



Cornell University Student Assembly

Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, March 3rd, 2016 Meeting

4:45pm-6:30pm in Physical Science Building 401

I. Call to Order (J. Batista)

- J. Batista called the meeting to order at 4:48pm
- *Present at the Roll Call:* B. Bacharach [4.5]; D. Barbaria [0]; J. Batista [1]; N. Billington [0]; S. Chadhaury [2]; J. Chessin [1.5]; V. Devatha [4.5]; M. Indimine [0]; S. Karnavat [5]; M. Kasher [0]; G. Kaufman [0]; J. W. Kim [0]; D. Li [4.5]; D. Liu [1.5]; M. McBride [0]; V. Michel [3]; P. Russell [2.5]; M. Stefanko [6]; S. Tayal [4.5]; K. Zhu [4.5]
- *Not Present at the Roll Call:* M. Chak (Unexcused) [6]; S. Chaudhary (Unexcused) [2.5]; R. Dunbar (Unexcused) [4.5]; M. Ghandour (Unexcused) [4.5]; R. Gupta (Unexcused) [4.5]; E. Johnston (Unexcused) [2]; C. Li (Unexcused) [2.5]; J. Selig (Unexcused) [4]

II. Open Microphone

III. Approval of the Meeting Minutes

- The minutes of February 25th were approved by unanimous consent.

V. Announcements and Reports

- Elections – Director of Elections M. Henderson stated that 27 candidates registered for Spring elections. He said there would be a mandatory meeting soon, and that the three vacant representative positions (CALs, Undesignated, and University Assembly) would be deferred to Fall elections.
- D. Li asked if transfers would have an opportunity to run for the open positions.
- M. Henderson expressed that the spots would be open to everyone.
- President's Update – J. Batista wished to continue to give updates over the semester. She notified the Assembly that D. Li was still working with the Quarter System Review Committee and they would be meeting soon with VP Lombardi to discuss Greek life and the data presented to the Assembly on Feb. 18th. J. Batista additionally informed the Assembly she would be giving a presentation to the trustees in March, and she requested students to reach out to her about ideas. J. Batista mentioned she would not be at the following Assembly meeting.
- Appendix B Update – VP of Finance M. Stefanko informed the Assembly that Monday the Appropriations committee would be meeting about Appendix B to set new guidelines on how clubs could spend their money.
- Diversity Trainings & Campus Planning – E. Johnston stated that on March 19th she would be holding diversity training for student leaders and any other interested students. She would be overviewing how to make clubs more welcoming and inclusive, and also

discuss how to fill out Diversity and Inclusion Plans (DIPS) E. Johnston was additionally working on campus beautification projects with the campus coordinator - including the master plan, and the bus stop in front of the Swartz Center – and requested others interested reach out to her.

VI. Initiatives

- Reporting Work Over Winter Break - Dale Barbaria & Shreya Mantrala
 - On behalf of the Educational Policy Committee, D. Barbaria and S. Mantrala presented on the creation of a poll that would allow students to report when teachers are giving work over breaks. The sponsors planned to use Qualtrics and were looking to ask what college a student was in, what class they were in, and what type of work they were assigned. They wanted to find out if Assembly members had additional question suggestions.
 - M. Stefanko asked about Qualtrics and if the sponsors had met with administrators on campus who run surveys to make sure their survey was professional.
 - The sponsors were open to the suggestion, but they believed that their questions were simple enough to not merit outside help.
 - D. Li asked if the results showed large amounts work over breaks what the Faculty Senate could do.
 - M. McBride stated that the Faculty Senate could only recommend that professors not assign work.

VII. Business of the Day

- Resolution 36: Attendance Policy
 - The sponsors M. Stefanko and J. Berger stated that this was the same resolution as previous weeks, and hoped to vote on it quickly.
 - G. Kaufman stated that there was not a consensus, and raised the question if the assembly should change internal policy halfway through the year.
 - J.W. Kim expressed that this was his own and other members first time hearing about the change. He asked why the Assembly was looking to implement a policy that made it easier to stay on the assembly.
 - M. Stefanko reiterated that there were seven voting members on the Executive Board, and that under the current protocol, any one member could vote off another member for six absences no matter their circumstances. He stated that the resolution looked to change this singular power dynamic, to change it so two Executive members would have to vote for someones dismissal. Thus the sponsors were in support of removing potential biases due to one member's sentiments.
 - There was a motion to **Call the Question**.
 - There was dissent.
 - G. Kaufman stated that he wished to add an amendment.
 - The motion to vote was **approved** by a vote of 17-1-0.
 - Resolution #36 **failed** by a vote of 16-2-2.

VIII. New Business Nicholas Karavolias '18, Travis Ghirdharie '17

- Resolution 44: Creation of the First Generation Student Representative.
 - S. Chaudhary and Co-heads of First in Class Advocacy Committee: Paola Muñoz '16 and Ewa Przybylko '18 stated that first generation college students (Student's who were the first in their family to attend college) felt underrepresented on campus. They had encountered a non-responsive administration, and hoped to use a representative on the Assembly to advocate for their concerns. First in Class, a

student group for first generation students, had been trying to create initiatives and voice concerns, but received a cease and desists letter from the Office of Admissions. With 14% of Cornell's campus composed of first generation students, they hoped that the Assembly would agree with their sentiments.

- There was a motion to move the resolution to Business of the Day.
- The motion was adopted by unanimous consent.
- S. Tayal expressed that his criteria for creating a seat on the Student Assembly involved the seat representing an identity, a college, or a group of students. The second criteria of his was making sure no identity was underrepresented in shared governance. He believed first generation students were underrepresented, and believed the group was large enough to warrant a spot in shared governance. He dismissed the argument that one more spot could lead to a slippery slope of add additional seats.
- M. McBride was in favor of the creation of a new First Generation representative. He was also in favor of increasing the number of total students on the Student Assembly.
- The sponsors were hoping to be a part of the Assembly's restructuring. They believed this resolution would start the process of restructuring, and that social identities representatives were seats that needed to be looked at carefully.
- B. Bacharach expressed that the uncontested seats in the Spring Election were a problem. He thought that adding positions might be the bad step considering the other members were not running for more positions.
- M. Stefanko wanted to move beyond the positions to look if the assembly was talking about issues affecting the campus. He believed that there were students on campus who believed the Assembly was not helping them, and therefore was in favor of social identities positions because they helped members create a greater variety of initiatives.
- J. Chessin thought that the Assembly should replace college representatives with a greater number of diversity representatives.
- S. Chaudhary expressed that he wanted to restructure the Assembly a piece at a time in order to more slowly address concerns over the optimum number of Assembly seats.
- S. Tayal asked if First in Class members were able to talk about Financial Aid Status with administrators without a representative.
- S. Chaudhary stated that it would be much easier to talk having the privilege of being a first generation student on the Student Assembly.
- E. Johnston expressed that there were a large number of college representatives on the Assembly, but too few for social identities. She believed that students were underrepresented, and raised the question of if there were ways to support more identities.
- S. Chaudhary stated that Qualtrics would be able to be viewed soon, and this would help inform the assembly about the identities represented throughout the Student Assembly.
- D. Li believed that college representatives and social identity representatives were different groups and should be treated as such. She thought the big issue was overall representation, and asked how the sponsors planned to keep the momentum moving to assure members running for a new First Generation position.
- The sponsors expressed that there was a correlation between first generation students and low income, and also raised that cultural norms were additional barriers to students wanting to run for student government. They believed an extra

- seat would help first generation students get involved.
- M. Henderson thought that all positions were important to consider, and adding one member would be an issue. Still, he thought that a first generation position would help represent a new identity on the Assembly, and was in favor of looking to potentially cut college seats.
 - The sponsors reiterated that they were requesting a seat as soon as possible. They were looking for support to create action, and would be hindered until they had support.
 - V. Michel believed a first generation minority position would be an important addition to the Student Assembly. She saw Cornell's atmosphere as only adding to First in Class's issues and thought aiding the group would best be done through a student representative.
 - The sponsors hoped to help mobilize students, and would continue to do such with or without a member on the SA. They discussed previous projects including building a lending library, but continued to need a better avenue to reach the administration.
 - D. Barbaria informed the sponsors that the Spring election had had an equal number of contested races between the college seats and social identity seats. He also asked about the wording of the resolution.
 - There was a motion to amend line four to read, "...This resolution *creates* a First Generation Liaison at-Large *representative* who will serve...".
 - The resolution was **amended** by unanimous consent.
 - Eduardo Medina '18 stated that he was a first generation student who faced difficulties in attending Cornell. He detailed how his family, amongst many others, had struggled with paying for each semester. He hoped for the creation of a representative as a means of addressing the challenges he and many other students faced at Cornell.
 - V. Devatha asked about First in Class's model.
 - The sponsors detailed that First in Class was a group consisting of 120 active members with specific committees for reaching out across campus. They would be hosting a First in Class forum in the future and invited members to attend.
 - J. Chessin asked for greater details about the Cease and Desist letter.
 - The sponsors informed the Assembly that the Cornell Financial Aid Office provided First in Class with a cease and desist letter following a meeting, for speaking too broadly on behalf of all Cornell Students and not on behalf of their own interests.
 - E. Johnston expressed her wish to have a First Generation seat in the Fall Elections.
 - M. McBride asked if the sponsors wished to have an Ex-Officio member on the Assembly.
 - J. Batista clarified that every student was an Ex-Officio member.
 - M. Stefanko expressed dissent at the idea of an Ex-Officio member, and hoped to see a new position possibly by the Fall.
 - By unanimous consent Resolution #44 was **tabled**

J. Battista adjourned the meeting at 6:07pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter F. Biedenweg

Assembly Clerk, Office of the Assemblies