This article serves to update the Cooper community on the Cooper Union Alumni Association (CUAA) as possible. Facts have been based on articles from the CUAA website and opinions have been offered by various CUAA alumni.

Throughout 2014, the relationship between the CUAA and the school administration changed drastically. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is a document that describes the relationship between the Cooper Union, the Board of Trustees, and the CUAA. President Bharucha and the administration overrode this agreement in the following ways:

1. All financial support for operations was withdrawn and the bank account that used to contribute to the CUAA with funding was closed.

2. On-campus meeting space was denied for the CUAA by Robert Turchak, Alumni Space in the Cooper dormitory was converted to an administration office without any prior notice in April of 2014. An addition to the meeting space in the Alumni Space lasted about 60 days. Although alumni had been repurposing the space to save Cooper money in rent and allow students to be closer to students, it is important to note that the CUAA was not consulted beforehand.

3. In addition, in September of 2014, the Director of the CUAA, Robert Turchak, told members of the CUAA that the school would no longer allow the CUAA financially or with administrative support. Because of this, the alumni website would no longer be maintained.

A group consisting of the CUAA President, the CUAA Secretary-Treasurer, and members of the Board of Trustees, including the Chair of the Board of Trustees, President Bharucha and his Alumni Director, has been meeting since November of 2014 to restore a working relationship between the CUAA and the administration.

In November of 2014, John Leeper (Arch ’83), CUAA President, listed three items that the CUAA Council was hoping to address by the end of the year. The first was to return the CUAA’s Board of Trustees to its original structure. The CUAA wishes to be able to accept tax free donations from future events and projects. The second was an outreach campaign to contact every living Cooper alumnus. The third was to poll alumni and determine what the most important tasks are for the CUAA.

Later in November the Cooper Union Alumni Association (CUAA) and the CUAA met. The temporary ban of CUAA events on campus was overturned and on-campus meeting space was made available to the CUAA. The CUAA will soon regain its tax-exempt status. Although the original CUAA website was deactivated, the new website for the CUAA is up and running at cooperunionalumni.org.

It also stated that the CUAA and Cooper Union will continue to work cooperatively on alumni events. However, the Board of Trustees will be entirely sponsored, planned, and carried out by the CUAA, according to Turchak, beginning April 26. Alumni awards will be given out and entertainment will be provided at the Cooper Union Black Party. Information can be found at cooperunionalumni.org.

The CUAA Executive Committee restated the importance of the forum so that alumni could ask questions about the Joint Statement released after the meeting with the Board of Trustees, administration, and the CUAA.

One question pertained to communication with the CUAA to its members. CUAA members now receive news directly from the CUAA Council instead of from the Cooper Union Alumni Office. The CUAA Council contacted alumni for any contact information on the CUAA’s behalf.

Issues regarding the Annual Fund were also addressed. The CUAA has in the past collaborated with the Development manager in charge of the fund. Now, as the office of the Development Office is in charge of the Annual Fund.

Lastly, the CUAA has stressed the importance of continuing to fight tuition against Cooper. Resolutions related to tuition as well as the mission of the Cooper Union were sent out to alumni via email and posted on the CUAA website.

The most recent resolution was written on August 6, 2014 and reads as follows:

“The CUAA is committed to a return to free tuition for all students, and encourages all students to defend themselves by filing and founding documents, founding principles, and Mission of Cooper Union which states that the Cooper Union administers solely on merit and awards full scholarships to all enrolled students.”

Next, the CUAA has noted that the school would no longer allow the CUAA to use the Cooper Union website and opinions have been based accordingly. Facts have been based on articles from the CUAA website and opinions have been offered.

In March of 2015, the Engineering Student Council (ESC) requested the CUAA to hold a vote to remove the tuition policy from the school’s policies and procedures. They met with the Cooper Union administration and the CUAA in order to make the vote happen.

For 2015, members of the CUAA are voting on the CUAA Constitution, resolutions, and referendum questions. CUAA members will be able to meet the candidates on Tuesday, April 26 at 6 PM. The positions being sought after are CUAA president, Alumni Trustee, Secretary-Treasurer, VP/Faculty-Student Relations, and Nomination Committee, and spots on the CUAA Council.

The three referendum questions pertain to supporting the continued fight against tuition, the status of the CUAA being a 501(c)(3) organization, and the CUAA’s representation on the Board of Trustees. There has been an emphasis on making sure that alumni answer the referendum questions responsibly and carefully.

A letter from John Leeper to all Cooper alumni highlighted the CUAA Election for 2015, and the CUAA Council will hold an open meeting to all students by ESC the next day, students spoke their mind. One student felt the policy “is discouraging interaction between schools since students would not want to pay for non-required classes.” Furthermore, in a particular area of interest would be the question of whether that specialty is worth the added financial burden. Among the discussion was also the sentiment that in order to enroll, the student body needs to take “baby steps” with the administration.

The petition was one of those steps. Drafted by engineering freshmen, the petition claimed that “the sheer inanity of charging students to try their best academically, capping them with a mere credit of $800 from their requirements, has no reasonable justification, economic or otherwise.” As students assembled to discuss their views and express their frustration, the petition rapidly gained momentum. From the whole issue, it was important to note that the CUAA is committed to “keeping Cooper as the educational institution of choice for the alumni of Cooper, alumni who overload their students.” The CUAA is committed to “keeping Cooper as the educational institution of choice for the alumni of Cooper, alumni who overload their students.”
PETER KATZ (Arch '76):
CANDIDATE FOR ALUMNI TRUSTEE

CAROLINE YU (EE '15)

Photo Credit: Winter Long (CE '18)

MARCH MADNESS:
FACULTY RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

CAROLINE YU (EE '15)

Photo Credit: Winter Long (CE '18) | CAROLINE YU (EE '15)

INVERTED CLASSROOM

ANUSHREE SRIDHAR (CE '18) | CAROLINE YU (EE '15)

In January 2019, Dr. Eric Mazur, a professor at Harvard University, published an article in Science Magazine called “Facilitating Learning,” featuring an alternate structure for classes that proved to help students better understand material. Mazur claims, “In hindsight, the reason for my students’ poor performance is simple. The traditional approach to teaching reduces education to a transfer of information.” Instead of lecturing, Mazur is now developing the idea of an “inverted classroom” in which students read the material before class, go to class to discuss the material, and engage in group work. Mazur calls this new structure “a transfer of information.” Instead of lecturing, Mazur is now developing the idea of an “inverted classroom” in which students read the material before class, go to class to discuss the material, and engage in group work. Mazur calls this new structure “a transfer of information.”

Professor Lepek’s “Dipped classroom” consists of videos that present course content and class time used to solve problems. His class room uses online electronic textbooks that can be annotated by highlighting and adding commentary features. Using a pedagogical system called “Learning Catalytics,” Lepek can send questions to students’ devices and enable them to use the in-class time to actively engage and think about the problem-solving process. Using a pedagogical system called “Learning Catalytics,” Lepek can send questions to students’ devices and enable them to use the in-class time to actively engage and think about the problem-solving process.

Professor Lepek describes how and when he started thinking about the inverted classroom. Originally, he was considering the use of POGIL (process oriented guided inquiry learning) approach to teach the course. Then he joined the VCP (Virginia Commonwealth University for Engineering Education) virtual community of practice centered around research-based approaches to pedagogy. In the community, Professor Steve Yalovik from the University of Michigan, who was telling me about a project that he’s been working on with Professor Eric Mazur of Harvard University. I was convinced that this was a better approach than POGIL and began implementing it last spring in my Heat and Mass Transfer course.”

Student reactions have been positive so far, but Professor Lepek is still seeking ways to improve the method. Professor Lepek would also like to further study how the inverted classroom approach enhances student learning and engagement and has a NSF grant under the ASEE Chemical Engineering Division. The award, which is based on outstanding teaching effectiveness and educational scholarship, is given annually to an educator who has shown evidence of significant contributions to chemical engineering education. Professor Lepek will receive the award, but he is not sure if this will be a significant change in his career.

Anita Raja explains her inspiration for holding this event: “When I joined Cooper last fall, I was tasked with helping coordinate the upcoming faculty and student research presentations event. Faculty members from each department shared their research and current research projects with professors. Each faculty member gave a 3-minute presentation to give their research projects. Pranay Joneja (CE ’18) kept the event on schedule and Monica Chen (CE ’18) helped coordinate the professors before it was time to present. For information on the research conducted by each faculty member at Cooper, visit their page at engfac.cooper.edu as well as the new website on research at cooper.edu.”
The Wall Street Journal announced on March 24 that Attorney General Eric Schum- derman will investigate the Cooper Union's finances and the decisions that led to the departure of tinute to undergraduates.

Justin Harmon told the website The Villager, “We have en- ough regulatory bodies at the A.G.'s office that require that we re- view Cooper's financials. That’s a really exciting thing because we're looking at a data center project about a data center at Cooper.”

This is an interview with Nicholas D'Avella.

The Pioneer: Could you tell me about your academic background?

Nicholas D’Avella: My undergraduate education was in a program called The Growth and Structure of Cities at Bryn Mawr College, which is outside Philadelphia. I was really interested in the way cities are structured and the ways people think about them – questions of urban planning and the history of urban life. Then for grad school I went on to study anthropology. My advisor was an anthropologist and I liked the way she thought about things. I was pretty taken by the myth- ology of anthropology, which is basically talking to people and doing interviews with them, observing them – usually on the other side of the microphone asking people about their lives and what they do. It’s an unstruc- tured way to understand the world and in that sense it’s unique in the social sciences. I went to study anthropology at UC Davis where I earned my PhD. Then I had a post- doc at UC Berkeley, and now I’m here at Cooper!”

TCP: How’s the climate between California and New York?

ND: I grew up in New Jersey and lived in New York for a few years after I finished college. It’s good to be back. One of the big switches is coming to Cooper, which is a much smaller and under-graded-focused institution. That’s a really exciting thing for me. As an anthropolo- gist, my research was about a construction boom in Bu- nos Aires after the financial crisis there in 2001. I lived there for a couple of years and ended up interviewing and reading a lot about real estate investors and mar- ket analytics, architects both in the university and in the professional practice, and with neighborhood groups, who were working to change the building code in the city. The project was about build- ings and how they appear in different worlds - a building that is shown up in a graph of market investment analysis, where they graph the price of three building apartments over thirty years is very dif- ferent than how a building appears in an architectural drawing and it’s very different than how it appears in the urban planning code. It’s also different than how people live with buildings in their everyday lives. The idea of the project was to look at buildings from these multiple viewpoints. Com- ing to Cooper is an exciting place to be because I worked there for a couple of years in Buenos Aires. I spent a year in an architecture school do- ing observation.

It’s also exciting to see how artists and engineers have different ways of thinking about crisis. I have my first couple of civil engineers in my HSS4 class called Writ- ing the City, which has stu- dents do ethnographic proj- ects in NY. We just read an article last week by an an- thropologist who was study- ing water infrastructure in Mumbai and he was looking at how water flow is not just a technical question but also a question of politics. He uses this idea of pressure to talk about water in this way - that water pressure comes from political pressure. So I’m interested as an anthro- pologist in engineering ques- tions, too. Infrastructure usually goes unrecognized until it starts falling apart – that’s when we recognize it. It’s an interesting take on the city.

TCP: Are you teaching another course at Cooper?

ND: Yes. So last semester I taught an Intro to Anthrop- ology course called An- thropology and the Other. Anthropology, in its long his- tory, started out as something complimentary to sociology. Sociologists studied modern societies and anthropologists studied traditional societies. So that class was a history of how anthropology started thinking about human rela- tions through people who live in radically different so- cial worlds, but how those insights are still useful to think about how we relate to people different from ours- elves today. Right now I’m teaching a class called Maps/Charts/Drawings: Visualisa- tion and the Anthropology of Knowledge. This class is about thinking about visual forms of representation not just as transparent views onto a reality but as certain cul- tural ways of thinking about and engaging with the world.

How students deploy these texts in their own arguments is fun and stimulating for me. For the Map/Charts/Drawings class, I’m actually revising a paper from one of my earlier courses about the Anthropology of Knowledge and I’m approaching it in a way that’s very similar to the things we’re learning in that class, about knowledge and politics and how they articulate with different visual tools for knowing the world.

TCP: What do you like best about Cooper’s humanities department?

ND: What I really like is the engagement with people who don’t already know how to care about the questions of the Humanities and Social Sciences. I’m drawn in by the kind of interdisciplinary work that does that fuses you to do a project about knowledge in a certain way. I really like that. I really like that the Anthropology of Knowledge class is one of the things I like about Cooper. I like that challenge.

TCP: Getting that interaction started is really important!

ND: It is important and it’s difficult. They call these things disciplines for a reason. You’ve been disciplined to think in a certain way. It’s not a challenge to make the conversations between students different disciplines deeper. That’s the kind of thing I enjoy doing. In the class on visual forms of knowledge, it’s cool and a really unique opportunity that we can read one article about an art piece and then discuss the way that that design is compre- hensive in the visual arts and another about the practices of engineers and discuss the way that those ways of thinking are different. And then think about those design ideas and the way that those ideas are structured in the visual arts and then they are talking about a table with artists, architects, and engi- neers! That’s part of what makes Cooper really unique and special for me. ©
The Pioneer: What does remembering the past mean to you, as a student at Cooper?

Malcolm King: I do remember spending a lot of time researching during my first year. I was interested in the history of the school, as well as its development and growth.

The Pioneer: What is your current perspective on the Board of Trustees?

Malcolm King: The Board of Trustees is a crucial component of the school. They are responsible for making important decisions that affect the entire student body. As a student, it is important to be aware of the Board's actions and to stay involved in the decision-making process.

The Pioneer: What is the significance of the State of the Union letter?

Malcolm King: The State of the Union letter is a summary of the school's annual financial report. It provides information on the school's revenue, expenses, and financial sustainability. The letter is important because it helps students and parents understand the school's financial situation and its plans for the future.

TCP: What was the East Village like at that time?

MK: The East Village was a hub of artistic and cultural activity. It was known for its counterculture, its bohemian atmosphere, and its vibrant nightlife. It was a place where creative individuals could come together and express themselves freely.

TCP: What is your current perspective on the Full-Tuition Scholarship?

MK: The Full-Tuition Scholarship is a valuable resource for students who are unable to pay tuition. It helps to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality education, regardless of their financial background.

TCP: What role did the alumni play in the decision-making process?

MK: Alumni have historically played a significant role in the decision-making process at Cooper. They are involved in the Board of Trustees and are important in shaping the school's direction and priorities.

TCP: What is your perspective on the Board's decision to increase tuition?

MK: Increasing tuition is a difficult decision, but it is necessary to ensure the financial sustainability of the school. The Board should be transparent about its decision-making process and should consider the impact of tuition increases on students and their families.

TCP: What is your perspective on the current state of the institution's financial health?

MK: The institution is in good financial health, but there are challenges to be addressed. The Board must continue to make tough decisions in order to ensure the future of the school.

TCP: What role do you think the alumni and students should play in the decision-making process?

MK: Alumni and students should be involved in the decision-making process in order to ensure that their perspectives are considered. They should have a say in the direction of the school and be given the opportunity to provide feedback on important decisions.