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UNIVERSITY**

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23 June 1999

To: Associate Dean Kathleen M. Rasmussen
From: Kerry H. Cook, Associate Professor *KHC*
Re: Committee on Educational Policy

The Committee on Educational Policy was not called into service during the 1998/99 academic year.

Dean Cooke suggested two possible agenda items, but neither was acted on.

One suggested item was the issue of fair access to computing resources. It is my understanding that a student raised this issue within the Engineering College, and that the student felt that the Engineering College's policy that no student would be penalized academically for not owning a computer was being violated. Dean Cooke wrote to me that a statement of the problem would be forwarded from Susan Murphy for the Committee to consider. Since this statement was never received by me, the Committee on Academic Policy was not convened.

The second suggested agenda item was to reconsider the policy of reporting median grades. Dean Cooke reported to me that Janet Gray, Associate University Registrar, was concerned that this information was being abused since the accessing of this information occurs mainly during pre-registration time. Since this eventuality had been discussed thoroughly in the course of the Faculty Senate's decision making process concerning median grade reporting, I declined to activate the Committee on Educational Policy over this issue.

Senate Committee on Educational Policies
Summary of Activities
Academic Year 1999-2000

Richard S. Galik, Chair
May 2000

The members of the committee are listed at the end of this report. It was an active year, with the committee meeting in person on nine occasions (Sept/Oct/Nov/Dec/Jan/Feb/Mar(twice)/Apr) and having many discussions via electronic mail.

There were many items discussed, but three of them dominated our time and I will first describe these.

In the fall we wrestled with a response to the growing problem of companies providing copies of faculty lecture notes on the web without approval of the faculty member. I presented our preliminary motion at the November meeting of the Senate. Faculty and University Counsel comments were then taken into consideration and we produced a resolution on the matter for the December meeting; committee member Robert Kay led the discussion in my absence. I have copied the motion, as amended and approved, at the end of this document.

The effect of this legislation has been mixed. Our action, coupled with those at other institutions, has caused at least one of the companies to change its mode of operation and secure faculty approval for note-taking. On the other hand, unauthorized note-taking has continued and the inability to identify the note-taker has made implementation of the legislation difficult.

Our second item, which bridged the two semesters, involved the "free time" of students. This includes, but is not limited to, the 4:30-7:30PM hours Monday through Thursday. After hearing from several constituencies, including a visit from members of the Department of Athletics and Physical Education, we drafted a memo, based on existing legislation, that reinforced the significance of this free time but also noted the importance of students having the academic day available for devotion to their studies. A copy of the memo is attached at the end of this summary report.

**Faculty Senate
Educational Policies Committee
1999-2000**

Carole Bisogni

Debra Fried

Richard Galik (chair)

Douglas Gurak

Ali Hadi

Robert Kay

Susan Piliero (spring 2000 only)

Charles Seyler

Dave Stipanuk

Kathy Rasmussen (ex officio)

J. Robert Cooke (ex officio)

Statement on University "Free Time"
Faculty Senate Educational Policies Committee
Spring 2000

University faculty legislation mandates that certain hours be free of formal undergraduate classes and laboratory exercises; as a reminder, the wording of that legislation is attached.

Our committee believes having such free time is not only wise but also vital to the development of our students. These hours are used for extra-curricular activities, including performances and athletics, for work time, especially in the area of dining services, and for just "being", whether with friends or alone. Given the increasing number of evening classes and evening examinations, this free time is more important than ever.

Of course, not just the individual students benefit from knowing that these hours will be free of academic responsibilities. Teams and their coaches need to know who will be available for practice; conductors and directors need to be able to plan rehearsals; supervisors need to be able to organize work crews. Clearly the activities of the university as a whole, which certainly include more than just academics, need to have such free time clearly defined and rigorously maintained.

Therefore this committee wishes to remind all faculty, administration and staff that scheduling regular academic activities in these periods of free time must be avoided, unless special arrangements have been made, as detailed in the attached legislation.

On the "other side", is it important for those organizing extracurricular activities to recognize that the primary function of the university is education. Students should not be so burdened with non-academic commitments (such as to a team or club) in the early morning or in the late evening that they are unable to participate with their full attention and energy during the academic day. Further, scheduling such extra-curricular activities during the times reserved for classes often forces students to make difficult choices that may hinder their academic progress.

Senate Committee on Educational Policy

Summary of Activities

Academic Year 2000-2001

Susan C. Piliero, Chair

June 2001

The Senate Committee on Educational Policy (EPC) had an active year, meeting, on average, biweekly throughout the spring and fall semesters. The items that consumed most of the Committee's time were the Academic Calendar, classes on Labor Day, and Evening Prelims. Also considered was whether a recent grading policy established in the law school conflicted with University grading policy.

Labor Day and other holidays during the Academic year

In response to the concerns of the Student Assembly regarding the University Calendar, much of the fall semester was spent discussing ways in which more breaks from classes could be included in the academic calendar. SA representatives were invited to attend several meetings of the EPC to share their concerns and present their priorities. These concerns included the current policy of holding classes on Labor Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and breaking up the long stretch of class days during the spring term.

The EPC focused primarily on Labor Day, consulting with the Student Assembly (SA), Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA), University Assembly, the Dean of ILR, University Counsel, and individual students. A concern related to holding class on Labor Day is the current length of the fall semester. The EPC concluded that that canceling classes on Labor Day without scheduling a day of classes elsewhere in the semester could result in Cornell's failure to comply with the NY State Regents requirements for granting academic credit. Thus, the Committee concluded that the options reduced to three:

- a) Make no changes to the current academic calendar with respect to holding classes on Labor Day.
- b) If the Wednesday before the start of classes becomes available due to efficiencies in the registration process, and if programming conflicts can be eliminated (e.g. new student orientation), then move Labor Day classes, when feasible, to the Wednesday before the traditional start of classes.
- c) Make no change in the current calendar. The EPC would join with the Dean of Faculty in encouraging faculty to allow students, whenever feasible, to make up the class if the student wishes to honor Labor Day. Hold science and other labs as scheduled.

After due consideration, all of the Assemblies voted in favor of the status quo, Option a. Concern that Option b would present hardship for students who relied on summer work to help finance their education, and that Option c would create chaos with the start-up of the semester, and create an unfair burden for those graduate TAs who would have to conduct labs on Labor Day, were given as reasons for favoring Option a. The EPC thus endorsed Option a and recommended that no change be made to the policy of holding classes on Labor Day.

Academic Calendar

The second major agenda item involved the approval of the University Academic Calendar through 2005. Given the continued deliberations over the Labor Day policy, the Committee first brought a resolution to the UFS to adopt the Dean of Faculty's proposed dates for

Cornell Commencement for academic years 2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. With the Labor Day issue resolved, the EPC then brought a resolution to the UFS to endorse the Academic Calendar for the years 2002-2003, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 as proposed by the Provost.

In its report to the Faculty Senate on Evening Prelims, the EPC presented its concerns about the overall compression of the academic calendar. Changes to the calendar that lead to further compression should be discouraged. The complete report on Evening Prelims and Compression of the Academic Calendar is appended to this summary report.

Evening Prelims

A goal of the EPC for the academic year, as included In the Committee's 1999-2000 summary report, was to produce a memo on evening examinations, including guidelines regarding review sessions and the class hour replaced by the examination.

A significant amount of time was spent in analyzing the problem of student stress related to evening prelims. One of the first steps the committee took was to explore the claim made by a University ad hoc committee on Student Stress that evening prelims contribute significantly to increasing stress levels for students. The EPC conducted its own informal survey of students in physics, mathematics, and engineering, and found that the response to evening prelims can best be described as mixed. While there are some students who dislike evening academic activities of any sort, the majority of students do not feel that the evening hours are overused for classes and exams, and many prefer evening exams to in-class exams.

The primary reason students cite for supporting evening exams is the possibility of extended time for testing, deemed critical on tests of critical thinking, reasoning, and problem solving.

Of the thousands of courses that are offered at Cornell, the number of courses with scheduled evening prelims that cause conflicts for students is small. Only 98 students had conflicts with scheduled evening prelims in Fall, 2000; half of these students were engineering undergraduates. One recommendation is to work further with instructors of courses with known evening prelim conflicts. Bob Cooke, Dean of Faculty, is confident that these conflicts can be minimized further, and even eliminated, and has agreed to continue his efforts in this area.

Even without actual conflicts, there are certain weeks that tend to have clusters of evening prelims for students, a significant source of stress for students. Many hundreds of students find themselves spinning out of control because of two or more major prelims in a single week.

After considerable study and discussion, the EPC concluded that evening prelims are essential to Cornell's educational enterprise. Nevertheless, the Committee recommends that faculty members explore other times during the week for holding review sessions, such as the underutilized 8:00 and 3:35 class periods. The complete report on Evening Prelims and the Compression of the Academic Calendar is appended to this summary report.

Setting Course Average Caps in the Law School

At the end of the spring semester the EPC was asked to determine whether a recently passed Law School grading policy was in violation of University Faculty grading policy. In order to address the problem of grade inflation in the Law School, a grading policy committee recommended to the Dean of the Law School that course means not exceed a maximum of 3.35. In the event that an instructor exceeds this mean, it Dean would have the right to adjust course grades to comply with the recommended cap.

The EPC supported the Dean of Faculty's view that such policy violated the University policy on grading, which stipulates instructors are the final arbiters of student grades. The EPC

has agreed to work with members of the Law School faculty to address the problem of grade inflation without conflicting with the University's grading policy. A copy of the memorandum from the EPC to the Dean of Faculty on the Law School Grading Policy is appended to this summary report.

Other Agenda Items

The Committee has discussed various topics that may merit further consideration in the future. These topics include:

- Residency requirements vs. high credit-hour loads carried by some students, especially students in engineering. Are the high course loads related to student stress? Five out of the last 8 students who committed suicide were of Asian descent. Were these students undergraduates? Were they taking heavy loads? If so, should we inform advisors of this concern? Many Asian students are required by their sponsors to finish their undergraduate work in three years (along the lines of the Oxford model).
- Student fees for labs, instructional materials, gym, etc. - students tend to find these small extra fees extremely annoying. Can/should we eliminate these fees?
- Finals during study period - they are going on. How do we curb these exams? Do we want to curb them?
- North campus - dorms, academic activities - what is the role of the faculty in determining academic activities? For example, the North campus freshman reading project, mandating a reading assignment for all freshmen - should the faculty be involved in such decisions? The line between faculty and administrative responsibilities for academic activities is getting blurred.

Faculty Senate
Committee on Educational Policy
2000-2001

Carole Bisogni
Debra Fried
Ray Bryant
Richard Galik (chair, fall term)
Douglas Gurak
Michael Gold (for Ali Hadi)
Robert Kay
Susan Piliero (spring 2001)
T. Michael Duncan (for Charles Seyler)
Charles Walcott (Assoc. Dean of the Faculty, ex officio)
J. Robert Cooke (Dean of the Faculty, ex officio)

Resolution on the Academic Calendar through 2004-2005

Whereas the Faculty Senate has the obligation to consider questions of educational policy which concern more than one college or school, and

Whereas the Senate's Committee on Educational Policy has reviewed the proposed academic calendars for academic years 2002-2003, 2003-2004, 2004-2005

Therefore, be it resolved that

The Faculty Senate endorses the Academic Calendar for the years 2002-2003, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 as shown on the attached document.

Background:

In response to concerns from the Student Assembly, The EPC has deliberated extensively over the Academic Calendar, especially with regard to Labor Day. The EPC drafted three possible resolutions and presented them to the Student Assembly, the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly, and the University Assembly.

The assemblies were mixed on their response to the resolutions. Straw votes in each of the assemblies leaned toward preserving the status quo. Last week, the SA voted formally to approve the Academic Calendar maintaining current tradeoffs. Given that decision by the SA, the EPC voted to present the proposed Academic Calendar through 2005 for Senate approval.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Piliero, Chair, SEPC
Douglas Gurak (Senator, Department of Rural Sociology)

Discussion of Evening Prelims and the Compression of the Academic Calendar

Susan C. Piliero, Chair

Faculty Senate Educational Policies Committee

May 3, 2001

In June 1998 an ad hoc committee chaired by John Ford, Dean of Students, published a report on the topic of Student Stress. The committee sought to identify the common sources and types of stress, and develop strategies for reducing its harmful effects.

One recommendation of the Committee to prevent or reduce stress was the limiting and regulating of evening prelims. According to the report, "Of all the class and exam scheduling factors contributing to unusual student stress, evening prelims seem to place the heaviest burden on students."

The Senate Educational Policies Committee has explored further the issues surrounding evening prelims, and submits that the issues may be more complicated than the mere existence of evening prelims.

- There are valid pedagogical and logistic reasons for having examinations that are longer than a class period. Pedagogical reasons include the assessment of creativity and/or problem solving, especially "real world" problems; reducing test anxiety by offering extended time; and accommodating students with disabilities who require extended time. Logistic reasons include testing multiple sections of a large course at one sitting; and reserving large lecture rooms to schedule extended testing.
- The number of evening prelims *scheduled through the Registrar's office* has remained relatively constant over the last several years. From 1995 to 1999, the number of evening prelims in the academic year has totaled 525, 545, 568, 547, and 554, respectively. The majority of these prelims are for engineering, science, and mathematics at the 100- and 200-level. The number of evening courses and subsequent student enrollments in such courses has increased. During the current semester, the total student enrollment in classes ending after 4:30 p.m. is 3,654¹
- There is a growing body of "best practices" associated with evening prelims that can help to reduce the stress associated with evening prelims, such as published make-up dates early in the semester, and cooperation among those faculty who teach large courses.
- Current scheduling has minimized conflicts for many students, but has not eliminated them. This is the case for more disciplines than for others: for example, while an analysis of freshman schedules showed that 98 students had scheduled evening prelim conflicts, more than half of these conflicts were for students enrolled in the College of Engineering.
- The real stress associated with evening prelims may not be that they occur in the evening, but that they cluster during the semester, and some students have two or three evening exams in one week.

¹ This does not include 875 students enrolled in physical education classes ending after 4:30 p.m.

For the Fall 2000 term, of those freshmen who were registered for courses that held scheduled evening prelims, here is the number of days between prelims for individual students²:

# of days	# students
0	98
1	24
2	706
3	249
4	163
5	1031
6	0
7	1737
8	13
9	773

- During the Fall 2000 semester³, the number of students sitting for scheduled evening prelims peaked on 9/28 and 11/16 (between 2700-2900 on each evening). Nearly one month elapsed between the start of the semester and the first scheduled evening prelim, indicative of the compression of workload that occurs as part of the academic cycle.
- The disposition of students to evening prelims is mixed. An informal written survey of 200+ students enrolled in Chemical Engineering, Physics, and Mathematics courses during the spring 2001 semester⁴ revealed that, while some students dislike evening prelims, others find them essential for juggling the demands of classes and work. Some students feel they are more alert and focused in the evening, while for other students, the opposite is true. Many students surveyed preferred having extended time for testing, and therefore tolerate evening prelims. Some like the kind of testing that can be conducted during extended periods, and find that such exams are more consistent with stated course objectives than are exams that can be adapted to a 50-minute class period.
- One clear outcome from the results of the surveys conducted this spring: students view prelims as valuable checkpoints that enable both instructors and students to assess their progress and focus on problem areas, and prefer prelims to final exams only. Overall, it appears that Cornell students value early, frequent, and varied assessment.
- Evening examinations should be substitutes for in-class exams, not additions to the course schedule. For courses with 3 evening 90-minute prelims, the net gain in contact hours is 270 minutes. For a 4-credit course with four 50-minute lectures per week, this can be translated as more than one extra WEEK of classes compressed into the regular semester.
- Faculty legislation requires that review sessions CANNOT be scheduled after 4:30 p.m. on any day unless an alternate session is made available for those with conflicts, except as approved by the College Dean.

² Analysis by J. Robert Cooke, Dean of Faculty

³ Ibid.

⁴ Surveys conducted by Professors M. Duncan, R. Galik, and S. Piliero.

- Finally, it should be noted that the semester has undergone a considerable amount of compression, which has created a stressful schedule for the entire academic community. The number of days in the semester, for example, is at or close to the required minimum. Friday afternoon or Saturday classes are increasingly rare, resulting in a horizontal compression of the school week. Furthermore, classes offered at 8:00 and 3:35 account for a small percentage of the 3,000 classes offered each semester. With the free time policy eliminating the hours of 4:30 – 7:30 for undergraduate instruction, the academic day is compressed vertically. It is little wonder that conflicts have become ubiquitous.

Recommendations

1. The Faculty is urged to weigh the potential advantages of evening examinations versus the stress these exams may cause for many students. Alternatives to evening prelims, such as more frequent in-class assessments, could both relieve some of the stress of taking heavily weighted evening exams and provide more frequent feedback to students.
2. Efforts to minimize conflicts for students with evening prelims should be increased. As well, analysis of common course loads for students in engineering, mathematics, and the sciences may identify areas where adjustments in the evening prelim schedule could relieve some prelim clustering.
3. Much of the analysis is based the official evening prelim schedule. Additional data to capture evening exams, including make-up exams, that are not on the official evening exam schedule should be collected and included in the on going analysis.
4. A guide on best practices for courses with evening prelims should be developed and made available to the faculty.
5. Further exploration of the "calendar compression" phenomenon should be encouraged. At a minimum, the Committee recommends that any further compression of the semester should be discouraged.
6. If review is considered an important aspect of instruction, the Committee encourages the faculty to schedule reviews as part of the course design, and hold them during normal class meeting times, thus ensuring that conflicts are eliminated and faculty and students are not burdened with additional evening meetings. Alternately, the faculty is encouraged to explore other time slots during the day that are known to be underscheduled, such as 3: 35 - 4:25 p.m. and 8:00 - 8:50 a.m., to hold review sessions.

May 7, 2001

TO: J. Robert Cooke
Dean of Faculty

FR: Susan C. Piliero, Chair
Senate Educational Policy Committee

RE: Law School Grading Policy

Professors Steven Shiffrin and Martha Fineman from the law school requested the opportunity to meet with the University Faculty Senate's Educational Policy Committee (EPC) at the Committee's regularly scheduled meeting on May 3, 2001. At this meeting they briefed the Committee on a grading policy that has been approved by the Law School faculty, and requested that the Committee consider whether this policy is in conflict with University policy.

Background

On April 30, a law school Committee on Grading recommended to the law faculty that it accept the Committee's report and recommendations on grading policy. The report reiterated the existing policy (first adopted in 1997) regarding grading in all law school courses, seminars and clinics, and recommended some changes to the current policy. Some key provisions of the report include the following:

- Faculty members will grade courses (including seminars and problem courses) so that the mean grade for J.D. students in the course does not exceed 3.35.
- If the mean grade in any course exceeds 3.35, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs shall request the instructor to adjust the grades to conform to the recommended mean. In the event of continued noncompliance, the Associate Dean has the right to mechanically adjust the grades so that they conform to the recommended mean.
- The Associate Dean may permit deviations from the stated mean grade cap under extraordinary and unusual circumstances.

Discussion

Professor Shiffrin explained that the rationale for this grading policy grows primarily out of a fear of grade inflation. Proponents of the policy caution that shopping for classes on the basis of grades might become more commonplace without a mandatory cap on course means. The University's grading policy, as described in the University Faculty Handbook, p. 67, stipulates that "Only the instructor of the course has the responsibility and authority to judge the quality of a student's work and assess the appropriate grade. No one can overrule instructors and require them to go against their judgement of the work."

Conclusions and Recommendations

It should be noted that the EPC chose to limit its discussion to whether or not such a college-level policy is in conflict with University policy, rather than extending consideration to the relative merits of grading caps.

It is the opinion of the Educational Policy Committee that the law school grading policy, as written, is in conflict with the University's grading policy. The EPC supports the Dean of Faculty's decision to take appropriate steps to bring the law school's grading policy in line with University rules.

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Summary of Activities
Academic Year 2001-2002
Susan C. Piliero, Chair
August 2002

The Senate Committee on Educational Policy (EPC) had an active year, meeting, twice a month for the entire academic year. Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education Isaac Kramnick attended the meetings as much as possible.

The main topics of deliberation this year were

1. A recent grading policy established in the law school that created possible conflict with University grading policy.
2. A faculty statement on academic integrity.
3. A survey of the undergraduate student body on educational policy issues, including evening prelims.
4. Course Enrollment Analysis
5. University Registrar services for Faculty.
6. Changes to the University Calendar with regard to Registration information.
7. Slope Day Programming
8. Learningrefined.com and other note-taking services

1. Law School Grading Policy

At the end of the spring 2001 semester the EPC was asked to determine whether a recently passed Law School grading policy was in violation of University Faculty grading policy. In order to address the problem of grade inflation in the Law School, a grading policy committee recommended to the Dean of the Law School that course means not exceed a maximum of 3.35. In the event that an instructor exceeds this mean, it Dean would have the right to adjust course grades to comply with the recommended cap.

The EPC supported the Dean of Faculty's view that such policy violated the University policy on grading, which stipulates instructors are the final arbiters of student grades. The EPC agreed to work with members of the Law School faculty to address the problem of grade inflation without conflicting with the University's grading policy.

At the beginning of the fall 2002 semester, the EPC was visited by Professors Steven Shiffrin and Martha Fineman of the Law School, who reported that no action had been taken in the Law school to reconsider the new policy for enforcing course mean caps. The EPC decided that send a letter to the Dean of the Law School reminded him of his obligation to bring the law school policy into compliance with University policy. Susan Piliero, chair, composed and mailed the letter to Deans Teitelbaum and Siliciano on September 27 (see appendix).

Subsequent meetings with the law deans, primarily Vice Dean Siliciano, revealed that the law faculty has been split over the grading policy. Dean Siliciano reported that the majority of law faculty members agree that a mandatory policy is important; the split has been over whether seminars should be included. According to the law school administration, the majority of law faculty are not concerned with enforcing a mandatory grade cap by changing grades when the course mean exceeds the cap. The law school administration consulted with University Counsel and found backing for its policy.

The EPC's objection to the policy is that it that allows an administrator to change grades. The EPC's interpretation of the faculty legislation is that only instructor of

enrollment after 2:00 p.m. Dean of Faculty Bob Cooke prepared a set of observations, with graphical representations, based on the data. The EPC agreed that a letter should be sent to VP Susan Murphy regarding the class enrollment, along with a request to regulate the noise levels (read: no amplified music) on Libe Slope before 2:00 p.m., along with Dean Cooke's report. A copy of the letter from Susan Piliero to Susan Murphy, and Dean Cooke's data analysis, is included in the appendix.

8. Learningrefined.com and other Note-taking Services

A&S Associate Dean Lynne Abel reported that she had received complaints from A&S faculty on the appropriateness of policies and services offered by Learningrefined.com, a web-based notetaking service. At Professor Piliero's request, Dean Abel brought the matter to the A&S EPC, which Dean Abel chairs. The major point of discussion was the company's policy to compensate faculty for their use of Learningrefined.com's notetaking services.

The A&S EPC determined that the company's policy of awarding 15% compensation to participating faculty was not proper, since it violated University policy. The company has promised to cease and desist from paying instructors, not only A&S faculty, but any instructor at Cornell University.

Given that Dean Abel successfully convinced the note-taking service to change its compensation policy for all Cornell faculty and academic staff, there was no additional action needed on the part of the Senate EPC.

FUTURE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION OR ACTION:

1. Final Exam policy: Should there be changes to the current final exam policy? Currently, faculty members are urged to avoid requiring students to sit for three final exams in a 24-hour period. Should that recommendation become policy? Should the recommendation be revised to apply to three exams on one day? Should the faculty member in the middle be the one to provide the makeup, thus reducing the need for negotiation? Should JGSM and law final exams be included in the final exam schedule, since many undergraduates elect these courses?
2. Student survey on educational policy issues, including free time, evening prelims, and athletics.
3. The current daytime class schedule.

Senate Education Policy Committee, 2001-2002

	<u>Term</u>	<u>College</u>
Robert Kay	2002	ENG
Michael Gold	2002	ILR
Charles Seyler	2002	ENG
Susan Piliero	2003	CALS, Chair 01-02
Lynne Abel	2004	A&S
Rosemary Avery	2004	CHE
Dotsevi Sogah	2004	A&S
Kenneth Brown	2004	A&S (resigned May 2002 to become chair of Mathematics Department)

J. Robert Cooke, Dean of the Faculty, ex officio

Charles Walcott, Associate Dean and Secretary of the Faculty, ex officio

Isaac Kramnick, Associate Provost for Undergraduate education, invited participant