

Minutes for CPEP Board Meeting - March 27, 2019

– Submitted by Ed Mei

Present:

Jan Zeserson (board chair), Bob Turgeon, Andy Borum, Esta Bigler, Alex Chertok, Sandra Greene, Tom Owens, Mary Katzenstein (remotely), Rob Scott (ex officio), Tess Wheelwright (ex officio), Katherine McComas (ex officio), Ed Mei (ex officio scribe)

Absent: Rachel Aleks, Ifeoma Ajunwa, Deb Streeter, Willie Marshall, Ray Roe

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the December 6, 2018 board meeting were approved unanimously without change.

Announcements

Jan will include, as addenda to the Minutes, written statements and committee reports sent to her before or immediately after a meeting. The objective is to devote meeting time to grappling with issues rather than reporting; and to keep a written record of accurate, complete committee reports. A committee (or any single member of the board) may of course always request and get meeting time to enlist help from or to seek advice from members, and the Jan encourages members to suggest issues for discussion.

We will vote on board seat nominees at our next meeting (late May). Nominating committee chair, Rachel, will accept nominations until April 5.

Discussion of Board Nominations

- Jan raised the question about considerations and criteria the Board should keep in mind when nominating and/or selecting new Board members.
- Bob mentioned the importance of representation of **different academic disciplines**.
- Sandra believes members should have **taught in prisons**; Alex thinks at least one should **currently be teaching** in prison
- Esta reminded us of Cornell's **Land Grant mission** and believes the Board should be understanding of Cornell's commitment to engage and reach out to the wider population.
- Sandra prompted those present to think about what other **skills** Board members should possess, citing fundraising skills as an example. Rob clarified that the Board's functions overlap with but don't formally include fundraising duties.
- Jan brought up the importance of balancing **historical memory with new insight**
- Katherine suggested some members should be affiliated with **the minor (CPEJ)**.
- Tess mentioned that the Board should be mindful **racial inclusivity**

- Tom, Sandra and Jan discussed how all of these suggestions are just that, suggestions, and not requirements needed to be written into the bylaws. However, Jan confirmed that the nominating committee does need guidelines to help steer.
- Bob consolidated everyone's suggestions into one word – **diversity**
- Esta suggested that the chair of the Board be charged to convey these recommendations to the nominating committee
- Mary brought up her concern that, given that there is currently an excess of nominations, that those nominated but not eventually selected to join the board might feel alienated
- Jan raised concerns about impending Board vacancies within the next few years. Tom confirmed that he will look over the rotation of Board members scheduled through the next few years.

Discussion of External Board members

- Jan raised the question of what to do with those people who are not formally on the board but still have expressed interest in staying involved with CPEP. Sandra suggested we have “on call, non-board member volunteers” who respond when needed. Many names were suggested, including Fellows, Program Consultants, Advisors to the Advisory Board, and more. Katherine summarized this discussion by making distinct three kinds of “outside of the board members” to consider – **Ex Officio** members, a smaller group whose role can be more clearly defined, **External non-Cornell members**, and **Faculty Fellows**, selected from our list of previous instructors. Katherine, and later Rob, suggested holding annual meetings in addition to existing Board meetings, where external board members are invited.

Action: An ad hoc committee of Jan, Esta, and Mary will convene about how to include external board members. Tom will look over the rotation of Board members scheduled through the next few years.

Thinking about CPEP's role in the possibility of PELL/TAP Grant Restoration

- Jan provided a summary of Rob's initial questions to the Board, which were, paraphrased: who is CPEP if federal/state funding was reinstated? How should CPEP use foundational grants and private funding in this scenario?
- **Short-term vision**
 - Sandra started the conversation by asking what CPEP expects community colleges might do if PELL/TAP grants were restored. Rob responded by saying that to his knowledge, CCs (community colleges) currently have no plan and no faculty appointments to respond to this hypothetical. However, he projects that if restored, TAP grants would give community colleges approximately \$1 million per year, which would exceed CPEP's current budget.

- After Rob established this background information, Tom suggested that Cornell should continue to preserve a place for undergraduate teaching; this would tie in with the minor and the reflections course, naturally. Sandra agreed with this and asked how CPEP could partner with CC faculty to take on Cornell undergraduates.
- Here, the conversation transitioned to envisioning, in the short term, how CPEP can work in conjunction with CCs. Esta provided a historical model, the “Empire State model,” as a basis for what initially can be done. In this model, CCs would take federal/state money to contract Cornell administration and instructors. Sandra and others were supportive of the viability of this model. Also in support, Tom reminded us of the pedagogical distinction between Cornell and CC instructors, that, largely, CPEP instructors instruct because they “want to,” while CC instructors will have financial incentives to teach as well.
- Andy, Tom and Rob asked the Board to consider DOCCS’ perspective in all of this. Who would DOCCS prefer run college-in-prison? Rob believes that DOCCS tends to be more than willingly to invite governmental constraints that can eliminate uncertainty and streamline college in prison programming.
- At this point, Mary, over Zoom, asked the Board to identify how CPEP can remain distinct from CCs. Mary mentioned the Certificate in Liberal Arts and undergraduate TAs as a few examples. She also brought up revisiting the “Inside Out” model as a way to keep undergraduates involved. Tess pointed out that the quality of instruction will decrease with CC instructors who may not have the commitment of CPEP instructors. Rob assured the Board that the status of the Certificate program would not be threatened by PELL/TAP restoration. Rob also explained that the Computer Labs are a wholly Cornell entity; Tom and Rob mentioned that CCs will certainly be interested in them moving forward.
- **Long-term vision**

Here the conversation transitioned to the board’s long-term vision for CPEP given PELL/TAP restoration. The discussion revolved around the possibility establishing 4-year degree programs, both in prisons and out (re-entry). To start, Katherine questioned the level of Cornell’s interest in providing 4-year degree programs inside, to which Rob and others responded with there being a philosophical reluctance to do so. Tess affirmed (a guess) that there is interest in a B.A. degree from an especially academically driven subset of our current students. Rob mentioned the possibility of pooling students from the 4 prisons into one facility to increase numbers, as the Bard program has done in the past.

 - In considering how 4-year degrees can be granted, Rob asked the Board to consider what Cornell/CPEP might do within a consortium of institutions to provide 4-year degrees in prison without being the actual degree-granter itself. Esta and Katherine suggested, with optimism, that Cornell can use its existing partnership with SUNY to collaborate further on this project. Katherine reported that SUNY has a current need for more students and tuition money. Esta reminded us that partnering with SUNY on this venture would fall right into Cornell’s Land Grant/engagement mission as well.

- **Finally**, Jan closed by asking Rob about CPEP's role in re-entry, to which Rob introduced his idea of wanting to hire a reentry coordinator in the near future. This could be another one of CPEP's roles with PELL/TAP restored, although Tess, Rob and others do not see this ever being CPEP's primary function.

Action: Rob requests that, after further discussion, the Board consolidate a 1-2 page vision summary of how it sees CPEP operating in this hypothetical PELL/TAP funded landscape. An ad hoc committee, not yet defined, will continue to think about these issues.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will take place sometime within the 2-week window around graduation. A doodle poll will be sent out to finalize this date.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m. by Jan.

ADDENDA to the Minutes (2):

1. **Mary's response to Sandra's question about the board's fundraising role**
2. **Rob's statement circulated prior to board meeting to inform discussion.**

ADDENDUM 1: Report from Mary Katzenstein after the meeting

I wanted to follow up on Sandra's question at the 3/27/2019 board meeting about the Board's fundraising role by describing the development efforts that a few of us on the Board have been doing for some years and which has probably not been sufficiently visible. I write this, mainly, in the hope that such a description might help enlist current and future Board members in this rewarding work.

The narrative is --with apologies -- long but then, the history is long. For those inclined to skim, the last few sentences summarize in **bold** *what draws us-- and what might draw current and prospective Board members -- into contributing to these efforts.*

History: A brief early history of raising program funds has been set out on the CPEP website. But let me try to describe what in different combinations and sequences Jan, Rob, and I have been doing *as an ad hoc committee of the Board* in more recent years. (NB: The history below does not record Rob's highly successful *individual* foundation grant seeking nor his personal initiatives with alumni donors.)

This work has evolved along two different lines:

- 1) **NYC Advisory Committee.** In the earlier years, starting about 2008, Jan Z., I, and Jim Schechter (then the program Executive Director) worked with a group of recent Cornell grads and their families (Roizens, Wertheimers, Mehlmans) to establish a NYC advisory committee. These families hosted events at their NYC residences which was the foundation of what has grown into a vibrant community of NYC alumni supporters. During that time, we also organized and presented several academic talks at alumni events. As CPEP became more established with a regular stream of financial support, that initial NYC advisory group became less active as a group although individually, these initial families, parents of more recent TAs, and other Cornell alumni have continued their involvement as program supporters. (Individuals from AA&D have also been crucial to these early initiatives and past and present members of the Board -- David

DeVries, Bill Goldsmith, Richard Polenber, Bob Turgeon, and Pete Wetherbee, have all been involved).

- 2) **NYCCPEP** (pron. “nik-pep”). What has now evolved into our most active New York City presence is an initiative of recent graduates/former TAs now living/working in New York City. This group (with a steering committee of about four or five recent TA grads joined by Jan/me/Rob, and several years ago by Esta Bigler-and at the last event, by Tess W. and Ed Mei) is known as NYCCPEP-a self-descriptive acronym, pronounced “nik-pep.” A few years ago, the steering committee applied for and received a small grant from Engaged Learning funds which helped finance a series of NYC events that encouraged campus-NYC connections.

NYCCPEP committee has organized two major events a year in NYC that have been held at, for example, the ILR Extension Center, at the homes of CPEP alumni families (twice at the McGraths), the Weill Medical College, etc. These events have been important in connecting recent TAs residing in New York City to CPEP and each other. The events have also been a vehicle for keeping the CPEP TA community informed about incarceration-related issues – legal reforms, educational debates, and health concerns. Over the longer term, the hope is also that this community of TAs will become part of our donor community.

Below is the (albeit-incomplete) list of events that advisory board members and/or NYCCPEP have organized since the beginning although our formal record keeping starts only in 2013. A social (networking) event in the City is likely to be held in the early summer. In the fall, James Forman (Yale Law) has agreed to lead a discussion on September 16 about his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Locking Up Our Own*.

WE EAGERLY INVITE (and urgently need) PRESENT OR PROSPECTIVE BOARD MEMBERS TO JOIN THE COMMITTEE. Current advisory board ad hoc committee members who work with NYCCPEP: Mary Katzenstein and Esta Bigler, with Rob, Tess, and Ed Mei.

Prospective ad hoc committee people might want to work with the NYCCPEP steering committee of former TAs in helping to plan panel events; those with incarceration-related expertise might volunteer to speak at alumni events. Committee members might wish to write holiday appeals, thank you letters, staying-in-touch letters and emails as we have over the years. There is enormous room for new energies and creative ideas. Perhaps for us, the most gratifying part of this work is that it keeps us in touch with some of the most active and engaged Cornell alums who are, in different ways, involved in social justice work. There is nothing more renewing than to witness the energy of the recent CPEP TAs as they start to launch their careers.

Timeline *:

- CPEP Volunteer/Supporter Day, April 2, 2011, Clark Hall, Cornell Campus (the first alum reunion with panel discussions)
- Jan 11, 2012 first meeting w/ NYC Advisory Committee, Wertheimer office (Jim Schechter, Christian French, Ellen Roizen, among others)
- May 29, 2013 informal panel at the apartment of Erica and Scott Belsky
- Nov. 13, 2013 Cornell Club-panel with former CPEP inside students
- Hallowe'en 2013 CPEP event organized by Michelle Smith
- June 6, 2014 first CPEP event at a CU annual Reunion, at Schwartz Center
- Nov 2014 second Cornell Club event hosted by Debbie Buell-Joe Margulies speaker
- June 2015 Film event at Remy Roizen's apartment film room
- * June 2015 second CPEP event (w/PPTG) at a CU annual Reunion event, Schwartz Center

- Nov 10, 2015 event at Bob Wertheimer's office w/ Ross MacDonald speaking
- Sept 29, 2016 First NYCCPEP happy hour networking event at lower east side bar, The Winslow
- * June 2016 third CPEP event at a CU annual Reunion event.
- Oct 27, 2016 – NYCCPEP Office of Engaged Learning application submitted
- Feb. 12, 2017. Linda and Ben McGrath Brunch event with panel of former CPEP students
- June 2017 fourth CPEP event at a CU annual Reunion event.
- Sept. 12, 2017 ILR Event w/ Joel Rudin law reform panel (Haran Tae; Phil Miller) hosted by Esta Bigler-ILR;
- May 2, 2018 School to Prison Pipeline panel at Linda and Ben McGrath, coordinated by Elie Bilmes
- Jan 8, 2019 Event at Weill Medical with panel chaired by Dr. Ross MacDonald
- Upcoming event, September 16, 2019, with James Forman leading a conversation about his Pulitzer Prize-winning Book.

**Please inform the current board's ad hoc NYCCPEP committee (Mary, Esta, Rob, Tess, Ed) of any corrections to this timeline.*

ADDENDUM 2: A statement from Rob circulated prior to the 3/27/2019 board meeting to provide background for discussion at the meeting.

Please Note: What follows is an informal statement from Rob to Advisory Board Members, meant to stimulate conversation. This statement is not meant for circulation outside of the CPEP Advisory Board and Staff. – March 16, 2019

I would welcome serious contemplation of the question “how would CPEP change if our students were eligible for financial aid?” I am much less interested in predicting whether or not a financial aid bill will get passed this year; suffice it to say that there have been bills in the US Senate & House, as well as in the NYS Senate & Assembly. In any case, CPEP has yet to have focused discussions about what specifically Cornell would do in prison education if there were a sudden restoration of financial aid for incarcerated students. I welcome your input.

Issue 1: Community College Associate Degree Programs would be eligible for financial aid

Currently, CPEP personnel do most of the work to run all community college Associate degree granting programs in the region. CPEP personnel find the funding, handle all prison- based administration, do all the teaching and recruitment of teachers, and thus are the singular and principal entity with which the incarcerated students are used to interacting. We have mainly done this with Cayuga Community College (in Auburn, NY). In recent months we have discussed a partnership with Corning Community College (in Corning, NY). We noticed a sentence that they slipped into a draft memo of understanding outlining our proposed partnership”

In the event that SUNY CCC has the opportunity to participate in a Second Chance Pell program, or other federal or New York State program allowing incarcerated individuals to access financial aid for correctional education, this MOU does not prevent SUNY CCC from establishing a program directly with ECF.

That is Corning CC. At Cayuga CC, there have only been informal verbal discussions regarding such a scenario, and I (Rob) have stated to their President, Provost, and VPs that “Cornell would welcome a conversation about how to transition into a different partnership model in an era of financial aid in prison.” I have suggested that Cornell would not go away but rather would continue to support the students in prison while acknowledging that the community college would want to charge tuition to the incarcerated students, and thus collect a larger sum of money than CPEP’s annual budget. This would surely change the relationship with the community colleges. The question is “what do we envision as CPEP’s role if the community colleges can collectively charge \$1m/year and receive it from the incarcerated students?”

Issue 2: Cornell’s Prison Programming is NOT eligible for financial aid (yet)

In the Summer of 2016, when the Restoring Education and Learning (REAL) Act was first introduced in the U.S. Congress, I had several conversations about whether Cornell’s in- prison courses would be eligible for Pell grants – the answers to my questions cover TAP grants as well so I will just refer to them collectively as “financial aid.” Generally, in order to be eligible for financial aid a student must:

1. Matriculate as an undergraduate in a degree-granting program that charges tuition
2. Enroll as a full-time student (≥ 12 credits per semester, in at least two consecutive semesters)
3. Meet all eligibility requirements (applicants must be low income, resident of NYS for TAP, etc.)
4. Comparable program must be offered on main campus or the new site must be designated as a satellite campus with its own governance to be eligible.

There are other smaller issues, but these are the important ones to consider when looking at Cornell’s path forward in the prison system. The Cornell courses that have been offered have been provided to the students *as non-matriculantes, as a non-(Cornell-) degree granting, sans tuition, with most students earning an average of 6 to 7 credits per semester ... and there is no equivalent program offered on Cornell’s main campus.* In essence, the only condition Cornell currently meets is number 3, above. Thus, an additional question is “do we envision CPEP creating a financial aid eligible program so that Cornell can receive approximately \$5000/student-taking-8-classes? Or do we envision Cornell foregoing financial aid in pursuit of some other model?”

Issue 3: Foundation Grants are Likely to Decline if Financial Aid is Restored

Virtually all of the foundation grant funding received by CPEP to date has been premised on the fact that Cornell had figured out a way to provide accredited, degree-granting college programs inside prison during this (current) era in which incarcerated students are not eligible for financial aid. If financial aid is restored, Cornell can take credit for having participated in a historic shift in priorities in which American society has reversed a 1990s era decision to focus ‘correctional’ funding completely on ‘punishment’ (much more could be said here). At the same time, simultaneously, this moment of “Mission Accomplished” could also trigger a rapid decline in foundation grants to the Cornell Prison Education Program.

In any scenario, CPEP is likely to continue to pursue grants, and we have plenty of projects that are worthy of consideration for funding (college *reentry* after incarceration, computers and research resources in prison, momentum toward building BA programs in prison, and the impact for our students on campus). But the question “What do we envision?” may need to be considered in tandem with “What can CPEP raise money to do?” if the community colleges get financial aid and Cornell does not.