

Background: Resolution on the Vetting of IDDP's

I. The Fundamental Issue

Collaborative research, scholarship, and creative endeavor are crucial practices to advance human rights and freedoms, and we affirm the ability and the responsibility of faculty and scholars to reach across all kinds of divisions to forge scholarly and creative collaborations. Degree-granting programs, however, are separate from the activities of research and scholarship; they are business structures to manage, control, and account for credit hours, staffing, and revenue.

II. The Current Process

The current process for vetting International Dual Degree Programs (IDDPs) involves the following:

- a. According to a [document of May 31, 2012](#), proposals for new or modified degree programs that involve non-Cornell entities are referred to the Committee on Academic Programs and Policies (CAPP). CAPP's charge is to review formal proposals for new academic programs and policies that are independent of or extend beyond the single or joint jurisdiction of a school or college faculty.
- b. The parties to an IDDP sign a Memorandum of Agreement. This MOA includes the following:

SECTION 1: ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Generally accepted principles of academic freedom will be applicable to all educational and research activities undertaken by, or under the direction of, faculty who participate in the projects contemplated by this MOA.

SECTION 2: NON-DISCRIMINATION

Cornell and Collaborator agree not to discriminate against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. However, participants will be cognizant of and abide by the laws of the host country. Cornell and Collaborator shall abide by these principles in the administration of this MOA, and neither institution shall impose criteria for the exchange of faculty or students which would violate the principles of nondiscrimination. Breach of this covenant may be regarded as a material breach of this MOA and any related Project Agreement.

So, international partners attest their commitment to academic freedom and non-discrimination. However, the vetting process includes no specific steps to investigate and assess the credibility of a proposed partner's attestation, or to assess the potential ethical and human-rights implications of proceeding with an alliance.

III. New Risks

Violations of ethical and human rights are occurring at increasing rates across the world and have been over the past 15 years. According to the Freedom House 2020 report,

2019 was the 14th consecutive year of decline in global freedom... [T]he brutality of autocratic regimes and the ethical decay of democratic powers are combining to make the world increasingly hostile to fresh demands for better governance....

Additionally, in February 2017, Garry Kasparov and Thor Halvorssen, writing in the *Washington Post*, warned:

According to the Human Rights Foundation's research, the citizens of 94 countries suffer under non-democratic regimes, meaning that 3.97 billion people are currently controlled by tyrants, absolute monarchs, military juntas or competitive authoritarians. That's 53 percent of the world's population. Statistically, then, authoritarianism is one of the largest — if not the largest — challenges facing humanity... Today, authoritarians rule an increasingly large part of the globe, but the leaders of the free world lack the motivation and gumption to create a new U.N.-style League of Democracies. 2

Larry Diamond, Professor of Political Science at Stanford University and a Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, at the Hoover Institution, and the Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, argues that: "Among states with populations of more than one-million people, the share of electoral democracies has recently fallen to less than half for the first time since the very early days of the post-Cold War world." 3

IV. Additional Risks

Additionally, recent transitions toward authoritarian and repressive governance have not resulted from armed takeover but have rather occurred, according to Diamond, as "incremental and subtle deterioration," and the line between democratic and authoritarian regimes grows increasingly porous and ill-defined.

As anti-democratic and authoritarian regimes worldwide increase in number and power, they currently do so without cutting ties with democratic countries, and without fearing the influence of such countries. Joshua Keating, writing in *Slate*, describes cases in which the Chinese government, for instance, has used its influence to limit free speech in the U.S. and the U.K. According to Keating:

The most blatant examples of globalized authoritarianism are when governments actually kill or attempt to kill their critics in other countries, as Saudi Arabia did in the case of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, or Russia allegedly did to Sergei Skripal, the former spy who was poisoned along with his daughter in England in 2018.... But other expressions of authoritarian power are becoming much more subtle and difficult to trace.

World superpowers have, for example, newfound abilities to censor or chill speech outside their borders. By acting as gatekeeper to the massive Chinese audience, for example, the country's government has essentially acquired final cut privileges on films

shown abroad as well as in China...Leaders of authoritarian countries are increasingly able to pressure and silence critics in the “free” world. 4

V. Concerns in the U.S.

Human rights violations are happening in the United States. Several states have or are currently enacting legislation that restricts the voting rights of U.S. citizens. According to the *New York Times*:

The avalanche of [new voting-related] legislation...raises fundamental questions about the ability of a minority of voters to exert majority control in American politics... The [Republican] party’s battle in the past decade to raise barriers to voting, principally among minorities, young people and other Democrat-leaning groups, has been waged under the banner of stopping voter fraud that multiple studies have shown barely exists.

“The typical response by a losing party in a functioning democracy is that they alter their platform to make it more appealing,” Kenneth Mayer, an expert on voting and elections at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said. “Here the response is to try to keep people from voting. It’s dangerously antidemocratic.”⁵

VI. The University’s Pledge to Address Injustice in the U.S.

The University is currently embarking on new measures to address and counter the racist injustice and violence that has been ongoing in the U.S. for centuries. Cornell President Martha Pollock issued a statement on May 29, 2020, affirming:

I want to make clear, both personally and on behalf of Cornell, that we will do all we can as a university to address this scourge of racism. We will address it directly in our educational programs, in our research and in our engagement and related activities, working through the ways we know best to push for a world that is equitable and kind; where people do not have to fear for their lives because of the color of their skin; and where everyone has the same opportunities to grow, thrive and enjoy their lives.

To this end, work is underway on a [Center for Anti-Racist, Just, and Equitable Futures](#). The final report of the Working Group developing this Center states that:

Our ability to understand and to challenge racism(s) depends on recognizing both their respective specificities in our local contexts, and the ways in which they become articulated across time and space.

VII. Conclusion

Given President Pollock’s commitment to address “this scourge of racism,” and given the importance of our mission as an educational institution, we must take action to ensure that *academic freedom* and *non-discrimination* cannot be empty phrases, and cannot be equivocated. The future of this institution depends on these words to mean what they say.

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- 1: Repucci, Sarah, "A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy," Freedom In the World 2020, Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2020/leaderless-struggle-democracy> :
 - 2: "Why the rise of authoritarianism is a global catastrophe," Washington Post, Feb. 13, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2017/02/13/why-the-rise-of-authoritarianism-is-a-global-catastrophe/>:
 - 3: Diamond, Larry, "Breaking out of the Democratic Slump." *Journal of Democracy* 31, no. 1 (2020): 36-50. doi:10.1353/jod.2020.0003:
 - 4: Joshua Keating, "Dictators Without Borders," *Slate*, Jan 21, 2020, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2020/01/authoritarianism-democracy-trump-borders.html>.
 - 5: Michael Wines, "In Statehouses, Stolen-Election Myth Fuels a G.O.P. Drive to Rewrite Rules," *the New York Times*, March 2, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/27/us/repUBLICAN-voter-suppression.html>