Report of the Subcommittee on the Student Experience

Rationale

Co-curricular activities are a key component of the Cornell experience, and help build a sense of belonging in the Cornell community. Involvement in co-curricular activities anticipates student wellness, student success, and student satisfaction, at an individual and institutional level. Even after the March shift to online delivery, co-curricular groups at Cornell report thousands of students remained active in their offerings. Our surveys and stakeholder conversations also indicate that building community in the classroom reduces anonymity, which not only enhances student learning but also likely helps mitigate academic integrity violations.

Following key recommendations, we include an expanded list of actions and note specific units whose current work, when amplified, will be critical to bringing the Cornell experience alive in an online world. We end by including a short summary of the data collection and analysis efforts that inform our recommendations.

Key Recommendations:

1. **Strongly encourage all online/remote courses to include an experiential component to build community and belonging in the classroom.** These components can draw from the four types of co-curricular programming described on page 35 and should aim to increase student engagement, student success, and student satisfaction. A component can be a range of activities from something as specific as how an assignment is prepared or how a breakout room discussion is facilitated to something as broad as a designed collaboration with a unit that offers co-curricular activities.

2. **Make resources available to instructional faculty to assist and enhance inclusion of experiential components in academic course work:**
   a. CTI to build an instructional video to help faculty/staff understand the value of the co-curricular/experiential component and offer design principles for co-curricular integration into the substantive curriculum. Integration to also be explicitly noted and encouraged in all webinars and training sessions offered to faculty and instructional staff.
   b. SCL/Dean of Students Office to revise and enhance the ‘Virtual Engagement’ site and make it a key nodal location that highlights a range of co-curricular activities that have been taken virtual.
   c. Work with key units/websites (a full list is available on page 33) that focus on experiential and virtual engagements to create links to each other, building an ecosystem of sites that point instructional faculty towards a variety of co-curricular programming.

3. **Encourage relevant co-curricular units to work with faculty and instructional staff to develop collaborations.** This includes specific ideas like bringing in ‘developmental’ co-curricular programming into classes with many international or professional focused students and longer term collaborations with units like OEI to prepare for community-engaged activities, or the Botanical Gardens or Cornell Cinema (while much of the collaborative work is longer-term, a small start now may yield large dividends later and the few experiences we see should be amplified through recognition).
ACTION ITEMS

This section offers a list of resources that faculty and instructional staff can draw on to bring experiential learning into online/remote instruction. It also suggests enhancing certain resources and websites to create central nodes for faculty to locate information on co-curricular activities.

Cornell Web Resources for Virtual Co-Curricular Programming

We build here on two key recommendations # 2b., 2c.

2b. Revising and Enhancing DoS Website ‘Virtual Engagement’

- There is currently a well-utilized resource in Cornell’s web architecture that offers support to individuals, student clubs, and academic/residential units looking to develop virtual co-curricular programs: https://scl.cornell.edu/get-involved/virtual-engagement
  - This resource was developed by SCL staff in March 2020, when we had to make the rapid pivot to virtual engagement
  - These pages, and underlying tabs, have received well over 15,000 views and clicks since they were established
- The Dean of Students Office will charge a working group to use Summer 2020 to revise and expand these virtual programming guides. The working group will:
  - develop plan to get this link re-posted in numerous web locations so that it is more noticeable and accessible, creating an ecosystem of web sites for faculty and staff
  - work with CTI to produce a training video for staff taking co-curricular programming online
- This work to be complete by mid-August 2020

2c. Linking key websites

Below is a list of departments/units that faculty can engage with to offer integrated co-curricular experiences with their courses. It is this list that the DoS office will focus on in their effort to link key websites offering resources.

1. Campus Activities
2. LGBT Resource Center
3. Asian and Asian American Center
4. Physical Education/Outdoor Education
5. NatureRx
6. The Tatkon Center
7. The Johnson Museum
8. The Lab of Ornithology
9. The Botanic Gardens
10. The Office of Academic Diversity Initiatives
11. Global Cornell (which includes the Einaudi Center)
12. Office of Engagement Initiatives
LEARNING FROM SPRING ONLINE & CO-CURRICULAR UNITS

Inventory of 12 Campus Units who took programs virtual in Spring 2020

The subcommittee conducted an inventory of 12 campus units perceived as leaders in virtual co-curricular engagement to glean best practices. Their recommendations for virtual co-curricular engagement in the fall include:

- social media posts that “show people engaging and having fun”
- schedules that mapped out programming in advance
- informal social and activity-based programs for entertainment (movie nights, game nights, virtual escape rooms), health (yoga, meditation) and community building (LGBT RC peer mentoring/support groups, virtual K-12 tutoring) were especially popular and combatted “Zoom burnout”

They suggested the following resources would help them in the future:

- **CIT training on Zoom** security (and for other online programming)
- **a system for coordination/collaboration** to avoid “reinventing the wheel” and allow groups to learn from one another
- **a coordinated calendar with activities from all groups** pushed to students; should be customizable so students can choose e.g. “fitness,” “nature,” “trainings,” etc.
- **Canvas sites to host preparatory materials**
- **International students** expressed that academic research and project teams would supplement their online experience better than student organizations, as they allow for more independent research but still encourage small group work and one on one interaction. These students also requested that student organizations be conscientious of time zones and encourage clubs to meet over the weekend to be inclusive of students in different time zones.

Stakeholder Conversations to understand student engagement and experience

The university's move to online learning this Spring left students in uncharted territory, not just with regard to their academic progress but their mental and emotional well-being. The task of the Student Experience subcommittee was to lay out ways to improve the experience for students in the fall. Through focus groups, surveys, and much discussion, we determined that students are spending copious amounts of time on Zoom, and only offering co-curricular activities by adding additional time will not be effective. Thus, we must merge the co-curricular experience with the academic one. In the table below, we have detailed examples for how to do so, including asking students to attend career services events in lieu of a homework assignment or assigning students projects that inspire creativity.

Definition of Co-Curricular: Through our information gathering, we determined that students desire increased community-engagement during the online experience while simultaneously
feeling fatigued from completing coursework online. As such, we concluded that in order for co-curriculars to be sustainable and productive in an online model, they must interact with students' academic curricula. For the purposes of our examples, we are focusing on co-curricular as experiential learning that complements course curricula. Co-curriculars might include performance and creative opportunities, social engagement, wellness, and developmental opportunities such as career development, etc.

*Ways to integrate co-curricular and substantive learning in the classroom*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Co-Curricular Activity (defined by focus)</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Oversight/Support provided by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developmental</td>
<td>Students are largely concerned that the pandemic will stunt their professional development. Many hope that next semester will re-envision career-development opportunities to better suit the online model.</td>
<td>One example of this is featuring alumni guest-lectures as a part of course opportunities. A college-specific example of this is providing opportunities in courses for architecture students to engage with alumni and even shadow working architects in firms that have moved their operations online. Another college-specific example is to offer more engineers the opportunity to be on project teams, so they are able to get more hands-on experiences. Two central level website links are to Global Cornell or Experience Cornell both of which offer links to various internships, fellowships and can also provide a link to various lectures available at Cornell that faculty can bring back into their classes.</td>
<td>Colleges/Depts • Central Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness</td>
<td>Students are struggling to take care of their emotional and physical health at home, and it might help students if we build wellness opportunities into courses.</td>
<td>One example of this is a homework assignment asking students to go on a walk outside and take a &quot;selfie&quot; while on the walk. Another example is assigning students to attend an event put on by Cornell Recreational Services or, especially for Freshmen, at the Tatkon Center.</td>
<td>Cornell Health • Residential Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance &amp;</td>
<td>Some students expressed</td>
<td>One example of this is an assignment to • Student Clubs,</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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| Production | interest in more opportunities to explore creative outlets in the online model. | produce a "vlog" or video series about a topic in place of a more formal examination. Another example is assigning musical pieces or poetry related to the course topic in place of a formal homework assignment. | • Dept-led (Music, PMA)  
• Johnson Museum  
• Cornell Cinema |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social & Sustainability | On campus, Cornell places great value on engaging with our local community. Many students expressed that the online experience is lacking in community-engaged learning. | Course instructors should consider providing opportunities for students to do service projects, such as spending a day volunteering to call elderly persons at nursing homes. Another example is creating course assignments such as gardening or engaging in one’s local environment (taking pictures of plants near one’s home, setting up journaling to follow birds, the facilities in which people are living, the essential services staff they engage with etc.). A central unit example is OEI’s “Serve in Place” initiative that allows students to both work with communities wherever they are and to offer community partners a range of resources while keeping social distancing and community health considerations at the forefront. | • Student Clubs  
• Dept-focused  
• Central Units |

*Note: In-practice types of activities and outcomes overlap.*