



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly
Minutes of the March 14, 2018 Meeting
12:15-1:30 PM
401 Physical Sciences Bldg.

I. Call to Order

- a. J. Kruser called the meeting to order at 12:19pm.
- b. *Members Present:* I. Allen, C. Dawson, H. Depew, K. Fitch, A. Haenlin-Mott, D. Harris, A. Hourigan, A. Howell, L. Johnson-Kelly, J. Kruser, M. Mosereiff, B. Nicholson, B. Roebal, C. Sanzone, K. Sheils, P. Thompson, S. Willcox
- c. *Members Absent:* P. Andersen, B. Ayanfodun, M. Carcella, T. Grove, K. Mahoney, H. Sheldon, S. Vaccaro, C. Wiggers

II. Call for Late Additions to the Agenda

- a. No late additions.

III. Approval of Minutes

- a. Motion to approve the minutes of February 28, 2018 meeting – **approved** with no dissent.

IV. Business of the Day

- a. Staff Holidays in Spring Semester (C. Sanzone)
 - i. C. Sanzone was concerned about semester breaks for staff in the spring semester. The university revised the academic calendar with emphasis on student mental health, but not so much for staff. She acknowledged staff earn vacation days, but it is hard to take them knowing there are projects going on. The situation is also exacerbated graduation falling on a holiday. She wonders if there is a chance through committees or otherwise to open a conversation with the administration.
 - ii. I. Allen said she was on the recent academic calendar committee. Part of the space in the breaks was made because of a big gap between February and Spring Break, and another after Spring Break to commencement. The impact was not just looked at in terms of students, but staff and faculty as well.
 - iii. P. Hampton said this was previously discussed between VP Mary Opperman and HR representatives. They considered taking out a personal day and implementing a day off for everyone. However, people previously voiced they would rather have their own discretion on when to take a day off.
 - iv. J. Kruser said that they should work on allowing staff to not come to work when sick.
 - v. C. Sanzone said she is not advocating for taking personal days away but for the university to recognize that staff could use a break.
 - vi. K. Fitch said he has been here for 27 years. Before, staff had 3-5 personal days a year and could take them with no questions asked. Now it is merged into healthcare and there is only a list of things staff can take time off for. In his department, those requesting the day off have to include a reason. He advocates dropping this list and allowing for more flexibility, which would be easier than asking for a paid holiday.

1. B. Roebal said staff used to receive 3 personal days and 9 sick days, as opposed to the 12 days they have now with no requirement of disclosing what it is for.
 2. K. Fitch said he will bring in the definition listed in the employee manual.
- vii. P. Thompson made a motion to close the discussion and pass it to the Personnel Policy Committee – passed with no dissent
- b. Teladoc Benefit Offered by Aetna (C. Sanzone)
- i. C. Sanzone had a constituent ask if the EA was involved with health benefits, specifically telehealth benefits. Her constituent found that Aetna offers a phone-a-doc service but was told she did not have this benefit on her plan.
 - ii. J. Kruser recommended reaching out to Senior Director of Benefit Services and Administration Gordon Barger to see what the current policy is.
 - iii. C. Sanzone explained patients can utilize the 24/7 phone-a-doc service for prescriptions and avoid physically going to the doctor's office. She wonders if there is a chance they do have this benefit, but do not know how to access it. If they do not have the benefit, she wondered if it is one the university will consider adding. Many complained in the transportation study it was hard to get back on campus after leaving mid-day or arriving late and will instead take the whole day off. If they had access to a service like this, it may help with efficiency and the parking issue.
 - iv. J. Kruser said it might be worth having someone come in to talk about benefits.
 - v. C. Sanzone said she would contact G. Barger and report back.
- c. Discussion: Board of Trustees Meeting Topics for March 21st
- i. C. Dawson said they have been expected to do more with less after the downturn. He wanted to ask what the long-term plans to reflect the upturn in the economy were. There should be an accompanying reaction to the recent upturn.
 - ii. L. Johnson-Kelly suggested talking about the resolutions they have been working on, such as the transportation task force, items on committee agendas, and the issue of staff retention on some parts of campus.
 - iii. K. Sheils said she and S. Willcox went to a presentation about Cornell's financials and Cornell is not in the wonderful financial shape people think it is.
 1. B. Roebal said the financial upturn has not been felt in the endowment payoff last year and this year. He questions when they will catch up to where they were two years ago. He is retiring in two years and would like to make a projection for his department.
 2. K. Sheils says employees are taking more work and in order to get the raise the university says is available, the unit has to find a way to cut their budget.
 - iv. P. Hampton said President Martha Pollack and VP Opperman will be at the next EA meeting and requested to be forwarded topics so they can come responsive.
 - v. C. Sanzone said she can provide a list of questions that did not get answered from the President's address to staff by VP Opperman.
 - vi. A. Haenlin-Mott asked if there were any committees or sub-committees focused on diversity and inclusion.
 1. J. Kruser said the Welfare Committee has historically handled those issues.
 2. L. Johnson-Kelly said there is no single person in charge of drafting resolutions, and anyone can propose ideas.
 3. P. Thompson says she will be happy to push forward support for a particular unit. They can also propose forming a diversity committee.

- vii. K. Fitch suggested asking about a smoke-free campus.
 - 1. B. Roebal said he is on the UA Welfare Committee and there is an email going out on March 27 with a question that he has not seen yet. The email will also have links to op-eds from The Cornell Daily Sun. He gave an overview of the schedule.
 - a. Townhall Forums with Cornell Health will be on April 2 and April 9.
 - b. The promotional period will be from April 9-16.
 - c. Voting will be from April 17-19.
 - d. The final vote will show the popular vote and the breakdown for each constituency group (undergraduate, graduate/professional, employee, and faculty). They are working to give equal weight to each group.
- d. Committees to Finalize Outstanding Issues
 - i. M. Mosereiff – Employee Education & Development Committee
 - 1. The committee decided not to add or change anything this term to the idea of education and the policy of supervisors having a say if you can take classes. A lot of staff members are not aware of the development and education benefits available, where to find the details, the outcomes, and if it is plausible to do it.
 - 2. The committee wants to eventually work with C. Sanzone and the Communications Committee to have spotlights on staff members who have graduated from the Employee Degree Program (EDP) or are currently in it.
 - 3. C. Sanzone said C. Dawson interviewed a couple participants in the degree program and has a draft article.
 - 4. M. Mosereiff said they talked about a platform where they can either present questions people have about the EDP program or where her committee could answer questions.
 - ii. L. Johnson-Kelly – Employee Welfare Committee
 - 1. The committee met and discussed two resolutions.
 - a. One resolution is A. Howell’s sustainability proposal, which he has revised and sent out for feedback. It will be ready for review at the next EA meeting, but they can also wait until after the meeting with President Pollack.
 - b. The other one is a proposal about non-exempt retirement benefits. It is also being reviewed through the Personnel Policy Committee. They need to involve HR, but the office is not responding to her emails. She has had no response from G. Barger or Associate Vice President of Human Resources Allan Bishop.
 - c. J. Kruser suggested she call them to get a response.
 - d. P. Hampton offered to assist.
 - 2. L. Johnson-Kelly said she was contacted by the Campus Climate Committee asking to meet with her committee. She is happy they reached out and will work out scheduling with them.
 - iii. C. Sanzone – Communications Committee
 - 1. The committee does not have any pending resolutions but did support a teaching resolution. C. Sanzone said she will be happy to support M. Mosereiff with the spotlights mentioned earlier.
 - iv. P. Thompson – Elections Committee

1. Those coming up to the end of their terms received an email from her asking to participate in a recruitment election info session done in collaboration with the Communications Committee. They are not currently working on any resolutions.
- v. J. Kruser – Executive Committee
 1. The committee talked about better ways of updating the constituency on what is going on in committees. C. Wigger’s email after meeting with the administration outlined a conversation about changing the perspective on how resolutions are handled. They can improve on setting expectations and defining roles for committee chairs and speaking with them ahead of time. They will be reaching out to all committee chairs present and future. This is not a short-term goal. He is open to recommendations and discussions on committee processes.
 2. J. Kruser highlighted making sure all parties impacted have been contacted when writing resolutions, which is one of the duties of committee chairs. Most of the resolutions coming through have been pretty good about this, but it was never a formal expectation. They do not need agreement from the parties but they do need to inform the parties that they having a conversation or are coming up with a resolution. He urged working with these constituents to define the problem as well as solutions.
 3. L. Johnson-Kelly said it is important to advocate for staff even if resolutions do not get passed.
 4. P. Thompson reminded they are not here to negotiate for staff.
 5. K. Fitch said resolutions are not the only ways to show engagement. Once put into resolution, their communication stops as they are waiting for a response that can eventually be a denial. Committees may be more productive if they instead kept that line of communication open.

V. Old Business

- a. Ran out of time.

VI. New Business

- a. Ran out of time.

VII. Committee Reports

- a. Ran out of time.

VIII. Adjournment

- a. J. Kruser said he is going to end the meeting as they are out of time, but those who want to stay and discuss are welcome to.
- b. J. Kruser adjourned the meeting at 1:32pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Catherine Tran
Clerk of the Assembly