Resolution on the Vetting of International Dual-Degree Programs

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Collaborative research, scholarship, and creative endeavor are crucial practices to advance human rights and freedoms, and we affirm the ability and the responsibility of faculty and scholars to reach across all kinds of divisions to forge scholarly and creative collaborations.
but… a program is **Not the Same Thing** as scholarship / research / creative practice

Degree-granting programs are business structures to manage, control, and account for credit hours, staffing, and revenue.
Currently:

Our international partners attest their commitment to academic freedom and non-discrimination. **However, the vetting process includes no specific steps to investigate and assess the credibility of a proposed partner’s attestation, or to assess the potential ethical and human-rights implications of proceeding with an alliance.**
Violations of ethical and human rights are occurring at increasing rates across the world and have been over the past 15 years.

“2019 was the 14th consecutive year of decline in global freedom... [T]he brutality of autocratic regimes and the ethical decay of democratic powers are combining to make the world increasingly hostile to fresh demands for better governance....”

--Freedom House 2020 Report
Violations of ethical and human rights are occurring at increasing rates across the world and have been over the past 15 years.

“….the citizens of 94 countries suffer under non-democratic regimes... 3.97 billion people are currently controlled by tyrants, absolute monarchs, military juntas or competitive authoritarians. That’s 53 percent of the world’s population. Statistically, then, authoritarianism is one of the largest—if not the largest—challenges facing humanity...”

-- Garry Kasparov and Thor Halvorssen, Washington Post, February 2017
Violations of ethical and human rights are occurring at increasing rates across the world and have been over the past 15 years.

“Among states with populations of more than one-million people, the share of electoral democracies has recently fallen to less than half for the first time since the very early days of the post–Cold War world.”

Larry Diamond, Prof of Political Science at Stanford University and a Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies & the Hoover Institution
Additional Risks:

Recent transitions toward authoritarian and repressive governance have not resulted from armed takeover but have rather occurred gradually, subtly, and the line between democratic and authoritarian regimes grows increasingly porous and ill-defined.

“The most blatant examples of globalized authoritarianism are when governments actually kill or attempt to kill their critics in other countries, as Saudi Arabia did in the case of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, or Russia allegedly did to Sergei Skripal... But other expressions of authoritarian power are becoming much more subtle and difficult to trace... Leaders of authoritarian countries are increasingly able to pressure and silence critics in the “free” world.”

Joshua Keating, Slate, Jan 2020
Additional Risks:

As anti-democratic and authoritarian regimes worldwide increase in number and power, they currently do so **without cutting ties with democratic countries**, and without fearing the influence of such countries.
Human rights violations are happening in the United States. **Several states have or are currently enacting legislation that restricts the voting rights of U.S. citizens.**

“The avalanche of [new voting-related] legislation... raises fundamental questions about the ability of a minority of voters to exert majority control in American politics...

“ ‘The typical response by a losing party in a functioning democracy is that they alter their platform to make it more appealing,’ Kenneth Mayer, an expert on voting and elections at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said. ‘Here the response is to try to keep people from voting. It’s dangerously antidemocratic.’

University’s Pledge to counter racist injustice:

The University is currently embarking on new measures to address and counter the racist injustice and violence that has been ongoing in the U.S. for centuries.

“I want to make clear, both personally and on behalf of Cornell, that we will do all we can as a university to address this scourge of racism. We will address it directly in our educational programs, in our research and in our engagement and related activities, working through the ways we know best to push for a world that is equitable and kind; where people do not have to fear for their lives because of the color of their skin; and where everyone has the same opportunities to grow, thrive and enjoy their lives.”

Cornell President Martha Pollock, May 29, 2020
University’s Pledge to counter racist injustice:

Work is underway on a Center for Anti-Racist, Just, and Equitable Futures.

“Our ability to understand and to challenge racism(s) depends on recognizing both their respective specificities in our local contexts, and the ways in which they become articulated across time and space.”

Final report, Working Group C
So,

Given President Pollock’s commitment to address “this scourge of racism,” and given the importance of our mission as an educational institution, we must take action to ensure that *academic freedom* and *non-discrimination* cannot be empty phrases, and cannot be equivocated. The future of this institution depends on these words to mean what they say.
Resolution on the Vetting of IDDP’s

Whereas the university has developed and continues to develop degree-granting programs with universities in countries around the world;

Whereas the Guidelines on Ethical International Engagement emphasize the importance of maintaining the University’s commitment to “free and open inquiry and expression; diversity, inclusion, and non-discrimination; justice and human rights; and respect for the natural environment”;

Whereas the Guidelines on Ethical International Engagement also assert that we should “avoid partnering with colleagues, organizations, agencies, or companies that are under credible and direct suspicion of malfeasance or serious legal or human rights violations”;
Whereas democratic governance is in decline across the world;
Whereas, currently, the transition toward authoritarian and repressive regimes does not result from armed takeover but rather occurs incrementally and subtly, and the line between democratic and authoritarian regimes grows increasingly porous and ill-defined;
Whereas, as a result of the above, we have increased opportunity and fewer barriers to collaboration with authoritarian regimes;
Whereas to collaborate in degree-granting partnerships with organizations and universities under the sway of authoritarian regimes risks degrading and compromising the University’s mission, function, and reputation;
Whereas to collaborate in partnerships with organizations and universities under the sway of authoritarian regimes also lends such regimes legitimacy, allowing them to further their anti-democratic aims;
...
Whereas the University’s Code of Conduct states that “The University, as an educational institution, has a special set of interests and purposes, the protection and promotion of which are essential to its effective functioning”;

**Be it resolved** that the Faculty Senate calls on University administration to recognize the grave and present risk of entangling our institution with anti-democratic forces;

**Be It Further Resolved** that the Faculty Senate calls for an immediate revision of the vetting and approval process for International Dual Degree Programs (IDDP’s), including greater transparency about the details of proposed programs and active consultation with the Faculty Senate and its committees, to ensure compliance with the Guidelines on Ethical International Engagement and to promote and protect Cornell's interests and purposes as a higher education institution.