

We are here to appeal the recommendation of the Appropriations Committee, which we, and nearly everyone else in this room, believes to be unreasonable and unwarranted, especially in light of the fact that Cornell Cinema was only asking for support from the SA for two more years – and at 22% less than our current level of funding - the time needed to secure replacement funding and not put the organization in jeopardy.

If the SA truly supports CC and wants to see it continue, as the AC rationale states, then eliminating our funding in a matter of months is not the way to do it. It is far too severe and too sudden, and despite what some members of the AC may think, it will not send the right message to the University. The recommendation does not allow enough time for the University to come up with replacement funding, nor for Cornell Cinema to restructure the program to reflect a new funding model. Zeroing out our allocation in just 8 months will create a funding crisis for the organization, and severely diminish our ability to continue to provide programming & services for students. It will provide virtually no time to find \$150,000 in replacement funding, nor the time needed to put in place a well considered plan that takes into account the organization's long-term future.

We, instead, propose a reasonable drawing down of our activity fee funding with a 22% cut in our allocation as of the next byline cycle (a drop from \$10.90/student to \$8.50/student). Inherent in our request is the need for two more years to secure replacement funding, not the 3 – 5 years erroneously mentioned in the AC's rationale.

If the SA would like a guarantee that we will no longer seek support from the SA as of the Fall '19 Byline Process, we have no objection to a statement to that effect being added to Appendix B.

The budget shortfall a \$8.50/student allocation will create - about \$30,000 - is one we can manage in the event the University cannot come up with stopgap funding. If necessary, we could cover this shortfall with funds from our reserve account, at least for one more year.

Any amount less than \$8.50 will put undue financial pressure on the organization and its programs, pressure that will thwart our efforts to achieve the very goal we can all agree on: a Cornell Cinema that is no longer dependent on the undergraduate activity fee.

An allocation of \$5.50/student, an amount that was considered by the AC on Monday night, would represent a 50% cut in our funding - \$75,000 – and once again, be too severe and too sudden. This reduction would also create an immediate funding crisis that would work against the achievement of our agreed upon goal. We would be left scrambling to fill an immediate hole in our budget instead of managing a well thought through transition to a new funding model while continuing to provide the high quality programming we are so valued for, programming that has enriched the lives of Cornell students for close to 50 years.

I would now like to clear up the misconceptions surrounding Cornell Cinema's use of activity fee funding to cover a small portion of our professional staff wages and associated fringe benefits – forecast to be 11% of total wages and benefits this year.

While we acknowledge that previous AC's have raised concerns about CC's need to use some of its allocation for this purpose, general activity fee guidelines do not prohibit this use, nor have

any previous SAs placed this restriction on CC using its funding in this way, something that we have always been up front about in the budgets we have presented to the SA. In fact, two years ago, when the SA approved our allocation for the current byline cycle, it was done with our full disclosure that we were planning to use some of the allocation for this purpose. CC has never violated any restrictions, nor inappropriately used its activity fee allocation, as was erroneously stated in the AC's rationale.

It wasn't until this past Spring semester, six months ago, that the AC told us in explicit terms, but in an informal request, that this practice could not continue. Cornell Cinema abided by this request as soon as it possibly could, given that it was mid byline cycle when we were told this. It would have been impossible to put this restriction into place immediately, as it would have meant violating *other* restrictions imposed by the Student Assembly in previous years. We made this clear to the AC in the spring. We took this new restriction into account in our current proposal, and we clearly stated to the AC when we presented to them on Monday night:

As of next year, we will no longer use any of the activity fee allocation from the SA to help cover staff salaries.

As our proposal budget indicates, we do forecast spending about \$27,795 on staff wages this year plus the associated \$9,700 in fringe benefits, for a total of \$37,495, spending that was approved by the SA in Fall 2015.

It is also worth noting that Cornell Cinema followed proper University procedures when we told the AC that we could only provide aggregate wage information instead of individuals' salaries, as this is considered sensitive business data.

The SA's own charter states:

ARTICLE III:

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Section 1: Legislative Authority Over Policies

The SA will have legislative authority over the policies of the Department of Campus Life and the Office of the Dean of Students, and will have the authority to review the budgets and actions of said departments.

Cornell Cinema is part of the College of Arts & Sciences, *not* the Department of Campus Life and the Office of the Dean of Students. As such, we directed the AC to Dave Taylor, the Associate Dean of Administration in the College for Arts and Sciences.

His reply to the AC was:

"The information you are requesting is sensitive business data and not something to which we grant access lightly (e.g. salary data). Further, the Cornell Cinema has – as you are aware – a director and manager who oversee operations and further, falls under both the department of Performing and Media Arts (PMA) and the College of Arts and Sciences. The point being, there is considerable oversight per standing university organizations and policies."

We have been disheartened, to say the least, at the repeated implications that we are lying about how we spend our activity fee allocation. At the meeting on Monday night, we provided a list of all the charges that hit our activity account last year, an account that holds activity fee

funding from both the SA and GPSA. The fact that money from both fees gets deposited into one account is not Cornell Cinema's doing. As far as we know, it was the Office of the Assemblies that established the account in this way.

If the SA wants their allocation put into a separate account for the next byline cycle, we have no objections to this. But we can't do it ourselves. It must be done through the Office of the Assemblies.

In closing, please note:

The \$8.50 we are requesting for the next two years, after which time we will seek no additional funding via the SA, goes toward making Cornell Cinema, as a program, possible. It is misleading and erroneous to conflate this amount with the very reasonable undergraduate ticket price we must charge to balance our budget. To do so represents a misunderstanding of what the fee is all about in the first place.

We urge SA members to read through the materials we have provided today, as well as our original proposal, before voting next week. The future of one of the University's most valued cultural resources is in your hands.

We have always operated in good faith and we ask that the SA do the same on this important issue.