



# Cornell University Student Assembly

## Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, October 8, 2015 Meeting

4:45pm-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. Batistia [0]; S. Chadhary [2]; J. Chessin [0]; R. Dunbar [1.5]; E. Johnston [0]; S. Karnavat [1]; M. Kasher [0]; G. Kaufman [0]; C. Li [1]; D. Li [2.5]; D. Liu [0]; E. Liu [2]; M. McBride [0]; V. Michel [0]; P. Russell [0]; M. Stefanko [1.5]; S. Tayal [2.5]; P. Titcomb [1]; R. Uttamchandani [1]; K. Zhu [0.5]
- *Not Present at the Roll Call:* L. Bushner (Excused) [1]; M. Chak (Unexcused) [0.5]; V. Devatha (Excused) [0]; M. Ghandour (Unexcused) [2]; R. Gupta (Unexcused) [0]; J. Selig (Excused) [1]

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

- The minutes of October 1, 2015 were approved by unanimous consent.

### III. Open Microphone (E. Johnston)

### IV. Announcements and Reports

- Arts and Sciences Advisory Council Meeting – M. McBride announced the Arts and Science representatives and members of the Arts and Sciences educational committee met with Dean Ritter and Dean Devries to discuss open course evaluations. Also discussed Arts and Sciences credit requirement changes.
- Rights of Ex-Officio Representatives – M. McBride stated on behalf of Parliamentarian Berger that the ex-officio members can motion to amend, but not motion to vote. He also informed newly elected members that there will be a quiz on parliamentary procedure.

### V. Business of the Day

- Byline Report: Cornell Athletics and Physical Education
  - M. Stefanko stated that Cornell Athletics requested to increase their funding from \$10.00 to \$11.00 through the next two years. He stated the Appropriations

Committee agreed the Big Red Sports Pass's funding should be raised by a dollar, yet the Committee believed the rest of the funding should be cut by \$0.70. This left funding levels at \$10.30 for the next funding cycle.

- There was a motion to approve. The Byline Funding was approved by the Assembly by a vote of 21-0-0.
- Byline Report: Cornell Cinema
  - M. Stefanko stated that Cornell Cinema asked for \$12.00, a \$1.40 increase from the previous cycle. He stated the Appropriations Committee believed that the increase was not justified due to attendance numbers and the current economic structure of the Cinema. Furthermore, he mentioned that the revenue of 10,700 undergraduates paying \$5.50 on top of the \$10.60 they already spend on Cornell Cinema, should be more than enough to cover movie screenings. This cost is also unfair to those who do not attend movies.
  - Mary Fessenden, Director of Cornell Cinema, stated Cornell Cinema provides a large number of programs, and unlike other groups they must pay infrastructure costs, all while the Activity Fee only covers 30% of their costs. Furthermore, she stated the Cinema recently updated their projector to digital, and that the Cinema's current reserve account will be zeroed out over the next two years under the proposed funding levels. She also asserted that ten years ago, the Appropriations Committee voted to increase the funding to \$11.00.
  - S. Tayal stated Cornell Cinema is a great benefit to the Cornell community, yet as a member of the Appropriations Committee, he stated he would like to see an increase of \$0.50 to ticket prices.
  - M. Henderson acknowledged a need to look at all the expenses of this organization, and ways in which students could contribute without being paid.
  - M. Fessenden stated their Webmaster only receives a \$16,000 salary. She stated that Cornell Cinema puts on 180 programs a year and also that there was an increase of 1,300 students, due to greater email blasts this past year. Lastly she mentioned the luxury of holding future free event would not be possible under current funding levels.
  - Wyatt Nelson stated to not increase Cornell Cinema's funding would also limit public funding from the New York State Council on the Arts. He also added that the current funding level holds back one of the largest cultural providers on campus.
  - Jael Goldfine '17 and Troy Sherman '18 as writers of the Cornell Daily Sun stated the Cornell Cinema has benefited their writing experiences and personal lives greatly.

- M. Stefanko stated that the Board of Trustees sets limits on the Byline Funding amount, and that not every organization's requests can be met.
- M. Fessenden stated that it has been 10 years since Cornell Cinema has received an increase in funding from the Student Assembly.
- M. Stefanko stated that Byline Funding does not increase alongside inflation.
- B. Bacharach requested the Cornell Cinema expand on what the increase of \$0.70 would create. He also asked about Cornell Cinema's demographics.
- Jeff Breuer stated that he was a happy to see such a large number of students at the Student Assembly meeting and encouraged their future attendance.
- M. Fessenden stated 11,000 undergraduates attended the Cinema last year, with a total attendance of 17,500. While she was unsure about unique visitors, 3,000 students like Cornell Cinema on Facebook and additionally they send emails to 6,000 students. She was concerned about raising costs of tickets, as attendance would go down.
- M. Stefanko stated the Convocation Committee and Slope Day get similar levels of funding and reach most of the Cornell committee. He believed the Cinema only reached a small percentage of campus due to reasons such as classes requesting students attend films and also the use of cinema passes.
- P. Russell stated that Cornell Cinema's levels should remain the same.
- Kramer Canfield '19 stated that Cornell Cinema's films are offered in a wide range of genres, and cutting funding would only make the Cinema's diversity smaller.
- M. Stefanko stated that the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly cut Cornell Cinema funding during the past cycle, and that the Student Assembly keeping the same level of funding should be seen as a compromise.
- J. Chessin expressed his belief that, as was similar at his last school, it would be possible for Cornell Cinema to limit the number of films they show while still providing excellent service.
- Christian Brickhouse '16 voiced that increasing costs would not make it possible to gain attendance.
- M. Fessenden stated that the Cinema has already cut the number of films they show.
- E. Johnston declared she voted for the increase, but noted EARS and Cornell Minds Matter only get \$3.50 collectively. During the next funding cycle she also recommended displaying the unique number of students, which attend.

- David Gouldthorpe '18 proclaimed that the Cinema personally helped him adjust to Cornell. He noted that despite paying part of his student fee for a sports pass, he attended a movie during Cornell's homecoming game.
- M. Stefanko stated that while the Cornell Cinema is making a request for a
- M. Fessenden stated that with increased funding, the Cinema would have more time to appeal to alumni and other grant proposals.
- Josh Barber '17 stated that the cinema is the best in the Ivy League, and that they don't host dangerous events such as Slope Day. He warned that artistic decay would occur with lower funding, and that making the argument that the number of students is the most important factor for funding is missing the purpose of cinema and art.
- M. Stefanko reiterated that the funding level would remain the same under the proposed amount and is not eliminating the Cornell Cinema program.
- Director stated it has become harder to get the number of student attendees
- They have already cut their days of cinema by two.
- S. Chadhaury suggested the Cinema raise revenues through ticket prices, or cut costs through areas such as branding.
- Yosef Washington '16 stated that increasing costs would decrease the number of events and therefore the number of attendees. He quoted Robert Ebert who said, "Movies are like a machine that generates empathy". Finally he stated that cultural and educational events help the whole Cornell community.
- M. Stefanko stated that paying a Webmaster a significant salary is unique to this organization, and urged the Cornell Cinema to look stringently at its budget.
- There was a motion to approve.
- There was dissent.
- S. Tayal stated that ideas concerning decreasing costs have not been fully discussed.
- The motion failed by a vote of 5-12-0.
- P. Titcomb stated that Cornell cinema has immense cultural value around campus, and hoped to find a balance between what everyone wanted.
- Madison stated the Cornell Cinema is unique in that it can host events relevant to, and reach every single member in the community.
- M. Fessenden stated that the number of students who attended events at the Cinema was potentially 80% of the student body for the past year. She further presented the fact that to have a cinematic experience at Cornell Cinema for the total price of \$16.00 rivals the experience of a regular theater in any major city.
- There was a motion to approve.

- There was dissent.
  - S. Tayal requested that there be further discussion.
  - The motion to vote was approved by a vote of 9-7-1.
  - The motion to hold a role call vote was approved by unanimous consent.
  - The motion **failed** by a vote of 11-6-0.
- B. Bacharach, Yes; S. Chaudhary, Yes; J. Chessin, Yes; R. Dunbar, No; S. Karnavat, Yes; M. Kasher, No; G. Kaufman, Yes; C. Li, Yes; D. Liu, Yes; E. Liu, Yes; M. McBride, No; V. Michel, No; P. Russell, Yes; M. Stefanko, Yes; S. Tayal, No; P. Titcomb, No; R. Uttamchandani, Yes
- There was a motion to overturn to \$11.10.
  - There was dissent.
  - M. Stefanko stated that \$11.10 had not been discussed as a potential allotment.
  - The motion **failed** by a vote of 3-14-0.
  - E. Liu stated that she understood the need for increased revenue, but also that an increase from \$10.60 to 12.00 would grant Cornell Cinema close to \$20,000. She stated that two years with cut costs would be beneficial to the organization to see where cuts could be made.
  - M. Stefanko stated that if the organization were not seen as beneficial they would not be receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars.
  - Ex-Officio M. Battaglia stated that the organization has hard choices ahead.
  - J. Chessin asked how the additional revenue would be spent.
  - M. Fessenden stated that with increased revenue the Cinema would host more special events, such as silent movies with orchestras. Additionally, two years with less financial strain would offer the Cinema an opportunity to search for other financial sources.
  - There was a motion to table.
  - The motion was **adopted** by unanimous consent.

J. Battista adjourned the meeting to Executive Session at 6:32pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
 Peter Biedenweg  
 Assembly Clerk, Office of the Assemblies