

Summary of CAPP review of resolution on “Academic Freedom in Cornell Programs in China and Other Parts of the Global Hubs System”

Mark Milstein (chair)

Overview

CAPP was asked to review and provide comments regarding the resolution entitled, “**Academic Freedom in Cornell Programs in China and Other Parts of the Global Hubs System**” which has been submitted to the Office of the Dean of Faculty after being brought to the Faculty Senate for the Good of the Order in its December 14, 2022 meeting by Carl Franck (Physics). The resolution reads:

Whereas, Cornell University has been rapidly expanding academic programs in China and other nations with authoritarian regimes;

Whereas, China has strongly suppressed and punished political dissent among its citizens, both at home and abroad;

Resolved, the Faculty Senate of Cornell University strongly condemns political, social, and cultural repression in the People’s Republic of China;

Resolved, the Faculty Senate of Cornell University affirms that the rights guaranteed to all members of the Cornell community under the Cornell Policy Statement on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech and Expression apply to all who study and teach in classes and programs sponsored by Cornell University;

Resolved, that the central administration of Cornell University should take all necessary steps to ensure that academic freedom and freedom of speech is protected throughout the Global Hubs system.

Senators Co-sponsoring the resolution:

Richard Bensel

Risa Lieberwitz

Michael Nussbaum

Carl Franck

Vilma Santiago-Irizarry

Mary Katzenstein* tentative until receives approval from CAPE faculty

James West

Summary of CAPP Review

The committee was generally supportive of the sentiment of resolution.

Key comments from the committee for consideration include:

- The resolution is seen as addressing a political question vs. an academic issue

- Why does the resolution bother to single out China instead of simply being more generally toward authoritarian regimes which embody specific characteristics?
- What is the point of the resolution given that Cornell cannot confer any “rights” to citizens of another country in that country or what “necessary steps” Cornell could take to “ensure...freedom of speech” in an authoritarian country that doesn’t tolerate free speech. Given that, it was suggested that Cornell could emphasize its principles but note that since it cannot protect the citizens in those countries who follow those principles, the resolution could state a desire to closely monitor whether the university’s academic freedom policies have traction in a given country, and if not to take some kind of action (whatever that might be.)
- It is appreciated that the resolution would strengthen the position of academics working with or at international partner universities as a way to reference their home institution’s (Cornell’s) principles.
- If the central administration of the university takes steps to ensure that academic freedom and freedom of speech is protected throughout the Global Hubs system, that could result in a conflict of interest/financial burden to college administrations which may require clear processes and procedures to address.