



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly

Minutes of the November 17, 2021 Meeting 12:15-1:30 PM
Zoom

I. Call to Order

- a. Chair J. Withers called the meeting to order at 12:15pm.

II. Roll Call

Members Present [23]: D. Barrett, M. Benda, J. Cannella, J. Chandler, S. Coil, J. Creque, H. Depew, J. Duong, A. Durant, B. Fortenberry, B. Goodell, A. Haenlin-Mott, D. Howell, K. LoParco, K. Mahoney, E. Miller, S. Resue, A. Schafft, K. Supron, K. Tannenbaum, J. Townley, J. Withers, L. Zacharias

Members Absent [6]: M. Brooks, M. Cherry, B. Fisher, A. Mittman, M. Podolec, J. Stewart

III. Land Acknowledgement of the Gayogoho:nq (Cayuga Nation)

- a. J. Withers stated the Land Acknowledgement.

IV. Approval of the November 3, 2021 Minutes

- a. Motion to approve November 3, 2021 minutes was **approved** unanimously with a note to make an attendance correction.

V. Business of the Day

- a. Open Discussion
 1. J. Withers introduced the possibility of returning to a hybrid format for Employee Assembly meetings in the Spring and asked for thoughts.
 2. S. Resue was nominated for appointment as the Employee Assembly representative for the University Assembly's Campus Committee on Infrastructure, Technology, and the Environment. M. Benda seconded the nomination. The nomination was **approved** unanimously.
 3. D. Howell noted that the Campus Welfare Committee needs an EA representative and an employee representative.
 4. M. LoParco stated that while she has been appointed to a campus committee, she has not received any information since, to which J. Withers stated that she would communicate for more follow up.
 5. E. Miller thanked those who attended the President's Address to Staff. E. Miller stated that there were over 50 in-person attendees and over 1200 online attendees, and that the EA Appreciation Award was presented to the Covid Testing Laboratory.
- b. President Pollack Remarks
 1. M. Pollack thanked the EA Committees for all their work and noted that as

she just recently spoke, there are not too many updates to bring forth.

2. M. Pollack stated that the Public Safety Advisory Committee was created to address concerns and sentiments on public safety, and that lots of feedback recommended that a new alternative safety response unit would be developed in the next 2 year to respond to less dangerous situations while still maintaining CUPD on campus for dangerous moments. M. Pollack noted that other safety recommendations to be acted upon include the diversification of CUPD and greater communication on proper procedure and use of these safety resources. M. Pollack stated that the local CUPD mix of diversity is similar to the current Ithaca population and other college police squads nationwide.
3. M. Pollack stated that, in reference to the threat of an armed individual on campus that occurred in previous weeks, communication of quickly evolving information while maintaining safety is vastly important. M. Pollack stated that, while the community would like to know information as quickly as possible, details may not be accurate without more time. Especially with the use of social media, false details and rumors on instances such as this may spread easily.
4. M. Pollack stated that the community has learned a lot in reaction to the pandemic, citing the test optional admissions policy that is being extended to see where this may effect diversity and other points of data. M. Pollack noted that faculty has introduced more online educational resources and implemented new policies and strategies that have resulted in better educational experiences.

c. President Pollack Q&A

1. A previously submitted question asked President Pollack to speak to ongoing efforts to support improvement of accessibility for those with disabilities, both disclosed and non-disclosed. M. Pollack stated that Cornell will continue to offer different options for resources and other facets of work life such as meetings through virtual and hybrid options.
2. A previously submitted question asked what work stipends and allowances for remote workers would look like. M. Opperman stated that there is an option for those fully remote to receive a one time \$500 stipend for their workspaces at home, but that if an office was available for a worker on campus, that would be considered their office.
3. A previously submitted question asked for thoughts on how Workforce and HR are currently managing hiring and onboarding in a hybrid and virtual work environment. M. Opperman stated that Cornell UnBoxed is a version of onboarding that is virtual in nature and is continually being developed, and that an online I-9 verification is currently being tested for a release in January.
4. A previously submitted question asked for discussion on HR efforts to understand current issues, and questioned whether Cornell's attitudes on flexible work would likely be changing. M. Opperman stated that a survey on remote work has been released and noted that many enjoy doing their work fully virtually, but that some roles also are done much better in the

workplace. In particular, certain roles, particularly those facing students, are accomplished much better when working in office and on campus, but the different attitudes and opinions on these issues make conclusions currently very difficult.

5. A previously submitted question asked what the University's plan for retention is when considering the now enlarged job market due to virtual positions. M. Pollack stated that there are many of those who want to live in Ithaca and rural areas in general, and that while Cornell has previously struggled with finding dual roles for couples where only one can find a job in Ithaca, the greater availability of remote work will allow Cornell to bring in more talent without this issue. M. Opperman agreed, noting the presence of both those who enjoy virtual work and those who enjoy work in a residential way.
6. A previously submitted question asked if President Pollack had any thoughts on how to support the campus community as the semester and year ends. M. Pollack stated that the pandemic has been very difficult, but that she has attempted to be as transparent as possible with the budget and returning money back to staff when able. M. Pollack stated that people are ultimately people are very tired and asked that supervisors may treat staff with kindness and understanding.
7. J. Duong stated that often many good recommendations are passed down to the units, but that often it is difficult to see what the units are doing and enacting with these recommendations. J. Duong questioned if it would be possible to gauge a sense of how much these units are following these policies as they are handed down. M. Pollack stated that the University has been working to do a functional review on the units to gauge if there is appropriate alignment between what happens in the center and what happens in the units, but also that as a large school, the different units have a large amount of autonomy to operate at their best capacity.
8. K. Tannenbaum questioned what efforts and changes for improvements to inclement weather responses could look like. M. Opperman stated that sometimes decisions on weather are prolonged because it is an issue that is so divisive and contested, but that a deadline has been agreed upon where a decision will be reached by a certain time with the best and available information.
9. J. Creque stated that internet speed at home is difficult as high-speed services can be very expensive and questioned the possibility of the University working to make these services more accessible. J. Creque stated that she'd like to find a way for staff members to advocate for themselves and be knowledgeable on their resources and points of contact. M. Pollack stated that a new infrastructure bill should hopefully help implement more high speed internet and agreed with J. Creque's statements on the necessity of internet services. M. Opperman stated that while there are many resources available for individuals, if there were a way to work with the EA and make these tools more visible it would be great to work on this.

VI. Committee Reports and Updates

- a. Executive Committee - A. Haenlin-Mott
 - 1. A. Haenlin-Mott stated that the Executive Committee focuses on giving direction to the Employee Assembly and engaging employees. A. Haenlin-Mott thanked Mary Opperman for her work with the Executive Committee
- b. Communications, Outreach and Recognition Committee - E. Miller
 - 1. E. Miller stated that this term, there are subcommittees for outreach, communication, and recognition. For outreach and communications, E. Miller stated that the subcommittee has been working on the monthly EA Voice newsletter which communicates important information to staff and noted that the EA pamphlet was redesigned for greater promotion to the staff community. For recognition, E. Miller stated that the subcommittee is working on a new Award for Staff Integrity and Inclusion to replace the Opperman Award, and that in the Spring the George Peter Award will be launched as well.
- c. Benefits and Policy Committee - B. Goodell
 - 1. B. Goodell stated that the Committee has focused on navigating resources and communications in policy services, working on things such as the cut off date, pet policy, endowed health benefit plan, and questions on benefits for childcare, as well as staff retention. B. Goodell noted that they have planned 6 guest speakers to come to their committee meetings to help clarify concerns.
 - 2. M. Pollack asked what B. Goodell thought the biggest issue behind low staff retention was. B. Goodell stated that he believed it was the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that some people would like to still work virtually and that some people's political and personal beliefs don't align with Cornell policy on the pandemic.
- d. Employee Welfare Committee - K. Mahoney
 - 1. K. Mahoney stated that this past year, the Committee has continued its partnership with Worklife, Michelle Artibee, Cornell Wellness, and more. K. Mahoney stated that the Committee has focused and advanced on support and inclusion for remote staff, mental health for employees such as the Restorative Circles, belonging for staff with disabilities, transportation issues around hybrid permits, enhanced opportunities for the onboarding process, emergency preparedness, and support for the care fund.
- e. Education Committee - M. Benda
 - 1. M. Benda stated that the Committee has focused on growth of the CLASP program and monitoring EDP courses to help improve enrollment numbers. M. Benda noted that a new focus to look towards would be to find ways to help non-native English speakers also utilize education resources.
 - 2. M. Pollack stated that the Staff Graduation was very impressive and moving, to which M. Benda agreed.
- f. Elections Committee - J. Duong
 - 1. J. Duong stated that there was a special election hosted this Fall that introduced 5 new members to the assembly and expressed excitement for a robust election in the spring.

VII. Liaison Reports

- a. Campus Planning Committee - A. Haenlin-Mott

1. A. Haenlin-Mott stated that two major projects were discussed- the ILR Courtyard Landscape Design and the Plant Science Building Renewal. A. Haenlin-Mott noted that the ILR Courtyard is being named in memory of the recently deceased Thomas Golden, the associate director of the Yang-Tan Institute.
- b. University Assembly - B. Fortenberry
 1. B. Fortenberry stated that President Pollack came to the previous UA meeting and remarked on the upcoming Do the Greatest Good campaign, particularly highlighting student affordability and the hope to increase the amount of students on financial aid.

VIII. Adjournment

- a. B. Goodell motioned to adjourn. L. Zacharias seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 1:20pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Office of the Assemblies