

### 3. DISCUSSION OF REVIEW OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Professor Ted O'Donoghue, Department of Economics: "For those of you who don't know me, I'm Ted O'Donoghue, a faculty member in the economics department. I am also currently the senior associate dean for social sciences in the College of Arts and Sciences. So we are here to talk to you about the review of social sciences that are upcoming.

Just to give you a little bit of background, there have been a variety of reports assessing the social sciences at Cornell over the years. So there was an internal provost task force in 1999, there was a provost external advisory committee in 2006, there was the internal social science task force in 2009.

"In addition, the other reports more focused on the subparts of the social sciences, reports on economics, reports on the public policy school. The broader reports all had a similar message that was expressed well by the 2006 committee. And if you read the charge that was handed out, we put in a couple quotes there, but sort of the key idea is that Cornell is known for strength in engineering the sciences and humanities, but less so in the social sciences. So the need to bring the social sciences up on par with the other areas of Cornell.

"And also, sort of pointing out that it is not just the lack of resources being sent to the social sciences, so again, the quote from the 2006 committee: The whole of the social sciences at Cornell is not as great as the sum of their parts.

"So that committee made a number of recommendations in 2006, which sort of led to a renewed focus in the social sciences, some changes since then, perhaps most notably, the reorganization of the economics department. And here we are at the ten-year milestone and, at this ten-year milestone, the provost called for another external committee to sort of assess where we are, to take stock of how successful have we been and to get advice on sort of what are the next steps to continue to improve the social sciences at Cornell.

"So the process moving forward, we are currently at a stage of information gathering, so we put together the charge that was handed out, and now we are going around, talking about the charge, getting feedback on the process. So last week, Judy and I spoke at the provost's academic leadership conference to college deans, department chairs, other leaders to get their feedback. Today we are here to get feedback from the faculty senate, all of you.

"Over the upcoming weeks, Judy and I are happy to come meet with departments, programs, other units that want to give us feedback, and we also invite e-mail feedback. So you will notice on the charge we have sent out, we have put together an e-mail address, [ssreview@cornell.edu](mailto:ssreview@cornell.edu), that you can send us feedback that way as well.

"In a few weeks, after we have collected a lot of feedback, the next step, the provost will appoint an internal committee that will assemble a report on the social sciences at Cornell. We are emphasizing this is meant to be a descriptive report, so not a report that's critiquing the social sciences at Cornell or being prescriptive. That's sort of what we want from the external committee. We want a sense of how things are at Cornell.

“Then finally, the provost will appoint an external committee of highly distinguished scholars that will be given this descriptive report, invited to come to campus and talk with people, and then give us their assessment of the social sciences at Cornell and what we can do to further distinguish the social sciences at Cornell.

“So two last comments before I open it up to all of you: One is we do invite feedback from people on the composition of both those committees, the internal committee and external committees. So if you have ideas, feel free to send it our way. You can use that e-mail address.

“And second, just since we have been asked this question in multiple venues now, I want to say from the outset we don't have a sort of preset outcome here. We are out to gather information and then to get advice from an external committee on what we should be doing next to improve the social sciences at Cornell. So on that note, let me open up to your feedback.”

Professor N'Dri Assie-Lumumba, Africana Studies: “I wonder what is the unit of analysis, if you are using the social science department as the unit of analysis, how do you have the input of consider those social scientists who are in multidisciplinary programs?”

Professor O'Donoghue: “That's a very good question, something we are starting to think about a lot, continuing to think about. So some of the initial ideas we have had, one of the things we are planning to do is to work through the graduate fields, so that is to start with sort of the obvious core social science departments in the fields there, but to work through the linkages through the fields to find social sciences elsewhere.

“So we are trying to figure out exactly what is the right scope. We don't want it to be too broad. Otherwise, the committee won't be able to say much, but we also don't want it to be really narrow, so we are working on that. And other ideas for how to sort of figure out that scope are welcome.”

Professor Abby Cohn, Department of Linguistics: “I have kind of a parallel question, which is: how do you identify which departments are social sciences. Linguistics is this odd field, sometimes it's considered social sciences. I like to think of it as a humanistic study using natural science methodology, so what about Linguistics, Anthropology? It wasn't clear from the charge how some of the fields are –”

Professor O'Donoghue: “So again, I think it's something we are working on. I can tell you Linguistics falls in the social sciences. It would be one of the six social science departments; Anthropology as well. Again, we are sort of working on that. So it's on our mind and we need to come up with a good way to identify what exactly the right set of places to look are.

Professor Matthew Evangelista, Department of Government: “I just wanted to express appreciation for your coming here and transparency of this initiative, which seems to conform to our norms of governance, which we haven't always seen. And I think it's an important, potentially hopeful, change.

“I just wanted to make a couple of comments about what you discussed as the way of getting feedback. I remember in Charlie Van Loan's campaign for dean of faculty, he mentioned that

sometimes there are e-mail addresses to which we can send our comments, and they are kept confidential or it's a one-way process, or perhaps bilateral, if there's a response to it. Would it be possible to have some kind of online forum, where you could see what other people are having to say about this issue?

“And then a specific suggestion, maybe you have already decided on it, to make public the names of the members of that internal committee, so that there can be a fuller discussion, and that it won't be any kind of secret process, the way some of the previous initiatives seemed to have been. Thank you. Vice Provost Judith Appleton: “It is not the intent to have a closed committee. It's meant to be known to everybody who's on the committee. And I would like to just thank those of you who have already sent nominations for membership on either committee. We have a lot of nominations in already and some input that's come in already, so thank you for that.”

Professor Richard Bensel, Department of Government: “This is a very nice document: Charge, scope, process, recommendations. Could you say something about the process after the recommendations are made? Are you going to come back to the faculty senate with those recommendations? Is there going to be involvement of the faculty senate in those recommendations? How do you envision the university acting upon the recommendations when they're made?”

Acting President and Provost Michael Kotlikoff: “Mike Kotlikoff, either acting president or provost, whichever you prefer. One thing I can commit to, Richard, is that the report will be submitted back to the faculty senate, so it will be a public report available to the faculty senate. It's a little hard to predict what the actions will be without the report, obviously, but I think the intent -- and we just had a discussion of this in the UFC and Governance Committee of the Faculty Senate -- is to have this report available for the faculty senate to consider and make any recommendations that they choose.”

Professor Risa Lieberwitz, ILR: “I wanted to continue on the vein of what the questions were and the response from Mike Kotlikoff. So I'm really glad to hear Mike talk about the intent to send the report back to the senate for our consideration and for the senate's responses, and it seems to me it would also be good to think about amending the charge so that we add that, and also add that at earlier stages, like with the internal committee.

“And this is something we discussed today in the Faculty Governance Committee, for that internal committee that we have something like Nominations and Elections Committee from the senate putting X number, whatever number of people onto the internal committee and perhaps members of standing committees, which are relevant from the senate having representation on that internal committee.

“And then also, at different stages, it would probably be good to report back, what does the internal committee's report say, and report back to the senate.”

Professor O'Donoghue: “Thanks. Those seem like good points.”

Professor Lieberwitz: “Okay, thanks.”

Speaker Lewenstein: “Other questions? You have final comments?”

Professor O'Donoghue: "Please send feedback and nominations. Thank you."

Speaker Lewenstein: "Thank you very much. We are well ahead of schedule now, and I will allocate that time to a couple of the other items, adding five minutes each to the next items.

"The next item on the agenda is the question of graduate student unionization, where Acting President and Provost Michael Kotlikoff; Senior Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, Barb Knuth; and from the graduate student unionization group, Alana Staiti are here. I don't know how you have arranged your time."