



Cornell University University Assembly

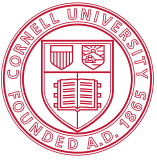
Cornell University Assembly

Minutes of the February 16, 2021 Meeting

4:30 PM – 6:02 PM

Zoom Meeting

- I. Call to Order
 - a. L. Kenney called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.
 - b. *Members Present:* V. Aymer, U. Chukwukere, H. Depew, C. Duell, D. Dunham, J. Feit, B. Fortenberry, T. Fox, D. Hiner, A. Hong, R. Howarth, L. Kenney, C. Levine, J. Pea, B. Sherr, L. Smith, C. Van Loan, P. Villablanca Thompson, J. Withers
 - c. *Members Absent:* C. Huang
 - d. *Also Present:*
- II. Call for Late Additions to the Agenda
 - a. L. Kenney read the land acknowledgment for introducing public events.
 - b. No late additions were called.
- III. Business of the Day
 - a. Approval of the Meeting Minutes (Dec. 8, 2020)
 - i. C. Duell motioned to approve the minutes
 1. D. Hiner seconded the motion.
 2. The motion **passed** without opposition.
 - b. Schedule Approval
 - i. J. Withers motioned to approve the schedule.
 1. B. Fortenberry seconded the motion.
 2. The motion **passed** without opposition.
 - c. Resolution 7: In Support of an Independent Review of Cornell Admissions Practices
 - i. Sponsors are B. Sherr and J. Feit.
 - ii. J. Feit motioned to move Resolution 7 to at the end of the business of the day, succeeding Resolution 9.
 1. B. Fortenberry seconded the motion.
 2. The motion **passed** without opposition.
 - d. Resolution 8: Expressing Gratitude from the UA to Each Individual that Helped in the New Student Code of Conduct Process.
 - i. L. Kenney gives U. Chukwukere chair-ship to present Resolution 8.
 - ii. L. Kenney stated that they took out opinions on the Code itself and instead focused on thanking those who helped craft the new Student Code of Conduct.
 - iii. R. Howarth motioned to vote on Resolution 8
 1. J. Feit seconded the motion.



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2. The motion passed with 15-0-1.
- e. Resolution 9: Resolution to re-name “Goldwin Smith Hall” to foster an increasingly inclusive campus environment.
 - i. Sponsors B. Sherr and J. Feit
 - ii. J. Feit stated that they have created this resolution to foster a more inclusive environment on campus. They quoted the Vice President of University Relations on a statement that Goldwin put forth essays that are misogynistic, anti-Semitic, and racist. J. Feit supported this claim with quotes. They asked how Cornell would
 - iii. R. Howarth suggested that they could name it after Ruth Bader Ginsburg.
 - iv. B. Sherr stated that they do like R. Howarth’s idea of re-naming the building after Ruth Bader Ginsburg, but wants to acknowledge the indigenous community may not support the naming due to past rulings regarding the indigenous community. B. Sherr also recommended Mae Jemison, the first African American woman to travel into space.
 - v. B. Fortenberry applauded B. Sherr and J. Feit for putting forward this motion. He spoke to Klarman Hall and Mr. Klarman’s acknowledgment of his Jewish faith and concern of being attached to the building of an anti-Semite.
 - vi. J. Feit stated that although there are cultural changes, it should not hold them back from recognizing justice and changing accordingly.
 - vii. D. Dunham asked if this resolution referred to official communication or also called for the removal of plaques and physical references.
 - viii. J. Feit stated that it was left intentionally broad to hear other’s opinions but personally does not believe that these plaques and quotes should stand unchallenged.
 - ix. J. Withers stated that she approved of this resolution and asked if they have considered recommending a comprehensive review of named spaces.
 - x. J. Feit stated that Ruth Bader Ginsburg should be recognized properly through an academic building due to the prominence of her place in history.
 - xi. L. Kenney supported this idea and the idea of an ad-hoc committee that investigates the naming of buildings.
 - xii. T. Fox stated that in the naming of buildings, the primary concern of the University is donations. They caution the sponsors to consider the ramifications of opening the naming as in the past it has become less of an homage to historically important people and more of a fundraising opportunity.



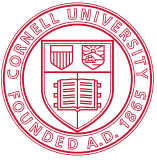
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- xiii. B. Sherr stated the UA might provide the weight needed to bring this to the attention of the Board of Trustees. He agrees that they should exclude those who donate simply for the contention of naming the building.
 - xiv. R. Howarth agreed with the creation of an ad-hoc committee and believed that they should push faster for the naming of the building so the University does not use the absence of a name as a fundraising opportunity. They believe that they should specifically rename Goldwin Smith hall after Ruth Bader Ginsburg to avoid this.
 - xv. B. Sherr agreed but brought up the point of unrest from those of the indigenous community in light of RBG's ruling on Native American Land Rights.
 - xvi. V. Aymer stated that they should take into account the student body and instead propose five names for the student body to vote on.
 - xvii. L. Kenney stated that she agreed with V. Aymer and reiterated that the broader community, such as the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S), should vote on the presented names.
 - xviii. J. Feit agreed that the broader community should weigh in on the matter.
 - xix. B. Fortenberry stated that they should explicitly address this monetary issue and create an ad-hoc committee with A&S students to come forward with concrete names.
 - xx. C. Van Loan cautioned against completely cutting off the monetary angle as it could beget an extremely positive impact on our community in the form of scholarships, for example.
 - xxi. B. Fortenberry made a motion to refer this resolution to the Campus Welfare Committee for deliberation and then return to the UA assembly for a vote.
 - 1. J. Feit seconded the motion.
 - 2. The motion **passed** with 16-0-1.
- f. Resolution 7: In Support of an Independent Review of Cornell Admissions Practices
- i. Sponsored by B. Sherr
 - ii. B. Sherr stated the resolution proposes a committee to investigate the lack of socioeconomic diversity within admissions.
 - iii. B. Fortenberry asked if the resolution investigates what process and procedures happen now.
 - iv. B. Sherr stated that the resolution calls for undergraduates to perform an audit of information of the process to be made public.
 - v. L. Kenney asked on behalf of R. Platt if the Office of Institutional Studies (OIS) is conducting these types of analyses.



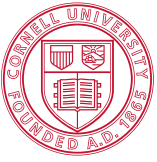
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- vi. B. Sherr stated that they would go back and check.
 - vii. R. Platt stated that currently he doesn't know if they are hosting these studies currently, but they have occurred in the past.
 - viii. C. Levine stated that it is a good idea to have students engaged in this wholistic process, however, there is the danger of public scrutiny and lawsuits that might threaten racial diversity. They instead recommend that the body ask admissions from each college to bring forward reports.
 - ix. B. Sherr stated that it becomes a balancing act between responsibility and lawsuits. The purpose of this is to identify where admissions teams are struggling.
 - x. G. Giambattista said that the UA has the authority to ask the administration to provide information.
 - xi. C. Van Loan stated that there are existing meetings between faculty and admissions. They said that the faculty are worried about the administration's process.
 - xii. J. Feit agrees with the sentiment in the resolution, however, he said that publishing these numbers may discourage those from diverse/lower-income students from applying. They said that they should put the focus on more attainable student-life and create a level field for applicants no matter their socio-economic status.
 - xiii. B. Sherr stated that the resolution aims to look at policy and recommend solutions rather than reporting the state of Cornell admissions.
 - xiv. B. Fortenberry motioned to table the resolution until the next meeting
 1. L. Smith seconded the motion.
 2. The motion passed and **tabled** the resolution with 13-0-3.
- IV. Resolution 11: Appointment of University Hearing Board and University Review Board Members for the Academic Year 2020-2021
- a. R. Howarth called for a better process to bring candidates to the UA in a timely way.
 - b. L. Kenney agreed that the process has been flawed and needs to be revisited, hence why these positions only hold for the Spring term.
 - c. B. Fortenberry supports the resolution.
 - d. R. Howarth moved to add B. Fortenberry as a sponsor to Resolution 11
 - i. B. Sherr seconded the motion.
 - ii. B. Howarth stated that the major role left for the UA is this appointment as a check against Day Hall.
 - iii. The motion **passed** without any opposition
 - e. D. Dunham motioned to vote on Resolution 10.
 - i. R. Howarth seconded the motion.



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- ii. The motion passed with 15-0-2.
- V. Resolution 12: Requiring All On-Campus Flags to be Flown at Half-Staff in Honor of Those Lost to COVID-19
 - a. J. Feit stated that out of respect for state regulations, according to the governor, to adopt a half-mast status in honor of those who have been lost. This would include not only the U.S. flag but also the Cornell flag.
 - b. B. Sherr motioned to vote on Resolution 12.
 - i. V. Aymer seconded the motion.
 - ii. The motion passed unanimously.
- VI. Committee Updates
 - a. Campus Infrastructure Committee
 - i. J. Feit stated that their first meeting will be next week, and they will hold meetings in the opposite weeks from the UA.
 - b. Campus Welfare Committee
 - i. B. Sherr stated that they moved forward with Friday at 4:30 for their meeting time and will be discussing the renaming of Goldwin Smith Hall.
 - c. Codes and Judicial Committee
 - i. B. Fortenberry stated that the first meeting would be on Friday.
 - d. Executive Meeting
 - i. P. Thompson said that the committee met last week and will meet every Tuesday before the U.A. meeting. They discussed the Spring Schedule that was voted on this meeting, resolutions, campus police, and guest invitations.
 - e. L. Kenney reported that they have a vacancy for a UA spot on the CJC. They thanked everyone chairing and on committees.
 - f. Student Assembly
 - i. L. Smith reported that they approved creating an ad-hoc group on bias and discrimination housed in the Office of the Student Advocate, allocated some funds to create a diversity and inclusion scholarship fund, passed a resolution recommending and urging the inclusion of pronouns and phonetic name pronunciations in class and class rosters, passed a resolution encouraging diversity and professional organizations, and passed a resolution that asked the final exam policy to be extended to a 30-hour window rather than a 24.
 - g. GPSA
 - i. D. Dunham stated that they are trying to fulfill vacancies and passed a resolution that amended the charter to give committee persons voting rights. They also passed a resolution that criticized I-TAP. They also talked about allocating funds from the Student Activities Fund back to either the Student Access Fund or some other way to benefit students as a result of the



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pandemic. They state that there has also been discussion on urging for a time-to-degree extension for doctoral students as a result of delayed research and financial burdens due to the pandemic.

- h. Employee Assembly
 - i. H. Depew stated that they just came back from their retreat from talking about topics in the staff priority polls. They addressed issues such as staff burn-out, campus climate, how to maintain the momentum in regard to efforts made with diversity, equity, and inclusion, job security, alleviating stress from overworked departments through lifting hiring freezes, and improving staff morale through acknowledging contributions. Each of the committees has created plans and moving forward they will be networking with different groups on campus, developing conduits for discussions. They will also have a staff forum on community building and a look-back into this year of COVID with senior leadership. They will also be talking about the budget.
 - i. Faculty Senate
 - i. C. Van Loan reported that they've been meeting every two weeks. There is a resolution that concerns removing racial characterizations from crime alerts. They have also revised the University's statement on free speech and academic freedom that has passed in the Faculty Senate and will be presented to the Board of Trustees. Next week, there is a presentation from an ad-hoc committee regarding protocol when a faculty member is the target of threatening communication via email or social media. The Faculty Senate will be looking to understand online communications such as petitions and podcasts. They are also reviewing the Research Misconduct policy and the 10-year review process.
 - j. L. Kenney made a note that she will be able to speak in front of the March meeting for the Board of Trustees and will be discussing what to bring forward with the UA later.
- VII. B. Fortenberry motioned to adjourn.
 - a. P. Thompson seconded the motion
 - b. The motion passed with unanimous consent.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:03 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kassandra Jordan
Clerk of the Assembly



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APPENDIX A Chat Transcription

00:20:46UA - Pilar Villablanca Thompson: I vote yes

00:20:50UA - Caroline Levine: yes

00:21:10UA - David Hiner (he/him): yes

00:24:25UA - Brandon Fortenberry (He/Him): I can't access resolution 9 either

00:24:37UA - Jacob Feit: <https://cornell.app.box.com/file/776973558616>

00:29:05UA - Bob Howarth: Amazing statements by Smith..... time to own up to this, and rename the building. Are we suggesting a particular name? How about something that honors women? Ginsberg Hall? Or something that recognizes the original people who lived on this land?

00:29:35Robert Platt: To quote Corey Earle, "He was the Ann Coulter of his time."

00:30:00UA - Caroline Levine: Jessie Fauset was an early African American graduate of Cornell who went on to be a major literary figure in the Harlem Renaissance. Fauset Hall please!

00:31:17Robert Platt: Clifton Beckwith Brown the first Cornellian to die in any war.

00:38:11UA Jessica Withers: My landlord is plowing and I need to move my car. Back in a few minutes My apologies.

00:39:15Robert Platt: They are willing to name the entire Arts College if you donate enough money.

00:45:42UA - Bob Howarth: I agree with Valerie's proposal.

00:50:22UA - Thomas Fox: Charlie is right about the possibility that something good could come from fundraising: e.g. someone donating to put Ginsberg's name on it. Or providing something additional. I'm not sure how to put 'don't be crass' into the resolution!

00:55:54Robert Platt: Is not the Office of Institutional Studies doing this type of analysis?

00:56:57Uche Chukwukere: My apologies for the technical difficulties!

00:57:20UA Chair - Logan Kenney (she, her): Welcome back, Uche!

01:01:34Gina Giambattista: "To the extent practical and appropriate, University officials will provide pertinent information as the Assembly requests".

01:01:42Gina Giambattista:
https://assembly.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/university_assembly.charter_as_of_2017.reformatted_2019.pdf

01:01:44Gina Giambattista: Line 60

01:26:51UA - Bennett Sherr (He/Him/His): I have to head out a little early today but thank you all and looking forward to the next meeting!