science and Technology, Molecular Biology and Genetics, etc.) decided to not use the SDS process but would give Graduate TAs autonomy in choosing the teaching assignments with the modality that best fit their needs. M. Chatterjee stated that the purpose of the resolution was to promote an opt-in policy for all Graduate TAs to decide for themselves whether they wanted to teach in-person or online in light of the pandemic.
 - ii. The resolution was seconded by N. Danev.
 - iii. M. Balch conveyed his apprehension for the resolution and asked if there were any action of recourse for faculty members who required in-person TAs and originally had Graduate TAs with the intention of being in-person but opted-out at a later date.
 1. M. Chatterjee stated that he believed there was a clause in the resolution regarding TAs being able to change the teaching modality as and when they decide to do so depending on their comfort level.
 - iv. T. Luttermoser expressed that he was strongly in favor of the resolution. He noted that there were more than 20 departments that independently adopted an opt-in policy similar to that being promoted by the resolution. He also



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noted that departments having to create their own policies only exacerbated the pre-existing inequities in the situation. In addressing M. Balch's question, T. Luttermoser stated that his department handled changes in TA modality preferences by shuffling specific class assignments to accommodate needs. T. Luttermoser also expressed frustration with the Graduate School for not taking the issue seriously in the first place.

- v. K. Krishnan echoed the sentiments of T. Luttermoser noting that it took a lot of work from Graduate students over the summer to get departments to make the opt-in a policy. K. Krishnan also stated that the process through SDS was only specific to a personal health concern and did not account for individuals living in households with a vulnerable population, transportation issues, or physical discomfort with teaching in-person in the middle of a pandemic. The issues that fell outside of a personal health concern would need to be addressed independently with the course professor, could potentially be escalated to the DGS, and could result in students losing their TA-ship and facing consequences.
- vi. C. Duell also spoke in favor of the resolution noting that even if the Graduate School did not adopt a similar opt-in policy, it would be helpful to have the resolution to point to showing that graduate students across the entire Graduate School felt that the topic was important. He added that individuals may not feel comfortable going through the process available to them and that it was ridiculous that they would need to go out of their way to feel comfortable and stand up for their health.
- vii. M. O'Leary echoed the previous comments supporting the resolution and expressed agreement with T. Luttermoser's assertion that this was a worker safety issue. M. O'Leary also noted that the lack of an opt-in policy fed into the expectation that Graduate TAs would continue to work far more than they were compensated for. She also emphasized that the policy would move towards acknowledging and attempt to alleviate the power differential between Graduate students and their advisors, departmental chairs, etc. Lastly, she noted that the process overall privileged students who had good relationships with their advisors, which was not always the case.
- viii. N. Danev expressed support for the resolution and moved to suspend the Bylaws for the rest of the meeting to allow a vote on all the resolutions that were introduced during the meeting. The motion was seconded and approved.
 - 1. D. Dunham noted that if the motion were to pass, it would apply to all the resolution except for Resolution 9 since it dealt with amending the Charter.



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- ix. D. Dunham moved previous question. The resolution was approved with 13 in favor and none opposed.
- c. Resolution 8: Maintaining the University Assembly's Jurisdiction over the Code of Conduct – Sponsored by L. Kenney, J. Pea, and N. Danev
 - i. L. Kenney noted that with the sweeping Code changes, one of the largest changes was the removal of jurisdiction from the UA. L. Kenney added that the UA had jurisdiction over the Code for the past 50 years in one form or another and this would be the first time another individual, the Vice President of SCL, would be overseeing the Code. She noted that the Vice President of SCL also had a conflict of interest because they also oversee the Office of the Judicial Administrator. She expressed her belief that the jurisdiction of the Code should belong to the UA since the UA had constituent leaders from all five constituent groups across campus as well as the CJC which was responsible for making Code amendments. The purpose of the resolution was to ask for the current draft, created by the University Council, remove jurisdiction from the VP of SCL and return it to the UA. L. Kenney added that she had spoken with the SA and they had formally and unanimously adopted the resolution including an amendment that whenever amendments to the Code went through the UA, they UA would immediately contact the GPSA and SA to ask for detailed resolutions and/or feedback that would be seriously considered. She noted that the proposed version only called for input from the constituent groups and did not what input was and how heavily it would be considered. She concluded by saying that in the spirit of shared governance, the jurisdiction should be with the independent and unbiased UA body.
 - ii. The resolution was seconded.
 - iii. N. Danev expressed strong support for the resolution adding that CJC and SA fully supported the resolution. He also noted that a third of the purpose for shared governance was to oversee the Codes in an unbiased way and by removing UA jurisdiction, the assemblies would be stripping themselves of one of the three core tenants. N. Danev also stated that New York State laws actually prohibited individuals with conflicts of interest to be overseeing the process which would happen if the Code was adopted as is.
 - iv. C. Duell also expressed support for the resolution saying that removing it from UA jurisdiction would completely go against the spirit of shared governance.
 - v. L. Kenney moved to amend the motion by changing Line 52 to read "Be it therefore resolved, the Administration, also providing GPSA Resolution 8 to the Board of Trustees, re-affirms the UA's jurisdiction over the Codes and Procedures. The language in the proposed Code of Conduct changes should



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shift jurisdiction from the VP SCL to the UA, with consultation as periodical formal updates from the UA to the Student Assembly (SA) and Graduate & Professional Student Assembly (GPSA), as well as all other amendments under consideration being immediately sent to these bodies, whose recommendations and concerns will be seriously considered by the CJC.”

- vi. L. Kenney stated that the amendment was meant to hold the UA accountable to the opinions of the GPSA and SA. She also added that she left it blank to have a chance to talk to the SA to ask how they would like to define consultation.
 1. The amendment was seconded.
 2. D. Dunham moved previous question on the amendment.
 3. The amendment was **approved** unanimously.
 - vii. L. Kenney made a note that the SA approved Resolution 19 on 12/05/2020 for the abstract and Line 49 rather than 12/03/2020 as written in the current resolution. The amendment was **approved** by general consent.
 - viii. N. Danev motioned to have a Roll Call vote on the resolution. The motion was seconded with no objection. D. Dunham moved previous question on the motion. The motion was **approved** unanimously and the default voting method for the resolution was set to Roll Call.
 - ix. L. Kenney mentioned that she had been granted five minutes to talk to the Board of Trustees on Thursday and a major part of that time would be spent on the topic of jurisdiction. She added that she did not want to see a Cornell where students did not have a strong say in their own rights and noted that removing jurisdiction from the UA could have many negative impacts for years to come.
 - x. Roll Call Vote:
 1. In Favor [16]: K. Masters, M. Balch, H. Cole, P. Vinhage, M. Chatterjee, T. Luttermoser, M. Keefe, J. Dotzel, K. Laurent, C. Duell, C. O'Connor, M. Welch, R. Barankevich, M. Schoeffler, A. Bidjarano, P. Cole
 2. Opposed [0]:
 3. Abstained [9]: M. Cantar, S. López, H. Bidigare-Curtis, K. Beras, E. Schoenly, M. Sturgeon, C. Ohenewah, R. Maloney, A. Cirillo
 - xi. The resolution was **approved**.
- d. Resolution 9: Extending Voting Membership to Standing Committee Chairpersons – Sponsored by D. Dunham
- i. D. Dunham relinquished the chair N. Danev and introduced the resolution. D. Dunham stated that he believed this resolution was important for several reasons. He noted that there had been several issues of the course of the



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semester with the fact that the GPSA required an absolute majority voting requirement for resolutions (as written in the Bylaws). He added that it was difficult to meet those high voting standards to pass resolutions if a large number of members were not present at the meeting. He stated that most other assemblies have a much lower requirement so the resolution would amend the charter to expand the number of people with voting status by granting ex-officio voting membership to committee chairs. D. Dunham expressed support for the resolution noting that it would allow individuals with the greatest level of commitment to the GPSA, to also have a further incentive to participate and vote on resolutions. The amendment would increase the number of voting members to 36 and there would need to be an amendment to address individuals with multiple chair positions. D. Dunham stated that since the resolution would amend the Charter, it could not be voted on at the current meeting and needed to be postponed at least one meeting. In addition, the resolution would need to be approved by President Pollack before it could be incorporated into the Charter.

- ii. N. Danev cited Robert's Rules of Order stating "a lot of organizations add a clause provided each person shall have only one vote" as a possible amendment.
- iii. D. Dunham moved to postpone the discussion on the resolution until the next regularly scheduled meeting in February. The motion **passed** via general consent.

XI. Reports of Officers and Committee Updates

- a. Executive Committee – N. Danev
 - i. N. Danev stated that the Executive Committee was proposing several changes to the Bylaws and the Charter including the changes outlined in Resolution 9 which was supported by the committee. N. Danev also urged members to consider signing up for the vacant positions.
- b. Finance – A. Johnson
 - i. A. Johnson noted that the committee was considering writing a resolution to compensate heads of committees and those who served on the Executive Committee. She added that compensation would make officer positions more appealing and also more feasible for students to take on.
- c. Communications – K. Krishnan
 - i. K. Krishnan stated that she would be sending out an email with the list of positions that were discussed and urged members to reach out if they were interested.
- d. Operations – M. Chatterjee
 - i. No Updates
- e. Appropriations – A. Pandey



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- i. No Updates
- f. DISC – Y. Shih
 - i. No Updates
- g. Faculty Teaching – C. Duell
 - i. C. Duell noted that he was looking for individuals to fill leadership roles for the Faculty Awards planning and encouraged members to contact him if they were interested.
- h. Programming – K. Laurent
 - i. No Updates
- i. Student Advocacy – *Pending election*

XII. Open Forum

- a. L. Kenney thanked members of the assembly for looking over Resolution 8 and giving her the chance to speak at the past few meetings.
- b. M. Chatterjee thanked the members of assembly for supporting Resolution 7 and pointed out that the subject of the resolution was typical of what the Student Advocacy Committee was usually involved in (student welfare and advocating for student welfare). M. Chatterjee urged members to consider signing up for the SAC chair position.
- c. K. Krishnan conveyed to the assembly that Anabel's Grocery would possibly be reopening for next semester.

XIII. Adjournment

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 7:00pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Auriole C. R. Fassinou
Clerk of the Assembly