



Cornell University Employee Assembly

Employee Assembly February 4, 2015 12:15 – 1:30 PM 401 Physical Science Building Minutes

I. Call to Order

G. Mezey called the meeting to order at 12:16 p.m.

Present: J. Ballerstein, B. Cristelli, M. de Roos, C. Ferguson, T. Grove, H. Hall, S. Jenks, E. Lee, G. Mezey, B. Schaffner, BJ Siasoco, M. Stefanski Seymour, P. Thompson

Absent: N. Bell, D. Brooks, L. Croll Howell, B. Esty, A. Mittman, L. Morris, J. Rogan

Also Present: J. DeStefano, G. Giambattista, C. Lender, L. Majani, A. Mathios, A. O'Donnell, M. Opperman, J. Siliciano,

II. Call for Late Additions to the Agenda

C. Ferguson requested to add a brief discussion on the budget to the New Business portion of the day.

III. Approval of the Minutes from January 21, 2015

B. Cristelli moved to approve the minutes and M. Stefanski Seymour second. The minutes from January 21, 2015 were unanimously approved.

IV. Business of the Day

A. VP Mary Opperman

G. Mezey introduced M. Opperman and explained the format would be a open discussion for members of the EA to ask questions. Before beginning questions, G. Mezey informed M. Opperman the EA is working on the possibility of hosting a Staff Address at the end of May. M. Stefanski Seymour offered this would also be a good opportunity to do staff recognition and awards. The floor was then opened for questions.

BJ Siasoco asked what changes were made to the HR strategic priorities compared to the 2013 version. He also asked how the goals in the plan were created and what the priorities behind some of them entailed. M. Opperman explained they tried to focus on setting goals that could actually be fully accomplished instead of attempting to make small strides on an overwhelming number of tasks. The goals in the plans come from both an external scan of the environment as well as examining internal pressures. One of the goals is to integrate diversity into how HR approaches things instead of having diversity as a separate tactic. Another goal is to place more emphasis on top performance instead of just dwelling on negatives.

B. Cristelli said she has heard some staff concerned about layoffs and hiring freezes and asked if this is still a major issue Cornell will be dealing with. M. Opperman explained Cornell is still in a deficit and each of the colleges and units are examining how to make cuts. One strategy is to have each college and unit make staffing plans to see if any job responsibilities could be covered a different way so it could be taken up without having to fill a vacancy. G. Mezey asked if the SIP pool has been finalized. M. Opperman said it was a difficult decision as anything you add to salary/benefits adds to the deficit. She is fairly confident there will be a modest SIP pool.

C. Ferguson asked if there are still conversations about Wellness release time, as President Skorton assured staff he was adamant about examining this issue during the President's Address. M. Opperman answered to her knowledge, the committee has been reevaluating it but she has not received any report yet. G. Mezey asked if M. Opperman believes the financially difficult times will ever go away or if this is now the new normal. M. Opperman said constrained times will probably be around for a while but there is a difference between being in a constrained time and being in a deficit. At the end of this year, Cornell should be out of the deficit but will still be constrained on their spending.

G. Mezey then asked if M. Opperman could briefly report on the transition occurring in with senior leadership. M. Opperman explained some of the leaders leaving had committed to stay through the president's term so their leaves were planned. If the numbers leaving were compared to leadership turnover at other institutions it would be approximately the same. M. Opperman also offered this is a time to allow people internally to grow and develop. N. Doolittle stated when external hires occur there is a lot of energy focused on new ideas, which makes it difficult for continuing staff to do the new work and continuing work. She asked how HR is viewing this and how should staff handle this? M. Opperman offered we must align the work with available staff time and resources and give employees the skills and comfort to be able to request the work that interests them and suggest ways to eliminate less critical work.

B. Vice Provost Search Committee

The members of the committee introduced themselves to the EA and explained their goal for the meeting was to listen to what the employees' concerns are in looking for a new provost. A. Mathios explained the committee has met twice and their first priority in the meetings was to create a statement as to what the provost is and what they would like to see in the new provost. The committee is looking at both internal and external candidates and has hired the same search firm who helped to find the next president. The floor was then open for discussion.

M. De Roos asked how fair along the process? A. Mathios answered the goal is to have a new provost by the fall 2015. BJ Siasoco asked how the key points in the statement were brought up and decided upon. A. Mathios said it was a community approach but there are certain things, such as the NYC Tech Campus, which are special considerations that need to be addressed.

N. Doolittle asked about the timing of the new provost's appointment and whether both the new and the old president would have some selection power. A. Mathios said President Elect Garrett is overseeing the Provost Search Committee but President Skorton will also have some say in the

selection. BJ Siasoco brought up there will potentially be two new, external leads coming to Cornell next year and requested the Provost search statement include the individual should be someone able to navigate and recognize this is 150 year old institution and there is a lot of legacy and tradition—both for students and staff. A. Mathios also assured the deans meet weekly with the provost and have a lot of shared experience which will greatly influence the provost and his/her respect for the work and traditions at Cornell. G. Mezey requested the provost search committee look for someone who identifies as a Cornellian versus as strictly a faculty member as the position has a large impact not only on faculty but staff as well. M. Opperman added it's not just about staff but a true community in which respect is the key issue.

C. Ferguson commended the committee for their inclusion of diversity into the statement and asked how they are advertising and searching for a diverse candidate pool. J. Siciliano explained the search firm works diligently and follows many different leads to find diverse candidates. G. Giambattista requested a continued good working relationship between the Provost and shared governance be a priority included in qualities to consider for the provost. U. Smith agreed and added there were a number of situations in which the students were asked after a decision was already made. He asked the provost be more open to discussions with shared government before making decisions that would affect the community.

G. Mezey thanked the committee for all of their work and coming to the meeting to gather staff thoughts and priorities.

V. Report from the Chair

There was no report from the chair.

VI. Old Business

A. Elections Calendar

G. Mezey reintroduced the resolution to the assembly. The resolution is a charter change which implements two changes to the wording of the Charter. The first change was for the timing of setting the elections so this occurs in the first three meetings of the spring term versus earlier in the fall term. Secondly, the timing of elections was changed so elections occur before the last EA meeting in May.

The floor was then opened for discussion. B. Schaffner asked if there was consideration for the portion of the charter about filling vacancies in the UA by a certain time. G. Mezey explained the UA has not changed their elections calendar yet but once they do there will have to be a second charter change and a resolution to reflect those changes. G. Mezey then called the question. C. Ferguson seconded the motion. The Charter change was approved with a vote of 13-0-0.

VII. New Business

C. Ferguson gave a brief overview of the budget and the remaining balance for this year. He explained that administrative costs are still high but he is working on this issue to see if it can be

reduced. In addition, he and G. Giambattist will be working on requested an increase in the budget for next year. The final budget for next year will be proposed at a later meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

T. Grove moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and the EA meeting of February 4, 2015 was adjourned at 1:27 p.m.