



# Cornell University Student Assembly

## Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, March 17th, 2016 Meeting

4:45pm-6:30pm in Uris Hall G01

### I. Call to Order (J. Batista)

- J. Batista called the meeting to order at 4:50pm
- *Present at the Roll Call:* B. Bacharach [4.5]; D. Barbaria [0]; J. Batista [1]; N. Billington [0]; S. Chaudhary [2.5]; J. Chessin [1.5]; V. Devatha [4.5]; R. Dunbar [3.5]; M. Ghandour [4.5]; S. Gilbert [0]; M. Indimine [0]; E. Johnston [2]; S. Karnavat [5]; M. Kasher [0]; G. Kaufman [0]; J. Kim [0]; D. Li [4.5]; D. Liu [1.5]; M. McBride [0]; V. Michel [3]; P. Russell [2.5]; J. Selig [3]; M. Stefanko [6]; S. Tayal [4.5];
- *Not Present at the Roll Call:* C. Li (Resigned)

### II. Oath of Office

- Conor Hodges '17 and Jeff Breuer '16 read the Oath of Office.

### III. Open Microphone

- P. Biedenweg was planning on meeting with library staff to discuss their late-charge policies for rented equipment (\$1/minute for most items), and requested that any other interested members of the community reach out to get involved.

### IV. Approval of the Meeting Minutes

- The Minutes of March 10<sup>th</sup> were approved by unanimous consent.

### V. Announcements and Reports

- Elections Update – Director of Elections Henderson stated the Student Assembly Spring Election results had been posted online. The new members would begin serving at the beginning of the fall semester. Three vacant positions for the CALS, UA, and undesignated at large representatives would be elected in the fall. He additionally requested suggestions for updating the election rules for the coming year.
- University Assembly, CJC, Faculty Elections – At-Large Representative Kaufman stated the UA tabled Resolution 7, which would request information about the cost of Cornell's Carbon Neutrality plan, was tabled and would be voted on again in a few weeks. Additionally, the CJC would be meeting to go over potential changes to the Campus Code of Conduct, and the UHRB applications would be due March 20<sup>th</sup>.

### VI. Initiatives

- Anabel's Grocery Update – Representatives N. Billington, E. Johnston, and M. Stefanko

gave updates on Anabel's grocery store. Related to funding they informed the Assembly a crowd funding campaign going live in April would create additional funding outside that appropriated by the GPSA and SA. Additionally, they would be raising funds through grants, private partnerships, and would be meeting with the Board of Trustees next week in regards to a subsidy fund. The space allocated to the grocery store had also moved upstairs to the first floor of Anabel Taylor Hall. The timeline was pushed to August or September 2016 as new construction issues would have to be addressed. E. Johnston and M. Stefanko had transitioned their leadership positions and were confident progress would continue.

- G. Kaufman asked about how the sponsors best planned to move forward concerning the delayed opening due to bureaucracy and "Big Red Tape".
- E. Johnston and M. Stefanko stated that accessibility was taken into consideration when they looked into renovation. They decided to spend part of their budget on small structural changes, opting for electronic doors and necessary considerations for students with disabilities.
- R. Dunbar asked if the sponsors could provide more information regarding designing the new store.
- M. Stefanko stated Chris Davenport, the primary project designer, would be working to design an official calendar and would continue to work on the process. As well, fundraising (with the goal of \$20,000) would help move things forward.
- J. Chessin asked about preparing for more alternative delays.
- M. Stefanko stated that it was challenging to work with faculty and administrators. He expressed that the issues the sponsors were facing were common issues faced in any designed project.
- Dean Hubbell stated that city and state codes needed to be followed, which was causing delays. He was excited about the use of the first floor space.

## VII. Business of the Day

- Resolution 46: Indigenous Peoples' Day (S. Chaudhary, M. Chak, Benjamin Oster '17)
  - S. Chaudhary and the sponsors requested the University adopt policy changes related to the recognition of the collective histories of Indigenous Peoples', by changing the University Calendar to recognize the second Monday of October as indigenous Peoples' Day.
  - Benjamin Oster '17, Co-President of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, stated that on behalf of himself and the sponsors he hoped to address the problems surrounding minority recognition around campus.
  - Mario Caro, Associate Director of Cornell's American Indian Program, stated that he was in great support of the resolution, as well as many other faculty and staff members.
  - There was a **Point of Information** asking if the resolution would remove Columbus day, or add another holiday on that day.
  - Benjamin Oster '17 stated that Columbus Day was not currently recognized by the University, and that this resolution sought to create a new holiday, which always would fall on the second Monday of October.
  - Fredrick Blaisdell '16, an Oneida, Bear Clan - Native American, shared a pigeon dance song to express that the Native American voice was on campus.
  - There was a motion to move the resolution to Business of the Day.
  - By unanimous consent the motion was adopted.
  - J. Chessin asked about including other programming around the day proposed.
  - The sponsors were in favor of including programming that week. They already had an American Indian menu with Cornell's dining facilities.

- Christian Brickhouse stated that close to seven hundred languages were dying at this time. He worked on Native American sites as an anthropologist and found that the physical erasure of Native peoples was taking place throughout New York. He was in support of the resolution.
- Angelea Jamison expressed that he was a programing house RA and a part of Akwe:kon, the nation's first university residence established to celebrate American Indian culture and heritage. He was in support of all indigenous peoples throughout the world, and in support of the resolution.
- There was a motion to **Call the Question**.
- By a vote of 24-0-0 Resolution 46 was **adopted**.
- Resolution 47: International Student Admissions and Financial Aid (S. Tayal, S. Chaudhary)
  - S. Tayal and the other sponsors addressed the new changes to admissions, opposing the stated that it was common sense why need-blind was a better policy than need-aware. The sponsors talked to the Provost and the Vice Provost of Financial Aid. There argument for the change was that other peer Institutions were using the same policy. S. Tayal raised that Cornell broke from other peer institutions when it admitted an African American student to its law school in 1887, began teaching East Asian languages, and when the University additionally admitted its first female student in 1870. In his second point, S. Tayal declared that the International Students and Scholars Office which is the main resource for international students, was not made aware of the administration's decision. The sponsors raised that the number of international students that graduated in four years was lower than American students and this should be reason to raise resources for the International community rather than put up additional barriers.
  - G. Kaufman expressed that he was in support of the resolution, but wanted to see this resolution passed through FARC.
  - B. Bacharach, Chair of FARC, stated that multiple committees could have passed this resolution.
  - Barbara Knuth, Senior Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School and an overseer of the Undergraduate Admissions Office, emphasized that the admissions policy was conveyed to FARC. She stated the current Financial Aid budget for international students was around eleven and a half million dollars, and would not decrease. The policy changes would allow Cornell to focus on the lowest income students with highest need, while not hurt international students of high-income backgrounds. In regards to reaching out to ISSO, Barbara stated members on the Admission and Financial Aid working group are the Vice Provost for International Affairs and the Vice President for Student and Campus Life, who the ISSO reports to.
  - S. Tayal stated that they reached out to VP Lombardi who reached out to the ISSO. He expressed that Cornell used to allow 150 international students who were allowed in on merit. The process would not be removed of merit, to allow . The Cornell Debate Society President, the leader that led Cornell students to America's Got Talent was a merited Cornell student. Cornell was a merit based environment.
  - R. Dunbar asked how the resolution would affect DACA students.
  - S. Tayal stated that this resolution would not affect DACA students.
  - J. Chessin asked about what tangible changes this resolution would create.
  - S. Tayal stated that this resolution asked the Board of Trustees to change the policy. The resolution would also ask for number of international students who leave Cornell because they could not afford Cornell, the number of students who take more than four years to graduate, and those students who had to take a leave

- of absence.
- Julia Montejo '17 stated the new policy would hurt undocumented students in the U.S. (non-DACA) in the same way it hurt international students.
- P. Russell asked if non-student assembly members would serve on committees and how they would be selected.
- S. Tayal stated this would be a decision left up to the Executive Board.
- By unanimous consent the resolution was moved to Business of the Day.
- S. Karnavat believed it was very important to ask administrators for hard statistics about international students, he believed this resolution was additionally about creating opportunities for those without the financial means of attending Cornell.
- A community member explained how she was the only Mongolian student at Cornell. For certain international governments, such as Mongolia, students get funding to attend the top 20 colleges in the world. The problem with Cornell's new policy is that it would leave her and other international students with no chance to attend, because their government funding only occurs after acceptance, and they would not be accepted without proof of financial support.
- M. Stefanko stated that as an issue with the administration was that they were getting smarter with passing policies. He was under the impression that better relationships with administration would lessen the problem.
- M. McBride stated that at the FARC meeting where they learned about the new policy, they were only told about the policy after it was passed. They additionally had to sign non-disclosure agreements.
- Barbara Knuth stated in 2015, 564 international applicants were admitted and of those 52 were offered aid, of which 92% accepted. Of all admitted applicants, 361 students did not apply for aid, and of those 58% chose Cornell, 151 international students applied for aid, but were not offered aid, and of those, 29% decided to attend Cornell.
- S. Tayal stated the number of international students who fell into financial trouble could be between 1-50. He stated that they had not received numbers on how many students leave Cornell who did not receive aid, and believed that they would need this data to make an informed decision moving forward.
- There was a motion to **Call the Question**.
- There was dissent.
- By a vote of 4-8-3 the motion **failed**.
- M. Ghandour thought the resolution was about opportunity, and that the administration was in charge of making decisions about the number of students who would be capable to attend the university.
- Brendon O'Brien, the Director of the ISSO said he was available to give information about any questions personally.
- There was a motion to **Call the Question**.
- By a vote of 26-0-0, with two community votes in the affirmative, Resolution 47 was **adopted**.
- Resolution 48: Ban the Box
  - Garrison Lovely '16, President of Cornell's Prison Reform and Education Project (PREP), and other sponsors presented a resolution requesting Cornell remove their current practice of requiring job applicants to report conviction records in preliminary employment applications. Given the New York State Human Rights Law requiring applicants not be denied a job based on conviction records unless there is a direct relationship between the offense and job, or if hiring would create

- an unreasonable risk to property or public safety, they wanted to alternatively only require background checks in the final stages of applicant's interview process.
- Kristen Lovely stated that in NYC banned the box, because the process disproportionately affected minorities. She believed Ithaca's recidivism rates would go down if they were able to supply jobs for more convicted applicants.
  - G. Kaufman was opposed to the resolution as it was important in determining if applicants had been convicted of serious crimes, such as sexual assault and Class A felonies.
  - By unanimous consent the resolution was moved to Business of the Day.
  - P. Biedenweg also believed this practice was important in hiring professors and administrators, but was in favor of removing the practice for blue-collar campus jobs.
  - The sponsors were in favor of the resolution because certain great professors may have been convicted in the past by harsher laws from the past.
  - M. Battaglia asked about certain convictions requiring strict guidelines on interaction with minors, and how the sponsors would address this.
  - R. Dunbar asked about whether background checks would be mandated if banning the box was removed.
  - The sponsors stated that most employers do background checks, yet this practice differs from the box because with the box an employer can simply disregard applicants that have checked yes without any explanation. Additionally, some job positions require applicants to disclose information early.
  - Andrea Stone '15 believed removing the box process had above everything else the goal of removing the cycle of poverty and incarceration.
  - The sponsors stated the city of Ithaca recently banned the box.
  - C. Hodges saw the removal of the box as a way of dismantling America's systematic racial, arbitrary, and bias criminal justice system.
  - There was a motion to **Call the Question**.
  - By a vote of 4-15-2 the motion **failed**.
  - M. Stefanko stated that banning the box would not remove the ability to check the records. Employers are statistically in favor of non-convicted members.
  - There was a motion to **Call the Question**.
  - There was dissent.
  - G. Kaufman stated that there were still speakers on the second speakers list.
  - There was a motion to vote to Call the Question.
  - By a vote of 20-3-1 the motion to **Call the Question** was **approved**.
  - By a vote of 22-3-2, with two community votes in the affirmative, Resolution 48 was **adopted**.

J. Batista adjourned the meeting at 6:24pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter F. Biedenweg

Assembly Clerk, Office of the Assemblies