

**Minutes – February 12, 2015**  
**Cornell University Student Assembly**  
**4:45pm – 6:30pm, Willard Straight Hall Memorial Room**

**I. Call to Order/ Roll Call**

S. Balik called the meeting to order at 4:47pm.

Members present: B. Bacharach, S. Balik, Y. Bhandari, B. Brown, M. Chak, L. Goldman, M. Henderson, E. Johnston, G. Kaufman M. LaPointe, E. Liu, L. Liu, M. Masson, J. Selig, B. Sullivan P. Titcomb, L. Wershaw, F. Yang, A. Zhou

Members excused: J. Batista, J. Fridman, M. Stefanko, S. Tayal, D. Vakili

Members unexcused: S. Ali Khan, D. Li

**II. Open Microphone**

To be held after the forum

**III. Announcements and Reports**

**Elections Announcement – K. Aniket**

2/27 is deadline to submit candidacy. New online registration system, but paperwork still needs to be submitted in person at the Office of the Assemblies Voting on 3/15, will try to announce results by Spring break.

**V. New Business**

**R.45: Regarding the Proposed Final Exam Schedule – M. Henderson**

3 different scenarios for the final exam schedule: front-loading large classes, avoiding conflicting exam times, and avoiding exams within a 24 hour period. The resolution supports the 3<sup>rd</sup> scenario.

**Motion to move to Business of the Day, seconded, approved by unanimous consent**

**Call to question on the resolution, seconded, approved by a vote of 20-0-0 (SA vote: 18-0-0. Community vote: 10-0-4 contributes 2-0-0)**

**VI. Forum**

Q. What is the financial breakdown of the fee?

A. \$150 toward expansion of services, \$70 to cover a loan from around 2009-2010, \$130 for staffing. None of the fee is going towards the creation of the expansion

Q. As an educational institution, where does Cornell's responsibility to students health begin and end?

A: The Board of Trustees passed the policy of every student having health insurance and believes there is an obligation to worry about the public and individual health of students

Q. What are the options for low income students that can't afford the fee?

A. Seek additional loan from Gannett as there is no grant aid available.

Q. In what ways are students benefitting from the health fee, short and long term?

A. It reduces out of pocket costs for students that go to Gannett

Q. Why were students left in the dark about the fee? Why was there no mention of the debt payoff in the initial email about the fee?

A. Historically students are not consulted in making funding decisions. Did not mean to obfuscate the debt.

Q. When and how will students find out how successful this is? What about the austerity measure mentioned by President Skorton?

A. This is a broader conversation beyond the health fee, and President Skorton will be sharing more in the near future.

Q. Would the expansion of services extend to longer hours in the evening and on weekends?

A. They are in the midst of that type of analysis.

Q. Will the health fee be the only cost the students will suffer this year?

A. Yes, along with a likely tuition increase. Housing and Dining costs will not be increasing.

Q. Why should the fee apply to students who choose not to go to Gannett and to use off campus health care instead?

A. The fee is not just for individual services, but rather there is an aspect of what the staff at Gannett does to support public health on campus.

Q. Once the debt is paid off, will there be a reduction of the fee cost? What would be the consequences of reducing the fee right away?

A. The consequences would be that they would have to cut back on services, and there would be a fee increase with virtually no benefit. Once the deb is paid off, there will be another analysis.

Q. Some are worried that the expansion of services will only be used by people that seek repeated services, like Physical Therapy and CAPS. Why should other students be paying for this?

A. There is a benefit to having a top quality health provider on a residential campus, and they don't know when the next public health crisis will occur.

Q. At some point students were no longer invited to meetings, and SA members were told not to share any confidential information. Why aren't students included in decisions that affect them?

A. In hindsight, the SA members were put in awkward positions, and it was an administrative problem that they were trying to solve – someone has to decide what to do about the business of Cornell while students are in classes.

Q. How much debt is Gannett in?

A. The total amount borrowed in 2 years plus interest is in excess of 4 million.

Q. What transparency measures will you have going forward?

A. The hope is that conversations will continue to occur between the President and shared governance

Q. Are there other options for students in case their loan request gets denied?

A. At this point there is no other path, and they will have to reevaluate if students do not have another place to turn.

Q. LGBTQ students are more likely to need the services of CAPS, and yet some are asked to wait 2 to 3 weeks and are forced to seek care off campus.

A. Cases are triaged for urgency at CAPS, but there are a number of other services available to target different levels of need (Let's Talk, for example).

Q. One reason given to justify the fee was in comparison to other Ivy League universities. However, those institutions have free bus passes, free gym memberships, and have fee waivers – why is Cornell only similar to its peers when it is politically convenient?

A. They try to use benchmark information on a whole variety of issues, not just when it is convenient, and Cornell is a much poorer institution than most of its peers.

Q. Will the administration follow up with where the fee is being allocated once the debt is paid off and services are expanded?

A. They will be broad categories (salary expenses, equipment) but it is unlikely that specifics will be provided. All information will be on the Cornell Caring Community website

Q. Services like CAPS are already backlogged. It would appear that this fee will be new to 70% of students, who will likely feel that they deserve such services, leading to more backlog. How does the math work out?

A. The staff at CAPS has been more than doubled, but it is concerning to hear about the long wait times.

Question and Answer session ended and an open discussion forum was held afterwards.

S. Balik adjourned the meeting at 6:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Chelsea Cheng