

Summary of CAPP review of “Toward the Establishment of a Teaching Professor Title: An Exploratory Discussion of Options and Issues”

Mark Milstein (chair)

Overview

CAPP was asked to review the presentation material entitled “**Toward the Establishment of a Teaching Professor Title: An Exploratory Discussion of Options and Issues**” and supporting material which included: 1) A Study of the Teaching Professor Track at Some Peer Universities of Cornell; 2) Senate Deliberations on Teaching-Related Titles; and 3) Towards the Establishment of a Teaching Professor Track: An Exploratory Discussion.

Summary of CAPP Review

Overall, the committee found the documentation does an excellent job of outlining the issues and possible solutions and supports moving the issue forward to the Senate for their discussion.

The committee reviewed the material from the perspective of whether or not there existed any omissions that ought to be addressed (vs. whether or not the committee was for/against the proposal) before presentation to the Senate. The only potential omission identified related to process.

The idea of the positions of Assistant Teaching Professor, Associate Teaching Professor and Full Teaching Professor potentially replacing Lecturer positions was seen as an interesting way to help establish parity among teaching staff.

At the same time, it was noted that professorial faculty, even those who are very committed to knowing and understanding the employment conditions of lecturers at Cornell, are not always familiar with the all the informal details of work arrangements, the social pressures of various responsibilities of expected of different roles, and the hidden ways in which power is exerted over them due to structural inequalities that are simply unavoidable when some teachers have tenure-line appointments and others do not. Moreover – and very importantly – this varies quite a bit across units.

A reorganization of existing titles along these lines has the potential to be extremely divisive within the ranks of our lecturer faculty. Any one of the proposed changes would likely create new cleavages in status and position that don’t currently exist in institutionalized forms. And the desire to regulate the conditions and particulars of these titles will create a lot of anxiety among the potentially affected faculty. It could force a lot of questions into the open in units that are already dealing with difficult issues. Many people would likely not want to even confront these questions, much less answer them, particularly if they are afraid of the implications of doing so.

The committee would urge anyone involved in this process to be sensitive to these issues and aware that even the most collaborative and open environment will not be able to accommodate the voices of the range of lecturers who would be affected by the outcome of the decision.

If it has not been done already, it is hoped that this complex issue will be debated in full at the faculty senate and ideally by a committee that includes those impacted. It simply would be odd and inappropriate (perhaps even insulting) to the lecturer community for the faculty to have a discussion about lecturers without having the proposal be socialized among – and getting input directly from – lecturers themselves.