



# Cornell University Student Assembly

## Cornell University's Student Assembly

Minutes of the March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023 Meeting

4:45 pm – 6:30 pm

Memorial Room Willard Straight Hall | Zoom

### I. Call to Order

- a. P. Kuehl called the meeting to order at 4:47pm.
  1. *Members Present (21)*: L. Balestrieri, A. Barry, F. Berry, S. Chan, R. DeLorenzo, D. Diao, Z. deRham, K. Everett, N. Hite, C. Kim, P. Kuehl, K. Jordan, C. Lederman, F. Meng, S. Parikh, C. Platkin, I. Rezaka, S. Son, D. Suarez, A. Vinson, A. Wang
  2. *Members Absent (8)*: D. Akkiraju, A. Akpan, L. Barrett, C. Flournoy, A. Helkowski, Y. Moitra, B. Terhaar, C. Ting
  3. *Also Present (10)*: D. Almeida, A. Bangura, A. Coleman, E. Kalweit, N. Maggard, E. Mandery, J. Swenson, L. Thomas, J. Wallen, J. Zhang

### II. Reading of the Land Acknowledgement

- a. P. Kuehl stated the SA's acknowledgment of the Cayuga Nation.

### III. Open Microphones

- a. Community members highlighted intention to introduce a referendum on divestment and emphasized the intention of allowing students to engage through their opinion.
- b. P. Kuehl restated an overview on the referendum process.
- c. I. Rezaka motioned to suspend the rules and move the referendum question to the top of the agenda.
- d. S. Parikh stated hope that other resolutions would be quickly moved through first to ensure they are attended to.
- e. I. Rezaka stated that, in acknowledgement of the audience which has gathered to discuss the resolution, the motion should be approved.
- f. P. Kuehl stated agreement with I. Rezaka.
- g. K. Everett emphasized that the Student Assembly is representative of the students and thus should bring the motion to the front.
- h. C. Lederman noted the possibility of rearranging the Resolution order differently.
- i. I. Rezaka stated support for moving the resolution forward.
- j. J. Wallen concurred with I. Rezaka.
- k. P. Kuehl called the motion to suspend the rules to question. The motion **failed**.



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1. K. Everett motioned to bring the referendum question above Resolution 68. The motion **passed** through unanimous consent.
- IV. Approval of the Minutes
- a. Approval of the March 14 meeting minutes
    1. P. Kuehl motioned to approve the minutes. The motion **passed** through unanimous consent.
- V. Consent Calendar
- a. There were no items.
- VI. Announcements
- a. P. Kuehl noted a speaker event on the topic of legacy admissions occurring later tonight. P. Kuehl noted a leadership breakfast in the previous week for discussion on the interim Expressive Activity Policy.
  - b. C. Lederman noted the SUNY SA Executive Committee which convened at Cornell the previous week.
  - c. C. Thomas highlighted the calendar for the upcoming Student Assembly elections cycle.
  - d. A. Bangura highlighted a final call for nominees to the Office of Ethics, noting 4 vacancies.
  - e. S. Parikh thanked the Student Employment and Wages Committee for work done on recommendations to improve the experience of student employees.
  - f. K. Everett highlighted to the audience that the Student Assembly election period will open soon.
- VII. Reports of Officers, Committees, and Liaisons
- a. There were no reports.
- VIII. Presentations
- a. There were no presentations.
- IX. Old Business Calendar
- a. Resolution 64: Establishing the Processes for the Appointment of Vacant Representative Seats
    1. C. Lederman introduced the intention of the Resolution.
    2. P. Kuehl called the Resolution to question. The motion to approve the Resolution **passed** through a vote of unanimous consent.



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### X. Resolutions Calendar

- a. Resolution 66: Finalization of Survey Question Language
  1. P. Kuehl motioned to add Resolution's 66, 67, and 68 to the Agenda. The motion **passed** through a vote of unanimous consent.
  2. The motion to approve the Resolution **passed** through unanimous consent.
- b. Resolution 67: Issuing Recommendations Regarding Student Employment and Wages
  1. S. Parikh introduced the Resolution and gave an overview on the research.
  2. C. Lederman stated context on the tier-pay system Cornell uses for student employees and identified some general trends.
  3. L. Balestrieri noted comparisons with peers at different institutions and highlighted the large discrepancy between Cornell's minimum wage and calculated living weight for the Ithaca area.
  4. S. Parikh highlighted the proposal for increased minimum wage indicated in the Resolution, and a constant wage increase in tandem alongside increases in minimum wage overtime in New York. S. Parikh highlighted problems with visibility and clarity of job postings on Workday.
  5. C. Lederman highlighted that there were about 10,000 students in a given year involved with student employment on campus.
  6. K. Everett stated thanks and support for the Resolution. K. Everett motioned to end debate. The motion **passed** through unanimous consent.
  7. The motion to approve the Resolution **passed** through a vote of unanimous consent.
- c. Referenda Question
  1. K. Everett stated support for the Referendum in giving voice back to the student body and highlighted the importance of giving students channels to state their opinions. K. Everett gave an overview on what the path forward for a referendum will look like.
  2. J. Wallen stated agreement with K. Everett's sentiments.
  3. A. Barry emphasized that in many previous discussions, it was emphasized that it isn't the role of the Student Assembly to take stances on complicated world issues and that it should be left to the student body.
  4. I. Rezaka echoed previous statements.
  5. C. Lederman stated support for the Referendum but stated concerns with the wording of the questions. C. Lederman highlighted the first question in the referendum given the University's tax-exempt status. C. Lederman



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highlighted issues with the second question and stated the possibility of rewording to state weapons manufacturers rather than list specific companies.

6. A community speaker stated belief that the wording doesn't change the core of the message, and that the added bulk to the second question.
7. S. Parikh noted concerns with the second question that they hold implications and thus aren't neutrally worded as is required. S. Parikh stated belief that the first question is not productive because it requires Cornell to forgo their tax-exempt status.
8. A community speaker stated belief that the wording is neutral and simply states facts. A community speaker stated belief that it is ingenuous to hunt for small changes to the Referendum.
9. J. Wallen stated that pedantic discussion on the Referendum is not beneficial.
10. K. Everett stated that multiple universities have had bodies within them call for a ceasefire. K. Everett stated that the intent of the Referendum is to give students a channel to share their voice.
11. F. Meng stated support for passing the Referendum and highlighted that constantly pushing for exact perfectionism will always be a barrier.
12. F. Berry stated that there has been ample opportunity for the University to act which haven't been met, and that this Referendum forces their hand.
13. A community speaker highlighted that the Board of Trustees likely knows their 2016 divestment policy, but since nothing has continued to be done, the Referendum pushes the problem forward. A community speaker highlighted that pushing the Referendum forward will open the opportunity to engage in dialogue with President Pollack.
14. D. Diao noted an engagement from a constituent who stated concerns with wording given the integral part of Israel in their identity. D. Diao questioned if the Referendum will be good for the student body going forward, given that there is no room for dialogue or unity and only a binary decision is presented.
15. A community speaker emphasized that they themselves are Palestinian, and that Palestine is a core part of their identity as well. The community speaker emphasized that Cornell has continually glorified Israel and stated support for the opportunity to have a final consensus on the student body's opinions.
16. A community speaker stated that they are Jewish, but that Israel has no part of their identity. The community speaker emphasized that there is



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ability to be critical of the state without disregarding the existence of a Jewish state. The community speaker emphasized that, should the Assembly not approve the Referendum, the path will continue to gain 10% of student signatures to bypass the Assembly.

17. C. Kim stated support for the Referendum but stated worries that students who don't have full knowledge of proper history and context would give their input without having a fully developed opinion.
  18. I. Rezaka reiterated how antithetical it would be for the Student Assembly to disregard the Referendum given how many students have signed.
  19. A community speaker stated agreement with I. Rezaka's sentiment.
  20. C. Lederman noted the possibility of reformatting the Referendum into a survey question.
  21. S. Parikh stated that the questions as is can be rejected on many legality and technicality basis's and that the Referendum could benefit from neutral wording.
  22. A community speaker stated belief that a poll and a referendum are the same.
  23. A. Bangura highlighted the need to rebase current discourse and return back to the original question on voting yes or no for the Referendum.
  24. P. Kuehl called the vote to question. The motion to approve the Referendum **passed** through a roll call vote of 15-10-0. (*Yeas*: A. Akpan, L. Balestrieri, A. Barry, F. Berry, S. Chan, Z. deRham, D. Diao, K. Everett, K. Jordan, P. Kuehl, F. Meng, I. Rezaka, D. Suarez, C. Ting, A. Wang) (*Nays*: D. Akkiraju, R. DeLorenzo, N. Hite, C. Kim, C. Lederman, Y. Moitra, S. Parikh, C. Platkin, S. Son, A. Vinson)
  25. K. Everett motioned to recess for 5 minutes and extend meeting time by 10 minutes. The motion **passed** through unanimous consent.
- d. Resolution 68: End Legacy Admissions
1. P. Kuehl ceded chairship to C. Lederman by order of descension.
  2. P. Kuehl noted that the Resolution was created alongside participation from Yale, Brown, and Columbia. P. Kuehl introduced the Resolution and gave an overview on its intentions.
  3. E. Mandery gave history and context on the history and intention of legacy admissions at elite academic institutions to exclude and maintain the wealthy. E. Mandery stated the importance of reducing a bit of inequity given that it is an indefensible inequitable practice and noted work done through the nonprofit Class Action to help reduce inequity.
  4. R. DeLorenzo questioned the feasibility of removing legacy admissions.



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5. E. Mandery stated that many colleges have shown willingness to depart from merit in cases such as reduced academic standards for athletes and children of donors. E. Mandery stated that for many socio-economically disadvantaged students on campus, it is difficult to be comfortable in a place where they aren't represented.
6. C. Kim noted the financial aspect of legacy students and questioned if this would impact finances at Cornell.
7. P. Kuehl stated that the end of legacy admissions will not affect the financial security of institutions.
8. E. Mandery concurred with P. Kuehl's statement.
9. J. Wallen stated support for ending legacy admissions and highlighted the importance of being equitable in ending legacy admissions alongside the end of affirmative action. J. Wallen emphasized that owning money speaks nothing to one's own intellect or abilities.
10. A. Barry emphasized the Cornell moto of "Any Person Any Study" and highlighted the need to further represent socioeconomically disadvantaged peoples for a more equitable process.
11. E. Mandery highlighted that many people mistrust perceived elites because there is such a large gap of access to these people.
12. K. Everett stated the importance of the Resolution given many systemic barriers to accessing institutions such as Cornell and highlighted the need for Cornell to stand alongside equity and fair treatment.
13. N. Hite stated that, as a legacy, legacy is not worthwhile given how many people are left out from common feeders such as East Coast feeder schools.
14. E. Mandery emphasized that the argument to end legacy admissions should not be about the individual but about the institution. E. Mandery emphasized that to do good there is a need to have no arbitrary barriers to access.
15. P. Kuehl emphasized that there is no research to support the idea that ending legacy admissions would financially damage the institution.
16. A. Vinson motioned to extend the meeting by 5 minutes. The motion **passed** through a vote of unanimous consent.
17. I. Rezaka shared personal background and emphasized the barriers she had to overcome to get to Cornell.
18. E. Mandery emphasized that, having taught for so many years, he has no correlation between high economic standing and intelligence.



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19. L. Thomas noted that Cornell is simultaneously a public and private institution and pushed back on the implication that legacy admitted students aren't intelligent.
20. F. Berry noted the school pride aspect of legacy admissions where intelligent students select from schools based upon family ties.
21. E. Mandery noted that meritocracy is a double-edged sword. E. Mandery stated that he has yet to hear a fully cogent defense for legacy admissions.
22. S. Parikh stated support for legacy admissions. S. Parikh motioned to call to question. The motion **passed**. The motion to approve the Resolution **passed** through a vote of 22-0-1.

### XI. Appointments and Vacancies Calendar

- a. There were no items.

### XII. Adjournment

- a. This meeting was adjourned at 6:40pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Jenny Zhang*

Clerk of the Assembly