



Cornell University Student Assembly

Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, September 24, 2015 Meeting
4:30pm-6:30pm in Willard Straight Hall Memorial Room

I. Call to Order (J. Batista)

- J. Batista called the meeting to order at 4:47pm
- *Present at the Roll Call:* B. Bacharach [2]; J. Batista [0]; L. Bushner [1]; M. Chak [0.5]; J. Chessin [0]; V. Devatha [0]; R. Dunbar [1.5]; M. Ghandour [2]; R. Gupta [0]; E. Johnston [0]; M. Kasher [0]; G. Kaufman [0]; C. Li [1]; D. Liu [0]; E. Liu [2]; M. McBride [0]; V. Michel [0]; P. Russell [0]; J. Selig [1]; M. Stefanko [1.5]; S. Tayal [2.5]; P. Titcomb [1]; R. Uttamchandani [1]; K. Zhu [0.5]
- *Not Present at the Roll Call:* S. Chadhary (Unexcused) [2]; S. Karnavat (Excused) [1]; D. Li (Excused) [2.5]

II. Approval of the Meeting Minutes (J. Batista)

- The minutes of September 17, 2015 were approved by unanimous consent.

III. Open Microphone (E. Johnston)

- Jeff Breuer '16 stated that he appreciated the new attendance records provided in the minutes and acknowledged that the practice increases transparency.

IV. Announcements and Reports

- Elections Update – M. Henderson announced the addition of five new members: J. Chessin, V. Devatha, M. Kasher, D. Liu, and P. Russell to the Student Assembly. He was joyful for expedited results, which involved no challenges, and further mentioned looking forward to reshaping the spring election rules.
- University Assembly Update – M. Battaglia updated the Student Assembly on University Assembly activities.
- Appropriations Committee Update – M. Stefanko stated that organizations applying for Byline Funding will be updated to allow organization's proposals if new costs arise. This practice has occurred during previous Byline cycles, and would not be a new. A more formal change will be recommended before the next byline funding.
- The new members of the Student Assembly took the oath of office.

V. Business of the Day

- Resolution 8 – Affirming Learning Style Diversity in Introductory Science Course (G. Kaufman, M. McBride, R. Dunbar, L. Bushner)
 - There was a motion to move the resolution to the end of the agenda.
 - There was dissent.
 - G. Kaufman stated he had a speaker arriving and that he would like to vote on this item today.
 - The motion was withdrawn.
 - G. Kaufman reinstated that the poll they conducted showed approximately 2/3 of all survey participants wished to not have study groups require attendance. He also stated that only 17% said they would not attend if the study groups were optional.
 - P. Titcomb asked about the faculty members who were reached out to, and why the study groups were established in this way originally.
 - G. Kaufman stated that these decisions were formalized through the Educational Policy Committee. He stated that Professor Feigenson (BIOMG 3310) stated that the groups should not be graded.
 - S. Tayal stated that the purpose of the Student Assembly is not to represent the majority of the students, at the costs of minority groups. Furthermore, he asked about the third of students who preferred the classes to be mandatory.
 - Kaufman stated that to students who desired to attend these, the option would still be available. As well he argued that attending courses with students who do not wish to be in attendance, takes away from the greater purpose of a study group.
 - Richard Chen '18 took a study group course. He wished to consider the quality of education, and to recognize certain individuals who learn best on their own.
 - B. Bacharach asked does the fact that students don't enjoy study groups mean that it is harmful the community.
 - M. McBride stated that this is a challenge over the student's rights to choose what to attend.
 - E. Liu asked after implementation would there still be study groups, and if so how would these groups be held with fewer students in attendance. She also asked about alternatives to study groups.
 - G. Kaufman stated the study groups have a short history, with most existing less than five years. He stated that with implementation of Resolution 8 there

would be fewer and smaller groups, and smaller groups would probably be better for most students.

- M. Stefanko stated this data is unrepresentative and is not very extreme. Also that with fewer study groups, it may become more difficult to find groups that fit student's schedules.
- G. Kaufman stated there might be a desire from surveyed students to attend fewer than the mandatory number of study groups.
- S. Tayal motioned to amend line 44 to remove "make these study group sessions merely optional by" and replace it with "to consider".
- S. Tayal further motioned to amend line 46 to insert "since 65% of surveyed students have indicated preference to optional study groups." after "aforementioned classes...".
- S. Tayal stated that the amendment would give greater reasoning as to why the Assembly approved the resolution, and argued this change in language goes to show that a majority of students are in support of the resolution.
- M. Stefanko wondered about the data's validity and who took the survey.
- G. Kaufman stated that 40% completely agree, and that this was a large number of students.
- The amendment failed by a vote of 6-14-3.
- D. Liu asked if the data could show a more detailed analysis, and also about the methodology. She further asked whom this would affect most.
- M. McBride stated that within the Student Assembly newsletter there was a link to the poll.
- G. Kaufman stated there were better ways to provide students with camaraderie than through study groups.
- M. Chak stated there is a problem with pre-med students needing ways to get faculty recommendations.
- M. Henderson stated that this resolution would be helpful in decreasing the number of students within study groups. Asked for voting members to view this resolution as a matter of whether or not it is appropriate for professors to get around credit limits with extra courses.
- G. Kaufman stated that having a class simply for resume building seems *pro tanto* not the right reason for creating a course.
- C. Li asked if the sponsors had asked professors if they would be willing to lower the grade percentage of the class associated with each of these classes.

- E. Johnston stated that further due diligence should be arranged for better proof. Johnston also brought up that it would be difficult to convince faculty with this data.
- G. Kaufman believed that the survey was well backed. He also stated that to not vote in favor of this resolution based on the data being good enough would limit the ability of the sponsors to argue their points in future conversations with professors.
- There was a motion to **Call the Question**.
- There was dissent.
- E. Liu stated that there has been a lot of effort put forth, and to potentially vote this down now would be a waste of the sponsor's effort.
- The motion **failed** by a vote of 10-12-1.
- E. Liu stated that not having experienced the study groups herself she could not determine if the study group's time was helpful.
- M. Ghandour believed that this resolution represented, more than anything, an agreement amongst the Student Assembly that the practice of study groups should stop being graded.
- L. Bushner stated that nothing unique or greatly necessary is derived from these groups.
- M. Stefanko stated that having data, which shows students who attend these study courses do better, should be enough reason to keep the courses.
- S. Tayal requested a **Point of Information** regarding the data.
- G. Kaufman stated this data is from the Professors who teach these courses and states that students who attend study groups receive a better grade in the class than those who do not.
- M. Battaglia stated that students should be given freedom over how they use their time.
- G. Kaufman stated the resolutions, if passed, would move forward to the Education Policy Committee of Arts and Sciences. This committee would choose how to act with this information.
- There was a motion to **Call the Question**.
- There was a motion to hold a roll call vote.
- By unanimous consent the motion to hold a roll call vote was adopted.
- The Resolution was **adopted** by the Assembly by a vote of 22-1-2, with 2 votes awarded in favor from the community.

- B. Bacharach, Yes; Luke Bushner, Yes; M. Chak, Abstain; J. Chessin, Yes; V. Devatha, Yes; R. Dunbar, Yes; M. Ghandour, Yes; R. Gupta, Yes; E. Johnston, Yes; M. Kasher, Yes; G. Kaufman, Yes; C. Li, Yes; D. Liu, Yes; E. Liu, Yes; M. McBride, Yes; V. Michel, Yes; P. Russell, Yes; J. Selig, Yes; M. Stefanko, No; S. Tayal, Yes; P. Titcomb, Abstain; R. Uttamchandani, Yes; K. Zhu, Yes
- Byline Reports
 - M. Stefanko announced that the Appropriations Committee would be reviewing Community Partnership Board, Alternative Breaks, and ECO, and invited anyone to attend the meeting next Monday, September 28th, 2015.
- Byline Report: Haven
 - M. Stefanko stated the Haven report asked for \$3.80 per student from the Student Activity Fee but the committee decided that given the information received, \$3.50 be awarded.
 - There was a motion to **Call the Question**. The Byline Funding was **adopted** by the Assembly by a vote of 20-0-0.
- Byline Report: ALANA
 - M. Stefanko stated that ALANA had controversy with funding cuts two years ago. The Appropriations Committee believed that the \$8.05 requested was a just amount.
 - There was a motion to **Call the Question**. The Byline Funding was **adopted** by the Assembly by a vote of 21-0-0.
- Byline Report: Multicultural Greek Life Council
 - MGLC asked for new funding this year, as they failed to submit an application for the previous funding cycle. MGLC asked for \$0.50 to which the Appropriations Committee agreed.
 - There was a motion to **Call the Question**. The Byline Funding was **adopted** by the Assembly by a vote of 21-0-0.

VI. New Business

- Resolution 11 – Charter Change Establishing a Student Health Fee Advisory Committee Liaison and Student Insurance Advisory Committee Liaison (M. Battaglia, J. Berger)
 - There was a motion to move this to Business of the Day.
 - The motion was **adopted** by unanimous consent.
 - B. Bacharach stated that placing students on the committees would help for transparency.
 - There was a motion to table.

- The motion was adopted by a vote of 20-0-1.

J. Batista adjourned the meeting to Executive Session at 6:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter Biedenweg

Assembly Clerk, Office of the Assemblies