



Minutes
University Assembly
Tuesday, May 6, 2014
4:30 – 6:00 p.m.
163 Day Hall

I. Call to Order

J. Blair called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

Attendance:

Present: R. Adessa, S. Balik, J. Blair, R. Booker, D. Bunck, N. La Celle, E. Loew, M. Lukasiewicz, C. McGrath, G. Mezey, A. Moore, G. Ruizcalderon, B. Schaffner, R. Wayne

Absent: J. Burns, M. Dumas, U. Smith

Others Present: M. Battaglia, C. Best, E. Johnston, D. Shalloway, R. Walroth, G. Giambattista, A. O'Donnell

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the April 22, 2014 meeting were approved unanimously.

III. Final Reports from Assemblies and Introduction of New Members

Student Assembly

S. Balik reported the SA finished setting funding regulations and also finalized changes to United Student Body. They also passed a resolution in support of the UA's decision regarding the TCAT issues.

Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

D. Bunck introduced R. Walroth as the incoming president of the GPSA. There was no further report.

Employee Assembly

B. Schaffner reported the EA has one vacancy. They will hold an organizational meeting on May 21.

Faculty Senate

There was no report.

IV. Final Committee Reports

Campus Infrastructure Committee

There was no report.

Campus Welfare Committee

A. Moore reported the committee focused most of their efforts on campus climate issues. They also reviewed the Incident Management Report. Additionally, they worked on CSVP training programs and general compliance efforts.

Codes and Judicial Committee

There was no report.

V. Old Business

J. Blair moved R 17 to be considered before R 16 because R 16 was expected to consume the balance of the meeting. Members agreed.

Final Comments, Discussion, and Voting on Resolution 17: Recognition of Outstanding Support to the AY 2014 Legislative Session

R 17 was voted on immediately. It was approved by a vote of 12-0-1.

Final Comments, Discussion, and Voting on Resolution 16: Carbon Neutrality and Divestment

M. Lukasiewicz served as chair so J. Blair could sponsor and present the resolution.

J. Blair gave a presentation on the history of the issue and the resolution from its origins with the FS resolution through to today's consideration of R 16. He noted that all public comments were opposed to the resolution and in favor of divestment. His personal opinion, however, is that in order to vote in favor of divestment, one must be able to differentiate this issue from all other similar issues. Otherwise, he said, divesting creates a "slippery slope" as many people would like their own issues reflected in the allocations of the endowment. The endowment, he said, cannot be managed effectively if it is held hostage to every important social issue. Also, as an institution with the mission to educate and partake in world-class research, Cornell can take a leadership position on these issues without divesting.

M. Lukasiewicz asked for remarks from UA members first.

E. Loew asked if there is any indication of a timeline for divestment. J. Blair responded saying there is no specific schedule. E. Loew also reminded members that the money divested is not lost; it would be reinvested, perhaps even in an investment more lucrative than the fossil fuel companies.

S. Balik noted the fact that Cornell is a leader in sustainability draws students in. Also, the UA members should represent their constituents. Three assemblies have demonstrated overwhelming support for divestment.

G. Mezey asked representatives of the bodies that have passed related resolutions to elaborate on the work they did. S. Balik reported the SA worked on this issue for two years through the work of two committees. The resolution was driven by action from student groups and speakers. D. Bunck reported the GPSA received the FS resolution, held a debate among members and heard a presentation. They did not hear a presentation

from AJ Edwards. R. Booker reported the FS also heard presentations in favor of divestment as well as some comments from President Skorton. B. Schaffner reported the EA discussed the issue and gathered information. There is concern that divestment could impact employees. The EA made no official determination on this matter.

G. Mezey noted that the last time there was a shortfall in endowment returns, 300 jobs were lost. He believes that the university should not tell fund managers what to do. Further, the three assemblies voting one way does not necessarily represent everyone especially if the issue was pushed through too quickly.

D. Bunck reminded members that the fossil fuel companies Cornell would be divesting from also fund very significant projects here including funding graduate student positions and research labs. By divesting, the university would put its direct connection to the top ranks of these companies at great risk.

A. Moore noted he would be comfortable voting against the GPSA's actions because of the lack of presentations heard against divestment.

M. Lukasiewicz recognized the community speakers.

J. O'dea noted that the university investment office claims losses of 10M USD per year could result from divestment. Although not significant compared to the entire budget, such a loss would likely adversely affect students and staff.

M. Battaglia said he has spoken with many tightly budget limited undergraduates. Tuition cannot be jeopardized for this.

Another community member said climate change is on the level of Darfur and South Africa because it affects everyone. Also, over twenty-five student organizations expressed their support for the SA resolution.

The next speaker suggested that the cost of divestment is a scare tactic. He said AJ Edwards refused to share the numbers and simulations he has used.

The next speaker said divestment is a step toward activist action. The endowment should not be used as a tool for protest. If such a trend continues, the endowment will no longer be invested for maximum yield. Further, divestment would close the door for dialogue, which is worth more than the money involved.

Another community member said he was concerned about the overall efficacy of the shared governance system. From the discussion today, it seemed that assemblies do not have sufficient power to make decisions.

M. Lukasiewicz returned to the UA members for final comments.

E. Loew said universities are not only meant for education and research. They are special places with a special obligation to consider and act upon important issues.

G. Mezey called the question on the resolution. There was dissent so the assembly voted to vote. By a vote of 8-3-3 the resolution came to a vote. The resolution passed by a vote of 8-5-1.

The assembly then entered Executive Session for the purpose of conducting elections and appointments.

Respectfully submitted,

Noah Wegener
Assemblies Clerk