

A MEETING
OF THE UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14, 2021

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: A lot to do. There's the usual rules. If you speak, really keep it down to two minutes. Let's go.

We don't have an announcement, but we have a statement. This is a bit of a horrific year. We are all stressed out. We have to cut each other slack. It all started last summer with the George Floyd murder, and that whole scene is continuing. Asian-Americans are on the receiving end of a lot of hate, we had a death on our campus just last week and, of course, the pandemic. So Neema and I just wanted to make a point we are very much aware of this. We're all at our limit, and we'll just all do our best.

The first half of today's meeting is about the final reports which have come your way from the three working groups. This is probably the first time we can talk in detail about all three statements, and they are all sort of connected; but at the high level, here is what the aim is for each one of them.

For the senate, the whole idea is to amplify research and scholarship in the general areas of race, ethnicity, indigeneity and bias. For students, the aim is to produce critical thinkers, lifelong learners in all matters that concern race, indigeneity and bias; and to have a thriving member of society. For the faculty part, we have to deliver "S." That necessitates perhaps some educational initiative.

We are in the senate, and things get packaged up in resolutions. For each report, there's a corresponding resolution that we will eventually vote on. The way it's stated is, basically, do you support the recommendations in this report; yes, no, abstain, so on. That's the destination.

As we always do with resolutions, you can post comments on them, while they're pending. We produced these three one-pagers because we know how busy everybody is, so that's there for you to look at. These are very important decisions. The chairs have been informed. They will be reminded about those votes. It is incredibly important there be local discussion in your units.

Here's sort of the timeline. On the resolution pages, you can post comments. A lot will be discussed today, a lot will perhaps be discussed over the week online. There will be a meeting in another week, totally devoted to these things. Resolutions are malleable, they can be modified. The working groups are done with their business.

As we've always advertised, things show up in the senate, things might get modified. That's the phase that we are in right now. We are sort of thinking about an e-vote right after next week's meeting, but we're relaxed about that. We have seen several times, this year and in years past, where things come up, and you get delayed, things have to be clarified or modified. We are relaxed about delays.

And a reminder, just about everything we vote on in the senate is advisory, but this has been rather explicit, it's been up on the website in September, and I asked Mark for this text. It is about the process here, which is to say the senate is going to look at these three things and possibly modify them. There will be votes.

The packet is then delivered to the president and provost. It consists of the reports, possibly modified resolutions, chat, the transcripts, that goes to the president and the provost, which then, in consultation with the deans, will consider academic implications and financial resources.

In short, things get implemented at that level. We have no budget. We have paid attention to finances in the sense that we don't want to propose something that's way out

there; but basically, the details, the finances is something that takes place at the next level. There's no going back to the working groups, back to the drawing board. The drawing board is at the president and provost level, as described on this slide. What we put on that drawing board is very much up for grabs and what these meetings are going to be about. Neema.

NEEMA KUDVA: Thank you, Charlie. I'm sure people are following what's happening, everything that's posted on the faculty website. Do use the comment section there. There's already very useful feedback coming in, and just wanted to highlight that, sort of mark it again for everybody's attention.

And also, where Charlie started off, it's been and continues to be a difficult year, so there will be little bits and pieces of missteps, and I think we need to cut each other slack, as Charlie said. I wanted to be able to say that and to add that voice to Charlie's. Thank you, Charlie.

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: Okay, let's get on with the Center report. We presented this March 17th, so the slides to follow, I will probably go rapidly through them, but I wanted to mention one thing here; things can be modified. Based on some rather late feedback we received, the C Working Group prefers a title that's been different from what's been on the books for the last one or two months. The new title is Center for Racial Justice and Equitable Futures. The old one was Center for Antiracist, Just and Equitable Futures.

A notion here is the following, which is that first of all, the new title covers what the Center is striving for. There was no necessity to change the content there. Just felt that racial justice is a much more widely understood notion than antiracist future. For that reason, and perhaps some others, I'm happy to talk about using the new title.

There's the working group, a mix of students and faculty. This was the largest of the three working groups.

A reminder about why we have centers; it's because departments and schools and colleges can't do everything. Centers are a venue for collaboration. They set up infrastructure, programs and space to make things happen. Very important, centers become go-to authorities, from the outside looking in. Oftentimes, they're the face of the University when something comes up. They're symbols, the University is making a statement about what it feels is important and is doing something about it.

Our peers are doing all these sorts of things. There's a lot going on, packaged in the form of a center of this variety. A little perspective there, that our peers are in this space as well.

This is fast, because you have seen this March 17th, and most of our interest is in the other two working group reports; but just to say, centers are places where you collaborate, centers amongst themselves can actually collaborate. We look at this a lot. A reasonable concern is how is this going to affect other centers. These are all important things that will be discussed at the implementation level, I am sure. There's a very strong student component to what's being proposed. Anyway, that's it with respect to the Center, just a little bit of a review. You saw this about three weeks ago.

Let's talk first about the educational requirement for students, and then follow that up with the corresponding discussion for faculty. Now, I want to go slow and make sure we were very clear on the slides.

Again, there's the group. And let's start with a notion, which is that our peers have put together university-wide requirements. They are all menu-driven. You can go to our website and take a look at them. Other places like Penn, Michigan, and us have requirements at the college level, so both CALS and Arts and Science have requirements in this general area; but the ones you see there are university-wide, so they do exist.

We want to stress that this is a framework for developing a requirement. This will not happen overnight, so it is important to have sort of a framework for moving forward in this area. Just to highlight three attributes of it, and we'll go into some details about those in the next slides; first, it identifies a pair of learning outcomes that are to be incentivized across all the degree programs, with adequate support from the Central Administration.

Makes effective use of faculty expertise in critical research areas, and takes advantage of existing infrastructure we have, using technology for delivering content. And finally, it respects the fact that colleges and graduate fields call the shots when it comes to requirements.

We knew these things all along, especially Number 3; but in our discussions with deans and others, this becomes a pretty important thing. It's not as if the provost can declare something to be suddenly in place. It has to go through the colleges. This framework we're talking about has to pay attention to these three things or take advantage of these three things.

Two components stated in the language of learning outcomes; the first one is the student understands that structural racism, colonialism, injustice bias and their current manifestations have a historical and geographic basis. Note, this is an acknowledgment that there is a historical basis, not that you are being backed into a particular viewpoint of this or that. Clearly, if the thing plays out correctly, it will not be any kind of indoctrination. There would be some reasonable presentation of the big picture. This is in the tradition of liberal arts education, breadth of education.

The second part to all this has to do with communication skills; that you are able to communicate across differences on these issues. The slide that had all the different centers, Johns Hopkins has a place called Hard Hopkins or whatever, about how difficult these conversations are. Part of the ambition here is that our students, when they leave here, are skilled in that direction. The way they become skilled is discussion and writing in the disciplines.

That's where you spend your time, that's where you have your discussions with people who are studying similar sorts of things; roughly speaking, the content and how it's developed, and then how you deliver this.

Here are three things to keep in mind: First of all, menu versus a role to play, but be aware that menus are incredibly hard to maintain, they have a tendency to grow, they have a tendency to dilute whatever they're trying to get students to focus on. It is a mechanism, but it's, by no means, an easy one. Whatever unfolds, whenever there's a menu, there has to be care in its execution.

Second, when we're talking about something that's university-wide, technology has a role there. To infuse the literacy content into the disciplines is going to require technology. It does not mean watch a 15-minute video, then check a box. It means integrating modules in a careful way, followed with discussions and things we have experienced now for three semesters, using technology. That has to be part of the scene.

And finally, the delivery of this material must not create unfair burdens on our BIPOC faculty and students. This is a responsibility for all of us. We have to pay attention to these three things, however things unfold in the coming years.

There are these two parts you want to keep in mind. Notice, this is not a single course. A lot of the comments on the website talk about a single course. It is not the case, as I hope the next few slides will make clear. You need ways of visualizing this.

There is a literacy part, there is a discipline part. Close proximity and the intermingling of those parts are pretty essential. Over time, one can expect they will become better integrated. The next year is very important. These things take time, but I don't want to use the word jump start, but you want to get going on these things. You want to try things out. Not

everything in the proposal is going to work. Set up an environment where you try things, a well-supported environment from the Central Administration.

Let's talk about content, and then its delivery. The idea here is that we have a center. As I mentioned, all three of these proposals are connected. You have a center with programs participating in them, other centers and faculty. The idea is to produce content that can be used across the university. Of course, this requires resources. You can think in terms of some kind of library, a module that can be used by instructors. When we say these should also be accompanied by instructor guide, that sounds like a manual or whatever, but it is the fact that it's video, watching something in the group and discussing it afterwards, and guidance has to be provided.

The tendency might be to think, well, using technology to do this kind of cheapens the whole enterprise. It's not. It's used intelligently. We have to resort to technology and, if we use it intelligently, it works to our advantage. Imagine having this library of resources out there; also, maybe brand new courses that are developed. Just think about resources.

Now, you have degree programs. If the degree programs somehow integrate this material into their curriculum, that's their business. They have to be incentivized to do it, they need resources for doing it, but flexibility. As a result of Martha's July message, a lot of departments and colleges have already started developing their own material. No one says that you have to totally live off of these centrally produced resources. Flexibility is key there. You do not want to think about there being some gigantic 5,000-student single course. It's provide resources and turn the colleges loose on this, with those resources to develop programs that realize those two learning outcomes.

Let's go on to this. Again, a smaller committee, but nevertheless, one that spans an integral number of areas and colleges. Here are some high-level underlying principles. If you

want to look at our core values and the recently approved statement on free speech, the proposal squares with both of those. We have to create a climate here on campus where everyone benefits from the core values statement and the University statement on free speech.

We are not starting from ground zero in this capacity. I know -- and we have all gone through them -- there are lots of different workshops and programs and sessions. And the quality isn't uniformly good, but some of them are good. Here are two that have been produced, so there's something of a track record in this area of producing content to help us with these particular issues. That's important to remember that.

Here again is a schematic to help us reason about this. The proposal is that it is managed by OFDD, the Office of Faculty Development and Diversity. They collaborate with the Center for Teaching Innovation, the Intergroup Dialogue Project, et cetera. It sits within the provost's office.

The idea is for them to continue to develop content, as they have in the past, only at sort of a higher and broader level. Again, you think in terms of a library of resources that can be used. We have many different roles; mentor, advisor, instructor and so on, and we show up in many different settings; classrooms, labs, department meetings. There's a lot of opportunity here for development of materials to help us understand the various forces at work, when we show up in these venues in these roles. Again, don't think some kind of monolithic course that we all have to do. The idea is to produce a library of materials that can be used.

A little bit about that. The question is what's the volume of this, how many hours? We are just thinking about one or two hours a semester. That's the expectation. The venue can vary. It could be a department meeting, it could be some centrally organized things that OFDD arranges, or maybe a smaller thing with your lab. The idea is you have these resources that can be integrated into these various settings.

Over the years, you cycle through these things. There's no formulas, there's no do A, B, C, D, in that order. It all depends on you and your department and what's necessary and what makes sense. The idea that over the years, you would be acquainted to certain points of view about these issues that constitute the so-called requirement.

Another part of the proposal has to do with accountability. These are hot-button issues, but talk a little bit about the working group versus the implementation stage. These are just ideas, with some very modest amount of detail around them. The idea, then, is when we get to the provost level and discussions with the deans and others -- and I'm sure there are going to be implementation committees formed -- that these things will be carefully thought out.

One of them, for example, is course evaluations. Engineering, for example, has a DEI question on their course evaluation. We all know that course evaluations are tricky business. All these things can be weaponized to go after faculty. On the other hand, if they're implemented properly, they become settings where you learn and improve. You get back a pretty tough course evaluation, you talk about it with others, and you improve. Versions of that apply here. Rather than look at these in a worst-case these can be weaponized point of view, rather than do that, suspend your judgment, I would say, and let's see what can be done here. There's a lot of opportunity to improve how we run the university.

Here are four venues where some kind of accountability can show up. Promotion, for example; when the department chair talks to the dean once a year about what went on in the unit, some kind of accountability there. Then, every ten years, departments are evaluated formally. Again, there should be some discussion of these topics. You want to look at these or think about these as opportunities to learn from experience and to perhaps improve how things were done in the past.

I think that's the last slide. Just a reminder of where we are. You can post comments on the resolution page. A lot of them have come in today. It's really important to keep your constituency informed. Bring questions to the next meeting, and what we do thereafter is up for grabs. It depends on lots of things. The way it should be, it should depend on how our conversations go here before we vote. We vote when we're ready. That's the case.

Let's take down the slides, Jill. And we have 20 minutes or so for comments and initial remark. Of course, use the chat. I want to encourage you -- there have been detailed and excellent postings since this morning, and I hope everybody has time to read these.

Laurent.

LAURENT DUBREUIL: I assume we are discussing all three --

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: Yeah. They are all related.

LAURENT DUBREUIL: I'm in favor of the center, so I'm not saying more than that at this point. Would have lots of things to say about the mandatory requirement for faculty, but I will begin with students, because I believe it's important. As I said before, and coming from a very different tradition, where basically I could not have the freedom of studying anything as a student, I'm a supporter of the idea of the free curriculum at Cornell. I'm always against mandatory policies, as a matter of principle, but if we move into such a requirement, I don't really buy the argument that what you call menus, Charlie, are difficult to maintain. What is good at Princeton should be good at Cornell, I guess.

In Arts and Sciences, there are tons of classes every single year, each semester, that are really about the issues we are discussing, so I don't see that there is a difficulty in doing that. I'm very skeptical about the move toward technology. There was some back and forth in the chat. I'm not going to repeat it.

But I have a question for the position you take on the necessity of not having an unfair burden on BIPOC students -- just say BIPOC students, what does it mean exactly. It seems to me, if there is a mandatory requirement, then BIPOC students are going to have mandatory instruction about racism, which might raise some questions, it might raise other questions if there are exemptions based on skin color, for example.

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: Neema, you can answer that, about the IDP experience.

NEEMA KUDVA: I'm sorry. I was paying attention to the chat.

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: Laurent had a question about unfair burdens on BIPOC students in some of these discussion venues.

NEEMA KUDVA: One of the things that came up in the working group in the conversations was that we looked at successful examples of university-wide things at Cornell. The IDP, the two-and-a-half-hour IDP during first-year orientation is one of them. Then the other one is the freshman writing seminar.

When we looked at those, one of the questions that came up or one of the comments about the IDP sessions in particular was from BIPOC students and faculty who felt that they were often in the position of having to explain to their white peers, and that it was not something -- for them, it was not an ideal situation, and they didn't want to be engaged in that -

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LAURENT DUBREUIL: If I may, that was not my question.

NEEMA KUDVA: Okay. I didn't hear it.

LAURENT DUBREUIL: That's why I am allowing myself to -- my question was if we speak about an unfair burden for BIPOC students, what do we do with these mandatory courses or instruction, modules of instruction against racism, what does it mean; that all students have to

attend them in the same way? Or does it mean there are exemptions for some students? Any situation comes with a big difficulty --

NEEMA KUDVA: No, no. The working group was quite united in the understanding that we have, amongst our faculty colleagues, amongst all of you, folks who have deep subject expertise in understanding these questions. And that subject expertise must be brought to bear on how all of us begin to think about what the education is. It is not about the identity of the student to whom this is being delivered at all, in terms of an education.

It is just for all of us, whether we are brown, black, pink, white, whatever color, whatever ethnicity, whatever our nationality, that we all think about these questions of structural racism, of dispossession, colonialism, ethnicity, indigeneity, how gender intersects with it, sexuality does, and that we have expertise on the faculty and that we should really be bringing our colleagues who have the expertise at the core of the conversation, or keeping them at the core of the conversation.

LAURENT DUBREUIL: Which is why we should have classes and only classes, not modules.

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: Thanks, Laurent. Let's get on to Harold, and then Eric.

HAROLD HODES: I've got worries about the proposal for the faculty and proposal for the student. Let me just start with the faculty. Suppose someone comes here as a starting-out assistant professor, and will have a 40-year career at Cornell. Is the idea that every semester that person is here, that person is supposed to devote an hour and a half to two hours to learning more about issues concerning race and ethnicity? I mean, that's an awful lot of time over a 40-year career. There's a lot to learn, but does each starting-out assistant professor need to learn all that much? It sounds insane.

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: You'll agree that times change. There are probably issues that will be on the table five years from now that we haven't even imagined. A little more flexible in your thinking about that. But the fact is the disconnect right now between the faculty population and the student population -- I'm speaking for myself -- things are very, very different than when I was that age, and we have a responsibility to educate students, and there's a gap. We will be well-served by being a little more receptive to learning things our students are already experiencing.

Eric.

ERIC CHEYFITZ: Thanks, Charlie. I was on Working Group S, so I'm speaking from that position, and I want to thank Charlie and Neema for taking on what is essentially a Sisyphean task. As far as I know, there was no consensus about this final report. I only echo here and have echoed from the beginning Laurent's critique. I think the module approach was something I opposed. I wanted direct classes.

We had some discussion certainly about that, but I think the module approach -- I have a note in the chat, then I have a longer comment on the comment page -- can only at best dilute and at worst distort the material. I'm a member of the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program, and I certainly don't want people who are not expert in the field mediating, interpreting what I might have to say on any video I might present. The question of consensus on the committee, to me, is not self-evident. There's my dissent, and there may be others who dissented as well. As far as I know -- and I was at every meeting, save one -- we never had a vote on the final report. Those are my comments.

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: You're right; there was no vote on the final report, but drafts of the report were floating among all of us, and everyone has the chance to comment. Remember, the idea is to put things on the table. Whether it was a 10-0 or 6-4 vote, I don't think is as

important as look at these ideas, so they have potential, are they worthy of further study and implementation. But let's go quickly here.

Brian, then Carl.

BRIAN CHABOT: Thank you, Charlie. Based on your presentation of this, and then also Eric's comments, I'm left thinking that this is just not ready to be voted on. There are too many loose ends, and it needs some more development before we can think about what the consequences of voting on this motion might be, specific concerns about the learning outcomes themselves and about the methods, as others have suggested, to have this implemented.

I will say the College of Agriculture has been doing this at least 15 years, and I think has successfully curated quite a menu of choices, so it is not impossible. And we recently revised our learning outcomes in relation to this, so we're ready to move ahead.

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: Thanks, Brian.

Carl.

CARL FRANCK: Thank you. Carl Franck, in Physics. I appreciate very much all the work that's gone on since President Pollack called for this initiative, but I also have been thinking a lot about what it might look like. I look back at two things; I think back to the training we received over inappropriate relationships between faculty and students. It was done by professional actors. It was excellent.

Then, more recently, I think back to the requirement that we all had as employees to go through a training over sexual harassment that we did at the beginning of this academic year. That was terrible.

I really am very concerned about the imposition of ideas of that sort. I think everyone should pay attention to that document that came from the Association of Alumni and Trustees,

because I think they said it very well: Central Administration should not be telling us what we should be thinking. Thank you.

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: Right. I'd be the first to say, if any of these resources are sub-standard, then there are all kind of questions; what happens if I don't go. If the produced resources are not of the utmost quality, it's going to fail. This is a dangerous area, because if you do it the wrong way, you actually can make things worse. Anyway, let's see if we can get some more comments here. Saida, then Wendy -- please don't raise any more hands. We won't be able to get more than four.

SAIDA HODŽIC: Yes, I would like to comment on S, the educational requirement for students. I cannot think of a more important subject area to be handled with precision, expertise and skill. That kind of expertise and skill that we call pedagogy that we train for takes decades to develop, so this is not something that we can expect faculty develop from the other component.

The actual pedagogical skills that are needed to deliver Item S, any course there, have to derive from years of experience and training. And that kind of experience and training only those people have who have been studying these subject matters and teaching them for years.

I would like to propose that we do not consider this report as feasible at all, and that we develop alternatives. One alternative is the report that is being developed by the various programs that were named by President Pollack as having the relevant expertise. There might be others that are outside my knowledge area, but we have one chance to get this right.

There will be flexibility. Different colleges can do what they want, faculty will produce and bring themselves into it, in their own ways; but as a form that we, as Cornell, decide now that this is going to be the educational requirement for students, we have only one chance to

set the infrastructure and the structure for that right. The structure that is being proposed is not right.

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: Thanks, Saida.

Wendy Wilcox.

WENDY WILCOX: I am just very disappointed by this conversation. I feel like, first of all, I don't believe that what is being proposed thought-policing. I'm very bothered that there's kind of this push to maintain the status quo, when some of this is coming from our colleagues and our students and our graduate students who are BIPOC individuals. I don't hear them saying that this is a problem. What I hear is they need people to understand historical context. Hearing even from someone who said an hour and a half every semester is really difficult to imagine doing over the course of a career is disappointing, and it's actually indicative of when people don't do their own work, so we do have to require that of our colleagues.

If you have colleagues who are BIPOC -- I'm sorry; I am talking on other people's behalf, but if you have BIPOC colleagues and they aren't speaking out, you might want to ask them what they believe on that, are there holes in the education of our colleagues.

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: Thanks, Wendy.

Joanie, then Buz.

JOANIE MACKOWSKI: Thanks. I'd like to speak about the faculty requirement. I was open to the idea originally. And reading the report, I do not support the proposal. It's not because of time. It's about the definition of academic freedom and that faculty are accorded academic freedom, and it doesn't make sense for the University to demand that faculty comply with particular activities, in order to ensure academic freedom. This issue is different from health and safety practices relating to lab operation and COVID.

Structures of authority and power are dynamic, they're dependent on context, in ways that safety and disease transmission are not. If this proposal were for an elective endeavor, such as the Knight Institute's Faculty Seminar in Writing Instruction, and if it highlighted the ongoing antiracist work faculty are doing here and if it sought to develop and extend this work, I think that would be great; but right now, the proposal essentially takes antiracism as a stick with which to measure and prod the faculty, and that is not productive.

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: Thanks, Joanie.

Buz. And let's stick to the schedule here. Buz, sum it all up for us here.

BUZ BARSTO: I just want to follow up on what Joanie said. Maybe I'll say it in a couple of words. I think the faculty are maybe looking for more carrot and less stick in this; how can you persuade better behavior, rather than compel it. How do you free up faculty time, so faculty have time to be more human with their BIPOC colleagues. I'll leave it at that. I'll be around for after, I hope.

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: Thank you. Clearly, we need much more discussion, and all of next week will be devoted to this. Thank you very much. A lot to digest here.

We're going to switch now to the second half of the program today, which will be a discussion with the two candidates for dean of faculty. I just want to make sure Eve was here. Eve was getting her second inoculation shot. Are you here?

EVE DE ROSA: I'm here, Charlie.

CHARLIE VAN LOAN: At this point, I'm actually going to leave, because I want to encourage much more open discussion. Have a good session. I'm going to go outside now and have a good time. Take care, and have an excellent conversation with the two candidates.

And thank you, both, Eve and Risa, for running. It's really important what you are doing, and we are all very grateful. Bye-bye.

NEEMA KUDVA: Thanks, Charlie.