The March 26, 2019 CUAA Council meeting was held at 41 Cooper Square Room LL101. Fifteen alumni, students and staff attended in person, 10 participated via phone, and 16 people viewed the Livestream video.

President Paul Nikulin CE’06 opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. Steve Verderese EE’84 made a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting, Cristina Ross AR’ seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved.

President Paul Nikulin CE’06, reminded council members that if you are asked by a member of the press about Cooper Union matters, you need to make it clear that you are expressing your own opinions if that is the case. We do have a policy on this in the Council handbook. Mary Lynch ChE’82 mentioned that this came up recently when the sale of the Chrysler building has been in the news.

President Paul Nikulin CE’06 gave an update on the filing for CUAA tax exempt charity status with the Federal government. (This process has already been completed with the NYS government which now recognizes the CUAA as a 501 c3 tax exempt charity). Paul explained that for the Federal application, we were asked to resend all of our tax returns going back to 2008. He thanked Dan Burke ChE’81, Stephen Verderese EE’84, and Darrel Low EE’89 for their help collecting and assembling the necessary documentation. Paul also mentioned that we may first re-establish 501(c)(7) charity status, because we already had that up until 2014 and then transition it to 501(c)(3) charity status if that pathway is easier.

**Committee Updates**

**Annual Fund -** Annual Fund Co Chair, Standish Lee AR’11, explained that the Annual Fund will send a fundraising template email to all CUAA Council members to use in a “Peer to Peer” fundraising campaign. Council members are encouraged to solicit gifts for the school from their classmates and other alumni friends via either telephone or email. This effort will replace the spring Phon-A-thon.

**Events Committee –** Events Committee Co-chair,Beatrix Ponce ME’11

Two recent events, Mock Interview Night and the Alumni Trustee Mixer held at the Brooklyn Navy Yard were both very successful. The upcoming events are:

* Shabbat Potluck Lunch with CU Hillel Association will take place on Saturday April 18, 2019.
* Meet the Candidates Night is April 3, 2019.
* The Cooper Doggy Playdate is Saturday April 14th, 2019 at Tompkins Square Park
* Mary Lynch announced there will be an alumni meetup for the class of 2006 at a pub in Brooklyn in mid-April and asked those interested to contact Paul Nikulin for information.

**Awards Committee** – Chair of the CUAA Awards Committee, Laura Spinner A’90, announced that the ceremony will be held on May 30th in the Rose Auditorium, with a party of the roof garden to follow. A Thursday evening was chosen so as to avoid a conflict with Sabbath activities. She mentioned that we may again have the Cooper Brew team and we may have some of the works from the End of Year Show on display in the hallways near the ceremony. She also mentioned her desire to have a press release sent to local news outlets, and indicated that the school agrees with the desire to issue a press release.

**MOA Committee** – Chair Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) committee, Nils Folke Anderson A’94 thanked the members of the MOA committee for the considerable work put into the preparation of the draft report that was recently provided electronically to all council members. He announced that there will be time for council members to discuss the report in smaller groups later during the meeting. He invited alumni to also email him directly with their thoughts and suggestions by this weekend. Nils explained that the original MOA was signed in 1974 and was updated in 2000. The 2000 MOA requires updating for multiple reasons, including because it

* mentions numerous position titles that no longer exist,
* specifies a number of Alumni Trustees on the CU Board that is no longer correct,
* described an office situation where the CUAA and CU Office of Alumni Affairs share staff and budget, and
* does not mention the CUAA having legal standing as a non-profit corporation.

The current MOA committee, formed approximately two years ago by CUAA President, Paul Nikulin, examined the agreements between 19 other colleges and their alumni association and also reached out to more than 50 alumni with knowledge of how the CUAA and Cooper Union have interacted during the last four decades. This includes past CUAA presidents, past CU trustees and others with direct experience. From this, the MOA committee put together a list of recommendations that were included in the draft report recently distributed. The next steps include the dialog with council members tonight followed by dialog with representatives of the school.

Nils acknowledged that the MOA committee has enjoyed a positive rapport with both Laura Sparks and Rachel Warren at that both have been supportive of the committee’s work. He advocates including a preamble in the MOA document that acknowledges the positive relationship that the school and CUAA currently have. He noticed that multiple of the MOA documents from other colleges have similar preambles.

Nils explained that the MOA committee recommends that the new MOA

* should not be overly detailed
  + Rather, administrative type details should be placed in a Procedures document that is referenced in the MOA.
* should state that The Cooper Union and the CUAA agree to work together toward Free Tuition.
* will include all requirements laid out in the Consent Decree regarding the Alumni Trustees
* will supersede any existing agreements.

Attendees were than split into 4 smaller groups to discuss the items in the draft report for 20 minutes. The groups than reported back to the larger groups about the what the groups feel have been successes and what are the remaining concerns.

**Group 1** consisted of alumni attending via phone. Carol Wolf spoke for the group. The group believes that the CUAA has not fully recovered from being severed abruptly from the school during the Baruch Jamshed Administration. Alumni participation has not fully revived to pre-Jamshed levels. There is a need to increase participation, donations and publicity. Group 1 feels that the CUAA needs more administrative support.

**Group 2** consisted of 5 alumni in the room (4 Engineers and 1 architect). Ron Vogel spoke for the group. They expressed concerns about how alumni contact data can be shared, and what the processes would be for ensuring alumni can opt out of either School mailings or CUAA mailings and how privacy is ensured. They mentioned that many alumni are confused about what the school does and what CUAA does making it hard for them to be informed about what they are opting out of. They asked what lessons learn were from the 5 years of tumult and how that is informing our decisions. In other words, they expressed concerns that this was an unique opportunity to negotiate a document intended to define the relationship for decades to come, and not be predicated on the current relationship (good or bad) with the Administration.

**Group 3** consisted of alumni in the room and included multiple architects and a former alumni trustee. Nick Agneta AR’80 spoke for this group. They expressed a desire for a more defined process for finding information on how the CUAA operates and advocated for more transparency in procedures and documents. They would also like to see a common database for alumni data that is shared between the CUAA and The Cooper Union, and that is maintained by the Cooper Union, but has tiered access, and built in systems for ensuring privacy. Nick mentioned that the CUAA biggest successes came in the pre-Jamshed years when the CUAA had a full time paid advocate with the title, Director of Alumni Affairs. Everything ran very well when Susan Lynch was director.

**Group 4** consisted of alumni in the room and included artists and engineers. Brian Rose A’79 spoke for the group. Maintaining a database with good contact information for alumni is a concern. There was a question as to why the draft report continually refers to the proposed MOA as a two-party agreement, when the prior MOA was a three-party agreement between the CUAA, the School Administration and the BOT. Another question asked whether any signed MOA is binding on people who hold the titles mentioned in the future, i.e., would a future school president bound by a MOA signed by the existing president? The group would like to see in writing that the CUAA retains the right to hold opinions that differ from the school -- that it does have a right to free expression, and reminded all, that during the Jamshed administration there was a period when the school censored what could be put in email blasts distributed by the CUAA to the alumni body. This period was followed by the termination of all email and website privileges that the CUAA had previously enjoyed.

Nils Folke Anderson thanked everyone for their comments and ideas. Scott Lyne asked what the next steps in the MOA process look like. Nils responded that the goal is to have discussions with Laura Sparks over the summer. A small group of point people would be involved with negotiating the draft MOA with a goal of presenting it to the CUAA council this fall.

**Other Business**

Mary Lynch announced that there will be no CUAA Council meeting in April. Today’s Council meeting was added to the schedule in lieu of the April meeting. The next Council meeting will be on May 14th, 2019.

Paul Nikulin made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Laura Spinner. The meeting ended at 9:10 PM.

Minutes taken by Mary Lynch, CUAA Secretary