



MINUTES
Graduate & Professional Student Assembly
November 17th, 2014
Bache Auditorium, Malott Hall
5:30 — 7:00 P.M.

I. Welcome and Introductions

R. Walroth called the meeting to order at 5:34pm

1. Introduction of voting members, 1 min.

Voting Members Present: J. Balaes, J. Bergfalk, C. Best, A. Bybee-Finley, A. Gardner, J. Goldberg, W. Nicholson, I. Roberts, K. Schlauraff, I. Small, T. Snider, A. Thomson, R. Walroth, K. Weng Wong, L. Xu, C. Yao

Voting Members Absent: A. Jones

II. Approval of the Minutes

1. November 3rd, 2014, 1 min.

The minutes were approved as printed.

III. Presentations

1. Student Mental Health and Wellness Committee, Rebecca Robbins, 10 min.

R. Robbins introduced herself as a PhD in Communications and she used to serve on the Graduate Assembly. She is now the graduate representative to Student Wellness and Health Committee. The Committee meets once per semester to focus on and discuss on different topics. They had a student panel last weekend that focused on stress at Cornell. Following the panel, she reached out to the GPSA leadership to inquire if members would be interested in the results and was at the meeting to present them.

One of the topics discussed at the panel was the 'Suffering Olympics' where every individual feels they must compete with other individuals in terms of stress, workload, and lack of sleep. For undergraduates, this seems to be an example set by TAs and advisors. A majority of students are unaware of the resources available to them in case of poor health and stress conditions. One of the options is to take a leave of absence and this is a suitable idea for some students. About 140 students take a leave of absence every semester. The floor was then opened to questions.

C. Yao asked if Resolution 3: Need for Systematic, In-Depth, and Longitudinal Data about Mental Health from last fall was discussed at the panel. R. Robbins said it wasn't but she and the organizers of the panel would like to hear more about it.

There was an inquiry about a student's health insurance, funding, and access to funding if they chose to take a leave of absence. J. Allen said in most cases, students have their health insurance once they return unless Gannett is short on funds and students have access to their funding.

2. Ivy+ Summit, Richard Walroth, 10 min.

The Ivy Summit is an annual convention attended by all the Ivies and MIT. They discuss common issues pertaining to graduate students such as housing, mental health, transportation, teaching, and unionization. Housing is especially a concern at Ivies in large cities such as

Columbia. In terms of mental health, R. Walroth said Cornell is doing well since it does not limit students' number of counseling visits per year or force students off campus. MIT recently redid their bus routes to better match student need and saw a drastic increase in utilization. The student government led the effort and Cornell hopes to bring this model back to the Ithaca campus. There's a push at Harvard to reduce the number of students per TA and to restructure the number of hours and pay for TA's. Cornell TA's have a similar concern. Unionization efforts are underway at multiple Ivies.

Another conversation at the Summit was about funding for it being a concern. One of the suggestions was to have each attending school pay a registration fee so the host school does not have to pay a large sum at one point. Cornell administration has volunteered to pay for Ivy Summit.

Other schools have active student government organizations at the individual college or school level with executive boards of more than 10 people. They have varying degrees of access to the administration. Cornell has a very involved student government and administration.

Next year's Ivy Summit will be held at Dartmouth and 6 delegates are invited.

IV. Reports of Officers and Committee Updates, 25 min.

1. Executive Committee (R. Walroth)

There's a field representative at Cornell Tech in NYC who is part of GPSA. The GPSA now has the ability to correspond with him through Google Hangout and have him be a part of the meeting. K. Weng Wong said the executive committee is looking into reduced pay tuition for self-pay students, especially for 6 and 7-year students.

2. Operations (A. Gardner)

The Big Red Barn Advisory Committee has 1 unfilled position, the liaison to Employee Assembly opposition is empty, and the Mental Health and Wellness Committee is looking for more people. A. Gardner said anyone interested in the position should contact her. The GPSA internal committees are also looking for members.

3. Appropriations (I. Small)

The Committee has begun the process of looking at obligations of organizations and procedure to apply for byline funding. They will be reaching out to these organizations to find out how they're using funding.

4. Communications (M. Daniels)

The next Buzz will be out in the next few days. A Graduates of Cornell spotlight will be a new added aspect.

5. Finance Commission (C. Wider)

No updates.

6. Student Advocacy (P. Berry)

No updates.

7. Faculty Awards (D. Citron)

No updates.

8. Diversity and International Students (K. Herleman)

No updates.

9. Programming Board (L. Munguia)

A. Bybee-Finely said the Board is still looking for more committee members. The Interschool mixer will be at the Big Red Barn 7-10pm. The targeted departments are vet, chemistry, and theater.

V. New Business

1. Election of Voting Member at Large, 5 min.

Any field representative can step up to be a voting member. Once a voting member, he/she is eligible to become a chair of a committee or hold a position on the executive board. M. Cairgnano, C. Rosenbaum, and D. Citron were nominated. They all introduced themselves briefly. C. Rosenbaum won and will be the new voting member.

2. Election of Advocacy Committee Chair, 5 min.

M. Carignano and J. Goldberg were voted co-chairs of the Advocacy Committee by unanimous consent.

3. Resolution 4 — Research Assistant and Teaching Assistant Stipend Difference, 10 min.

R. Walroth presented R. 4 that highlights the difference between Research Assistant and Teaching Assistant stipends. TA's received a 2.7% stipend increase this semester while RA's did not receive an increase. Members feel this change in stipend rates could damage academic climate and collaboration. The resolution was drafted to encourage opposition against differences between RA's and TA's.

T. Snider proposed grammatical amendments to the resolution and then spoke in favor of it. He is strongly against a distinction between RA's and TA's. T. Snider proposed an addition of two more whereas clauses to the resolution. These clauses will serve to convey that making important changes to issues such as stipend rates without input from the larger Cornell community weakens shared governance system at Cornell.

J. Bergfalk asked the rationale for increase in TA stipends but not RA stipend. The previous student trustee published an article in the Daily Sun on this issue. A. Thomson asked the history of increase in stipends.

S. Firehammer asked possible results of resolution. R. Walroth said administration would contact and talk to GPSA to have a conversation about this. A. Thomson said shared governance does not belong in the resolution since this is not a pertaining issue. M. Foreman changed the order of the whereas clauses to make the resolution more coherent. The amendment was approved by unanimous consent.

I. Small had an amendment to change "looks forward to working with" to "request the opportunity to work with." Amendment was passed by unanimous consent.

There was talk about splitting the resolution into two, one that addressed stipend difference and another that discusses transparency in shared governance. A motion to move to vote to pass the resolution as it stands was proposed. Resolution passed with a vote of 10-3 with 2 abstentions.

4. Resolution 5 — Creation of an Ad-hoc Sustainability Committee, 10 min.

Resolution 5 moved to next meeting in interest of time.

VI. Open Forum, 3 min.

R. Walroth asked where the members would like to hold meetings next semester. Most members agreed to stay in Malott rather than move back to Warren Hall.

A. Rasweiler announced a pet holiday photo shoot at the VET school next Sunday.

R. Walroth adjourned the meeting at 6:55pm.

**Respectfully submitted,
Aastha Wadhwa**

Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

November 17, 2014