



# Cornell University Student Assembly

## Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Tuesday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Meetings

4:48-5:48pm & 6:32-6:40pm in the Lewis Auditorium, Room G76, Goldwin Smith Hall

### I. Call to Order & Roll Call I

- a. J. Anderson called the meeting to order at 4:48 pm.
- b. Roll Call:

### II. Announcements

- a. G. Martin said that the new VP will be voted on next semester, and that he did not have time to make the necessary edits for this semester due to his academic schedule.

### III. Open Microphone

- a. No speakers at the open microphone.

### IV. Byline Reports I

- a. Financial Aid Review Committee (FARC)
  - i. M. Adeghe said that AppsCom did their final three byline reports yesterday, and that the first was FARC. She added that FARC is an SA committee that was on byline up until 2009 when they decided to get off of byline due to the recession. She also said that FARC is now requesting \$5, \$2 of which would go to Students Helping Students, and the other \$3 for the Student Experience Grant (henceforth SEG). She added that this is great work that the assembly does, and that the SEG is also a partnership with each individual college, and so the colleges help to fund this program. She also said that the vote was unanimous and that there was not too much discussion in it.
  - ii. Motion to approve FARC's byline funding – approved 20-0-1.
- b. Student Assembly
  - i. M. Adeghe said that the SA requested \$4 and is currently funded at \$0.87, and that the increase in funding was mostly to support a more robust SPF. She added that their operating budget to run the assembly itself is about \$18,000 per year, and that this gives them \$35,000 or \$40,000 per year, which allows them to get more money for events for students. She also said that there was a conversation on whether they needed that much money, but that AppsCom did vote to approve funding at \$4.
  - ii. Motion to approve SA's byline funding – approved 20-0-1.
- c. Student Activities Funding Commission (SAFC)
  - i. M. Adeghe said that SAFC is a funding commission that funds about 550 organizations on campus, and that they are going through some restructuring and working on some new initiatives. She added that they get \$1.4 million in

funds at this time, but that they receive \$2.3 million worth of requests, and that through their restructuring, they are trying to lessen that gap. She also said that this funding is to help try and bridge the gap and close the holes, and that it is a sizable jump, but that this vote was unanimous.

- ii. Motion to approve SAFC's byline funding – approved 20-0-1.

## V. Business of the Day

### a. Resolution 19: Creating Internal Elections Rules

- i. N. Matolka asked if someone could cover for those in attendance what the decisions regarding this resolution were at the last sprint meeting.
- ii. O. Egharevba said that they left off at the one main point being the comment procedure and whether they wanted to have the appeals process or not. He added that there were people, including himself, who didn't think it was right to have only those three people decide what people can and can't say, and that if you have a President, EVP, and Parliamentarian who don't like a given individual or want to push a given individual, they can just censor things. He also said that there was also a point that an appeals process could make this more complicated.
- iii. J. Clancy said that there were definitely some counter-positions as well, and that those were the main points of contention, but that there were others.
- iv. N. Matolka asked if there could be a strawpoll about expanding the amount of people reviewing comments, or if they would prefer an appeals process.
- v. G. Martin asked what an appeals process would look like.
- vi. N. Matolka said that would be something to be discussed.
- vii. Discussion continued in this regard.
- viii. A. Cass said that they think that there is something to be said for there being distance between when statements are first made and then when people say things, and that this wouldn't work perfectly, but that they would hope that if people had issues with something somebody said about a person, there would be conversation between them and the people that vetoed it about why there is a problem. They added that this could allow that person to think more carefully about it and then possibly not say it or say it in a more constructive way later on. They also said that they don't know if the assembly can rely on that or if they would want to have some kind of appeal.
- ix. G. Martin said that he knows that they had discussed that OAR might be part of this, but the "Insight" portion of that had been removed. He continued to discuss this point.
- x. O. Egharevba said that he thinks that this really goes hand-in-hand with what G. Martin is doing, and that they could communicate on how this would work with the new Exec position that he is proposing. He added that he doesn't want to have this position alone and then have an additional new Exec position if those two things can't work together to make this better.
- xi. N. Matolka said that he likes the idea of this process being under the new Exec position. He asked G. Martin what the position is called at the time.
- xii. G. Martin said that it was referred to as "Research and Accountability" (henceforth RA).
- xiii. Discussion continued in this regard.

- xiv. G. Martin said that there aren't many internal elections during the semester, and that he thinks the committee can work around that as a result.
- xv. N. Watson said that FARC does things over email when there is an emergency request, and that the SA could do that as well.
- xvi. G. Martin said that any member of RA is also up for internal election, they would have to recuse themselves.
- xvii. J. Anderson said that such language cannot be included yet because the position doesn't exist yet.
- xviii. G. Martin said that he thinks that they can pass this today as the format, and then amend it later once the position formally exists.
- xix. M. Adeghe said that she was going to say that she's still getting caught up about allowing three people or potentially the VPRA to have the moral high ground. She added that regardless of people's positions, she doesn't think that anyone really has a moral high ground in the group, right now or in general.
- xx. C. Huang asked if M. Adeghe has suggestions then.
- xxi. M. Adeghe said that she's not sure that she's comfortable with this at all, and that she doesn't think that she wants her speech vetted by other assembly members.
- xxii. J. Anderson said that he would now start a formal speakers list.
- xxiii. M. Haddad asked if there is a chance that they can have training before internal elections so that they can inform everyone what's okay and what's not.
- xxiv. N. Matolka said that he agrees, but that he doesn't think anyone was on the same page with that in discussing it the first few times. He added that he thinks that people will have different opinions regardless of training.
- xxv. J. Kroll said that he agrees somewhat with M. Adeghe that if they put this intense framework on the debate, they give some people power over people's speech, which is problematic. He asked if they could introduce some really high standard to censure people, like a 4/5ths majority or something of that nature.
- xxvi. J. Anderson said that he wanted to speak on training because they tried to do that this year, and that they were operating on the Class Councils model, and that the timing is difficult especially considering the spring special elections timeframe. He added that the ideal zone is for an assembly to do training before internal elections, but if that is the request, then it would have to be written in the President and EVP roles to work that in prior to internal elections.
- xxvii. A. Cass asked if someone could give a rundown at some point as to what happened in sprint.
- xxviii. M. Adeghe said that they don't have minutes for that.
- xxix. G. Martin said that he could give a quick rundown, and that people had issues with the title itself along with what came with that title, and that there were also questions of internal vs. external elections. He added that there were different things discussed and that they fell upon Research and Accountability for those reasons.
- xxx. A. Cass asked if anything major changed about structure and responsibility.

- xxxi. G. Martin said that it is no longer appointed through Exec, and that the committee is now larger.
- xxxii. A. Cass asked if the position is now elected.
- xxxiii. G. Martin said that it is now internally elected.
- xxxiv. M. Adeghe said that she doesn't see it as a problem to make it four weekends instead of three, and that she thinks that training is important enough that changing the calendar isn't particularly bad.
- xxxv. J. Clancy asked what the timeframe for the weekend training was last year.
- xxxvi. There was a general response that it happened in April.
- xxxvii. J. Clancy said that he's been listening to various members' concerns about free speech, and that he personally thinks that there should be a system where it's vetted so that they can have a more controlled process and so people's feelings can't get hurt. He added that he definitely thinks no matter what happens that there should be a more formal ruleset regardless of the form that it takes, wherein people aren't just raising their hands and saying something. He also said that he doesn't know if this helps, but that he does think that there needs to be a more formal process.
- xxxviii. O. Egharevba said that he thinks that there should be, and that the reason he is concerned about three people deciding is that the composition of the personalities of these three changes year to year, and that there is no set standard as to what an approved or rejected comment looks like. He added that he feels like it is all arbitrary and that there are definitely times where on the assembly, in his opinion, people would censor other people or bring them down just because they didn't like them. He asked if he is correct in thinking these would not be anonymous anymore.
- xxxix. N. Matolka said that a standard one would not be anonymous.
  - xl. O. Egharevba asked if it would be anonymous for negative ones and that only positive ones would have a name tied to it.
  - xli. N. Matolka replied in the affirmative.
  - xl.ii. O. Egharevba said that he is not very convinced that only three people get to select what he can and can't say, and that there are definitely people who have served on the assembly who will bring down other people in any way possible, and that it is very toxic.
  - xl.iii. C. Huang asked if O. Egharevba has a suggestion.
  - xl.ii. O. Egharevba said that he would want concrete standards as to what constitutes an acceptable and unacceptable comment, and that without those, it's arbitrary and increases the risk of censorship.
  - xl.v. J. Youngblood asked if they were all okay with the rest of the structure, and if the vetting process is the only point of contention.
  - xl.vi. N. Matolka asked if a strawpoll could be done to determine this.
  - xl.vii. Discussion continued in this regard.
  - xl.viii. There was a strawpoll.
    - 1. Rule 1 was agreed upon.
    - 2. Rule 2 was agreed upon.
    - 3. Rule 3 was agreed upon.
    - 4. Rule 4 started discussion.
  - xl.ix. G. Martin said that he knows that they had a discussion about positive comments and asked what constitutes positive or negative comments.

1. C. Huang asked if he would like to keep discussing this.
- li. G. Martin replied in the affirmative.
- lii. C. Huang specified the language of the rule.
- liii. M. Adeghe said that she wonders whether a good middle ground would be not necessarily having a comment have to be positive or in support of someone, but that a person could send it in and it would just be posted without vetting. She added that a person would just be able to type the message, and that they would hopefully be thinking about it as they were typing, and that she thinks this takes away from the moral high-ground type of thing.
- liv. N. Matolka asked for a strawpoll to condense rules 4 through 6 to send in comments, and said that it wouldn't be vetted, but no one can see all the statements until Wednesday night. He added that the statements are not anonymous.
- lv. M. Adeghe said that their applicants are not currently in the room for deliberations, and asked whether these would also be sent to the candidates. She added that she thinks that it says somewhere that the candidates would also be reading the comments.
- lvi. C. Huang said that it is assumed but not explicitly said.
- lvii. M. Adeghe said that this might also be something to think about, because at this time their comments are not heard by the candidates.
- lviii. G. Martin said that he is nervous if there are now positive and negative comments and there is no vetting, and that he did not see why they needed vetting when all the comments were positive and in support.
- lix. N. Matolka said that the positive statements weren't going to be vetted anyway, and that the idea was that if a person had something they needed to say, they could submit it and bring it up with leadership.
- lx. T. Reuning asked what the response to M. Adeghe's question was regarding applicants being able to see it.
- lxi. C. Huang said that they would.
- lxii. T. Reuning said that he doesn't think that they should be able to.
- lxiii. A. Cass said that if the assembly wants to have general comments, there should be guidelines, and that they definitely can't allow anything that's a personal attack, and they can only allow things immediately relevant to that position. They added that maybe if these statements aren't formally vetted, if there is a statement that someone on Exec sees and thinks is mean, they can hopefully ask the person not to say that. They also said that the assembly could say that if a person does say something malicious or negative and irrelevant, they might be asked not to comment in the future.
- lxiv. C. Huang asked what people would think about having guiding questions on the form, such as "if you are in support of this candidate, what qualities do you see in them?" and things of that nature, such that it's a little more formulaic so that the things people can say are limited in that way.
- lxv. S. Sun asked why people are allowed to make comments about these candidates if this is regarding internal elections, and that this means that people in the SA would have been able to assess the character of these candidates. She added that they could just have people give their three-minute candidacy speech, the assembly could think of questions and

concerns, and then in the next week have a question and answer session to discuss things in a controlled way, followed by a three-minute closing speech. She also said that she thinks that what they have here could introduce a lot of assembly politics, and that the reason that they're doing this is because they want to avoid that, and that this systemizes the problem.

- lxvi. C. Huang said that this is something that past assemblies have brought up.
- lxvii. S. Sun said that she thinks that problems and drama and conflicts arise when people say something about somebody, and that removing the person from the situating is not sharing valid concerns, and that it legitimizes gossip. She added that if everyone is just in the situation, if a person has something to bring up, they can say it to the person's face, and if they're lying or it's not a good answer, she would think that assembly members would have the discernment to make their own decision.
- lxviii. M. Haddad said that she sees where S. Sun is coming from, and asked about the possibility that someone is a very good speechwriter and they give an amazing speech that doesn't align with what their work ethic is.
- lxix. S. Sun said that she thinks that it would then be up to other assembly members to ask good questions, and that no amount of polish will make up for a lack of content and qualifications. She added that she thinks that it would become very apparent, especially once they've had a week to come up with questions after the speech.
- lxx. G. Martin said that he really likes S. Sun's idea, and that he thinks another thing to look at this would be internal elections in the spring, and that elections of VPs are difficult with this, in that new members don't know the qualifications needed or the people themselves.
- lxxi. S. Sun asked if they are trying to avoid the whole concept of dynamics of the assembly, and said that she thinks that anyone on the assembly has the capacity to develop leadership skills and serve in the right way. She added that she thinks that by systemizing comments about people, that will be even worse for new members, since they are taking away the new members' ability to assess people for themselves, since everyone else is doing it for them.
- lxxii. M. Haddad said that she thinks that what S. Sun is proposing would mean having an extra week during internal elections.
- lxxiii. C. Huang said that they could possibly do training in that time.
- lxxiv. M. Haddad said that that could be beneficial for internal elections as well as their regular meetings, and that they could teach the appropriate way to critique something.
- lxxv. U. Chukwukere said that there is a possibility of someone knowing they've had experience with someone on a committee with them who is running for a position, and that such a person might have valid and objective concerns that people can see. He asked how such things would be voiced in this framework.
- lxxvi. S. Sun said that it sounds like U. Chukwukere answered his own question, and asked whether he is saying that people would be able to see if someone doesn't have the skills or character traits to be successful.
- lxxvii. U. Chukwukere said that, as an example, someone could be sitting on the Dining Committee, and that not everyone on the assembly sits on that

- committee, but that a person could have worked with them and saw firsthand that this person doesn't do certain things.
- lxxviii. S. Sun said that she thinks those could be answered during the debate and Q&A period, and that someone's idea of who a person is is influenced by the situation, but that she thinks that if someone has a track record of being ineffective, those concerns could be voiced during the debate. She added that a lot of people's efforts can go unnoticed, and that not everyone always wears that on their sleeve.
- lxxix. C. Huang said that it could maybe come in the form of a question, such as asking what committees a person has served on and what they did on them.
- lxxx. M. Haddad said that they normally ask all candidates the same question, and asked how they can work around that. She added that if they are asking specific questions like that, she thinks that a lot of questions would be generated, and that she doesn't think they would have the time.
- lxxxi. S. Sun said that she thinks that could be solved by having umbrellas of questions like character and fitness, past qualifications, and so on, and that this would have a basic framework filled in with things relevant to that candidate.
- lxxxii. Discussion continued in this regard.
- lxxxiii. M. Adeghe said that she thinks that this starts to get wishy-washy, and that she wants to know if a person is not committed, and that she doesn't know why those things can't be outed. She added that if a person doesn't show up to meetings, no one is going to come out and say that, but that it does happen during deliberations.
- lxxxiv. J. Clancy said that he would like to narrow the scope of this discussion, and that he does think that in going through the plethora of elections in spring up until the trial run of this system, he did see a significant difference, and that he's seen the rules try to be changed, and that he thinks that what they did during that trial run gave him a peace of mind about the questions they were pondering. He added that he doesn't know if this will completely fix this, but that he does think that they should start with what they had originally, and then actively think in the long term if they should revisit this and whether or not it has been working. He also said that if it has been working, they could lay out a probational period to the end of the spring, and that he definitely thinks that the original system put in place is something he would like to see over the long term.
- lxxxv. A. Cass said that S. Sun brought up good points about whether or not there should be comments at all, and that they think that if they are going to have people make comments, it shouldn't just be that people share whatever opinion they have of the person, and that they think that it should be just that if there are any comments at all, they should consider only constructive ones from people who have close experience with the person.
- lxxxvi. Ian Wallace said that he really thinks that there is something to S. Sun's suggestion, and that regarding the point G. Martin made earlier, he thinks it might be worth down the line for a slightly different set of rules altogether than those for regular internal elections during the semester. He added that there is attendance of committees available that could be made available to the members of the assembly beforehand.

- lxxxvii. S. Xu said that it is very reasonable to give a definition about what comments should be made, and that they should be thinking about what kind are necessary and helpful and what kind are not, but that it is hard to define. She added that one point they can make is to set a word limit.
- lxxxviii. S. Sun said that, to mitigate M. Adeghe's concern and bouncing off of having training in between, is that not everyone feels comfortable saying things to someone's face that they would be comfortable to say behind their back, and that saying things regarding attendance and track record are not personal and not ad hominem, but are valid statements to be made and can come out and be resolved in a fair and organic way. She added that the assembly trying to put rules on it will result in some strange circumstance coming along that they can't account for here.
- lxxxix. Discussion continued in this regard.
  - xc. U. Chukwukere said that, like I. Wallace brought up, if he knows that he is working with someone on a committee and if he assigns someone to a project in SAIFC, and he knows that this person doesn't check in or respond and the project isn't getting done, and they don't show initiative, he doesn't know if this is still something that would be solidified, but that asking questions and trying to tailor a question in a way that the truth can come out gives people a way to finesse it so that they don't get the full picture.
  - xcii. S. Sun said that a person could say those things verbatim during the discussion period, as a "what do you have to say for yourself?" sort of question, and that if a person feels that way, then it is on them to say it so that everyone in the assembly knows.
  - xciii. M. Haddad asked if they could table this to next semester's sprint planning meeting.
  - xciv. J. Anderson said that a lot of this discussion is focusing on a person's SA experience, and that there are other types of leadership on this campus. He added that if a person has the experience in their organization, they can step into any one of the Exec roles and do it flawlessly, and that he thinks that it is a fundamentally flawed paradigm to operate in that an assembly member who has been on for two or three years necessarily has more experience than a person who's operated an ALANA organization flawlessly for years.
  - xcv. Motion to table Resolution 19 – **tabled** 20-0-1.

## **VI. Adjournment I**

- a. J. Anderson adjourned the first meeting at 5:48 pm.

## **VII. Call to Order/Roll Call II**

- a. J. Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

## **VIII. Byline Reports II**

- a. Full 2020-22 Byline Funding
  - i. M. Adeghe said that SAFC is the only organization that can get more money than AppsCom, and that they will receive an extra \$0.91 to make the fee an integer. She added that Slope Day is not on this chart, and that they forgot to submit their application, so they will not be on byline anymore, and that this is a 51% increase overall.



- ii. N. Matolka asked if M. Adeghe is comfortable with how much this went up by.
- iii. M. Adeghe said that she thinks that the increases were important increases, and that it looks and sounds like a lot, but that there is nothing she is upset about or ashamed of in all the increases. She added that there were a lot of new organizations on byline such as IFC and FARC, and that a number of organizations that needed sizable increases got them. She also said that across the board, the organizations that got increases deserved them in her opinion.
- iv. Motion to approve the 2020-22 byline funding – approved 18-0-1.
- v. J. Anderson said that advisors who have done this for years said that this was the best process that they have seen, and that it really stands to show what they have done this year.

**IX. Adjournment II**

- a. J. Anderson adjourned the meeting at 6:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*John Hannan*  
Clerk of the Assembly