

**To:** Dean of Faculty, Eve De Rosa  
**From:** CAFPS: Gillian Turgeon (chair), Diane Burton, Bruce Van Dover, Beth Lyon, Ellen Gainor, Mike Scanlon, Riche Richardson, Ritchie Patterson  
**Date:** February 9, 2022  
**RE:** Summary of CAFPS zoom discussion of February 9, 2022 of proposal on Part-time Bachelor's Degree for Non-traditional Students

As for the CAPP and EPC committees, **we applaud the clear accord with the original promise of our founders (any person/any study) in that this program seeks to attract underserved communities, with the caveat that there be NO compromise in academic excellence.** Cornell is rated highly because of its commitment to academic scholarship- there can be no dilution of academic standards. In addition, several of us pointed out that the proposal sees the value of a core liberal arts-type education, with requirements in foundational areas such as writing, in addition to other training with employable/ transferrable skills in a range of disciplines.

As background for our discussion, we first asked ourselves how this proposal relates to our charge as members of CAFPS and agreed that the proposal falls within Section A.3 of our charge (below).

*A. Examine and make recommendations concerning issues and considerations in the following areas:*

- 1. Academic Freedom and Responsibility.*
- 2. Freedom of Teaching and Learning, including but not limited to the special concerns of the faculty that teaching and learning at Cornell University be carried on freely and without disruption, interference, or*
- 3. The Professional Status of the Faculty, including but not limited to policies and procedures relating to faculty appointments, promotion, retirement, separation, tenure and other related matters.*

#### **CAFPS Concerns:**

**Faculty appointments:** In line with our charge, we felt the number one issue for us was protecting our faculty from being overstretched. Who will be responsible for course academic content creation, curation, delivery, and evaluation? Who will be asked to teach these courses (TT, RTE, lecturers, instructors, adjuncts, new hires, etc)? Current faculty operate already at bandwidth limits with regards to research/teaching/extension/ service and academic community responsibilities. How will increased instructional demands be met? Cornell has not previously relied heavily on a pool of adjunct labor. We will need to look at the multi-faceted implications of any such shift very carefully. Similarly, we must be very cautious about increasing graduate student labor demands, as this has significant institutional, as well as career, implications for the graduate population. How would compensation work for faculty who provide ideas, labor, time, innovative course models, etc? How might this new initiative impact faculty promotion criteria and career trajectories? Participating in this system is designed, we speculate, to generate profits for the university.

**Academic Standards:** Will there be a disconnect between content offered by faculty who teach in the traditional program versus those who teach in the proposed PT degree program? Current faculty, both tenure track and RTE, are hired by academic departments who rigorously evaluate potential hires and have processes for ensuring that Cornell's high standards are met. There are mechanisms in place that ensure course content is appropriate and instructors are well-qualified. We were very concerned that this program would create **two sets of academic standards**. Would the proposed program lack depth? Will resident full-time students have the option to take courses in the part-time program? That could complicate the structure of degree requirements if requirements are distinct within the two programs. One of us commented *'I have concerns about how the undergraduate writing component is conceptualized, what*

*will count toward its fulfillment, and how this component of the proposed program can be developed further to protect Cornell's global reputation and leadership in this pedagogical area. As proposed, the plan conceptualizes the teaching of writing in modes that directly conflict with those of the University-wide requirements for our full-time undergraduates. Representatives from the John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines must be involved in further discussion/planning.'* We note Cornell has invested a huge amount of money in eCornell-- are there parallels here? Again, we need to maintain credibility of Cornell degree, so that there is no confusion. **We urge that the PT degree program be tested in a very small pilot** --maybe eCornell associated?

**Resources:** We felt the audience for the PT program would require more support from an already stretched support system at Cornell (e.g., mental health and other support services). In addition, how can we responsibly assess, matriculate, and support international students who are not first-language learners in English? This is a long-standing pressure point at Cornell and one that the proposal does not fully address. Representatives from ELSO and/or ITAP must be involved in further discussion/planning. One of the key things we've learned during the pandemic, is that we need MORE support resources!

**Additional comments:**

The Committee requests that the administration provide comparative information about faculty arrangements that the benchmarked institutions are using for their part-time programs, including status composition and compensation arrangements.

Re section A2 of our charge, the proposal raises our concerns about the boundary between university teaching responsibilities and independent work, and it also has the potential to create inequities, all of which merit further scrutiny.