

**Faculty Issues: Year in Review**  
**A Report to the Board of Trustees**  
May 2002  
J. Robert Cooke

**Introduction:** This has been another busy, productive year for faculty governance. The Senate is responsive to faculty concerns, and therefore, is regarded as an effective voice for the faculty. Because the faculty's shared responsibilities depend so fundamentally upon a sense of collegiality, our governance procedures depend heavily upon the effective work of numerous committees, both standing and special purpose and at the departmental, college and university levels. I must mention this explicitly because of the tendency to focus only on the exceptional situations. The range of topics is broad – from oversight of research, curriculum, promotions, appeals and grievances, etc. to special events and lectures. Notwithstanding that reminder, I'll limit myself to a discussion of campus-wide issues.

**Some Good News:** Thanks to the shared good work of the Trustees, the central administration and the college deans, much-welcomed attention to the level of faculty compensation has occurred. The faculty gratefully acknowledges the leadership and considerable effort required to meet the goals of this first year of a multi-year effort to address this problem that was undermining the future quality of our faculty. With the completion of the magnificent new north campus facilities, the new freshman class resides as a group, realizing an important first phase of President Rawlings' vision for a sweeping renewal of the undergraduate experience. The campus responded soberly, but thoughtfully, to the trauma of the tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup> and its aftermath. The Provost's 'book project' was a resounding success. The faculty's affirmative action committee pressed the administration for a Gender Equity Study of Faculty Salaries; the noteworthy finding of that report was that there are no statistically significant differences in compensation in any of Cornell's colleges attributable to gender.

Perhaps the most appreciated faculty governance initiated event of the year was a University Faculty Forum for Faculty Who Teach Large Courses led by Patsy Brannon, Dean of the College of Human Ecology, who has first-hand experience teaching large courses. The faculty participants appreciated the opportunity to share their experiences about what works and what doesn't, how to deal with the management aspects peculiar to large courses, and the opportunity to get acquainted with others who share their interests. A committee consisting of some of the most accomplished academic advisors produced recommendations concerning the Carpenter Advising Award, a brainchild of Trustee Ashley. (I return to advising below.) After the passage of a decade, a new Faculty Handbook was issued.

**Senate Topics:** Aside from its information-sharing role, the Senate provides a framework for rational debate and the collective expression of faculty opinion. Its charge is to deal with matters affecting more than one college. Six years ago

the Senate recommended that median grades for each course be posted on transcripts to provide a context for understanding a student's grades. This remains unimplemented.

A recent study of the algorithm for allocating costs among the users of the digital network infrastructure has generated much anxiety for the faculty. The study attempted to re-allocate more equitably the infrastructure costs, especially between voice and digital usage. The underlying principle of the study was that all costs (within buildings, between buildings and the external Internet costs) are to be recovered from the end-user. Faculty who use hublets to reduce their costs (i.e., local branching to connect multiple computers to a single line) have been concerned about the anticipated costs increases, as have the students using ResNet. (The students' appetite for network resources is insatiable.) The Financial Policies Committee Report explored alternative approaches to cost recovery.

A compelling interest exists in promoting interdisciplinary teaching and research issues. Collaboration across departmental and college boundaries has become dramatically more important, and in fact, has become essential. Our effort to adapt our administrative structures sometimes creates a problem. The Senate called for prior public disclosure of proposed name changes in order to allow competing interests to be resolved in an orderly manner. For example, the claim on the term 'biological' has become problematic across college boundaries. The Senate formalized a request for the administration to initiate a study to find a successor to the largely moribund Statler Club. Because of the growing significance of interdisciplinary work, our need for a re-vitalized mechanism to promote communication and collaboration across departmental and college boundaries is heightened. Our request for the creation of a campus-wide, academic events database (listing seminars, guest speakers, etc.) to promote sharing across departmental boundaries remains unmet, but some progress may be possible.

One of our largest challenges this year was another interdisciplinary problem. In a collegiality-rupturing dispute about its level of funding three years ago the Computer Science Department was allowed by the then-Provost to secede from the College of Engineering. In the interim the Provost's office provided direct oversight as if it were a separate, pseudo college. An agreement negotiated by the administration with the Faculty Senate two years ago by the then Vice Provost Cutberto Garza called for that department to become part of one or more existing colleges, i.e., not be treated as an embryonic college. No progress on the assimilation process had been made during the two years that had elapsed while two searches for a new Dean of Engineering were conducted. At its April meeting, by a decisive vote (63 in favor, 1 opposed, and 3 abstentions) the Senate called for this process to be completed. The Senate, however, strongly supports the Faculty of Computing and Information as the appropriate vehicle for nurturing interdisciplinary cooperation on information technology across college boundaries, but does not wish that coordinating group to be dominated by the Computer Science Department. Similarly, the Senate wishes to optimize the information technology interests of the entire university, not just the interests of

the Computer Science Department. Hopefully, with this strong expression of faculty opinion, the strained relationships can now begin to heal.

To emphasize the importance of academic integrity, the Senate recommended that every course syllabus include a reference to the Code of Academic Integrity. On a separate issue, the Senate recommended (for Trustee approval in May) modifications to the appeals and grievance procedures to remedy a limitation peculiar to the small colleges. Specifically, in these units the departmental structures are not as fully developed as in the larger units, causing the Dean, rather than a Department Chair, to assume a role in settling disagreements at the lowest level, thereby compromising the Dean's role of providing a completely fresh and independent review at the college level. Upon Trustee approval, the faculty in the smaller units will have access to a multi-level review process comparable to that available to the faculty in the larger colleges.

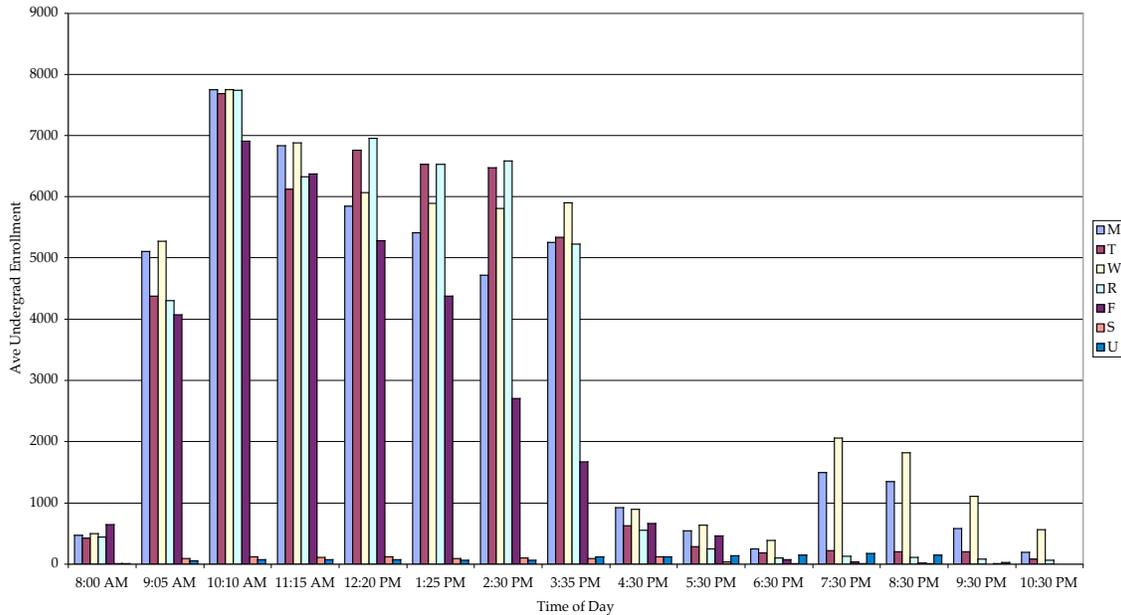
On May 8<sup>th</sup> (too late for recommendations to be included on the May Trustee agenda) the Senate will vote on a proposal to create a new professorial track called Clinical Professor. This recommendation comes from a faculty committee that has studied this issue for more than a year. This title, if approved, will be a significant departure from existing professorial title usage. First, this title will **not** be tenure bearing; but instead will permit an unlimited number of terms of finite duration – and therefore it departs, from the 'up or out' quality-control policy applied to the promotion of Assistant Professors to tenure status. The financial and recruitment benefits to the university are obvious, but there are liabilities to both the university and the faculty. The proposed hedge against adversely impacting the role of tenure is to limit the percentage of the faculty allowed in this category. The responsibilities associated with this title are more limited in scope than the traditional professorial title – and that has the potential for creating a culture-shift over time. The enabling legislation being proposed would provide a standard framework against which proposals arising from college faculties would be measured. This promises to be a spirited debate.

**Active Issues:** Several significant issues are on the horizon but have not yet been addressed fully or at all.

**Scheduling:** The Educational Policy Committee continues its study of scheduling issues. They are examining the time-of-day utilization for courses, prelims, exams, etc. As the following figure shows, the early morning hours (before 10 a.m.) are appreciably under-utilized. Evening classes are permitted on Monday and Wednesday evenings and those enrollments now exceed those at 8:00 a.m. There are very few Saturday and Sunday classes and Friday afternoon is used less than the other weekday afternoons. This pattern reflects a cultural shift shaped by student and faculty preferences (e.g., allergic to 8:00 a.m. classes), but has substantial implications for the economical use of our real estate resources.

The following figure shows average enrollment of undergraduates in courses (of all types and all levels) for the most recent four semesters by the time of day and day of week.

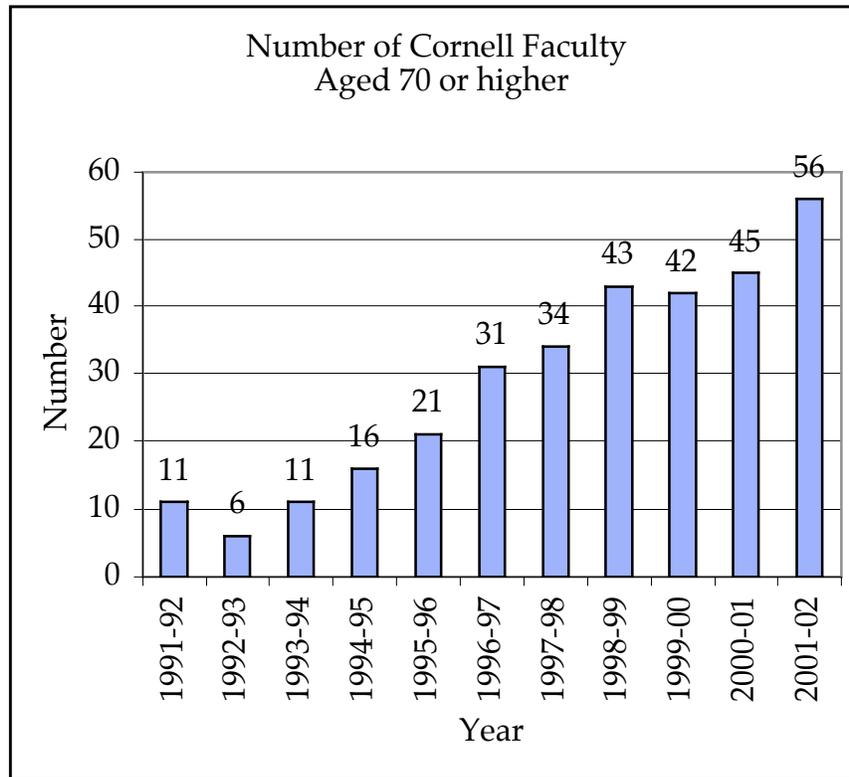
Ave UG Enroll



Academic Advising: We plan to address Academic Advising next year. This oft-criticized support mechanism has been resistant to repeated attempts to bring about significant change. We have a commitment from the administration that photographs will be provided to the advisors (as was done three years ago for our courses) to assist the faculty in personalizing their attention to their students. Among other things, we anticipate organizing a University Faculty Forum for Academic Advisors next year to share ‘best practices’ and to encourage greater attention to this role.

Age Distribution of the Faculty: The Financial Policies Committee has agreed to study the age distribution of the faculty – a matter of concern resulting from the federal government’s having lifted the mandatory retirement age. As shown in the following figure, the number of faculty aged 70 or higher has grown from 6 in 1992-93 to 56 in 2001-02.

Our concern is neither age nor productivity, but our inability to grow the number of tenure-track faculty. Institutional self-renewal requires some recycling of the salary pool as new scholarly areas emerge; without this recycling we also limit opportunities for hiring women and minorities. The remediation focus should be upon how to recycle the salary pool, rather than upon the exclusion of older faculty!



#### Other Issues:

**Distributed Learning:** We were so pre-occupied with the issues associated with the creation of a for-profit subsidiary for distance learning that we failed to consider fully what we should be doing for our own residential (tuition-paying) students using the technology-mediated tools that inspired that discussion for non-resident 'students'. Going beyond the good start made with the Innovative Teaching Awards, we should now muster the energy to complete this task. Here's a proposal that I believe would appeal to the faculty and would focus upon doing a better job for those whom we already have an obligation for excellence, but which we might leverage into a great public service.

A sister institution (MIT) has decided to make its course websites freely available to the public. I believe that we could do something that would have far greater impact but for vastly less expense and that would find ready acceptance by the faculty. Suppose we were to provide modest additional resources (say half as much as eCornell receives) and invite all interested faculty to compete for funding to add a media-rich course component. We already have most of the infrastructure students would require to utilize a technology-mediated portion of their courses via distributed learning. The faculty, thereby, would have an incentive to learn how to make this technology work effectively. Specifically, we would need to learn what works and what doesn't using this technology and especially to learn how to motivate students within this paradigm.

If we succeed, our students will benefit from this media-enriched offering. But I believe the Cornell faculty would be willing to give away the equivalent of an hour or two of lecture content in exchange for the opportunity to receive meaningful support for course enrichment, especially if they get to retain the copyright on this freely distributed module (so they retain the ability to re-package it into a book). I believe that we'd gladly donate these self-contained introductory modules for use by the high school students of the nation. Both the high school students and their teachers are apt to be grateful for this supplementary material. We could treat this as content-rich recruiting material.

Significantly, the Cornell faculty would not inherit the responsibility for teaching these students or for awarding Cornell credit. We'd simply serve as content providers. We'd probably need to provide some direct human contact with them, but that need not the faculty so our teaching obligations could remain with our residential students. This form of outreach need not be limited to just a few Cornell colleges, but would be applicable campus-wide. We might also make this available to our alums and donors. We should provide access to our Cornell staff as a meaningful educational benefit of working here – and it could be used in a manner and time that does not compete with the employees' regular duties.

I believe this approach to distributed learning deserves serious consideration because it could energize an expansion that would be well received and would not be resisted, but actually embraced by the faculty.

**Dual Careers:** Cornell's geographic location is one of its greatest strengths, but also has the prospect of becoming a significant impediment to our future. A great many of the new faculty we've hired in recent years require consideration for simultaneously finding professional employment for a spouse or partner – the so-called dual career problem. Our rural setting imposes a relative liability in this regard. Because we have no intentions of relocating Cornell, we need to consider more seriously ways we might deal with this complication of dramatically increasing importance. I believe it is a complication that will eventually be costly if we do not think more seriously and more creatively.

**Scholarly Publishing:** Higher education is facing a real crisis with respect to its handling of the scholarly communications, i.e., its publications. The traditional presentation of this dilemma is to blame the publishers for escalating subscription costs. But the reality is that the problem is much deeper as is obvious if one asks, 'Given the exponential growth in the body of knowledge (that doubles every 12-14 years) could we afford the storage and circulation costs if every publisher in the world were to decide to donate a free copy of everything to us?' I believe the answer is 'no' because we already must struggle to provide sufficient shelf-space for the small portion of the total scholarly output that we now acquire. In other words, I believe the paper paradigm is the truly limiting aspect.

For those disciplines willing to adapt to a digital environment (for which all the essential technology already exists), we could be served by a common scholarly database, permitting the elimination of the redundancy now required by each of

the 100+ research universities. This shared digital approach would allow costs for redundancy to be squeezed out to the system – as is commonly done in the corporate world.

If each research university were to publish a copy of all of its scholarship on its own website and if these websites were federated into a system having a common index updated daily, we could give away our scholarship, making it freely available to everyone, save money and at the same time transform access and thereby significantly increase faculty productivity.

When we finally admit that our current system has become fundamentally inadequate with respect to access and is broken financially, we will realize that we have a technologically feasible option open to us.

**Closure:** In closing, I observe that the success of a university depends fundamentally upon the existence of collegial working relationships. Our effectiveness this year was enhanced by a conscious effort by the administration to improve the level of consultation. The faculty looks forward to the next academic year with optimism about the prospects for further collaboration on the myriad of activities where we share a common interest.