

Cornell University

Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

Cornell Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

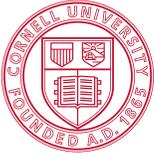
Agenda of the February 15th, 2021 Meeting

5:30 PM – 7 PM

Zoom Meeting

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call (3 mins)
- III. Approval of the Meeting Minutes (2 mins)
 - a. Monday, February 1st, 2021
- IV. Presentations (30 mins)
 - a. Dr. Charles Van Loan, Dean of Faculty: Anti-Racism Initiative Progress
- V. Elections, Vacancies and Appointments (10 mins)
 - a. Finance Chair
 - b. Student Advocacy Chair
 - c. DISC Chair
 - d. Masters-At-Large Voting Member
- VI. Unfinished Business (10 mins)
 - a. Resolution 9: Extending Voting Membership to Standing Committee Chairpersons
 - i. Sponsored by: David Dunham, GPSA President
- VII. New Business (10 mins)
 - a. Resolution 12: Addressing the ITAP and University Policy 1.3
 - i. Sponsored by:
 1. Nikola Danev, GPSA Executive Vice President
 2. Kavya Krishnan, GPSA Vice President for Communications
 3. Liz Davis-Frost, GPSA Ex-Officio Member & Student-Elected Trustee
 4. Christine Ohenewah, GPSA Voting Member for the Law School
- VIII. Breakout Session by Division (10 mins)
 - a. Seeking nominations for GPSA Vacancies:
 - i. Faculty Senate
 - ii. Employee Assembly
 - iii. University Assembly Campus Infrastructure Committee
 - iv. University Assembly Campus Welfare Committee
- IX. Reports of Officers and Committee Updates (5 mins)
 - a. Executive Committee – Nikola Danev
 - b. Communications – Kavya Krishnan

If you are in need of special accommodations, contact Office of the Assemblies at (607) 255-3715 or Student Disability Services at (607) 254-4545 prior to the meeting.



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- c. Operations – Martik Chatterjee
 - d. Finance – *Vacant*
 - e. Appropriations – Aakarsha Pandey
 - f. DISC – *Vacant*
 - g. Faculty Teaching – Cody Duell
 - h. Programming – Kasey Laurent
 - i. Student Advocacy – *Vacant*
- X. Open Forum (7 mins)
- XI. Adjournment



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Minutes of the February 1, 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* [16]: R. Barankevich, K. Beras, H. Bidigare-Curtis, M. Cantar, H. Cole, M. Drescher, C. Duell, M. Keefe, K. Laurent, T. Luttermoser, R. Maloney, C. O'Connor, C. Ohenewah, A. Presher, P. Vinhage, M. Welch
 - ii. *Absent* [8]: M. Balch, M. Chatterjee, A. Cirillo, J. Dotzel, S. López, M. Schoeffler, E. Schoenly, M. Sturgeon,
- III. Announcements
 - a. Inactive members
 - i. D. Dunham stated to the assembly that under the Charter and Bylaws, voting members were required to be present at all meeting with only two possible excused absences before being removed from their position. He added that the slate would be cleared for all voting members at the start of the semester but going forward, the stricter rules for attendance would be applied.
 - b. Committee assignments
 - i. D. Dunham noted that voting members, under the governing documents, were required to be a member of at least one committee and preferably serving as a committee chairperson and also encouraged field representatives to get involved with committees they were interested in. He added that a list of members interested in each committee, based on the e-mailed sign-up form, would be sent to each committee chair and the chairs would be responsible for sending out invitations to the committee's next meeting to all interested members. The goal would be for the chairs, to eventually send an updated list of members to M. Chatterjee, VP of Operations, after the first meeting of the semester.
 - c. Access Fund
 - i. D. Dunham stated that the GPSA had discussed with the administration about the \$2,200 allocated to the Access Fund by the GPSA for home technology needs and after consulting with the administration, learned that the fund had distributed approximately \$12,000 to Graduate students for their expenses. These expenses included laptop repairs, hygiene products, medical expenses, and emergency travel expenses with the maximum withdrawable amount being \$500 per individual. However, a resolution that



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would direct more money for the purpose of donating to the Access Fund was not able to be drafted for the meeting, so D. Dunham invited members to present a motion under New Business to contribute money that was allocated for that purpose or to move allocated money from the GPSA reserve funds for Access Fund purposes.

d. External Vacancies

- i. D. Dunham noted that liaisons were needed for the Faculty Assembly and Employee Assembly to serve as points-of-contact for the GPSA. Additionally, members were also needed for the UA's Campus Infrastructure Committee (CIC) and Campus Welfare Committee (CWC). The Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) was also looking for another GPSA Representative. D. Dunham directed members to contact the Executive Committee if they were interested in filling any of the vacancies. D. Dunham also noted that the elections for officers would be occurring at the end of the semester and told members that might be interested in running for an Executive Officer position to contact him because now would be a good time to start thinking about it.

IV. Approval of the Meeting Minutes

a. Monday, December 7th, 2021

- i. N. Danev moved to amend the minutes by replacing "a lot of organizations out of clause provided each person shall have only one vote" with "a lot of organizations add a clause provided each person shall have only one vote" in Section D, Subpoint c, line iii. The motion was seconded by K. Krishnan and amended by unanimous consent.
- ii. The minutes were approved unanimously.

V. Elections

a. Finance Chair

- i. D. Dunham noted that A. Pandey had been previously elected to serve as the Finance Chair but had to unfortunately submit a letter of resignation because she could not manage the chair responsibilities in addition to her work. A. Pandey's letter of resignation was accepted by the assembly unanimously.
- ii. A. Johnson stated that the purpose of the student activity fee was to fund Graduate and Professional student groups with the GPSA controlling the funding mechanism by voting and the Finance Commission ensures the rules are followed. She added that the role of the Finance Chair was to manage the committee, help review all submitted budgets, coordinate with administrators on campus, and propose many of the updates to the Finance rules. However, if the chair position were not filled, the means by which all of the Graduate and Professional student groups received funding would



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break down and that would not be ideal in a pandemic where social interactions were important, and clubs need to be funded. A. Johnson noted that the position was difficult times especially when it came to having to be available to answer student questions by email with some questions being difficult, being available to interface with administrators, and managing a committee of 10 members with a monthly budget cycle.

- iii. D. Dunham asked the assembly if there were any incentives or changes to the position that would make the position easier or more appealing. He also noted that he and A. Johnson would be meeting with the administration to discuss ways in which the position could be reformed to make it more manageable.
- iv. A. Johnson noted that the goal would be to have compensation for the position along with other GPSA leadership positions, time/money saving mechanisms, or other desirable benefits that would make the time commitment worthwhile. She added that she believed one of the main reasons why many individuals do not volunteer for the leadership roles is because of the time commitment that prevents them from completing work or they need to have a paying job and cannot take on a role with such extensive volunteer responsibilities.
- v. N. Danev noted that there were quite a few people interested in the Finance committee based on the e-mailed committee sign-up form and asked if there were members that were on the fence about serving in the chair position. He also echoed A. Johnson's comments stating that extending greater funding to the organization of the chair would be a good incentive for organizations to participate in the work of the Finance Commission. The extension of funding would also make it easier for the GPSA to find chairpersons more easily in the future.
- vi. K. Krishnan echoed her agreements with A. Johnson and N. Danev statements about incentivizing individuals to apply for the role by increasing organization funding but pointed out that it was rare for an individual to be in only one organization so if the assembly were to go that route, the details would need to be figured out. K. Krishnan also noted that she would be sending emails and sharing on social media, all the open positions up for election for next year.
- vii. D. Dunham asked members if they had any preferences or oppositions to the benefits or compensation options described by A. Johnson.
- viii. N. Danev and D. Dunham stressed the importance of filling the role of Finance Chair noting that without the position being filled, all funding for any organizations would be halted. D. Dunham asked A. Johnson to



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highlight the key responsibilities of the chair that could not be delegated to other committee members.

- ix. A. Johnson stated that the key responsibilities included organizing the meeting for the committee members and taking the time to review and approve the budgets.
 - x. D. Dunham asked if the chair position could be split into co-chair positions.
 - xi. A. Johnson stated that co-chair positions could be created instead with each chair alternating on arranging meetings and responding to emails.
 - xii. N. Rogers asked if A. Johnson was responsible for responding to all of the emails directed to the committee.
 - xiii. A. Johnson noted that committee members were still assigned to review certain budgets and work with those organizations but the main emails she was responsible for revolved around general student questions about budgeting and setting up a club. She would then have to either find an answer or refer to another administrator/individual that could provide the answer. A. Johnson stated that about 30% of her time in the role was spent responding to emails and added that other roles included maintaining the website and tier lists.
 - xiv. N. Danev pointed out that A. Pandey had also agreed to serve as Vice Chair in the committee to split the work. He also added that there would be a support system for the chair along with A. Johnson aiding in the transition and being available to answer questions in an advisory role.
- b. Student Advocacy Chair
 - i. D. Kent expressed interest in the role and noted that he would like to discuss the responsibilities with a past chair or member familiar with the role.
 - c. M. Eng. Voting Member
 - i. D. Dunham noted that the position was open to any Master's student regardless of whether or not they were in the Engineering program due to how long the position had been vacant.
 - ii. J. Levin self-nominated himself for the vacancy. J. Levin introduced himself and stated that he would like to serve in the role was to ensure that the Masters in Hospitality Management community was properly represented, noting that it was an extremely diverse group and would like to contribute to the graduate committee.
 - iii. N. Danev rose to a point of order stating that any member could vote and not just voting members. J. Levin was **elected/approved** 36-0.
 - d. Masters-At-Large Voting Member
 - i. No Nominations

VI. Breakout Session by Division



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- a. D. Dunham informed the Johnson School representatives that they had a voting member vacancy and could use the Division Breakouts to select a member to run.
- b. Johnson Voting Member (P&M division)
 - i. C. Liu self-nominated himself and was approved to serve as the voting member for the Johnson School. C. Liu introduced himself and stated that he was running because the Chinese community represented 40% of the international student class and 13% of the Johnson student body so being a voting member would afford students in the Chinese community the opportunity to make their voices heard.

VII. Unfinished Business

- a. Resolution 9: Extending Voting Membership to Standing Committee Chairpersons (Sponsored by: D. Dunham, GPSA President)
 - i. N. Danev noted that the resolution had been postponed at the last meeting in accordance with the Bylaws and would now be reopened for discussion.
 - ii. D. Dunham summarized the resolution stating that it would amend the Charter to grant ex officio voting membership to committee chairs and this would be a way to incentivize individuals to take on leadership positions as committee chairs. D. Dunham also added that the Charter could only be amended by a two-thirds absolute majority of the voting members.
 - iii. D. Dunham moved to postpone the resolution. The motion was seconded by C. Duell and approved by unanimous consent.

VIII. New Business

- a. Resolution 10: Establishing the Standing Rules for the Spring Semester 2021 (Sponsored by: D. Dunham, GPSA President)
 - i. D. Dunham summarized the resolution stating that it established the regular meeting dates for the rest of the semester and switched out one regular meeting on April 26, 2021 with a meeting on May 3, 2021 because April 26 was a Wellness Day with no classes.
 - ii. D. Dunham moved to suspend the rules that would require a postponement of voting on the resolution until the next meeting. The motion was seconded by C. O' Connor and approved.
 - iii. M. Cantar asked if the extra meeting was needed and emphasized the importance of all students taking care of their mental health.
 - iv. N. Danev and D. Dunham noted that the number of meetings was staying the same, so no extra meetings were added, rather, a meeting was set for a different date to replace a meeting set during a Wellness Day.
 - v. D. Dunham moved previous question; the motion was seconded by C. Duell.
 - vi. The resolution was approved 17-0-0.



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- b. Resolution 11: Revising and Formalizing the Procedures for Consideration of Resolutions (Sponsored by: D. Dunham, GPSA President)
 - i. D. Dunham summarized the resolution, noting that it would accomplish three different goals in the Bylaws but invited members to motion to divide the question if they wanted to. D. Dunham stated that the first part of the resolution would remove the requirement to postpone a resolution at least one meeting after it had been introduced without needing to always suspend the rules. The second part of the resolution would remove the absolute majority voting requirement for resolutions to prevent absences from serving as “negative” votes. The third part of the resolution would set certain recourses if the GPSA President failed to convey a resolution to President Pollack within the regular two-week period.
 - ii. D. Dunham moved previous question; the motion was seconded.
 - iii. The resolution was **approved** 16-0-1.
- IX. Reports of Officers and Committee Updates
 - a. Executive Committee – N. Danev
 - i. N. Danev noted that members that did not fill out the emailed committee sign-up form would be assigned a committee and directed members to contact M. Chatterjee if their preference had changed.
 - b. Communications – K. Krishnan
 - i. K. Krishnan noted that she would soon start sending email and social media updates on officer positions up for election.
 - c. Finance – *Vacant*
 - i. No Updates
 - d. Appropriations – A. Pandey
 - i. No Updates
 - e. DISC – Y. Shih
 - i. D. Dunham stated that Y. Shih had not communicated with the Executive team at all during the year and that as he understood it, there was no committee activity. He informed the assembly that Y. Shih could be unseated by a two-thirds majority vote so that another chair could start directing the committee.
 - ii. N. Danev moved to unseat the chair of DISC, Y. Shih, on the lack of attendance and communication. The motion was seconded by J. Levin.
 - iii. D. Dunham pointed out that the Executive Committee had taken every effort to reach out to Y. Shih but had not heard back.
 - iv. N. Danev echoed the sentiments of D. Dunham adding that both he and D. Dunham had reached out multiple times without any replies since being elected and there had been no communication from Y. Shih prior to being elected either. N. Danev expressed the significance of the DISC, particularly



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as an international student. He also added that he did not believe that the GPSA could go on without a functioning Diversity and International Student Committee (DISC), so unseating the chair would allow for a new chair to take on the serious responsibilities of the role.

- f. Faculty Teaching – C. Duell
 - i. C. Duell encouraged members to reach out to him if they were interested in joining the committee.
- g. Programming – K. Laurent
 - i. K. Laurent encouraged members to reach out if they were interested in joining the committee. K. Laurent noted that the committee was currently working on a “Build Your Own Chimes” event in collaboration with the Big ed Barn and Cornell Chimes.
- h. Student Advocacy – *Vacant*
 - i. No Updates

X. Open Forum

- a. ITAP Progress – N. Danev
 - i. N. Danev noted that he had not started drafting the resolution for ITAP reform but conveyed to the assembly that he would be appreciative of any support members could offer on the resolution writing process. He also stated that he hoped to get a meeting setup soon and expressed that it would be important for the GPSA to get involved in reforming the ITAP process.
 - ii. J. Levin asked N. Danev to elaborate on the topic.
 - 1. N. Danev described the details of the ITAP, emphasizing the bias against specific demographics and stress associated with the process.

XI. Adjournment

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Auriole C. R. Fassinou
Clerk of the Assembly



Resolution 9: Extending Voting Membership to Standing Committee Chairpersons

Abstract: The GPSA grants voting rights only to a subset of its members, the composition of which is proportional to the Assembly constituent divisions. This resolution amends the GPSA Charter to grant *ex officio* Voting Membership to the chairpersons of the GPSA standing committees, provided that the Chairpersons are democratically elected, and that no future amendment allows Chairpersonship to be granted without a general election.

Sponsored by: David Dunham, President

Reviewed by: Executive Committee, 12/02/2020

Whereas, the GPSA Charter §4.04.B sets the number of Voting Members at 27 and states the composition thereof; and

Whereas, these Voting Members have the power to elect Officers and standing committee chairs, as well as the exclusive right to vote on the adoption of resolutions (§4.04.A.iii); and

Whereas, the concept of a limited Voting Membership is an unconventional construction that withholds a power rightfully reserved to all members, thereby creating a democratic deficit in the GPSA; and

Whereas, the current composition has led to undesirably low attendance due to the frequent vacating of Voting Member positions, and this tendency has led to difficulties in disposing of regular business; and

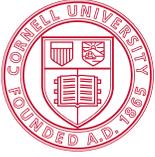
Whereas, the standing committee chairs have shown the most consistent attendance at our meetings, the most informed involvement in our affairs, and the highest level of professionalism; and

Whereas, the standing committee chairs are often unrewarded in their tireless efforts to support the mission of the GPSA; and

Whereas, GPSA members already elect the chairpersons of the standing committees;

Be it therefore resolved, that the GPSA Charter §4.04.B (line 187) be amended to be “There shall be thirty-six (36) Voting Members, composed as follows:”; and

Be it further resolved, that the GPSA Charter §4.04.B be amended to insert the following subsection §4.04.B.iv after §4.04.B.iii (line 204):



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- 30 iv. “*Ex officio* Voting Membership shall be granted to the Chairpersons of the following
31 GPSA standing committees, provided that the committee chair is either an elected
32 Officer or a member appointed through an election by a majority of all members:
33 1. Executive Committee (Bylaws §3.02)
34 2. Operations and Staffing Committee (Bylaws §3.03)
35 3. Appropriations Committee (Bylaws §3.05)
36 4. Communications Committee (Bylaws §3.06)
37 5. Finance Commission (Bylaws §3.07)
38 6. Student Advocacy Committee (Bylaws §3.08)
39 7. Graduate and Professional Student Programming Board (Bylaws §3.09)
40 8. Faculty Teaching, Advising, and Mentorship Award Committee (Bylaws §3.10)
41 9. Diversity & International Students Committee (Bylaws §3.11)

42 **Be it finally resolved,** that the GPSA urges the President of the University to approve this
43 amendment, pursuant to the President’s authority under Charter §10.04.

44 Respectfully Submitted,

45 David Dunham

46 President of the Graduate & Professional Student Assembly



Resolution 12: Addressing the ITAP and University Policy 1.3

Abstract: This resolution aims to address and remedy the issues identified in Objective 2 of the International Students section of the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative (“GPCI”). As confirmed by a graduate and professional student-wide survey and in meetings of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (“GPSA”), certain demographics of students are targeted by a University-wide program called International TA Program (“ITAP”), which has consistently overstepped its authorities, interfered with funding and grants, and at times caused undue stress and pressure on students. The GPSA resolves to acknowledge these issues, and, in addition, demands that the University Provost and President form a working group involving stakeholders to reform the ITAP per the suggestions presented in this resolution.

Sponsored by:

Nikola Danev, Executive Vice President;

Kavya Krishnan, Vice President for Communications;

Liz Davis-Frost, Student-Elected Trustee and ex-officio member;

Christine Ohenewah, Voting Member

Reviewed by: Executive Committee, 02/08/2021

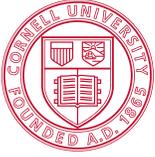
Whereas, international students¹ must participate in Language Assessment (“ILA”) meetings in order to determine language proficiency level and allow for time to fulfill any requirements prior to a Teaching Assistant (“TA”) assignment,

Whereas, participation in the ILA is a requirement of the Office of the Provost for all first-time teaching assistants from a country where English is not the first language to demonstrate a minimum level of oral proficiency via a language assessment,

Whereas, the only exception are students who have earned a TOEFL iBT speaking score of 28 or higher or an IELTS speaking score of 8.5 or higher, and students with a previous degree are not exempt from a language assessment,

Whereas, University Policy 1.3 sets vague requirements for the implementation of the aforementioned assessment,

¹ This term remains undefined by the ITAP office and the University



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29 **Whereas**, per University Policy 1.3 failure to meet ILA requirements results in a mandatory English
30 language course (“ALS5780”) administered by the International Teaching Assistant Program
31 (“ITAP”) and a TA ban being placed on the student,

32 **Whereas**, the ITAP has no formal advisory committee or oversight,

33 **Whereas**, Cornell University already has an English Language Support Office (“ELSO”),

34 **Whereas**, ITAP receives an undisclosed amount of University funding,

35 **Whereas**, the Graduate and Professional Community Initiative (“GPCI”) recognizes the need for
36 reform of the ITAP,

37 **Whereas**, 90.5% of surveyed Cornell University graduate and professional students (“Cornell
38 students”) express dissatisfaction with the ITAP²,

39 **Whereas**, over 84% of students targeted by the ITAP are from one geographic region,

40 **Whereas**, student funding is contingent on being a TA in many graduate and professional programs
41 and the ITAP has the ability to bar students from being TAs, therefore directly interfering with their
42 funding,

43 **Whereas**, Directors of Graduate Studies (“DGSs”) are not allowed to grant exemptions to ITAP
44 bans,

45 **Whereas**, ALS5780 requires over 200 hours of active work and most students must take it more
46 than once,

47 **Whereas**, there is no way to appeal an ITAP decision,

48 **Whereas**, the International Teaching Assistant (“ITA”) designation assigned by the ITAP is
49 derogatory and inherently introduces bias and xenophobia,

50 **Whereas**, the current political climate in the United States presents many problems for international
51 students,

52 **Whereas**, there is no clear guideline for persons affected by University Policy 1.3,

53 **Whereas**, no other peer institution³ has a similar program,

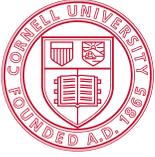
54 **Whereas**, ITAP has failed to provide empirical data for the necessity, or success, of the program,

55 **Whereas**, the ITAP is undergoing a review process that does not involve students,

56 **Whereas**, instances of racism and xenophobia have been reported by students undergoing the
57 ITAP:

² See Appendix 1.

³ Informal survey of Ivy+ schools.



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58 **Be it therefore resolved,** that the Cornell Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (“GPSA”),
59 on behalf of all graduate and professional students at Cornell, and in recognition of the undue
60 burden on international students, strongly and unequivocally condemns University Policy 1.3 and
61 the ITAP;

62 **Be it further resolved,** that the GPSA acknowledges the unfair additional burden placed on
63 international students by the ITAP and University Policy 1.3;

64 **Be it further resolved,** that the GPSA strongly and unambiguously condemns racist and
65 xenophobic behavior of Cornell affiliates;

66 **Be it further resolved,** that the GPSA demands that students be involved in the ITAP review and
67 reform process;

68 **Be it further resolved,** that the GPSA demands that the ITAP be disbanded immediately and
69 entirely for the academic year 2021/22 and until it is thoroughly reviewed and changed per the
70 requests of the students and the GPSA;

71 **Be it finally resolved,** that the GPSA requests that the ITAP review board have equal, both in
72 number and voting powers, representation from graduate students (particularly international
73 students), Directors of Graduate Studies or their appointees, and University Administrators.

74

75 Respectfully Submitted,

76 **Nikola Danev**

77 Executive Vice President

78 **Kavya Krishnan**

79 Vice President for Communications

80 **Liz Davis-Frost**

81 Student-Elected Trustee and Ex-Officio Member

82 **Christine Ohenewah**

83 Voting Member from the Law School