



# Cornell University

## Student Assembly

### Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, February 11th, 2016 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 4:48pm
- *Present at the Roll Call:* J. Batista [1]; M. Chak [3]; S. Chadhaury [2]; V. Devatha [2.5]; R. Dunbar [2.5]; M. Ghandour [5]; R. Gupta [2.5]; E. Johnston [1]; S. Karnavat [3]; M. Kasher [0]; G. Kaufman [0]; D. Li [4]; D. Liu [0]; M. McBride [0]; V. Michel [2]; P. Russell [0.5]; J. Selig [2.5]; M. Stefanko [4.5]; S. Tayal (Excused) [3.5]; K. Zhu [3]
- *Not Present at the Roll Call:* B. Bacharach [2.5]; J. Chessin [.5]; C. Li [2.5];

#### II. *Forum:* Questions to the Provost - Financial Aid for International & Undocumented Students

- Student Trustee Yamini Bhandari invited Provost Kotlikoff to discuss changes in financial aid policy regarding the 2016-2017 school year. He spoke on rate increases, undergraduate financial aid changes, and how tuition goals were focused on providing enough resources for students of all socio-economic backgrounds.
- Provost Kotlikoff announced for the 2016-2017 year Cornell would have the lowest percentage rate increase for the endowed colleges since 1965. Housing and Dining costs would increase by 2% (the first increase in four years), while total education costs would increase by 3.37% for Endowed Colleges and 3.23% for Resident Contract Colleges. This would be the first time in seven or eight years that the percentage increase in tuition rate was the same as the previous year, and the second year in a row the rate fell below 4%.
- Their goals of financial aid focused on economic diversity providing for *any student*. This is why Provost Kotlikoff announced that undocumented students, students with federal DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival) status, would be treated as domestic students during admissions starting in Fall 2017. This decision would increase the cost of financial aid to the university, but would give undocumented students the ability to receive need-blind aid and was part of Cornell's *any student* commitment.
- Cornell wanted to allow in more deserving students regardless of socioeconomic background, which would allow Cornell to maintain competitiveness compared to other peer institutions. Domestic students would continue to be admitted through need-blind admissions, where they receive need-based financial aid (not based on merit).
- Starting in the fall of 2017, international students would be admitted under need-aware admissions. Every Ivy League school excluding Harvard, Princeton, and Yale, at this time was need-aware, and Dartmouth similarly made this change in 2015. Provost Kotlikoff discussed how there was a cap on international financial aid based on the amount of aid left after the full needs of domestic students had been met.
- Provost Kotlikoff provided the Assembly with an example of why this was the case. He stated that Cornell in the past had granted international students admission to the campus

on need-blind admissions, but under this system around 30% of international students would choose to attend without the resources to cover their total expenses. This would create depressing moments when students would not be able to graduate from Cornell.

- The healthcare fee was also calculated into the new tuition costs.
- Provost Kotlikoff stated there were 14,315 undergraduates, and that 55% pay full tuition, while 45% receive need-based Cornell grants. Cornell leads in the Ivy League and other top schools in using unrestricted money to pay for financial aid.
- Provost Kotlikoff presented a graph illustrating how the cost of education for the bottom 80% of Cornell students had stayed the same or gone down over the past 20 years. The unaided is the only 20% that had seen costs rise.
  - Haadia Amjad '17, an international student from Pakistan who received no financial aid, stressed that not giving international students a chance to receive aid hurt the Cornell community and was unfair to the international community.
  - Provost Kotlikoff agreed with her sentiment, but believed that given the limited amount of aid, and the difficulty of knowing which international applicants truly would be insecure attending Cornell, he reiterated the importance of covering domestic student's costs. Furthermore, he mentioned that the overall goal was to increase funding for an international body in the future.
  - Andreas Kummen '16 stated that one issue that he found with the university was that their motto did not fit within the context of the university's practices. He admitted that understanding the financial needs was a large challenge, but given the nature of Cornell he wanted the university to stand up to its ideals.
  - Provost Kotlikoff stressed the financial aid offered to lower income students as a means of fulfilling the *any student* motto. As well, undocumented students now able to attend Cornell due to increased aid, would open the University to a greater number of diverse individuals.
  - M. Stefanko stated that he was graduating with a substantial amount of debt, and wanted to inquire if issues related to student debt were coming into the discussion.
  - Provost Kotlikoff stated they were tentatively expecting 3.75% increases over the next four to five years. Additionally, Provost Kotlikoff stated Cornell student's debt after graduation was lower than the national mean, and the number of students graduating with loans was lower than in 2007, which were good signs.
  - S. Tayal proclaimed that shared governance was a joke, and that valid student opinions brought up at meetings and in front of faculty went nowhere. He brought up that the new policy would accept a greater number of international students with economic means, but was unfair for a majority of international students. He gave examples of many students on campus who were leaders in their academic fields, but almost did not attend Cornell had it not been for outside scholarships. He requested the support of other students to work together to fight this decision.
  - Provost Kotlikoff stated that the college deans were all unanimously in favor of the financial aid decision. He reiterated the possibility that nearly 30% of international students would continue to accept offers to Cornell without the financial means to graduate if Cornell maintained its need-blind admission standards.
  - Julia Montejo '17 stated that she was an undocumented student who disagreed with the committee's makeup which only included J. Battista as a student. She shared about how even with DACA she struggled to pay for her college tuition,

and was concerned with the environment on campus concerning undocumented student workers. Her DACA report was largely ignored when she applied for on-campus jobs.

- Provost Kotlikoff stated that much of the issues facing undocumented students would be dealt with in the new protocol. He brought up H1-B visas and sought to address similar issues moving forward.
- J. Battista read an anonymous question that asked about the possibility of policy changes regarding international students. Currently international students who do not apply for financial aid in their initial application are not able to ever again apply for financial aid, – a policy that is not the case with domestic students – and the question asked if this would change under the new changes.
- Provost Kotlikoff stated that he did not know the answer, and suggested J. Battista reiterate the question at a committee meeting.
- Brandon Mok '19 asked about the process of admitting international students on a need-aware basis, and if this process would skew in the favor of economically advantageous students.
- Provost Kotlikoff stated that initially international students would be admitted on a need-blind standard, but once funds ran out the admissions committee would look at those who could afford attendance. Provost Kotlikoff stated that Brandon was correct in his assumption that the new process would skew admissions in favor of those from better socio-economic backgrounds.
- P. Russell asked about the tension between scholarships and grants, and explained how he knew students who felt dismayed when they learned the money they won through scholarships was often used in place of Cornell grants instead of applied together.
- Provost Kotlikoff stated the Admissions and Financial Aid committee was created to make real-time adjustments, and he suggested they the committee would talk more about this issue.
- M. McBride brought up that the Faculty Senate held their meeting on their decision during finals week. He believed that Cornell University was supposed to be an objective judge that corrects the financial differences of society. He believed Cornell was failing its duty if it continued to support an elitist environment.
- Provost Kotlikoff stated \$245 million was being allocated to students, and reiterated that Cornell ranked amongst the top universities for using unrestricted money for Financial Aid. He was most of all worried about the students who attended Cornell, but were unable to make it through their entire education, but was open to hearing more suggestions.
- Hamish MacDiarmid '19 raised the point that as a top university, Cornell's purpose should not be collecting money for administrative costs, but should be to promote a global university. He requested that Provost Kotlikoff reexamine his perspective and the views of his other community members.
- Akhilesh Issur '17 Believed that Cornell's current policy only allowed students with the financial means to attend. He requested that Cornell, like peer institutions, needed to hold more open forums where students could give their opinions.
- Provost Kotlikoff stated that studying these issues would be beneficial. He believed that despite the SA President being the only student allowed to hold a seat on his Admissions and Financial Aid committee, the committee still had student presence. The major problem was the lack of funding for International

students, and supporting all university goals.

### III. Open Microphone

### IV. Approval of the Meeting Minutes

- The minutes of February 4th were approved by unanimous consent.

### V. Announcements and Reports

- G. Kaufman stated the Faculty Senate met to discuss the College of Business, and believed they did not play a large enough role in the decisions of President Garrett. He stated that Resolution 24: Cost Barriers to Studying Abroad, was rejected by President Garrett.
  - J. Berger stated that they had already begun proposing alternative ideas for a new resolution.
- Director of Elections M. Herderson stated registration for the special election ended last night. There were four candidates for LGBTQ+, Arts and Sciences, and Hotel Administration, and one for Engineering. He announced that there would be a mandatory meeting tonight from 7:00-8:00pm for all candidates.

### VI. Initiatives

- Breaking Bread: A Conversation Between the SA members and the Minority Community: M. Chak stated she and S. Chaudhary met with members of the Diversity Committee and that they were planning to hold a breaking bread event in the near future with minority community leaders.
- Diversity Inclusion Fund: S. Chaudhary stated the Diversity Committee established a fund with close to \$12,000 dedicated to Diversity Initiatives. No single initiative would receive more than \$6,000, and they hoped to use the entire fund by the Spring of 2017. If at that time all money was spent, they would request and hopefully renew the fund.
- P. Biedenweg asked S. Chaudhary if he could clarify about the sorts of initiatives the fund would be looking to endorse.
- S. Chadhary stated this would be a mixture of aspects of the Infrastructure Fund, but they would be focusing on Diversity proposals.
- M. Kasher asked if the fund might be combined with other funds in the future.
- S. Chaudhary stated that this would be a possibility.

### VII. Business of the Day

- There was a motion to suspend the agenda to move Resolution 37 and 38 to the top of the agenda
- The motion was adopted by unanimous consent.

### VIII. New Business

- Resolution 37: Wishing a Speedy Recovery to President Garrett.
  - J. Berger explained that the Health and Wellness Committee created this resolution to wish President Garrett a quick recovery from her surgery.
  - There was a motion to move the resolution to Business of the Day.
  - The motion was adopted by unanimous consent.
  - There was a motion to Call the Question.
  - By a vote of 18-0-0 Resolution 37 was approved with two community votes in the

affirmative.

- Resolution 38: Continuing to Promote Community Feedback on the College of Business.
  - G. Kaufman remarked that this resolution was a new version of the resolution he presented in the previous week. The resolution would ask Provost Kotlikoff to allow the Assembly to appoint members to the newly established committees. G. Kaufman stated changes would include not requesting the appointment of students onto the Alumni Engagement committee.
  - There was a **Point of Information** as to whether or not Provost Kotlikoff already approved the Assembly's appointment of students.
  - J. Battista said that Provost Kotlikoff was in favor of the Assembly appointing one student or representative to the Undergraduate Synergy Committee.
  - M. McBride stated the resolution was approved unanimously by the Executive Committee.
  - M. Ghandour clarified that the resolution requested the appointment of a student outside of the Assembly to the committee.
  - There was a motion to move the resolution to Business of the Day.
  - The motion was **adopted** by unanimous consent.
  - M. Ghandour asked if Provost Kotlikoff's request of an appointment made this resolution obsolete.
  - G. Kaufman suggested that recommending more than one students could be a possibility if the resolution passed, especially with students from ILR wanted to be part of the discussion.
  - There was a motion to vote.
  - By a vote of 17-0-1 Resolution #38 was **adopted** with two community votes in the affirmative.
  
- Resolution 36: Attendance Policy
  - R. Dunbar expressed his dissent with the policy going into effect this semester. He believed like the other policy changes made this would make most sense to go into effect at the start of the next Assembly term.
  - G. Kaufman believed it set a poor precedent to make operational changes half way through the year.
  - There was a motion to amend the last line to read "Be it finally resolved this policy would come into effect at the beginning of the 2016-2017 term."
  - M. Stefanko believed that the standing rules included an institutional error. Thus he believed it important to adjust the attendance policy this term.
  - G. Kaufman was in support of the overall change, but thought that changing operational policy half way through the year for whatever reason, be it personal benefit or institutional fixes, was not the proper way to correct the issue.
  - E. Johnson believed this decision would remove power from the Executive Board.
  - M. Battaglia believed that operation rule changes should come at the beginning of the year. He believed that with shared governance representation having the possibility to fail constituents, it was important to hold members accountable.
  - R. Dunbar asked why this issue was not addressed earlier if it was such an institutional issue.
  - M. Stefanko stated that the issue only came up when J. Berger began to review the Standing Rules over winter break.

- There was a motion to vote on the amendment.
- By a vote of 3-9-1 the motion failed.
- There was a motion to Call the Question.
- The motion failed due to a lack of quorum.
- There was a motion to adjourn.

J. Battista adjourned the meeting at 5:49pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter F. Biedenweg

Assembly Clerk, Office of the Assemblies