

# Cornell University University Assembly

## Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

Minutes of the September 28, 2020 Meeting

5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Zoom Meeting

- I. Call to Order
  - a. Call to Order
    - i. A. Barrientos-Gomez called the meeting to order at 5:33pm.
- II. Roll Call
  - i. *Present:* A. Barrientos-Gomez, H. Bidigare-Curtis, A. Bidjarano, M. Cantar, M. Chatterjee, A. Cirillo, A. Cohn, P. Cole, J. Dotzel, C. Duell, K. Laurent, S. Lopez, R. Maloney, M. Schoeffler, E. Schoenly, A. Sontag, M. Sturgeon, T. Tejada, P. Vinhage, M. Welch, H. Xu
  - ii. *Members Joined after Roll Call:* R. Barankevich, K. Beras, M. Keefe
  - iii. *Members not Present:* E. Call, H. Cole, T. Luttermoser, K. Masters, D. Wang
- III. Presentations
  - a. Jen Forbes, Director of the Big Red Barn (refer to PowerPoint in meeting packet)
    - i. J. Forbes conducted a Zoom survey to gain Feedback on Game night ideas. Additionally, J. Forbes notified members to reach out to her if they were receiving the Barn or Graduate school newsletters and would like to.
      - 1. M. Cantar stated that it would be beneficial to continue holding events such as game nights that fostered a sense of community.
- IV. Division Breakout
  - a. A. Barrientos-Gomez noted that during this part of the meeting, members would caucus into their own divisions for discussions, but this had not been completed through Zoom yet. For the time being, members should just fill out the form and submit it.
  - b. C. Duell stated that given the fact that the GPSA had not been doing normal division breakouts recently, he wasn't sure what would be the best way to gauge interest and go through a voting process for the Physical Sciences Representative voting member.
  - c. D. Dunham asked A. Barrientos-Gomez if there had been any division breakouts on Zoom by pre-assigning members to breakout rooms corresponding to division?
    - i. W. Treat from the Office of Assembles stated that it would be possible to pre-assign members to division breakout rooms. N. Danev and VP of Internal Operations would have to coordinate with the OA to provide them with the names of members in each division to preset the breakout rooms

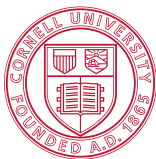


## Cornell University University Assembly

- ii. D. Dunham noted that pre-setting the breakout rooms with members and active Field Representatives would be the ideal solution because there would need to be division breakouts eventually and it would address C. Duell's question.
- iii. A. Cohn added that the reason why the breakout rooms had not yet been utilized for division breakouts was because there was usually lots of turnover because at the beginning of the year, there would be a lot of new Field Representatives but by the third meeting, that should be set.
- iv. D. Dunham stated that he believed that this solution should be implemented as soon as possible starting with members and Field Representatives that had attended the first two meetings.
- v. A. Barrientos-Gomez noted that the GPSA did have a Slack channel so using that could be another way of discussing Field Representative positions.
- vi. D. Dunham stated that using this channel would be a good way of continuing division breakout conversations after the meeting was over.
- vii. K. Krishnan noted that a lot of Field Reps and representatives of other organizations would not stay the same across meetings so having people change their Zoom name to begin with their field or having a form for them to fill out before the meeting would be beneficial. It could not be assumed that the same people would come every meeting.
- viii. H. Cole suggested that members could have their names along with their fields and as the roll call was being done or during presentations, the OA or EVP could create the breakout rooms then.
- ix. D. Dunham stated that if there were no objections, this could be done for the next GPSA meeting to hold division breakouts as close to normal as possible.
- x. A member asked if an admin of the GPSA Slack could send out an invite. A. Barrientos-Gomez responded with a yes.

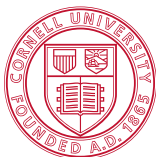
### V. Elections

- a. A. Barrientos-Gomez stated that the terms of the current Executive Board would finish at the end of September so a new Executive team would now be elected. In addition to a new Executive team, there would also be a new Dean of the Graduate School and Dean of Students so this would be a unique opportunity to reshape the GPSA.
- b. President
  - i. David Dunham elected – uncontested race
    - 1. A. Barrientos-Gomez noted that the President would serve as the main GPSA representative and would chair the meeting as well as convey assembly resolutions to President Pollack.



## Cornell University University Assembly

2. S. Lopez nominated D. Dunham and D. Dunham accepted the nomination.
  3. D. Dunham stated that he would be grateful for the opportunity to serve as President of the GPSA. He had previously participated in the GPSA as a Field Representative for two consecutive years during which time he had gained extensive observations of the GPSA operations and appreciation for its impact on the Graduate student population. As President, he would bring several years of leadership experience on and off-campus. He acknowledged that the opportunity would come with important responsibilities and if given the opportunity, he would lead fairly, impartially, and respectfully to represent the interest of all Graduate and Professional students at Cornell.
  4. A member of the GPSA asked D. Dunham what his top priorities would be as GPSA President.
    - a. D. Dunham responded by stating that the biggest priority would be finding more people to get involved on the committee level. It would be important for the committees to use their size to their advantage to try and coordinate the committees to work in a way that would lead to collected fundamental achievements even if it was a smaller number of achievements. This year, a big priority would be dealing with the Coronavirus and the implications of a potential reopening in the Spring semester. He noted that many Graduate students were expressing concerns about health and safety issues from a reopening and it would be important for those concerns to find their way onto the GPSA floor.
  5. D. Dunham was elected by a unanimous vote to serve as GPSA President for the 2020-2021 term.
- c. Executive Vice President
- i. Nikola Danev elected – uncontested race
    1. A. Cohn stated that the Executive Vice President would serve as a second-in-command to the President. Responsibilities of the EVP would include setting the agenda, maintaining membership information, and sending out the agenda. Additionally, the EVP would be in-charge of the Executive Committee.
    2. M. Chatterjee nominated N. Danev and N. Danev accepted the nomination.
    3. N. Danev stated that this was his first year as a Field Representative in the GPSA and although he had not had many leadership positions at Cornell, he had served as the Chief Executive Officer of an ambulance in Manhattan. Additionally, he had previously represented International Students on the Student Assembly at Columbia. N. Danev noted that he would bring the experience of



## Cornell University University Assembly

those roles into the EVP role on the GPSA. He felt strongly about advocating for Graduate students especially in the midst of the pandemic. Additionally, since he was early on in his career as a Graduate student, he would have a lot of free time to dedicate to the role and the GPSA.

4. N. Danev was elected as the EVP for the GPSA for the 2020-2021 term by a vote of 37-1.
- d. Vice President for Internal Operations
  - i. No nominations
    1. A. Barrientos-Gomez stated that the VP for Internal Operations would be responsible for the operations and staffing of the internal and external committees of the GPSA. They would appoint certain Graduate or Professional students to these committees and would also be in charge of updating GPSA charters, Bylaws, and any other relevant governing documents. One of the most important skills for the position would be having large networks to find students interested in a specific committee.
    2. D. Dunham also added that it would be important for whoever would occupy the role to be in communication with him so he could be aware of what was going on at the committee level. Additionally, D. Dunham stated that if anyone was interested in the position, they should reach out to any member of the Executive team.
- e. Vice President for Communications
  - i. Kavya Krishnan elected – uncontested race
    1. A. Cohn stated that the VP for Communications would be in-charge of all things communication related. Communications would include sending out a meeting summary after each meeting and overall maintenance of the GPSA's presence on campus.
    2. K. Krishnan was self-nominated for the role.
    3. K. Krishnan stated that she had been with the GPSA for three years starting as a voting member in the Life Sciences division, then Co-Chair of the Diversity and International students committee, and would now like to run for VP of Communications for this term. She stated that she had experience in multiple organizations across Cornell with experience in working with Cornell administration.
    4. K. Krishnan was elected as the Vice President of Communications for the 2020-2021 GPSA term by a vote of 33-1.
- f. Appropriations Chair
  - i. No nominations
    1. A. Barrientos-Gomez stated that the Appropriations chair would work with the semester Graduate and Professional student activity fee. The main role would consist of signing off on expense reports for committees and knowing the amount of money available in the GPSA budget. The latter role would come in handy if the GPSA



## Cornell University University Assembly

ever needed to donate money to the Access Fund since it would be important to know how much it could donate.

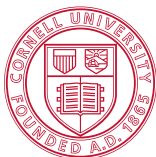
2. A member of the GPSA asked if the Appropriations Chair was a member of the Executive Committee.

- a. A. Barrientos-Gomez and D. Dunham said no and that the Appropriations Chair would be a committee position.

- g. Voting Member – Physical Sciences Representative
  - i. Representative will be nominated/elected by division
- h. Voting Member – Masters Student Representative (ENG)
  - i. No nominations

### VI. Committee Q&A

- a. Executive
  - i. A. Cohn stated that she would be compiling all the information (updated list of Field reps and Division reps) from the previous division breakout forms and send it to the new Executive team.
- b. Operations – no updates
- c. Communications – no updates
- d. Appropriations – no updates
- e. Finance
  - i. A. Johnson noted that the GPSAFC was taking new members and if anyone were interested, they could reach out to her. Additionally, updated pandemic guidelines and recent changes to the guidelines on the GPSAFC website.
- f. Student Advocacy
  - i. M. Chatterjee stated that members that were interested should reach out to him. The purpose of the committee was to advocate for graduate students for better academic and mental health.
- g. Diversity and International Students
  - i. A member noted that there would be a Building Allyship event on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October at 12 pm. Additionally, there was not a fixed committee meeting time yet.
- h. Programming
  - i. K. Laurent noted that the committee was holding meetings on Wednesday's at 3:30pm and interested members should reach out to her.
- i. Faculty Awards
  - i. C. Duell stated that interested members should reach out to him.
- j. General Committee
  - i. A member stated that the General Committee had been meeting with the Dean of the Graduate School regarding concerns of Graduate students and COVID-19.



## Cornell University University Assembly

- k. Graduate School
  - i. A member stated that a new graduate field of Integrated Plant Science had been approved by the General Committee. Additionally, Dean Knuth would be leaving on Wednesday with Dean Boor coming in on Thursday.
- l. University Assembly
  - i. A member noted that there were four representatives on the UA along with the new GPSA President (D. Dunham). Additionally, there would be an organizational meeting on 10/6 to elect the Executive Committee and set a meeting schedule.

### VII. Open Forum

- a. M. Munasinghe (serving as the Graduate and Professional Student-Elected Trustee) addressed the assembly in regard to the Student-Elected Trustee elections that were paused in the Spring and were now being reactivated. Student-Elected Trustees would be expected to attend all meetings of the Board of Trustees and serve on Board and University committees.
- b. K. Krishnan mentioned visa regulations that were being thrown into jeopardy for international students, along with racial issues with the recent updates of the Breonna Taylor case and asked members how the GPSA could help.
  - i. N. Danev agreed with K. Krishnan and conveyed that it would be important for the GPSA to draft a statement in regard to the current national climate.
  - ii. S. Lopez asked how to get other student organizations involved either by speaking, presenting during a GPSA meeting, or co-sponsoring GPSA legislation.
    - 1. A. Barrientos-Gomez noted that the EVP could reach out to these organizations and invite them to attend and speak to the assembly members.
  - iii. A. Barrientos-Gomez stressed that this was an entirely new GPSA Executive team, Dean of the Graduate School, and Dean of Students and asked assembly members, field representatives, and others for their patience as the new Executive committee transitioned in.

### VIII. Adjournment

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 6:59pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Auriol C. R. Fassinou  
Clerk of the Assembly