Program for Andrew D. White Professors-at-Large
ANNUAL REPORT
to the Faculty Senate
Summary of the 2010-2011 Academic Year

Part 1: Overview of Committee Activities and Achievements

Changes in Committee Membership
The Program for Andrew D. White Professors-at-Large (PAL) held three meetings of the Selection Committee during the 2010-2011 academic year, on Tuesday, October 5 and Monday, December 13, 2010, and on March 17, 2011. The new Program Chair, Robert Raguso (Neurobiology and Behavior) began his three-year term, replacing Steven Strogatz (Applied Math). Barbara Knuth (Natural Resources) succeeded Sunny Power as the Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost as an ex officio member of the Selection Committee. Also, Maria Fernandez (History of Art), David Feldshuh (Theatre, Film and Dance), and Natalie Mahowald (Earth and Atmospheric Science) joined the committee as new members—also for three-year terms.

Professor-at-Large Visitors and New Nominations
There was a total of 17 PALs with active six-year terms during the 2010-2011 academic year. Four PALs visited Cornell this year, including Hélène Cixous (Humanities – Feminist Theory), Jeffrey McNeely (Life Sciences - Conservation), Lowery Stokes Sims (Arts – Africana Studies) and Denise Riley (Humanities – Literature & Philosophy). Lowery Stokes Sims, who visited in April, 2011, completed her tenure as an A.D. White Professor-at-Large in June 2011, as did Natalie Angier, providing space for two new nominations. Angier held the sole title of President’s Council for Cornell Women (PCCW) A.D. White Professor-at-Large.

The Call for Nominations 2011 was distributed to Cornell faculty through bulk email in October, following the traditional timeline for nomination submissions and final selections. There were four new proposals submitted by the December 1, 2010 deadline for pre-proposals and two full-proposal nominations selected at the March meeting. The President and Board of Trustees approved the two final selections, Professors Sarah Blaffer Hrdy (Anthropology) and Margaret McFall-Ngai (Medical Microbiology and Immunology) at the Board meeting in late May 2011. Either of these two new selections would be an ideal replacement for the PCCW endowed A.D. White Professor-at-Large slot vacated by Natalie Angier.

Changes and Updates
Over the course of the year, Professor Raguso and members of the committee had in-depth discussions about the overall policies and procedures of the ADW-PAL program. Some of the most important outstanding issues relate to the ability of faculty hosts to maintain their central role over the course of a PAL’s 6-year tenure. The committee determined that all nominations should formally identify faculty co-hosts in the event that the primary host is unable to assume their duties. (In a number of recent instances, faculty hosts have left Cornell, leaving it to Program administrators to locate new hosts.)
A second issue that arose was the feeling of disconnect between the nomination process, rigorously evaluated by committee members, and the actual PAL visits, often occurring months to years after the vetting process. Committee members discussed their desirability to meet with PALs as a group during the end of their campus visit, both to close the loop on the process of evaluating successfully approved PALs and also to serve as a kind of exit interview to generate suggestions for improving the PAL’s next visit to Cornell. Selection committee members were provided with copies of formal visit schedules and Listserv notices for all PAL visits during 2010-2011, in an attempt to better inform them of the range of planned activities and engagements.

A third issue that arose was the long delays experienced as successful nominations awaited final approval by the university President and Board of Trustees. Traditionally, the selection committee votes on nominees at the March meeting, but does not receive confirmation of newly elected PALs until the first week of June. Selection committee members felt that this was rather late, considering that the spring semester usually ends during the first week in May. By the time confirmation occurs a month later, many of the faculty who are nomination stakeholders have left Ithaca for summer research or other scholarly activities, which creates a lag and deflates momentum related to overall planning. Because of this, the Program canvassed committee members on whether to adjust the timeline to correspond to that implemented by the Rhodes Class of ’56 professorship, and most agreed that this would be appropriate. Therefore in the 2011-2012 academic year, the Call for Nominations will be distributed in September, the deadline for pre-proposals will be November 15 and that for full-proposals will be February 15. This will allow for approval decisions to be made at the March Board of Trustees meeting.

Finally, the A.D. White program office space at 726 University Avenue was compromised during an unexpected fuel oil spill/flooding in the basement in March 2011, which especially affected the air quality on the east side of the facility that housed the Program office and closed down the building for several weeks. It was necessary for the Program to relocate to a temporary workspace in Caldwell Hall until June 2011. The incident set in motion the effort to locate a new permanent home for the Program office, which will now reside in Day Hall, rooms 114a and 114b. The location of the new office provides a greater convenience to central campus, allowing for increased interaction with other departments and greater accessibility of visiting Professors-at-Large to students and faculty.

Part 2: Summaries of Committee Meetings

October 5, 2010 Selection Committee Meeting
The first Selection Committee Meeting of the academic year usually is scheduled for mid- to late-September or early October. This is thought to allow for adequate time to publicize the Call for Nominations and allow nominators time to determine a possible nominee, prepare a letter of intent regarding the nomination, obtain a CV, ascertain an initial interest in the nominee among various departments, colleges, programs and institutes at Cornell and, determine whether the nominees would be willing to accept ADW professorships if elected. The September 2010 meeting served to introduce new committee members (Maria Fernandez, David Feldshuh, Natalie Mahowald, and ex officio members, Program Chair, Robert Raguso and Barbara Knuth, Dean of the Graduate School/Vice Provost), and review outstanding and new business.
The Committee reviewed the list of current committee members and identified those members whose term would end in June 2011—namely Graeme Bailey and Shelley Feldman. They provided names of possible replacements:

- Eric Tagliacozzo - History
- Debra Castillo - Romance Studies
- Sandra Greene - History
- Jeevak Parpia - Physics

These names were forwarded to the Faculty Senate for consideration, selection and approval via the Dean of Faculty. Graeme Bailey (Computer Science) was interested in serving another three-year term, and Selection Committee Members enthusiastically agreed to his offer, as his contributions during his first term were highly valued. Debra Castillo (Romance Studies) was chosen to serve as a replacement for the other seat, to be vacated by Shelley Feldman in 2011-2012.

The roster of 17 Professors-at-Large was reviewed, including the newly elected PALs (Simon Baron-Cohen (Life Sciences), Anne Carson (Humanities), James Scott (Social Sciences), and Lord Robert Skidelsky (Social Sciences). It was noted that one vacancy would occur in June 2011 with the end of Lowery Stokes Sims’ six-year term. The Committee agreed that only one or two new PAL nominees should be selected. With the departure of Lowery Sims, the committee members studied the distribution of PALs by discipline and noted that the arts would lack representation after her departure. They also reviewed the upcoming terms that were to end in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, to determine which other disciplines would lack representation in the years ahead. Subsequently, they focused on the term of Natalie Angier (2006-2012). This professorship is funded through a special endowment line from the President’s Council on Cornell Women, and the Program realizes monthly returns to support this position. It was explained that Prof. Angier was not expected to return to Cornell for a formal campus as numerous attempts to contact her or her faculty host Bruce Lewenstein went unanswered. She visited campus once during her professorship and the evaluation of her performance was issued a lukewarm response by the faculty host and other faculty, which played into ambivalence about having her return. Because of this, there was a sense of urgency to address her replacement. The Selection Committee Members determined that women candidates in the life sciences should be emphasized over the arts this year.

December 13, 2010 Selection Committee Meeting
The second meeting of the year focused on the review of the pre-proposal nominations which were received by the December 1 deadline.

The nominations that were submitted were:

- *Kofi Annan*—Former UN Secretary-General and Nobel Laureate for Peace
  Nominated by: Professor Henry Richardson, Department of Architecture

- *Jas Elsner*—Humfy Payne Senior Research Fellow at Corpus Christi College, Oxford and Visiting Professor of Art History and Classics, University of Chicago
  Nominated by: Associate Professor Verity Platt, Classics and Art History
At this point, the committee reviewed all the nominations to determine whether they should be invited to continue to the full-proposal stage. Committee members are not obliged to select any nominations if the candidates do not meet the caliber of an A.D. White Professor-at-Large.

There was considerable discussion at this meeting about attracting high-level candidates and effective, pro-active faculty hosts. It was made clear that individuals who have substantial name recognition often require special handling and additional coordination of co-hosting through other departments—including central administration. Committee members wondered whether potential candidates should be contacted several years in advance to determine whether a professorship is of interest to them. This way, the Program can anticipate early on whether their candidacy would be sustainable after the first visit. It was also determined that nominations for high-profile candidates must reflect concrete and diverse examples of how they will interact with students on campus—not just faculty and administration.

Three of the four nominations were encouraged to proceed to the full-proposal stage. Committee members felt that Jas Elsner would be a better candidate for a Messenger Lectureship. The Messenger and University Lectureships, and Rhodes Class of ’56 Professorships are considered alternative possibilities for nominations that are not selected. It is often felt that those nominees that have already visited Cornell under the auspices of those programs often make for stronger ADW candidates, if it is desired that they return to Cornell.

March 17, 2011 Selection Committee Meeting

The third and final meeting of the year was held to review the full-proposal nominations. The Selection Committee Members carefully considered the following criteria in determining their choice(s) for final selection.

- How a candidate’s expertise will capture the interest of a wide range of faculty and students in various departments and colleges at Cornell and the surrounding community
- The planned level of activity while in residence and the ability to sustain the vigor of these scholarly activities - which ideally should cross academic disciplines and include outreach - over the course of their six-year professorship
- The candidate’s versatility and enthusiasm in meeting the complex demands and expectations regarding accessibility in a higher education environment
This stage draws particular attention to the role of the faculty host(s) and their potential to maintain that role throughout the six-year term of an A.D. White Professor-at-Large. For example, untenured faculty are not always in the best position to act as a primary faculty host, for diverse reasons. Committee members agreed that all faculty who front a nomination need to inform their department heads and other faculty in their departments about their effort to gain support and interest - in other words, to not work in isolation - even though their nomination may have amassed a large number of stakeholders from other colleges and departments at the University. This allows for more direct involvement in a PAL visit by a host’s colleagues. It was also debated whether the University faculty or deans, department heads or directors should be informed in advance about the nominations—in the pre-proposal stage—to allow for an open commentary about a proposed nominee.

The Selection Committee unanimously agreed to select the following nominations for consideration by the President and Board of Trustees, who were approved as new A.D. White Professors-at-Large on May 29, 2011.

- Sarah Blaffer Hrdy
- Margaret McFall-Ngai

Attached:
- List of ADW PALs Members of the 2010-2011 Selection Committee
- Call for Nominations 2011
- Selection Committee Meeting Minutes 2010-2011
- Distribution of ADW Professors-at-Large by discipline 2010-2011
- Distribution of ADW Professors-at-Large Selection Committee by discipline 2010-2011

Respectfully Submitted: Professor Robert A. Raguso
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