Faculty Senate Resolution on Cornell Leadership in Honesty and Reliable Knowledge

The New Hork Times https://nyti.ms/2kMuAzH

The Opinion Pages

American Universities Must Take a Stand

Leon Botstein

ON CAMPUS FEB. 8, 2017

How can the university turn a blind eye to ... the capacity to dress falsehood up as truth and reject the fruits of reasoned argument, evidence and rigorous verification?

Standing up for the truth — which is, after all, higher education's business — might appear to be an act of political partisanship. But this is not about political parties. It is about the proper role of the academy in a troubling time.

Filippo Menczer (Computer Science & Informatics, Indiana U. Bloomington)

Time Magazine 11/28/16

We need all hands on deck: Computer scientists, social scientists, economists, journalists and industry partners must work together to stand firm against the spread of misinformation.

http://time.com/4583475/fake-news-effective/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=flipboard

Robert Reich (Public Policy, UC Berkeley)

Newsweek 3/2/17

Be vigilant. Know the truth and spread it. The media should stop mincing words.

http://www.newsweek.com/robert-reich-how-trump-lies-about-his-many-lies-562520?rx=us

Concrete leadership actions by Cornell

Off-campus education and outreach

- Instructional materials on discriminating fact from opinion, validating facts, and establishing what is reliable knowledge: K – college, <u>free</u>.
- Instructional materials to explain how scholars seek the truth in different fields.
- "Popular" videos on reliable knowledge: scientific method, efforts to undermine reliable knowledge (tobacco & cancer, etc.), fake news, etc.

On-campus education

- Encourage teaching <u>explicitly</u> in individual classes: how do we gain reliable knowledge in this domain?
- Campus-wide: weekly seminars, forums.

Public structures

- Web pages (at Cornell Libraries?) providing links to reliable information on socially relevant current questions ("reference librarians to the world").
- Create standards for online journalism to provide links to supporting information and primary sources.
- Support partnerships between academia and public communication professionals, on digital communications challenges in a democratic society.

Cornell Leadership in Honesty and Reliable Knowledge

Whereas dishonesty, falsehoods, and the <u>distortion or suppression of reliable</u> <u>knowledge have become critical public issues of particular urgency;</u>

Whereas a central mission of colleges and universities is the discovery, validation, communication, and preservation of reliable knowledge;

Whereas social media, the internet, and other forms of digital communication are dramatically changing the patterns of our communication in a manner that "blurs the distinction between fact and fiction" and creates conditions where <u>reliable knowledge is often drowned out by large volumes of false information;</u>

Whereas Cornell University has a unique position as both a private and land-grant university with an official "...mission to discover, preserve, and disseminate knowledge; [to] produce creative work; and [to] promote a culture of broad inquiry throughout and beyond the Cornell community," and "...through public service, to enhance the lives and livelihoods of our students, the people of New York, and others around the world";

Therefore be it resolved that Cornell university leadership and faculty should expand and initiate <u>educational activities</u>, <u>both on- and off-campus</u>, to explain established academic practices for discriminating between fact and opinion, validating facts, establishing what is reliable knowledge, and exposing the communication practices that distort, confuse, and seek to repress or censor reliable knowledge.

Be it further resolved that Cornell faculty and leadership should <u>work with</u> <u>communication experts, journalists, and other relevant groups</u> to develop innovative means, appropriate to the changing technology of communicating reliable knowledge with the public.

Be it further resolved that the Cornell leadership <u>should collaborate with other colleges and universities to forward these objectives.</u>

Next steps

Any Senators who would like to co-sponsor, or participate with the group preparing this resolution, please contact me asap: spe2@cornell.edu

Final resolution submitted by March 12; Dean of Faculty website opens a web page for faculty comment.

Appendix to the Resolution (to be posted) will list suggestions for specific concrete actions.

Resolution is brought to the Senate on April 12