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Dean of Faculty Report 2008-2009  
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**Introduction :** This is my first report to the Trustees as Dean of the Faculty, and I'd like to make some general comments before describing important events of the past year. First, it's a distinct honor for me to represent the University Faculty because the Cornell Faculty are wonderfully accomplished teachers and scholars. I am now and have always been very proud to be associated with such an accomplished group, and you can also be very proud of this group of people. From my previous experience as a faculty trustee, I realize that most trustees are less familiar with the faculty side of the university than with the student or administration sides of the university. Therefore, I'd like to provide a glimpse of what it's like to be a faculty member, and also to share with you why I'm so proud to be a member of this faculty. My disclaimer is that this faculty is so diverse that no one person can speak for the entire faculty.

Faculty honestly do love learning and we love of our particular disciplines. We love new insight and we love to share that with students. We are dedicated to our disciplines, but we are also dedicated to students and to the university. When faculty pass resolutions on a diversity of topics we do it out of a sense of commitment: to our disciplines; to our students; and to our university. We live in a world where ideas are constantly changing – often because of our investigations. We're surrounded by bright young people who also love learning and who challenge us. It's a wonderful job. Our efforts occur in scholarship, teaching and outreach.

**Faculty activity:** Accomplishments in research/scholarship probably receive the greatest degree of publicity, and these accomplishments are indeed noteworthy. In the last fiscal year, faculty were so successful with the NSF that Cornell ranked #1 in the country in attracting NSF funds (>\$111,000,000). In late April we learned that an interdisciplinary team (Chemistry, Physics, Applied and Eng. Physics, Chem Eng. and Materials Science) of Cornell faculty was awarded \$17.3M from DOE for an Energy Frontiers Research Center as the first example of funding to Cornell from the Recovery Act. Cornell is the lead university in a consortium that is addressing vulnerability in wheat worldwide to a new variant of the wheat stem rust pathogen. That group attracted nearly \$30M from the Gates Foundation. We are also a leader in biofuels research and Cornell is one of the regional centers in the Sun Grant Initiative. In the humanities and liberal arts, where there are few large group efforts, Cornell faculty are well represented with two new members of the American Philosophical Society, a new fellow of the AAAS, and there have been Guggenheim, Mellon New Directions, and NSF awards to individuals.

Teaching is valued by the Cornell faculty. We do a lot of teaching – with more than 8000 courses and nearly 600,000 credit hours in 08/09. Obviously, some of us are more successful than others, but essentially all of us aspire to be as effective as the Weiss Fellows. As of this academic year, the 50<sup>th</sup> Weiss Fellow has been named. As have their predecessors, the 2008/2009 Fellows have done wonderful things. They interact with students in large lecture courses, in small advanced classes and as research mentors. They view their interactions with students to extend well beyond the classroom. Students

of these faculty understand that their teachers respect and care deeply about them. For example here's what one student said about her professor: "she took me seriously as an intellectual...It was incredibly freeing to feel like there was a new and intellectual realm of my life that I had barely explored... If *she* took me seriously... then I had better do so as well." The Weiss fellows are characterized by an infectious enthusiasm for their courses and for their subjects and they have a clear empathy for their students. While not all of us can be named Weiss Fellows, we do aspire to the standard they have set.

Finally, outreach is important. It has a huge diversity of expression. Some faculty have appointments in Cornell Cooperative Extension, and outreach is a major activity. The impacts have been many and large throughout the state and in NYC. However, in addition to very large projects there are some smaller activities with large impact. One such program occurs in Geneva NY. Cornell faculty in Geneva have partnered with the Geneva City School District to enhance elementary science education and bring agricultural science to Geneva third and fourth grade students. Faculty visit the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades and each 3<sup>rd</sup> grader visits the Geneva campus. There is a summer camp for disadvantaged kids. Since the program started, the number of students who pass the New York State mandated science test has increased from 85% to 93%. The number of students achieving a mastery level of 4 (the highest possible) on the state test has increased to 37% and there has been a 50% increase in 4H program enrollment.

**Budget problems.** Like all of us, the university faculty have been very concerned about the financial difficulties facing the university. We fear that a major impact in the long term will be a reduction in the number of tenure track faculty, and this will challenge our tradition of diversity and excellence. In this situation, the faculty appreciate the openness with which the President and Provost have discussed the budget situation with the faculty and with the broader university community. Both the President and Provost have addressed the Faculty Senate, and the President has met with the entire faculty in a special forum to discuss these issues. Both the President and the Provost have met together and separately with the University Faculty Committee and with the Financial Policies Committee on several occasions. While not all faculty agree with every decision, there is much appreciation for the openness of the discussion.

The University Faculty Senate passed a resolution asking that there be transparency concerning the capital projects on the campus. The President responded by constructing a link on CUINFO to a site with the status of all approved projects – with a description of the rationale for proceeding and a description of the funding. The Senate was very appreciative of this response. There is a general feeling among the faculty that the President and Provost have been very transparent, and this transparency has enhanced the mutual trust required to deal with the budget difficulties.

**Academic Calendar:** The Educational Policy Committee of university faculty has been considering a change in the academic calendar. They have consulted with the various constituencies in the university (undergraduate students, graduate and professional students, employees and faculty). The Faculty Senate recommended to the provost a

minor change in the fall term calendar: that classes commence on a Wednesday instead of on a Thursday, and that Labor Day be taken as a holiday – with no classes to be held on Labor Day. That recommendation is currently with the Provost.

Additionally, there is now momentum to consider more significant changes to the academic calendar. There are many issues: the fall term is now shorter than the spring term; Martin Luther King Day is not yet recognized as a holiday at Cornell; Cornell breaks are currently out of synchrony with Ithaca public schools; the Wednesday before Thanksgiving should be part of Thanksgiving break. The University Faculty will evaluate the whole calendar during 2009-2010.

**Strategic Planning:** The Provost has discussed the approach to strategic planning with the University Faculty Committee, the Financial Policies Committee, and the Faculty Trustees. Those discussions have been frank, honest and confidential. Such discussions provide an important mechanism for the Provost to learn faculty opinion. We realize that there are very difficult and controversial decisions to be made during the next year. While it's difficult to believe that any of these decisions will be popular, knowledge that there has been faculty consultation will contribute significantly to campus morale and will lessen resistance.

**Transparency.** The President has intentionally elevated the transparency of this administration. For example, he consulted with the University Faculty Committee about the search committee for the Provost and made some adjustments to the composition of that group as a result. That action enhanced interactions between the faculty and the President and also generated considerable good will for the new Provost. We know that the next several years will be difficult. We have appreciated the degree of transparency exhibited by the President and the Provost during these budget difficulties. The vast majority of faculty want to contribute to the solutions. Due at least in part to this transparency, the interaction between the Administration and the University Faculty is as good now as I can ever remember. We're appreciative and will work with the administration to retain the excellence that is Cornell.