



# Cornell University Student Assembly

## Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Meeting  
4:45-6:30pm in the Memorial Room of Willard Straight Hall

### I. Call to Order & Roll Call

- a. J. Anderson called the meeting to order at 4:45 pm.
- b. Roll Call:
  - i. Present:
  - ii. Absent:

### II. Approval of the Minutes

- a. 3/5/20 Meeting
  - i. Motion to approve the March 5<sup>th</sup> minutes – approved.

### III. Announcements & Presentations

- a. 2020 U.S. Census
  - i. L. Smith and Kate Supron presented on the 2020 United States Census.
- b. Cornell Coronavirus Response
  - i. J. Anderson said that he first had two quick things to say, and that the first was that in working with SAFC, they have gotten SAFC to donate \$150,000 to the Access Fund, which is currently at \$178,000, and that he would like to get it to \$200,000 by the end of the week. He added that if students need to pay for a plane ticket home or for a laptop for online classes or something of that nature, they should use this resource. He also said that in working with the administration regarding the Cornell Bus Program, they will be increasing the amount of buses to Syracuse so that students can get to that airport, as well as decreasing the ticket price from \$30 to \$10, which the Access Fund can cover if there is a need. He added that there will also be buses to Buffalo and Philadelphia, and that he would highly encourage people to keep an update on the bus schedule website. He also said that he is also very deeply appreciative for every member of the SA and the OSA for doing this work in such a short amount of time, and for the amount of emotional labor being put into action. He added that those who have other goals on campus should not lose sight of those goals, and that they will be doing their hardest to make sure that needs that must be met will be met.
- c. VPF Adeghe – Special Projects Funding/Resolutions 53 & 54
  - i. M. Adeghe said that they will be having an informal Q&A information session immediately following this meeting around 6:00 or 6:30 to address students' concerns about the recent announcement and this crazy time.
  - ii. Discussion continued in this regard.

- iii. M. Adeghe said that she is going to withdraw Resolution 53, and that she is still in communications with the women's volleyball team in regard to Resolution 54, who are currently in the process of removing themselves from the tournament, and that they might still need some money for things that they might not get refunds for.
- iv. J. Anderson moved to withdraw Resolution 53 – **withdrawn** 24-0-2.
- v. There was no dissent to approving Resolution 54.
- vi. J. Anderson moved to withdraw Resolution 55 – **withdrawn** 22-0-5.
- vii. Discussion continued regarding the buses for Syracuse, Buffalo, and Philadelphia.

#### **IV. Open Microphone**

- a. No speakers at the open microphone.

#### **V. New Business/Business of the Day**

- a. S.A Resolution #56: Support of the Divestment from Fossil Fuels
  - i. J. Kroll and I. Pavlov presented the resolution.
  - ii. B. Weintraub moved for a strawpoll on members' standing regarding the resolution.
  - iii. J. Anderson explained to the community what a strawpoll is.
  - iv. The strawpoll was conducted and resulted in an overwhelming response to the positive with one member unsure.
  - v. M. Adeghe said that this is a great cause but that she worries that it is performative in nature. She added that she does not know if the presenters spoke to minority communities in this, and that she is unaware of their involvement with them in this.
  - vi. J. Kroll said that this is an entirely valid concern, and that both he and I. Pavlov are high-SES white people and so they tried extensively to reach out to those communities. He added that they shared C. Benedict on their Google Doc on the second week of their work, and that they had conversations with U. Chukwukere a month or two into the preparation for him to serve as a point person for other ALANA organizations. He also said that they had the intention and significant effort to reach out to those communities since those are the groups most directly impacted by the actions of the fossil fuel industry.
  - vii. Y. Yuan said that fossil fuel divestment on campus will eventually have some financial impact, and asked if the presenters have had conversations with organizations representing international students on campus regarding the financial impact on international students, since they are quite vulnerable to severe financial impact. He added that in the resolution, they mention that the reason that there will be minimal financial aid impact is that the general financial performance is not doing well while they are seeing an increase of profit in green energy, and asked that if this is the case, then what is the point of students who do not have much experience in investment telling the administration what to do, since Cornell knows how to do investment and so they would already be investing in that to get a better return.
  - viii. I. Pavlov said that it is not Cornell personally managing all their accounts, but rather a bunch of financial agents who don't have to disclose to them what

they are investing in, so they rely on outside sources, and there is evidence there that they do invest in fossil fuels despite the higher S&P performance by green energy.

- ix. J. Kroll said that they said last month that they had about 1% invested in the Oil and Gas 100, and that the impact of that being reinvested into renewable shares will be negligible because the reallocation is in and of itself negligible, and that it may actually have a positive impact. He added that, in regard to employees and many other groups on campus who rely on university funding, their funding does not come from the endowment, and that despite employees having concerns about their pay being cut, the way that staff are paid is removed from the direct cash stream of the endowment.
- x. I. Pavlov said that implicit in Y. Yuan's question was concern of the current state of the stock market, and that they ask for divestment to happen as rapidly as possible, so they don't anticipate that having an impact, and so they can decide as soon as possible.
- xi. J. Feit said that he is wary of the effectiveness of this resolution for a few reasons, one of which being the pandemic, and that this will pose serious threats and that he wants to make sure that they all remain committed to making sure that this resolution is passed and enforced. He added that this resolution is a very good research paper, but that it has no enforcement mechanisms, and that he will support it 100% because he is committed to sustainability efforts, and that he understands enforcement mechanisms are very tough. He asked what enforcement they have in an institutionalized manner across the university.
- xii. J. Kroll said that they coordinated with the people who passed resolutions in the other assemblies, and that they were intentionally vague because the Board of Trustees and the people holding the power do have all the power and know how to do it better than they do. He added that their language in this regard is restricted to "as rapidly as possible" and "in an orderly fashion," and that if they publicly agree, he thinks that they can be held to that and that it would be in their interest to follow through.
- xiii. J. Feit said that he thinks that being intentionally vague is fundamentally flawed, and that he thinks that a concrete timeline is better, and asked if there is a reason why they won't include that.
- xiv. I. Pavlov said that she thought the same at first, and that a lot of that comes from a student perspective, but that Bob Howarth and others enlightened them as to why this is the smartest approach.
- xv. J. Anderson said that he is going to cut this conversation off, and that this is a protocol question. He added that if this resolution passes, it will go directly to the Board, and that they will consider this question and are willing to do so. He also said that he thinks that it is a procedure question that J. Feit is asking in that whether or not they will in full faith take this up, and that they will do so because it is outlined in their procedures.
- xvi. A. Cass asked whether or not it is the case that all the other assemblies have passed their versions of this resolution, and that once the SA passes this one, it will go to the Board.
- xvii. J. Kroll replied in the affirmative.

- xviii. A. Cass asked how the presenters feel about that going, and asked what they think is going to happen next. They said that they share the concern that the Board of Trustees who mostly don't live here and have no immediate stake make all of the relevant decisions.
- xix. J. Kroll said that they are feeling hopeful and confident that they've made the best case that they can, and that all they can do is hope that they understand the precarious point that they are at as to their continued survival as a species.
- xx. I. Pavlov said that she is sure that A. Cass has noticed the activism of Climate Justice Cornell, and that the Board has noticed as well. She added that Brown, Georgetown, and the UC system have divested, and that it will only be a very short time before the rest of the Ivies consider divesting. She also said that even if they don't have a direct stake in what goes on on campus, they do have a stake in their reputation and how much money they make.
- xxi. V. Xu said that she wanted to echo Y. Yuan's point about the financial burden, and that she would recommend including an appendix when it comes to the board. She added that I. Pavlov said that most of the investment information is not public, and asked if they know what percentage is currently invested into fossil fuels.
- xxii. I. Pavlov said that she isn't sure if it can be seen in the agenda, but that all the resolutions have an accompanying white paper, and that this was passed through the Faculty Senate yesterday. She added that this has really distinct outlining of the positive effects and outcomes of divesting, and that she believes that the percentage invested is around 3% or 4%, which is standard for universities, and so that would be \$400 million for Cornell.
- xxiii. J. Kroll said that that percentage is the national average, but that it was said last month that it's around 1%, and that there could be more that aren't in the Oil & Gas 100, but that by no means would it be a huge chunk of the endowment.
- xxiv. V. Xu asked if the presenters have spoken to the student trustees about the sentiment among the Board, since the end goal is for this to get passed through there.
- xxv. I. Pavlov said that she thinks that the trustee sentiment is that they are open to hearing about it.
- xxvi. S. Sun asked what organizations and services are funded by the cash flow from the endowment.
- xxvii. J. Kroll said that he is not entirely sure of that, but that this money only represents 1% to 2% of the endowment, and the performance of renewables shares is as good if not better.
- xxviii. S. Sun said that she thinks that there are people that could be considered stakeholders that this would be crucial information for, and that if that 1% has a negative impact due to divestment, she would like to see that fleshed out.
- xxix. J. Kroll said that that is a great point and they should have done that, but that they will not lose the 1%, but rather likely just a fraction of a percent of the percent, and that he does not think that the university will let that downturn affect how they finance students.

- xxx. T. Reuning said that he wants to caution all members of the assembly not to speak for communities that they are not part of, and that as a low-income student, low-income students would like for their money not to come from fossil fuel companies and for their parents not to get cancer. He added that he will be voting in favor of this, but that he doesn't think that sharing a Google Doc with an indigenous member or talking to U. Chukwukere is significant enough minority outreach, and that being an ally is uplifting others so they can speak for themselves, and that the fact that the one indigenous person walked out of the room in frustration speaks for itself.
- xxxi. J. Kroll said that to be fair, they didn't just share a blank Google Doc, and that they told him that they wanted him to have a voice because they realized that they wanted him to have a voice. He added that they are sorry if it felt like tokenizing when they spoke about U. Chukwukere, and that they just don't have a lot of point people in ALANA, and that he reached out to them to help. He also said that he understands that it is probably still not enough and that they should have done more, and that he apologizes.
- xxxii. There was a motion to move Resolution 56 to Business of the Day – moved.
- xxxiii. There was a motion to vote on the resolution – approved 23-0-2.
- b. S.A. Resolution #57: Election Cancellation and Fall Election Restructuring
  - i. J. Anderson and G. Martin presented the resolution.
  - ii. A. Cass said that they know that there is a lot to deal with on a very short notice, but that they are wondering about how this will affect uncontested seats.
  - iii. G. Martin said that since the elections will be closed, anyone who is uncontested who does not violate the rules will be seated come fall elections.
  - iv. Discussion continued in this regard
  - v. K. Wondimu said that he fully supports this, but would like to hear explained the part about there being no legislative access in that time period.
  - vi. G. Martin said that that will be the transitional SA, and that anyone who is not going abroad or a senior will have no legislative power but will keep their title following June 1<sup>st</sup> to ensure transition.
  - vii. K. Wondimu asked if this means that those staying would also not be able to do anything.
  - viii. J. Anderson said that everyone in their current positions will have no legislative power.
  - ix. M. Adeghe said that she is a little bit confused about the lack of legislative power, and asked what the SA would do come fall.
  - x. J. Anderson said that their only job would be to ensure that a fall election is done.
  - xi. M. Adeghe asked whether or not that would that there wouldn't be any committees or anything like that, and that the SA wouldn't really exist until the election happens. She also asked if the current VP of Finance will make a budget over the summer, as well as what the first few weeks in the fall will look like for the SA since there is no legislative power.
  - xii. J. Anderson said that the SA in all its capacity will be used to run the election, and that since there is no legislative authority, that would just entail getting the word out to new students. He added that the transitional SA would just recruit and support people, and that since there won't be a VP of Finance,

this assembly will craft a generic budget for the beginning and then move on, so that the new VP of Finance can see what's going on. He also said that it establishes a generic point of contact as well.

- xiii. M. Adeghe said that she was thinking about campaign finances as well, and asked where that money would come from.
- xiv. J. Anderson said that the new Elections Committee would be the source of that since that is an elections process.
- xv. M. Adeghe said that her thought is that they wouldn't even have a budget.
- xvi. J. Anderson said that that is why they would conditionally approve one at the end of the semester for the transitional body.
- xvii. M. Haddad thanked G. Martin for taking the lead on this, and that she was having a panic attack, and that she genuinely appreciates him.
- xviii. B. Weintraub asked if the presenters could confirm if his understanding is correct, and that his understanding is that they are going to appoint a new Director of Elections, that person will create their own Elections Committee, they will serve for 2020-2021, and they will be the only individuals on the SA with any ability to do effectively anything more than talk.
- xix. J. Anderson said that when B. Weintraub says "talk," it means "do the election".
- xx. G. Martin says that it will be the body that has power, but in a way that they can put together fall elections.
- xxi. B. Weintraub said that, given this absence of power on the SA, and that he hates to use the word power, and absence of ability to pass any resolutions following June 1<sup>st</sup>, since resolutions take time and considering the current state of affairs, he does worry about there being a lack of ability of any Student Assembly to organize before this election happens.
- xxii. G. Martin said that in looking back into the records, in the first two meetings, two resolutions were passed, and that they don't anticipate an influx because there never is one, and that they anticipate the elections happening in the first three weeks, but that this would be up to the Director of Elections.
- xxiii. B. Weintraub said that they usually don't pass that many, but that they are not in a usual operating procedure, and that they can hope that everything will be fine in August, but it may not be. He added that it would be good to somehow ensure that if something needs to happen in August, it can.
- xxiv. G. Martin said that the resolution says that if something is so dire, the Elections Committee can vote to give the SA legislative power, and that there are mechanisms that allow for issues into the future.
- xxv. V. Xu said that they normally do internal elections toward the end of the semester, and asked what that would look like.
- xxvi. J. Anderson said that the new SA elected in the fall would do that as soon as possible with regard to their schedule, and that it is up to them and their leadership team.
- xxvii. V. Xu asked if people on Exec would therefore continue their responsibilities until then.
- xxviii. J. Anderson said that it would be in a transitional matter, and then once the new SA is elected in the fall, they would organize themselves with the leadership team on their schedule.

- xxix. V. Xu asked what the procedure would be regarding committee chairs.
- xxx. G. Martin said that internal elections would be done after fall elections, and so freshman and transfer representatives can possibly vote on those positions, but that it would ultimately be up to the Director of Elections, who they have to look for now.
- xxxi. There was a motion to move the resolution to Business of the Day.
  - 1. K. Wondimu dissented, and said that they still have a speakers' list.
  - 2. Deborah Nyakaru said that they can still have a speakers' list following this move.
  - 3. K. Wondimu **withdrew** his dissent.
  - 4. Motion to move the resolution to Business of the Day – **moved** 26-0-0.
- xxxii. There was a motion to vote on the resolution.
  - 1. There was a dissent.
- xxxiii. J. Clancy said that he's looking for clarification regarding Article 8.
- xxxiv. G. Martin said that anyone who has questions offline, they can talk to him, J. Anderson, Lydia Zheng, and D. Nyakaru, but Elections Committee is very small, and that as the Elections Committee has already been voting, the only people who abstain are the director themselves and anyone who is not in attendance.
- xxxv. J. Clancy said that he is worried about the procedure requiring unanimous consent, and what would happen if unanimous consent isn't reached and they cannot return for Fall 2020.
- xxxvi. G. Martin said that it can be amended to make it two-thirds.
- xxxvii. There was a motion to amend line 134 such that "unanimous" would instead read "two-thirds" – **amended** 26-0-0.
- xxxviii. There was a motion to vote on the resolution.
  - 1. K. Wondimu dissented, and said that he had a quick question.
  - 2. The motion was not withdrawn.
  - 3. Vote to vote on the resolution – **passed** 20-4-0.
  - 4. Motion to vote on Resolution 57 – **approved** 26-0-0.
- c. S.A. Resolution #58: Amending the Standing Rules to Allow Votes Out of New Business
  - i. There was a motion to vote.
    - 1. The motion was **withdrawn**.
  - ii. B. Weintraub presented the resolution and moved to move the resolution to Business of the Day – **moved** 23-0-1.
  - iii. Motion to vote on Resolution 58 – **approved** 23-0-1.

## VI. Adjournment

- a. J. Anderson adjourned the meeting at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*John Hannan*  
Clerk of the Assembly