



Cornell University Student Assembly

Cornell University Student Assembly

Minutes of the Thursday, March 9th, 2017 Meeting

4:45pm-6:30pm in WSH Memorial Room

I. Call to Order

- J. Berger called the meeting to order at 4:47pm.
- *Present at Roll Call:* J. Berger [0]; T. Celestin [1.25]; N. Chovanec [0.5]; D. Cox [0]; V. Devatha [2.5]; E. Dzodzomenyo [0]; R. Herz [2]; A. Iglesias [1]; M. Indimine [0]; A. Issur [2.5]; N. Jaisinghani [1.75]; J. Kim [1]; C. Lee [1.5]; D. Li [0]; L. Lipschutz [1.5]; D. Liu [1.5]; T. Magloire [0]; M. McBride [1]; J. Montejo [0.25]; R. Musto [2]; H. Reichel [0.5]; W. Rong [1]; M. Valadez [0]; A. Viswanathan [0];
- *Not Present at Roll Call:* H. MacDiarmid (Unexcused) [4]; E. Reppy (Unexcused); J. Selig (Excused) [3]; Y. Wang (Unexcused) [2];

II. Moment of Silence in Remembrance of Angel Hierro '17

III. Discussion with Provost Kotlikoff

- Provost Kotlikoff presented on Cornell's financial aid strategy. He stated that it was unfortunate a draft of the Financial Aid Working Group's plan was leaked to the Cornell Dailey Sun. He clarified that at this point the plan had changed, but lacked the specific recommendations. The Financial Aid Working group was continuing to investigate ways financial aid could be altered and what could be done in financial downturns. Provost Kotlikoff summarized that in the past Cornell gave less aid than peer institutes, but this changed under President Skorton, and today Cornell spends more of its operating budget on aid than any other school in the Ivy League. For students with the lowest income the cost of Cornell had decreased, while for the highest income students still receiving financial aid, the cost had gone up over time. Additionally, during financial downturns Cornell could consider increasing the number of international students accepted, which now stood at around nine percent of the student body.
 - Rep. Iglesias was glad that transfer students were no longer being considered based on their finances, but was still concerned about international student acceptance.
 - Provost Kotlikoff clarified that Cornell would not be decreasing the amount of aid towards international students, but that an option the Working Group was considering was using a need-aware policy to increase the number of international students during economic downturns.
 - Rep. Valadez suggested that the group look at equity, and remember that students with the lowest incomes would need greater support and resources, especially if they were first generation college students.
 - Provost Kotlikoff stated that these concerns were being considered by the Working Group. He also said the unfortunate reality was that there was not enough aid for all international students. This meant Cornell could not be need-blind for international applicants, and therefore the question rested on how to best distribute the aid to all international students.
 - Rep. Issur asked why the Working Group's report believed the media would see certain

- o policies as more or less receptive.
- o Provost Kotlikoff stated that he did not write the draft, but apologized for the remark. He stated he would come back to talk about specific recommendations when they were made, which could be as early as March 17th.

IV. Slope Day Programming Board

- The Programming Board stated that the previous Slope Day was the highest rated Slope Day based on responses. Last year's Slope Day also had the lowest medical incidents in five years. The Board stated that their budget of \$250,000 would not cover this year's breakfast, and that they were requesting additional funding. In choosing the artists the Board took into consideration offensive lyrics, safety and risk, and artist availability. The artists selected were Misterwives, Big Gigantic, Brasstracks, and S'natra.

V. Approval of the Meeting Minutes

- The minutes of the March 2nd meeting were approved by unanimous consent.
- By unanimous consent Referendum 35 and 32 were moved to the top of the agenda.

VI. New Business

- Referendum 35: "Should American Sign Language satisfy the foreign language requirement at Cornell?"
 - o The sponsor stated that currently ASL did not satisfy Cornell's foreign language requirement. The sponsor stated the College of A&S was proposing to give credit to ASL classes, however administrators wanted to understand the number of students interested in the idea. This referendum would help the College discern the amount of support.
 - o Rep. Cox asked how the sponsors planned to respond to concerns that ASL was not as culturally diverse as other offered languages.
 - o The sponsor stated that ASL had its own culture and represented a diverse group, even if it was based in America.
 - o Rep. Wang asked if classes would be offered in ASL.
 - o The sponsor stated that this referendum was asking specifically for transfer credit to students who took ASL before college, but they were also working to create classes.
 - o There was a motion to **Call the Question** by roll-call vote.
 - o By a vote of 23-0-1 Referendum 35 was **approved**.
- J. Berger, Yes; T. Celestin, Yes; N. Covanec, Yes; D. Cox, Yes; V. Devatha, Yes; E. Dzodzomenyo, Yes; R. Herz, Absent; A. Iglesias, Abstain; M. Indimine, Yes; A. Issur, Yes; N. Jaisinghani, Yes; J. Kim, Yes; C. Lee, Yes; D. Li, Yes; L. Lipschutz, Yes; D. Liu, Yes; H. MacDiarmid, Absent; T. Magloire, Yes; M. McBride, Yes; J. Montejo, Yes; R. Musto, Absent; H. Reichel, Yes; E. Reppy, Absent; W. Rong, Yes; J. Selig, Yes; M. Valadez, Yes; A. Viswanathan, Yes; R. Wang, Yes.
- Referendum 32: "Should median course grades be included on student transcripts?"
 - o The sponsor, EVP Indimine, stated that this referendum was an opportunity to find out how the undergraduate student body felt about the idea of removing median grades.
 - o Rep. Wang stated that including median grades in transcripts provided students the opportunity to take harder classes without a disadvantage.
 - o Ex-Officio Kaufman believed a referendum should not be created until it could promise students the removal of median grades from their transcripts.
 - o EVP Indimine believed there was no way to guarantee the removal of median grades, and that if the referendum showed a majority of students favoring the removal of median

- grades it could leverage administrative changes.
- Rep. Valadez believed that median grades were harmful to student's mental health.
- A community member believed that it would be good to hear from students at large.
- Rep. Devatha believed that referendums should not be used as a polling system.
- Rep. Viswanathan believed that students voting for the referendum would not vote with an informed opinion, and that the representatives were elected to voice others' opinions.
- Rep. Selig requested that if the referendum passed, the votes be separated by college.
- There was a motion to Call the Question by roll-call vote.
- By a vote of 9-14-1, with two community votes opposed, Referendum 35 **failed**.
- J. Berger, Abstain; T. Celestin, Yes; N. Covanec, Absent; D. Cox, Yes; V. Devatha, No; E. Dzodzomenyo, No; R. Herz, Absent; A. Iglesias, No; M. Indimine, Yes; A. Issur, Abstain; N. Jaishingani, Yes; J. Kim, No; C. Lee, No; D. Li, No; L. Lipschutz, No; D. Liu, Yes; H. MacDiarmid, Absent; T. Magloire, No; M. McBride, Yes; J. Montejo, Yes; R. Musto, Absent; H. Reichel, No; E. Reppy, Absent; W. Rong, Yes; J. Selig, No; M. Valadez, Yes; A. Viswanathan, No; R. Wang, No.

J. Berger adjourned the meeting at 6:30pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter F. Biedenweg

Assembly Clerk, Office of the Assemblies