

A MEETING
OF THE UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE
WEDNESDAY, December 8, 2021

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Everyone, my name is Jonathan Ochshorn, Department of Architecture, Speaker of the Faculty Senate. And we start this meeting with a land acknowledgement.

Cornell University is located on the traditional homelands of the Gayogóhó:nq', the Cayuga nation. The Gayogóhó:nq' are members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, an alliance of six sovereign Nations with a historic and contemporary presence on this land. The Confederacy precedes the establishment of Cornell University, New York state, and the United States of America. We acknowledge the painful history of Gayogóhó:nq' dispossession and honor the ongoing connection of Gayogóhó:nq' people, past and present, to these lands and waters.

The meeting is now called to order. And I just want to mention some issues of decorum for this hybrid format. There will be Zoom captioning, live transcription in the Zoom menu. If you want to speak, you have two minutes to pose a question or make a statement. Please identify yourself, last name, and department. I will select someone from the Zoom audience first, then from the floor, then back to Zoom, and so forth. Chat will be available for Zoom attendees. We don't want to disadvantage in-person attendees. Limit chat to sharing resources with each other. The chat will be published as is publicly on the Dean of Faculty website after the meeting.

We're ready to approve the minutes from the November 10, 2021, meeting. These minutes have been posted and distributed online in the form of a verbatim transcript. I'm asking for unanimous consent, which in practice, means asking you if there are any corrections. If there are, raise your virtual or real hand.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Seeing none. The minutes are approved as posted.

At this point, I want to turn the floor over to the Dean of Faculty, Eve de Rosa, for some announcements and updates.

EVE DE ROSA: Hello. Thank you, Jonathan. And next slide please. Okay. So, first item. See, oh, I know what the first item is. So, I created a Faculty Senate, or Senator, mosaic. Our office created that for advertising who in the department serves as a Senator. This is a way hopefully of promoting faculty engagement. So, please put those outside of your office, and hopefully faculty will come to you to discuss things that we have brought forward in the Senate, and maybe even bring things to you that should come to the Senate. So, I'm hoping this is a way of increasing faculty participation.

And next item, please. I was maybe overly enthusiastic about the Faculty Fora, after speaking with Risa. So, in the last Senate meeting I said that we would have one next week. I think, in thinking further about it, realizing that everyone's finishing up their semester, a little distracted, we'll have a new and energetic one in the spring. So, our first one for this academic year will be in the spring of 2022.

Next item. The chair of the Education Policy Committee, David Delchamps, and I are both committee members for the NYSED credit hour policy implementation. And so, I just wanted to give a brief update. There will be two working groups. One working group -- and what I'm finding heartening about the conversation is that there's no urgency. Yes, we have to comply with the New York State credit hours, but there is a deep consideration of how to implement it.

And so, the two working groups will be first working -- one group will be working on a system-wide tool for input from faculty. And that group will have -- create a tool, and faculty will have an opportunity to share their input with the Implementation Committee before implementation, during implementation, and continue after.

The second working group is working on a tool to help aid the implementation of the policy. And that group will use this tool to share with people how the academic calendar should work, and sort of

what you would have to do to comply with the new -- for some -- the new New York State Education, Board of Education, credit hours policy. And it's actually not new. It's been there for a while, and we haven't actually achieved the policy. But the other benefit of this tool to help with the implementation is that this tool will be available to help us show to the accrediting agencies, to NYSED, that we are in compliance. And so, it's serving both roles.

Next credit -- sorry, next item. The task force for considering Research, Teaching, and Extension faculty in academics. We have -- I shared with you last time that we have two chairs. So, it's co-chaired by Senators Kapko and Callister. And in this group also, we're taking a very systems-wide perspective on RTE. And the two different working groups, one will look at ranks, and promotion through the ranks, and having clarity around that. Acknowledging, or both actually, the credit hour, and also for the RTE, that there is a college specific implementation of something that we want to consider as a system-wide value.

And the second working group will look at climate issues, and integration and inclusion of RTE into the academic community.

Okay. Next item, please. I wanted to share with the Senate that there's a new PhD program that was approved by the grad school, and this is a program that actually has already been in effect. It's formalizing an existing field of Computational Biology. And this new PhD is in Computational Biology and Medicine, and it's a program that was preexisting between Sloan Kettering, Weill, and Rockefeller, and our campus. And if anyone wants to see the proposal that's been accepted by New York State, and it's been accepted by the grad school, and I just wanted to share it with you before it goes to the Trustees.

Next item. Today we're using the Faculty Senate to consider two proposals that are in their early stages. And one of those proposals is a change in honors and distinctions, and how can we think about the even application of that across the university?

And the other proposal is a part-time bachelor's proposal for non-traditional students. And this is going to be presented today to the Senate by VP Avery August and VP Lisa Nichii. And the plan that I have, and this is an opportunity for the Senate to give me feedback, is right now, it's already been considered by CAPP, our Academic Policies and Procedures Committee, and they've produced a report. The Education Policy Committee has also met with Avery and Lisa, and they've had another meeting independent of them, and now they would like to continue to consider it. So, CAPP, two meetings was sufficient. EPC would like more time.

And so, I thought this is an opportunity to bring it to the Senate for -- share their proposal with the Senate, and get feedback in terms of Q&A. And I'm going to share the recording of the Senators questions and statements with the two committees that are already considering it. So, CAPP and EPC, in case CAPP wants to revise their summary of their discussions and forum, the EPC.

But I am also thinking of -- I am, I'm going to share it with two additional committees. One is the Finance Policy Committee, and the other is the Academic Freedom and Professional Status of Faculty Committee. And the issue around faculty labor has come up, and I feel like it's important for those two committees to consider this proposal as well as it moves forward. And the idea is that those four committees will come to our first Senate meeting in the spring to share the discussions around the table in those committees.

I am still considering also whether to share this with the ROTC Committee. We have a Senate committee that deals with academics in the ROTC. And so, there's a possibility of also including them in the conversation. And of course, all of you.

Next item, please. I attend the Academic Deans meeting that's run by the provost, and in that setting, Gary Koretzky, who's the VP of Academic Integration, he gives updates, COVID-19 updates, of COVID-19 policy, what the testing procedures are, collaborations with Tompkin County, and -- Tompkins

County. And when I'm sitting in that space, and I'm listening to this, and I see the thoughtfulness and care, I always have this regret that it's not something that's shared directly with faculty.

And so, I had an extra 10 minutes on the agenda, and he gave a presentation on Tuesday that I thought would be informative, especially in light of our increased anxieties when students are coming back to campus after a holiday, they're going away for winter break, they will be back. We now have the Omicron variant. So, I'm going to yield those extra 10 minutes to Gary Koretzky so that he can update us on the thinking, and he also offered, after we adjourn, if anybody has additional questions, he's happy to ask -- answer them.

Okay. Next slide, please. We had three resolutions that we considered in the November meeting. All three were approved, and it was awesome to see that we increased our voting. 10 more people voted, and that is meaningful. So, we're at three-quarters of our Senate actually voting. And let's see if we can even make it higher. So, I'm very appreciative for those of you who made a choice to engage. We had systematically had 45-ish people who didn't even vote, and now we're down to 33. So, thank you.

The first two resolutions. 177, I'll start here, is where we resolved to share, or make transparent, the no-contact list.

And if I could have the next slide. We -- and this is its partner, 178. This one is to also make transparent the external review selection process. And having the Senate strongly approve these allows me to go to the Academic Deans, and possibly chairs if needed, to really motivate them to make all of these things transparent in the tenure process. So, thank you for that.

And if I could have the next slide. And then this last resolution was brought forward by Faculty Senators and faculty, and it really partners well with the Resolution 174 from earlier in this semester. And we -- for the 174 and 179, the approval of these resolutions allows me, also, and Neema, and the

Office of the Dean of Faculty, to work with the VP of -- for International Affairs, with CAPP, our Committee for Academic Policies and Procedures, and the International Counsel in trying to really make more robust the feedback of the Faculty Senate.

And that's all I have. I don't know how I'm doing on time, but. Oh, am I ahead of time? So, I guess I'm happy to take questions or comments, if anybody has any.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: It looks like Risa, in Zoomland, has a comment. Why don't you --

EVE DE ROSA: Yes?

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Or a question.

EVE DE ROSA: And just before you start, Risa, I just want to know, how many minutes do we have, before, so I can be mindful.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Five minutes.

EVE DE ROSA: Okay, great. Yes, Risa?

RISA: Great, thank you. And thanks for the update on the various resolutions, including the Global Hubs Resolution. So, I wanted to raise something that relates generally to the resolutions, and that is first, of course, it's great, the more participation, the more voting, the better. I'm all -- I think we're all on board with that. However, I've been concerned with some of the responses that we've had from the Central Administration to clear majority votes in favor of resolutions where the administration has said well, of all eligible voters, it's whatever percentage voted positively. Which is not the way, you know, normally votes go. It's of those voting, we look to the majority. There's no super majority required, and normally a majority is not calculated based on eligible voters.

So, of course, it's great if we get strong participation, but I think that we should not let that go by, that aspect of majority votes. And so, I wanted to raise that.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Risa. Any other --

RISA: Do you have any comments on it? I'm raising it to see [indiscernible].

EVE DE ROSA: Oh, you're raising it. Excuse me for my [indiscernible] consideration.

RISA: Yeah, yeah. I'm not just commenting. I'm hoping that you might have something to say about it.

EVE DE ROSA: So, I'm happy to -- well, one, I think with and greater engagement, it makes it easier for me to make these arguments. I don't even probably have to worry about that anymore. And I'm happy to address that with both the provost and the president.

RISA: I mean, do you have a position on it, I guess I'm really asking? Because I've never heard of a democratic process be based on the percent of eligible voters, as opposed to majority of those voting. And this is a repeated statement that we're hearing from the administration.

EVE DE ROSA: So, the --

RISA: And I think it's a concern.

EVE DE ROSA: Yeah. It's based on participation, and it's based on the proportion of yeses relative to noes. So, yes, I'm in agreement with you.

Any other comments? So, we're a little early, but I think we could probably move on. Thank you.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Yeah. I think we can move on to the proposal presentations. There are two. The first is about part-time bachelor's degrees for non-traditional students. I have Avery August

and Lisa Nishii. I'm not sure if you're in person, or in Zoom, or who's going to talk first. But whoever it is, should just start talking.

LISA NISHII: Hello, everybody. This is Lisa Nishii. I had intended to be there in person, but I kind of ran out of time to get out of my chair and over there. So, I'm here at home, and I'll be presenting actually both of these proposals to you.

So, first related to -- oh, someone help me advance. Great. And you can go to the next one. And the next one. Thank you.

Okay. So, I'll be talking to you today about the report produced by a committee that was charged to consider whether or not the university might offer a part-time bachelor's degree. So, we were charged with, you know, considering whether or not a part-time bachelor's should be offered. As you can see here on the charge, the population of students who would not otherwise look to Cornell, or be able to come to Cornell, for a traditional, full-time, residential education. The admission to the bachelor's degree program would be competitive, and the degree would not overlap with the population that traditionally seeks out Cornell as -- for their post-secondary degree.

The overarching questions, there were many more of course, but you know, the overarching questions were, what are the reasons for and against offering such a pathway? How does it relate to our mission as a university? And who would we be serving? And what might it entail? It was very difficult for the committee, you know, not to get in the weeds. We were instructed not to really get into the how, but consider instead whether we should do this.

You'll see here on the right, we had a great committee. Avery August, I believe, is here with us. He was co-chair. And we had David Bindel, John Burdick, vice provost for enrollment, Kevin Hallock, David Lee, Katherine McComas, Jamila Michener, and Linda Nozick was also on the committee. So, we had a really great committee.

Next please. Okay. So, I want to first say a little bit about what we mean by non-traditional students. So, that's the focus of a potential degree, part-time degree program. So, we're thinking not, you know, about the traditional student who goes to college full-time, usually straight out of high school, but instead, non-traditional student is someone for whom a full-time residential experience wouldn't be an option due to the location where they are, their work, so working professionals, or perhaps other barriers.

We expect that many of the students who might be interested in a degree like this would be working professionals. Given, you know, our focus on expanding access as a university, we found it very useful to think about some specific populations as we went through this exercise.

And we focus on populations that might be of particular interest to us as a university, either because of existing experience. So, for example, with incarcerated individuals through the Cornell Prison Education Program, or farmworkers, especially in New York State, through the Cornell Farmworker Program. I just want to make a note that in both of these programs, students have an opportunity to earn an associate's degree, but not a bachelor's degree.

And we also focused on populations where Cornell has a distinctive commitment. So, including enlisted military personnel and veterans, as well as Native American and Indigenous communities, given the lands given to us by the Morrill Act.

Next please. So, in a nutshell, the committee felt that there is a compelling case to be made for Cornell to build on its historical founding, and aspirational ethos of any person, any study, and to really strengthen our brand as an egalitarian Ivy.

And, you know, so I should say, a couple years ago, we did a review of the School of Continuing Education, and at the time this topic came up, you know, can we imagine a world in which the School of

Continuing Education might offer a degree? And we said well, we're not Columbia, we're not Penn, we're not in a major metro location. So, who would we be teaching?

And at the time, we couldn't really imagine, right, a full set of online courses. Then, of course, the pandemic happened. And now it's just -- it just seems much more imaginable. So, the timing is a really important part of this conversation as well.

So, the degree would be conferred by the School of Continuing Education. And the reason for that is to really optimally leverage all the strengths that we have across our colleges and schools, rather than have a part-time degree granted by any one of the undergraduate colleges and schools.

The idea would be that the instruction would be delivered asynchronously online. Although it's asynchronous online instruction, there would need to be some meaningful synchronous interaction and instructional activities. This is true not just because the Department of Education talks about how important it is, but really so that, you know, we offer a high-quality degree, and that we have it, you know, a way to -- do it in a way that sets us apart from some of the other programs that are online, and so our students get access to our well-renowned faculty.

Next, please. Great. So, the committee thought that, you know, one way to go about this would be to really offer a limited set of -- we could call it majors, we could call it, you know, areas of study, and each one of them would have a general education component that takes up, let's say about a third of the credits, and then a third, probably a little bit more, of the credits would be within the area of focus or major, and then another third would be elective credits.

So, for example, we might choose to offer a degree in Humanities, Social Sciences, and STEM. I know these are big categories, and there may be advantages and disadvantages for us to consider these big categories versus more specific majors. Especially where there's high level of demand.

And then the thought was to offer concentrations and to grow the number of concentrations over time, and that we would offer them in areas where we have great institutional strengths. You know, where we might be able to leverage already existing eCornell assets, of which we have quite a few now. And that aligned with areas where there's growing demand in the marketplace. So, the different topics that you see in this box here, they represent the occupations with the most job growth according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and also align with areas that we heard about in our outreach with various populations.

So, there would be a finite set of courses. I think some people think about the thousands of courses that we offer in the full-time program. That's not what this would offer. Right? It would be a finite set based on whatever required courses are determined by a faculty curriculum committee. And I think also, it would have to depend on what departments -- you know, what courses departments feel they could offer, right, in terms of the staffing that they have in their departments.

So, we have to think through how we would build this. Would -- an implementation team that follows might think about whether, for example, departments can propose courses that they want to offer as part of this part-time program.

Next please. And we have a lot still to think through. And we tabled, right, really important questions when we were initially considering this. And so, we're here to collect input from you. We'll be continuing to do that in different channels. We need to do a search for a new dean for the School of Continuing Education.

And then an Implementation Committee needs to really continue to think through some really, really important details. So, like the instructional strategy, right? How to develop courses. Faculty are already, of course, very busy. So, how we do that. And the instructional support that we would provide for these courses, TAs, adjuncts, and so forth.

The tuition model. So, this would be the mix of full paying students to, you know, students who get some aid, and some who get a full ride. And we would have discretion in how we split that up. And then we have to think a lot about the student services structure. That was something that emerged early and often was that the advising that we need to provide would -- it has to be tailored to this population, not just an extension of what we currently do.

So, I am going to stop there. I don't know how we are on time, but I want to make sure we have time for questions.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Thank you. So, turn it over to a Faculty Senate discussion. As a reminder, if you're in person, just walk down to one of the two microphones. If you're in Zoomland, raise your digital hand. Identify yourself when you're called, with your last name and department. And try to keep it to about two minutes.

We'll start with Courtney Roby.

COURTNEY ROBY: Hello. Courtney Roby, Senator for Classics. Thank you very much for this short presentation. I realize that it was short, and so there's a lot of details that you couldn't include. Could you say a little bit about how the instruction for this will be staffed? Would faculty be incorporating courses for this part-time bachelor's into their usual teaching load?

LISA NISHII: So, really good question. And, you know, we don't have an answer to that, and that there are probably a number of different ways for us to think about how this will be possible. It's something that -- I think our provost is here with us, but that would really be worked on with this next "how do we do it?" committee, which is the implementation. We're calling it the Implementation Committee, but maybe we should call it the How Committee, right? So, I know that's not a satisfactory answer, Courtney.

COURTNEY ROBY: So, this is not a topic that came up thus far.

LISA NISHII: It is, it is. And, you know, we talked about -- of course. And then, we kept saying but we can't get that far into the details. But there are different ways to, you know, try to create more time for faculty to develop these courses. There are different models in terms of the actual facilitation of the courses when they're running.

So, you can imagine having TAs and adjuncts really supporting the office hours, and a good amount of the actual instructional activities with our faculty coming in to meet with students perhaps once or twice a week so there's some face time there. But we want to -- we need to figure out the best way to balance, right, all of the demands on faculty time, and the quality of program we want to provide. Avery, I saw that you just unmuted.

AVERY AUGUST: Yeah. I just wanted to add to that. So, you know, Courtney, this is something that we did, as Lisa says, we did come to multiple times as members of the committee, you know, sort of thought about their roles as faculty, and how we would do this. And as Lisa said, you know, we were drawn back to, should we do this? And then, you know, then determining whether we do this would be a consideration of how we do this.

One -- you know, there's some -- many models that one can think of. One can think of -- an example, I'm just going to put this out there as an example, not that this was proposed. Where a faculty member is hired, and as part of their teaching duties, they have a role in this particular program, degree program, in the same way that when you hire faculty, you know, to teach in particular parts of your department's or college's educational program.

So, but I think part of it is getting the faculty input, if the faculty thinks it's a good idea, to be able to think through ways in which this could be done, so that it's a robust program that we're proud of.

COURTNEY ROBY: I see. Thank you very much, and best of luck.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Thank you. We have an in-person speaker. Please identify yourself and your affiliation.

THOMAS BJORKMAN: Hi, Thomas Bjorkman from Horticulture. So, you described very nicely how big an enterprise this would be to set it up. There are already a bunch of other institutions that do it well, and do it efficiently for this audience that is not one that we've had in the past, and I'm curious how we're going to compete effectively, and at least break even on the enterprise.

EVERY AUGUST: So, maybe I can take a first stab at it, Lisa. So, I forgot the name of the speaker, sorry. I can only see a very small box. But you know, one of the things we thought about is we did do -- we did -- our team, with very good support from Lisa's team, looked at other places that do this. They are the Phoenixs, there's the Grand Valleys.

We felt that there was a different audience that would be interested in a degree from Cornell. And that that audience would be one that would, as Lisa says and the committee proposed, broadening our reach. We had particular groups that we suggest we focus on, but we didn't feel that we would be competing in essence with those institutions. Southern New Hampshire, for example. And we think it's a different demographic.

Mike, you're muted.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We have a --

MIKE KOTLIKOFF: If I could also -- if I could also add [indiscernible] the -- we do have some of our peers that [indiscernible] program consider [indiscernible] usually in urban areas that are traditionally more, you know, night school programs in person. We -- I think the -- some of the thinking of the committee is that given the move to online, the comfort with online in lots of situations, that this is an

opportunity to provide value in a different way to what broader audience that would -- that has been part of the reason that Ithaca has never mounted such programs because we're not in an urban area, and don't have the population that would attend in these types of -- for these types of programs.

THOMAS BJORKMAN: Thanks.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We have a Zoom speaker. Harold Hodes.

HAROLD HODES: Hi. Harold Hodes, philosophy. Why a 7-week semester, rather than the usual sort of 15-week semester? Under the latter arrangement, a course that's given online as part of this program could be merged [indiscernible] an in-person course. I mean, with a professor or a lecturer could bring a laptop, and simultaneously Zoom and teach in person. And I think there would be less need for hiring additional faculty to teach these courses. I don't see what the upside is in going for a seven-week term.

LISA NISHII: Thanks for the question. So, I'll say a couple things about the hybrid instruction mode. I know we just went through that, too, with the pandemic, and that can be challenging. But it also, you know, introduces barriers for international students, right, for whom the time zone would, you know, make it impossible for them to participate.

But in terms of the seven-week, I mean, you know, we can imagine it -- there are advantages to sticking with the academic calendar that we have. We can imagine full 15-week courses. The reason we talked about seven-week courses, and they emerge, is based on some of the input that we collected. But if you think, for example, about military personnel, right, active duty, and being in a course, and then having -- not being able to complete the course because of an assignment, and that there would be, you know, less time before the next start, right, cycle of a course. A 15-week course could be cut into two halves and taught as 7-week, or you could also imagine condensing it into 7 weeks.

So again, this -- we would get into these kinds of details more in later conversations. But because of the demographic was a big part of that reason.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We have another Zoom speaker. Doug, possibly Entak. Correct me.

DOUG ANTCZAK: Right. Doug Antczak. Just switched around there. Sorry, guys. I wonder if that -- I think this a really excellent idea. It's consistent with Cornell's history and aspirations. I'm wondering if the committee considered dovetailing with the existing infrastructure of community colleges around the states to think about bringing students after their first two years in an associate's degree.

LISA NISHII: Absolutely. And that would be one of the pathways into this degree. Absolutely.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Are there anymore? Yes, I just got another online from Ashleigh Newman.

ASHLEIGH NEWMAN: Hi. Thanks. Ashleigh Newman, Department of Population Medicine and Diagnostic Sciences. I just had a couple things, questions, about potential things like timeline or how many students. Like are we talking a class size that graduates together? Or is it completely an individual path, and different timelines that can be customized? Things like that. The scale that's being imagined for this. I'm just curious, are we talking thousand -- you know, compared to our undergraduate, residential population?

LISA NISHII: Yeah. Great question. We talked about the advantages of starting small, right, and then growing as we go. We center a lot of our conversations around a number that was somewhere closer to, you know, the lower -- 200, 300 kind of thing. Not in the thousands.

We talked about the value of cohorts. As you can imagine, retention in a part-time degree program, and ultimately graduation, it tends to be more of a challenge in a part-time population

compared to full-time because they're juggling, you know, jobs and families and all these other things. And so, there are advantages to a cohort where they're kind of going through it together.

And from what, you know, our sense is that if you assume, on average, this is just an assumption, students might come in with, let's say, 12 credits that they've taken elsewhere, that a standard pace might take roughly 6 years, but -- and a slower pace might take more like 12, you know, if they're really going at a reduced rate. And an accelerated pace might be possible in something like five years.

So, yes, there would have to be some flexibility because of the population, although we think the advantages to communicating, this is what we expect, right? Or here's the standard pace, so that people have something that they're measuring their own progress against. And trying to stick together as a cohort.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We have a little over five minutes. Risa Lieberwitz is back.

RISA LIEBERWITZ: I'm back. Hi, Risa Lieberwitz, ILR. Thanks, Lisa, and all for explaining this. I have two questions. One is a process one, and one is substantive. The process question is, who are these recommendations being made to? And this does seem like something where, you know, under the university bylaws, that this would come before the Faculty Senate for a vote, since it does affect educational policy, and more than one college.

And so, perhaps somebody could explain the various steps. I realize this seems very much an idea stage, but there are recommendations. So, I think it'd be important for people to understand who -- how the process of decision making goes with regard to considerations at different stage, and ultimate decisions.

And then, this more -- the substantive question has to do with the tradeoffs between doing the resident program, as opposed to the combination of asynchronous teaching, with some online synchronous teaching, with some in person synchronous teaching. I mean, it seems to me the urge to expand to allow more people to have Cornell degrees is a good urge, and obviously I support that as a democratic kind of goal. Assuming that's -- you know, that seems to be the primary goal that people are talking about.

But you know, what are the tradeoffs here with regard to the nature of the educational experience?

LISA NISHII: Mike, do you want to take the first question about process?

MIKE KOTLIKOFF: Sure. Thanks, Lisa. Risa, I would say we're here, you know, in our mode of consulting with the faculty. So, step one is to consult early with the faculty, and put an idea on the table, and get faculty feedback on that idea. I don't think we're at a point of a proposal yet, or something that would be voted on, but I think you are right in the sense that Article 13 would suggest that when such a proposal comes forward, the Faculty Senate would consider it, and presumably vote on it.

LISA NISHII: Now I'm forgetting the second question. It was a tradeoff --

AVERY AUGUST: Yeah. On the question of [indiscernible], maybe I can start that, answer that.

LISA NISHII: Thank you.

AVERY AUGUST: You know, this is something that the committee sort of grappled with, Risa. You know, we have our established residential population that we would -- that we continue to be very proud of. And we did consider, you know, how much interaction and blending there could be, or would be, as a potential proposal. We felt it was clear that there would be clear boundaries between the two,

and that this -- what it -- you know, this sort of part-time program does not -- does not affect the quality or the functioning, and the continued excellence of our residential program.

And so, the question about size, the number of students, scope, how much overlap there would be with faculty who would do both, are things that we need to consider very carefully.

RISA LIEBERWITZ: I'm really sorry just to pop in it. The tradeoff I was asking about, I wasn't worried about the residential students. I was asking about the tradeoff for the students in the part-time program, and what their experience would be.

EVERY AUGUST: Ah. Yeah. So, I think that's a question that we did think about a bit, and you know, it's part of the initial proposal to say six -- a seven-week course as compared to a full semester course, thinking about what are the lives of those students? What are the challenges they might be having on a day-to-day basis?

And then, we spent a lot of time thinking about advising those students. It's a different population, and we would need different type of advising. And this may not work for everyone. And so, that's also something to think about as well. There might be students who Southern New Hampshire is the better option for them than a Cornell degree, just based on their lives and their personal experiences.

MIKE KOTLIKOFF: Just to add that -- on that last point, the -- you know, there is the tension, Risa, between individuals who -- for whom the only way to access this type of education is remotely, and they would not have the ability, either they're working professionals, working individuals, or in the military or incarcerated, and would not have the ability to have a residential experience. I think the idea of the committee was to try and create that opportunity without limiting participation to someone that has the luxury of being able to be residential for some period of time.

EVE DE ROSA: I just want to quickly insert myself just to say, Risa, that Lisa and Avery and the provost have presented the proposal to CAPP and EPC, and they are -- they've -- CAPP's already produced a summary of their discussions. EPC will. Four, maybe five, committees will come to the Senate at our very first meeting to give their assessment of the proposal and as we move forward.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We're out of time. I would suggest that -- we have three Zoom people who want to make comments. Perhaps they could use the chat function, and perhaps the vice provosts can respond via chat while we move on. And then the chat will be posted on the Dean of Faculty website, if that's okay with everyone.

We have a second proposal presentation dealing with award of honor and distinction to Cornell undergraduates. And I believe Lisa Nishii is going to discuss this. Then we have another presentation by David Delchamps. And finally, 10 minute of faculty discussion after those presentations. So, Lisa?

LISA NISHII: Thank you. So, you can advance please, thank you. So, the sponsors of this proposal, there's a resolution, but there won't be any -- well, it's just a discussion today, include the college and school deans, and associate deans, and my office, and the provost's office.

So, the -- just to give you a little bit of background here, as the number of cross-college majors increases -- so, the last time we looked at actual data was in May of 2018. So, admittedly, a little while ago.

There are 10 cross-college majors, and they kind of form more than a quarter of all our undergraduate students. So, this is an increasing -- a population that's growing. But as it does, the need for us to example, you know, various academic policies and practices continues to bubble up primarily because students find that the differences across colleges and schools are really confusing. Makes it much more difficult to navigate Cornell. And it also results in inequities.

And so, as a group with the associate deans, we've been working on something we're calling the Cross-College Mapping Project. But looking at various policies and practices across colleges, and our goal is really to understand the nature and extent of variability across colleges and schools, and then for us to figure out whether the differences that we see support distinct academic objectives across the colleges and schools, or instead, are arbitrary. And when we looked at this particular issue, which is, you know, awards and honors and distinctions across the schools and colleges, we were actually quite surprised at how much variation there is across the university.

And so, the Associate Deans concluded, and the proponents agreed, that, you know, after a review, that the differences that we saw were not intentional, and don't seem to advance specific goals of the colleges and schools. And that instead, that they do seem rather random, and lead to confusion and inequity for students.

So, the, you know, other piece of this that I should mention is that there are a lot of discussions ongoing right now related to mental health, as you know. And there's a belief that by having so many different types of awards that are based solely on grades really perpetuates an obsession with grades that make students feel that they're in competition with each other, and that, overall, is not so healthy. So, this is the backdrop.

Next please. So, here's a snapshot of the range that we discovered. So, in three of the colleges and schools, students currently cannot earn Latin honors. That's A&P, Human Ecology, and ILR. And on the other side of the spectrum, there's a school where 74% of undergraduates graduate with Latin honors. So, 0% to 74% is quite a range.

In four of our -- of eight colleges, Latin honors are awarded at the level of the degree. Although the GPA thresholds that are used to calculate cum laude, magna cum laude, and summa cum laude vary

across the four colleges. In Arts and Sciences, however, Latin honors are awarded at the level of the major, and honors are bestowed based on assessments of the students' theses, not GPA.

In terms of dean's lists, all of our schools and colleges do currently have dean's lists, but the GPA threshold varies across them from 3.3 to 3.8. So, as you can imagine, there's also a correspondingly wide range in terms of the percentage of students who qualify for dean's lists. The range is roughly 30% to 60% of students qualifying.

What you don't see on this slide, but I'll tell you, is that we also have other types of honors. So, they're defined differently, labeled differently across colleges. Some are based solely on GPA, kind of like the Latin honors concept, and others are based on GPA plus another academic activity. Some mix a number of different criteria, and they're called everything from distinctions in research, distinction in all subjects, with distinction, high distinction, high distinction in honors, high honors, Latin honors with distinction. You get the idea. There are a lot of different possible combinations.

So, really, you know, what this proposal is about is for us to try to clean some of this up. Right? The inconsistencies and messiness, really, across the colleges and schools in terms of how we do this as a university. And for us to have a single type of honors that's based on GPA. And for it to have the same label. And so, they would be Latin honors. And that -- for them to be calculated using the same criteria across our colleges and schools.

As you'll see in that top bullet, the top 30% of students would earn some form of Latin honors according to the guidelines set forth in this proposal. All students across all colleges. And schools would be eligible based on the shared set of criteria, like I said. And be conferred at the level of the degree, not the major.

And in the proposal, we recommend using percentiles to calculate them, rather than GPA, that absolute value GPA. And, you know, in order to -- so, we talked about this quite a bit. We looked at data,

we calculated it different ways, we compared it, and what we saw was that if you use GPAs, it produces much greater disparities across the colleges and schools in terms of the percentage of students who would end up graduating with Latin honors.

So, I'll give some examples. If we adopted the criteria that are currently in place in CALs () and College of Engineering, where you get cum laude if you graduate with a GPA of 3.5, then the range would be 47% in one college, all the way up to 78% in another of students who would graduate with cum laude. Magna cum laude, 3.75 is currently the criteria, and the range is 27% to 51%. These are really big differences. And then for summa cum laude, at 4.0 currently in those two colleges, that would produce a range from 1.6% to 18%.

And so, you know, the very purpose is for us to pay attention to the inequities across colleges and schools, and seemed that basing it on GPA would continue to perpetuate these inequities.

So, just for reference, when you -- we took a look at our Ivy peers, all of the other seven Ivies award Latin honors. So, we think eliminating it would disadvantage our students. All but Brown offered the three levels, and all but Princeton confer honors at the level of the degree versus the major. And of the six that confer Latin honors at the degree level, five use percentile rather than GPA. So, you know, there's something to the use of the percentile that makes sense to our peers as well.

Five of the seven Ivies do not have dean's lists either, and our proposal is to eliminate the dean's lists, and to have just Latin honors as the type of award that's based on GPA. There are a couple reasons for this, but dean's list happens, right, every semester. And so, it's much more salient to students. We think it feeds the obsession with grades more than Latin honors, which is kind of more of a distal goal. And also, you know, because our peers don't have it, and grad schools don't look at it, we don't think it's as important as the Latin honors.

And then, finally, the last part of the proposal is to eliminate the kinds of honors that -- recall though the things like distinction in studies, or whatever it might be, that were determined based just on GPA, because that's redundant. It's the same thing as the Latin honors. And to keep the other types of distinctions that would be called, you know, distinction in x, whatever the x might be, as determined by each college, school, or major. So, leave that local flexibility there, while of course, again, keeping in mind the need to be consistent, as consistent as possible, for students who are in cross-college majors.

I'll stop there and take questions.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Well, I think we have the questions after David's presentation.

LISA NISHII: Oh, right, right.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: David has a laptop and is in person. So, you have a choice.

DAVID DELCHAMPS: Okay. I have a laptop, but I'm not on Zoom. So, and this is not a presentation. Okay? I'm just here to tell you that EPC, working together with -- sorry?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Get closer to the --

DAVID DELCHAMPS: Oh, okay. I'm always worried that I'm too close. Okay. That EPC, since last spring, has been going back and forth with Lisa and Carol Grumbach, and others from the Associate Deans group, and we've gone through several iterations of this proposal, and the EPC is happy with the current version.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Thank you. We now open this up for discussion, and I have a raised hand on Zoom. Yuval Grossman. Identify your institutional affiliation.

YUVAL GROSSMAN: Hi. This is Yuval Grossman from Physics. So, I have two question. The first one is just for clarification. At Physics, we have several awards that we give at the end, and when people

graduate. It actually also involves some money. So, those are not under any of those proposal. We can still give them, is that correct?

LISA NISHII: Sorry. So, you mean colleges, schools that aren't under this? I missed part.

YUVAL GROSSMAN: So, we have several award every year that we give to our -- to the physics major, like the Yennie Prize, and the Yennie prize go after the name of Professor Yennie.

LISA NISHII: Oh, yeah. I don't think that -- right. Right.

YUVAL GROSSMAN: So, these are totally not seeing involved in.

LISA NISHII: I think so. Right, right.

YUVAL GROSSMAN: Yeah. Okay. So, that was just the clarification.

The second one is actually kind of a proposal, and what bothered me -- overall I really like the idea, but what bothered me is the fact that now actually it's down at the college level. And the, in particular in Art and Science, the differences between, say, you know, just to choose, Physics and History, they are very different. Okay? So, and I understand, you know, I read the report, and I could see that you had a lot of discussion about it.

So, let me make a proposal, and the proposal would be that we actually do both. That is, that we give, say, you know, for the top 5%, you get it if you are top 5% in your major, or top 5% in your college. And I think that's going to really help, because in particular, I feel that, you know, just looking at the kind of the average median, in Physics, average median are usually much less than ever -- medium, say, for example, in music. Just a -- that's something that I actually looked at.

So, I'm just kind of worried that, you know, in Physics, you're going to get very few who are going to get it just because in Physics, our median usually seems like a B+, and in other part of the colleges, there the median is A.

So, my suggestion for you, and you know, it's not about answering me right now, it's taking it back to the committee, and saying maybe we can do both. It's going to give a little more, but if you are 5%, say top 5% in your college or in your major, you get this.

LISA NISHII: Thank you.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Is there a response? Or should we go to the in-person speaker? We have an in-person speaker. Identify yourself.

MELISSA HINES: Hi, Melissa Hines from department of Chemistry, also the faculty elected trustee, one of the two. I wanted to raise the same point that Yuval just rose. This is great. I like the idea of trying to make things be on a level playing field, try to give the same kind of percentages to people in different colleges.

The problem is, is that I'm in a college that's very heterogeneous. And so, we have people in science, we have people in the humanities. The grade distributions are very different. And I think it's great that we publicize things like median grades, but what's going to happen if we do this, is that there will be a push for those of us in fields that give somewhat lower median grades to inflate our grades so that everyone in the college is on a level playing field.

The second concern that I have is that in chemistry, the Latin honors, particularly the top two levels, have always been chosen on the basis, in part, of research accomplishments. And so, that's meant to encourage students to get into the lab, which is a big piece of chemistry, and it also gives students the opportunity to take courses that they wouldn't otherwise. So, things like graduate courses

that tend to have lower means, and undergraduates may not be as prepared for. So, I'm worried that both of these things will disadvantage chemistry students.

LISA NISHII: Melissa, I'll address the second one first, which is that you could continue to do what you do in chemistry. That is to have students work towards a thesis, have it -- be eligibility, be based on GPA if that's how it's done now, and for them to have the exposure that you just spoke of in order to graduate with distinction in research, for example. And that -- we fully expect that the colleges and departments would continue those kinds of activities as they define and as they want to implement. Does that make sense?

MELISSA HINES: It makes sense, but I disagree. I think that our students benefit from the way it is set up now. I think that the research motivation helps to get more students into the lab, and it's really important, particularly for people who want to go on to -- in chemistry, to see if they like doing research. And so, I think this motivates our students.

LISA NISHII: But they could still do that. I'm confused about why they wouldn't still be able to do that.

MELISSA HINES: They still can, but they lose the motivation of getting Latin honors.

LISA NISHII: But they would graduate still with honors, it's just called something else.

MELISSA HINES: Names mean something.

LISA NISHII: True. True. I mean, you know, one thing I'll say, throughout these discussions, is that, you know, we felt like that there isn't always one, one perfect solution that addressed all the different things that came up. And this issue of within college, between major variability and grades, was something that came up, but then we thought through what it might look like to award at the level

of the major, and new problems come up. And so, you know, we don't think there's a perfect solution, however, we don't think what's happening now is the ideal way to do it.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We have a Zoom speaker. Courtney Roby.

COURTNEY ROBY: Hello. Courtney Roby, Classics. I mean, you know, I am in Arts and Sciences, and I have seen, you know, firsthand, many times, the benefits that come to students from, you know, taking the plunge, doing the difficult work of going through an honors thesis. And, you know, what I can imagine does look, from an administrative perspective, like cleaning up a messy situation, looks very much like to me like impoverishing what is currently a very rich array of ways for students to succeed and to define for themselves what success means, what meaningful challenge seeking means.

Our students are obsessed with grades already. And to reduce all recognition for, you know, seeking out additional challenges, you know, deeper experiences, down to a single distinction that might be for anything, you know, distinction then is the one label that we have for someone who does an excellent thesis, or someone who does an okay thesis, or someone who worked in a lab, or someone who was most congenial, whatever it is, is now reduced merely to the single label of distinction, as opposed to the spectrum that we have now.

The GPA, and I presume class rank information, is already available from transcripts. So, this seems to me to be a redundant -- it's informationally redundant, and again, it reinforces that grade obsession for our students, that discourages them from taking more challenging classes and seeking out challenging research activities.

LISA NISHII: So, what I heard you say is that what you don't want to lose is the ability to make distinctions in the quality of the honors theses that students might complete, right? Because there would still be motivation for them to do that, for them to graduate with distinction in chemistry, let's say, right? Distinction in research in chemistry. The label would be up to you, we just, you know, have

some convention so it's not all over the place. So, distinction in, and the criteria would be set by the department.

And so, I don't think the intention at all was to take away. I totally agree with you. You know, engaging in undergraduate research, working that closely with a faculty advisor, it's a phenomenal experience for our students. We would not want to do anything that would take away from that. And so, it's to have just one type that is based on grades, while maintaining these other kinds of activities that lead to different awards. That might be a combination.

COURTNEY ROBY: I appreciate that, but as Melissa said, names matter. And you know, summa cum laude for a really excellent honor thesis, it's something that, you know, we wrack our brains every year about the quality, you know, differentiating the quality of the theses. It's something that the students strive really hard for. And to have it all collapse down to a single distinction, I think really takes the richness out of that experience. Perhaps they shouldn't --

LISA NISHII: It would be two distinctions.

COURTNEY ROBY: -- motivated by labels, and yet they are.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We have about five minutes. Laurent, online.

LAURENT DUBREUIL: Laurent Dubreuil, Faculty Senator for Roman Studies, and I'm going to echo some of the opinions we heard before. I mean, two primary remarks, one is that it's clear that we have a very uneven situation. It's not very convincing when you look at the different units. So, I'm not convinced by that. I learn new things reading the first report.

And second primary remark, I would say that in an ideal world, knowledge matters to such an extent that the grades do not matter. So, if your proposal was to get rid of all grades, I would be on board with that. With no problem at all. I believe that that is not what we should focus on.

But if we remain within a system with grades, then we are meeting all kinds of difficulties with the situation you are describing, with the situation we have. But suddenly with the situation that is being proposed, to me, it seems that some units should clean up their house, but I mean, if you give 75% of honors to your students, maybe that's your problem. But from the viewpoint of Arts and Sciences, when I don't think that we should pay for the fact that other units would be so generous with what is supposed to be a set of particular distinctions. So, that's the first point.

Then second point, we also know, it has been said already, and I'm coming mainly from the Humanities, we tend, in the Humanities, to be more generous with grades, on average, because we have less students than we used to. And so, we want to retain them. And it's true that if there are different ways of giving grades depending on the disciplines, and clearly within one discipline or one department, I'm not grading the same way that my colleague next door is grading. And so, I'm worried about the consequences of that.

And if we want to have a more even situation, are we, next time, going to discuss the numbers of A, A+, A- that we are going to grant? Is this the direction we are going to have next -- in the next, I don't know, in two years from now?

And then, I would like to stress the point, again, about what has been said by several of my colleagues. Within Arts and Sciences, the honors distinction is tied to the honors thesis. None of us invented that system, but that's how it is. But the honors thesis is absolutely key for research university. So, it's not one aspect of what we do. It's the main aspect of what we do. Research is what defines the research university. So, we should not -- we should not weaken the immersion within research for undergraduate students by moving things around.

We will see less students being interested in doing an internship in a lab or in writing an honor thesis, if the honors is disconnected from it. That's whatever you can add distinction research. You will

see -- you will necessarily see a weakening of the research experience for the undergraduate education, and that is not the way to go.

Thank you.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We only have a couple of minutes. I'm wondering if I should skip Harold Hodes, since he spoke already, and go to Bruce Lewenstein, and the rest of everyone who wants to speak, again, put your comments into the chat. So, Bruce?

BRUCE LEWENSTEIN: Thank you. I'm Bruce Lewenstein, Senator from Communication, which is in the Ag School. So, a different college than the ones we've heard from. As many of you know, I'm also a member of Science and Technology Studies in the Arts college. And in particular, I advise in the Biology and Society major, which is one of the -- I was surprised to see in the report, 25% of our students, I think was the number, are graduating from these cross-college majors.

And I have seen directly the problem of two students following essentially the same program, engaged in the same kind of research, having completely different honors outcomes, because -- simply because their enrollment is in a different college.

So, although I understand absolutely the points that my colleagues have made about wanting to find ways of continuing to encourage research, I agree, it's what we want to do, it's the advantage that a research university has is that it's a great way to learn, I think that the overall motivation of this, which is to try to create a system where the same -- where students pursuing the same kinds of work across the university, have the same kind of outcome. So, I strongly support the way that this proposal is going.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Thank you. So, again, those of you who still want to comment, please use the chat function, because we're going to move on to the last order of business, which is the Good of the Order. We have two speakers. Richard Bensele appears to be online. Three minutes.

RICHARD BENDEL: Hi, everybody. I circulated my comments to the Senators earlier today, and you already have them. And they won't fit in three minutes. So, there's no way possible that I could even summarize those comments.

I will say, though, looking at the agenda, that the vice provost Koretzky is going to stick around after his three minutes, and answer questions and discussion. And I am very happy to do that as well.

So, you know, you could give me -- you can share questions, comments on the chat, or wait until the vice provost is done, and then present them in this session.

But I thank you for the time. And I think it's best that we move on and do that discussion. Thank you.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Thank you. Gary Koretzky, I believe, is in person. So, the floor is yours.

GARY KORETZKY: Great. Well, thank you. So, do I have three minutes, or can I take more? Because -- okay. So, I'm Gary Koretzky. I'm not sure which direction I should look, but I think I'll look at the folks who are here in the room. I am a professor of medicine at Weill, but I'm also appointed at the vet school, and the Department of Microbiology and Immunology. And I think as many of you might know, over the past year and nine months, I've really been immersed in our COVID response.

So, what I would like to do in my more than three minutes, because I've never been to the Senate before to talk to you -- I know that Peter Frazier's been here a number of times talking about some of the modeling, and Peter and I, of course, work really closely together -- is to give you an overview of what the principles have been, and what they remain in thinking about our COVID response. And not rehash everything that's gone on but tell you about this past semester.

So, there really are, in my view, five overarching principles. And the first in dealing with the pandemic, was that we wanted to do this in a way where we were really guided by the best evidence.

And in the popular press, it's often written how the science has changed around masks. The science has never changed; it's just that our understanding of the science has changed.

And we went into this recognizing that we didn't want to have so much hubris to think we really knew what we were doing, but to recognize that we were going to do the best we could, but that we had to be able to be flexible, and we had to be nimble so that we could change as our understanding of this virus, and the response to the virus, changed.

Our second major principle is that we had a very, very clear goal, and that goal was to protect the safety of the community. We knew early on that COVID was a lethal disease. The number of Americans who have died is close to 800,000 now. That's a bad disease.

And we recognize that without an approach, we suffered the possibility, or we raised the possibility, that we would be bringing back people into the community, and without care, that they would be subject to those risks. Furthermore, the larger community would be subject to those risks.

But we also wanted to recognize that there were ways to protect against mortality, but those would essentially eliminate life as we knew it. So, it was this balancing act, and it still is this balancing act, where we're trying to retain as much normal life as possible, but also have that degree of safety.

We also knew that our strategy that we adopted, once we adopted it, wouldn't be perfect, and that we would have to adapt as the conditions change, and as our understanding changed. So, as a result, just so you know, there have been now many hundreds of cases on campus, and we have looked at every single one of them. We looked at them to see what we could learn from them, and then we've changed what we've done. Right?

So that you all know, there's this notion of adaptive testing where we test more people than the Health Department would tell us to. There -- at times we would increase testing frequency for different

populations, and that wasn't random. That was because we saw a signal that made us concerned, so that we would try to interdict spread, because that was really the key to all of this.

And then the last principle, and I can't emphasize this enough, is that Cornell wasn't alone in doing this. So, absolutely everything that we've done, we've done together with the Health Department. Everything we've done together, we've done also with the major health system in the region, like Cayuga Medical Center. I meet actually weekly, and I have since March of 2020, with Frank Kruppa, the director of the Health Department. We met most recently this morning. And I meet weekly with the CEO of Cayuga Medical Center.

And as a result, we've had a coordinated response that Cornell has been able to take on more and more responsibility because the Health Department trusts us, and that has alleviated some of the burden on the Health Department. Right? We've got a big community here, and we've been able to manage that community.

So, that -- those were the overarching principles, and those are the principles that remain, and those are the principles that we've been using every semester. I think you might remember that back in May, things looked very different than they actually look right now. Case counts in the country were down to 10,000 a day, that we imagined that we would be able to bring people back who are now largely vaccinated, where you could have classrooms without masks. And even in the summer, we began that because case counts were so low.

But as I said, we pivot as the conditions pivot. This big pivot was due to the Delta variant. And what we discovered with the Delta variant is that is very, very transmissible. It's transmissible even in individuals who have been fully vaccinated. And so, as you know, we're all wearing masks inside. That was different from what we anticipated. We're testing all of the undergraduates, different than we anticipated. We thought we wouldn't be testing those who were immunized.

So, what's happened? So, we had a bolus of cases in the beginning of the semester. We used our approach. We increased testing for some groups. We were very aggressive, and the number of student positives went down substantially. The number of staff positives was quite low, but then began to rise, mostly because of gatherings, mostly because when you live at home and there's somebody positive, it's quite likely you'll become positive as well. So, we know all of this, and we've been doing a lot of work to make sure that we try to inform people who are positive in their context, what the risks might be. And then apply the testing process.

So, in the beginning of the semester, we had 20 a day, then 50 a day, then 70 a day. That's stopped. Now after Thanksgiving, again, we've got another surge. I hope -- you know, I've seen today's data, that it's plateaued, and I hope that it will then diminish.

One of our major goals was to make sure that we could have in-person education through the entire semester. Think we achieved that as of yesterday. So, that was quite an accomplishment, I think. But the bottom line is, is that we're still paying attention to this. And every week, every month, I'm thinking I can see some of this in the rearview mirror.

So, now there's Omicron. I'll just mention that we will know when there's Omicron on campus. We have a PCR technology to rapidly screen for the possibility. To date, no Omicron on campus. We'll know. It's going to be here, and then we're going to respond to that as well as we learn more of the science.

So, I wanted to give you a flavor of where we are. This semester, there have been more cases than we would've liked. That's the fact. We were hoping that vaccination would prevent infections. It does to some extent. It does an amazing job in preventing hospitalizations and death, and that remains the case.

So, I think the mandates for vaccination were well thought out. The fact that that happens has allowed us to have in-person classes where the rooms are full, but we won't be able to do this without infections, and the real balance now is to protect health, recognizing that infections will still happen, try to minimize the spread, and also try to minimize the disruption. You all know, right, when you have students in your classes who are positive, they isolate for 10 days. And we're trying to walk this line of having as normal an experience for everybody on campus, but also afford that degree of protection.

So, I'm happy to answer questions, if people have them. I don't know if that's what you wanted to hear, but this is where we are right now, and the adventure hasn't stopped, unfortunately.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We do have a question online. Sherry Colb.

SHERRY COLB: Hi, thank you. I wanted to ask, because my -- our observation at the law school is that a disproportionate number of the cases of COVID that are coming up are among the staff. And just wondering whether the staff is required to be vaccinated? And if not, why not?

GARY KORETZKY: Oh, there is a mandate for vaccination right now for Cornell staff that there is an exemption process, and the exemption process is for religious or medical exemptions. It's being adjudicated through an appropriate process, but the expectation is that staff are vaccinated. I think the number is about 93% right now, and one strong urge, or recommendation, is not only be vaccinated, but get a booster shot. It matters. It matters for Omicron. The data are coming out now that it does make a difference.

So, the hope is that we'll have essentially universal vaccination, except for those who can't be vaccinated for one or another reason, or for a religious reason it just doesn't work for them.

SHERRY COLB: Thank you.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Another question or comment from Paul Ginsparg.

PAUL GINSPARG: Hi, Gary. I'm just wondering, in response to your -- to that previous question, the mandate for staff is only very recent. I think it just went into place this week perhaps. And so, a lot of that data really was concerning when we had more staff than students showing up on the dashboard, given the, you know, enormously larger number of students than staff. It was a much higher percentage. But you know, I agree that particular issue should be going away.

One thing I'm curious about is that if you have any data about the students who were, as well, getting it, not being protected by perhaps some of the other vaccines. I'm wondering if you were tracking which vaccine they had, because of course, there were concerns about some of the vaccines that had been approved by WHO not being quite as effective as the, you know, Pfizer, Moderna vaccines that many of the rest of us have had.

GARY KORETZKY: Yes. And so, we do have data on vaccination, and we do have data on subsequent infection. And we actually are tracking the likelihood that somebody will be infected after different vaccinations, because we know both the numerator and the denominator.

So, the answer is yes, we're tracking that. Even with the FDA approved vaccines, there are relative strengths, or relative degrees of protection. I think our data are similar to what you probably learned nationally, and that is Johnson & Johnson is the least protective a subsequent breakthrough infection, followed by Pfizer, and then Moderna. They each give great protection though. Certainly, great protection against what's ultimately most important, and that is whether individuals will become ill.

I'll just tell you that that's something else that we track very, very carefully. It's a lot easier for us to track it with students than with staff. The degree of morbidity this semester, even though we've had more students positive this semester than either of the previous two semesters, the degree of illness has been far, far less, and that's an attribute to the vaccines, including the international vaccines.

We're hoping that students who have received vaccines that are not FDA approved, they're making it available for them to get a subsequent FDA approved vaccine, and we're urging them to do that.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: I'm calling on Risa again, but just so you know, it's because there's no one else with a raised hand. So, Risa?

RISA LIEBERWITZ: I'm happy to defer, if anybody wants to speak before me. Hearing nobody, I'll go ahead.

So, there's a strange disconnect between the discussion that we're having now, and the discussion about this potential part-time program which involves a lot of online, including asynchronous online learning that may take place. And the disconnect I think is pretty clear that it has to do with the way in which it was so difficult, and so stressful, and really just enormously anxiety producing and frightening for many people who needed accommodations and found the process at the -- in July, August, September, to be extremely difficult to navigate, and very unfriendly to them.

And so, it -- and one of the things that our resolution that passed in the Senate, one of our resolutions called for, was an open consultative process between the administration and the Faculty Senate, and governance bodies generally, about how to handle those kinds of accommodation requests, which are not just individual health of the person teaching, but also their families, et cetera.

And it seems to me that we need to integrate this sort of tear that you described, Gary, with the governance process in a way that will really address the concerns, the compromised position that many people hold, so that we don't have a rigid kind of approach, but one that's not only flexible, but transparent. And I don't know if you were involved with that, or if you have some thoughts about it.

GARY KORETZKY: Well, those are really, really good points and good questions, and I have thoughts about most things that people ask. So, I'll just tell you, of course, I do have thoughts about it, because it's something I think about as well. Right? And that is if where, you know, our major goal is to protect safety. All I can tell you is that it's a complicated issue. There are lots of conversations. I agree that transparency is really important, and we were doing this in real time, where the goal was to preserve the experience as much as possible, while maintaining safety.

You know, one can always look retrospectively and say oh yeah, we did a good job, but that's not really the issue. The issue is what's the process? And how is that discussed? And I agree that I think that everybody recognizes the importance of the discussion and the transparency, and I am involved, at least am present in conversations, where this is at the top of the mind. Now, it may not have come across satisfactory to everybody, but this is -- the questions that you asked were certainly not ignored.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We have a little under two minutes, but I think Gary has offered to stay after the meeting will officially end. Meanwhile, we have an in-person speaker, David Delchamps.

DAVID DELCHAMPS: [indiscernible].

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, yeah, do that. Not sure what happened to that microphone.

DAVID DELCHAMPS: David Delchamps, Electrical and Computer Engineering. First of all, Gary, thank you so much for all you've done. I mean, I've been -- watched your updates all year. Great.

Question I have is kind of on the other side. Now that everyone's vaccinated, now that kids can be vaccinated, now that there's been six people in the hospital for like weeks, even though there's a zillion positive tests, why are we still wringing our hands about positive tests? Why are we still calling them cases? Okay? Why don't we change the terminology? Why aren't we moving into an endemic zone

where folks who are careful, wear a mask, and others don't, and people who don't want to get vaccinated, don't get vaccinated, and they spin the Russian roulette thing?

You know, I don't really understand why we are still, like, so worried about, like, how many positive tests there were. I mean, we are in an age now where this virus, this virus and all its variants, I mean a plural big basket of viruses, just like the cold, just like the flu is kicking around, it's going to be kicking around forever. So, anyway.

GARY KORETZKY: Yeah. So, you know, that's an incredibly important question. It's a little different than the cold, because 800,000 people have died. Right? So, it's when do we make the transition so that this becomes an endemic disease, because it is a disease, that we are going to learn to live with? And your points were well taken. Right?

So, when people are vaccinated, and they're fully vaccinated, an important question was, when the community is eligible and a vaccine is available, right? So, children are just becoming eligible now. Five-year-olds, right? So, that becomes a real important question.

I guess my brief answer is, it will someday be an endemic disease. We're not going to eliminate COVID. We're not going to eliminate SARS-COV-2 and its variants. But we, as a larger community, Cornell cannot make the decision that we're not going to have people that are positive be isolated. So, if somebody's positive, according to the Health Department, they need to be isolated. It's hugely disruptive.

So, what we're trying to do right now, again, is walk this line where we diminish the number of new cases, but not in such a way where people can't do their life. And wearing a mask is inconvenient, but it's better than not being able to have classes. At least in my view.

And so, we are going to move to that, but -- what you described -- but I don't know exactly when. And when there's a new variant that scares people, Omicron is more transmissible. Maybe it is actually less virulent. If that's in fact the case, then that, overall, mitigates some of the concerns. Right? But we just don't -- we're just not there yet. But we will be at some point, that society will not be able to tolerate having, you know, no interactions. But we're just not there yet.

So, we are working as hard as we can to maximize the ways that people can interact, while still affording that degree of safety. And it's hard. I'm not -- I wish somebody else was doing this, to tell you the truth.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Well, we are at 5:01. The Senate meeting is officially adjourned, but I'm happy to stick around to moderate any other questions. Eve, should we continue the recording, or stop the recording?

EVE DE ROSA: Stop it.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Stop the record.