



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Cornell Employee Assembly

Minutes of the May 5, 2021 Meeting 12:15-1:30 PM
Zoom

I. Call to Order

- a. Chair H. Depew called the meeting to order at 12:15pm.

II. Roll Call

Members Present [22]: J. Cannella, M. Cherry, J. Creque, J. Duong, H. Depew, B. Fortenberry, B. Goodell, A. Haenlin-Mott, D. Howell, R. Lochner, M. LoParco, K. Mahoney, V. McAuley, A. Miller, E. Miller, M. Newhart, N. Siadat, K. Supron, K. Tannenbaum, L. Taylor, J. Withers, L. Zacharias

Members Absent [6]: S. Barry, B. Fisher, E. Ivory, J. Michael, M. Podolec, J. Townley

III. Approval of the minutes from April 7, 2021 and April 21, 2021

- a. Motion to approve April 7, 2021 minutes **approved** unanimously.
- b. Motion to approve April 21, 2021 minutes **approved** unanimously.

IV. Business of the Day

- a. Fall Workplace Principals – M. Opperman
 - i. M. Opperman stated that planning for the Fall semester is fully underway and the expectation for the Fall is that everything will be in-person. M. Opperman acknowledged the desire of many for remote work but also acknowledged the desire for a full student experience and stated that exceptions will be handled on a case-to-case basis.
 - ii. J. Duong questioned if the University would provide guidance to deans and unit leaders, particularly for clarity on staff that don't have a student-facing role.
 1. M. Opperman stated that staff are meeting and going through each function to determine details. M. Opperman also clarified the necessity for the return of staff-support roles and researchers. In particular, she noted that HR and IT would be looking at new workforce strategies and options.
 - iii. A. Haenlin-Mott stated that reactivation was a point of worry for the Disability Colleague Network Group (CNG) and noted that the accommodation process has been much easier to facilitate while working from home, questioning if measures would be made to continue this ease.
 1. M. Opperman stated that beyond medical or religious accommodations, she recognized that many are reluctant to return back to campus and don't feel comfortable yet. M. Opperman stated that they would be highlighting all the health and safety accommodations that would be implemented to relieve worries, and that those with concerns should fill out the flexibility request form.

- iv. B. Fortenberry questioned if there would be a date determined where all staff would be required to be vaccinated.
 - 1. M. Opperman stated that the decision to make vaccination mandatory would need to be bargained with the unions. She noted that while she originally didn't believe that vaccination would need to be mandated because people would willingly receive their vaccine, a decision might need to be made later on due to slightly disappointing staff vaccination numbers.
 - 2. M. Opperman stated that venues would be created to help answer staff questions and explain more of the science.
- v. E. Miller recommended the creation of a guide for employees returning to campus.
 - 1. M. Opperman stated her support for the idea.
- vi. B. Goodell stated that the need for childcare by staff should be addressed.
 - 1. M. Opperman stated that lots of childcare services have been lost, but that attempts are being made to address this shortage.
- vii. H. Depew stated that staff would appreciate a bit more transparency on the decision-making process for Fall planning.
 - 1. M. Opperman stated that after initial plans are made, they will be widely released, hopefully in a week or so.
 - 2. A. Lang agreed with H. Depew and noted that there does seem to be some breaks in communication and confusion in the staff community. A. Lang questioned if there would be some sort of standardization in procedure.
 - 3. M. Opperman stated that those wishing to work partially or fully remotely will work within their college or unit to determine if that's possible, as there isn't one simple model for everyone to follow.
- viii. B. Kunz stated concern over the possibility of having visitors on campus. As someone working in admissions, she noted a lack of discussions about safety or health concerns and questioned if there was more information available.
 - 1. M. Opperman stated that in almost every case, COVID-19 positive cases have come from traveling or gatherings because in these situations, masks often come off. The best guideline for safety is to continue keeping masks on.
 - 2. B. questioned if the campus would be open to visitors, to which M. Opperman stated yes.
- ix. J. Duong questioned if the campus has discussed using the Excelsior pass that the state is promoting.
 - 1. M. Opperman stated that they haven't discussed this yet due to the presence of the Daily Check, though there was discussion about using it for commencement. This decision will be based on if Cornell is allowed to ask if one may show their vaccine status, which is currently unknown.
- x. M. Cherry stated that being off campus has allowed lots of staff, particularly those further from campus, to participate in central programming. M. Cherry questioned if there had been thought on offering operational guidance to push units to offer virtual programming to continue the feeling of connection and allow non-Ithaca based staff to participate more fully.

1. M. Opperman stated that she has heard feedback similar to what M. Cherry stated and noted that webinar-based programming is very effective and could possibly be aligned besides in-person programming to allow for a more equal playing field. M. Opperman also noted the very mixed feelings over Zoom, as some like it while others heavily dislike it and do not want to use the platform anymore.
- xi. H. Depew thanked M. Opperman for all her support to the Employee Assembly for this past semester.
- b. Finance Forum Update – H. Depew
 - i. H. Depew stated that the Finance Forum is tentatively scheduled for June 8th from 11:45 - 1:00pm. They will give a snapshot on 2021 and give projections on the budget. H. Depew noted that this will fall into the purview of the next Employee Assembly.
- c. EA R10: Revision and Renaming of the Opperman Award – E. Miller
 - i. E. Miller stated that the resolution renames the award from the Opperman Award for Staff Advocacy to the Award for Staff Integrity and Inclusion and updates the selection criteria. Eligibility for the award is also revised to include all exempt or non-exempt staff members, while eligibility for nomination has been revised to include any Cornell employee.
 - ii. M. LoParco moved to vote on EA R10, and B. Goodell seconded the motion. The resolution was **approved** 16-0-0.
 - iii. E. Miller thanked K. Ciferri for all her work on the resolution.

V. Committee Reports

- a. Executive Committee – M. LoParco
 - i. M. LoParco stated that the Executive Committee discussed the return to work and the parking situation in particular, the visibility of the EA and the newest election in particular due to Zoom fatigue, summer engagement for the vacant EA seats, the Public Safety at Cornell (PSAC) survey and the information shared from the working groups, and the EA annual liaison update that will probably occur at the next EA meeting on May 19.
- b. Communications and Awards Committee – E. Miller
 - i. E. Miller stated that there has been a focus on staff awards. The George Peter Award received 23 nominations, and a subcommittee will be determining top 3 candidates from this group to than be voted on. Furthermore, some ideas for communications and outreach for the EA will continue to be thought about for the next term.
 - ii. H. Depew questioned who the top 3 candidates are currently or if there were any nominees in particular that E. Miller wanted to highlight.
 1. E. Miller stated that the top 3 candidates haven't been determined yet and are currently being ranked by the rubric. E. Miller stated that the Cornell campus is full of outstanding employees and all the candidates stood out to her.
- c. Education Committee – J. Withers
 - i. J. Withers stated that reports on fact-finding initiatives due to the priorities poll were discussed at the previous Education Committee meeting. Statistics for staff enrollment in the School of Continuing Education were also discussed. J. Withers

stated that enrollment numbers for the Fall and Spring were slightly low, while Summer and Winter enrollment numbers were around normal. Educational benefits at peer institutions were also discussed with accessibility as a focus.

- d. Welfare Committee – K. Mahoney
 - i. K. Mahoney was not present for an update. H. Depew determined that an update could instead be emailed in the interest of time.
- e. Benefits and Policy Committee – B. Goodell
 - i. B. Goodell stated that the Benefits and Policy Committee discussed meeting with Alexis Brubaker for Q and A on University policy, the EA retreat and how to move forward with the priorities poll, the email H. Depew sent on extending and allowing for more days of vacation with M. Opperman, the concern of staff being required to use their vacation days when they didn't want to, discrepancies between units on remote work, and the utilization and policies of HAP. B. Goodell recommended that the presence of someone with more knowledge of employee labor relations at the next Benefits and Policy Committee meeting would make lots of discussion clearer and noted that he has put in calls to pushing this recommendation forward.
- f. Elections Committee – N. Siadat
 - i. E. Miller stated that the Committee has not met and that there aren't new updates.

VI. New Business

- a. H. Depew stated that the EA will go into closed executive session.
- b. B. Goodell expressed thanks and appreciation for the Employee Assembly members.
- c. M. Loparco made a motion to adjourn. B. Goodell seconded the motion. The motion was **approved** unanimously.

VII. Adjournment

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 1:23 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Office of the Assemblies