

## **CPEP Board Meeting – May 19, 2021**

**Present:** Jamila Michener, Katherine McComas (*arrived during board nominations*), Darnell Epps (had to leave early), Lauren McLeod, Esta Bigler, Andy Borum, Nancy Koschmann, Judy Appleton, Peter Enns, Sheri Johnson, Patty Keller, Elie Bilmes, Bob Turgeon.

**Missing:** Dave Sanders, Sheri Johnson

### **Meeting Agenda:**

- 3:00- Greetings & agenda overview (Jamila)
- 3:05- Review and approval of minutes (Jamila)
- 3:10- CPEP Faculty Fellows Program Update (Esta)
- 3:15- Certificate in Liberal Arts Review (Judy)
- 3:40- CPEP Board Nominations (Jamila)
- 4:00- Update on part-time BA committee (Jamila)
- 4:15- Update on the current and upcoming semester (Keisha)

### **Board Meeting Notes**

#### *Review and approval of minutes (Jamila)*

Jamila welcomes everyone and gets the meeting started. Jamila let's everyone know that the "notes" from the last meeting are in the form of direct meeting transcripts. It turns out that those are hard to read and very long. But they are what we have. So those transcripts will be uploaded to the CPEP drive. In the future, we will just take notes by hand. Jamila is taking notes today. We vote to approve "transcripts" from last meeting. Everyone approves.

#### *CPEP Faculty Fellows Program Update (Esta)*

Esta reports that there have been two events. The first featuring Joe Margulies and Jamila Michener, the second featuring Anthony Ong and Tony Burrows. Both went well. Esta offers some statistics:

1<sup>st</sup> event: 95 registered (74 Cornell IDs); 63 attended (46 Cornell IDs, 17 w/relationship to CPEP)  
2<sup>nd</sup> event: 89 registered (75 Cornell IDs); 63 attended (47 Cornell IDs, 17 w/relationship to CPEP)

These numbers are remarkably similar but show strong interest from the CPEP community and beyond. In future events they will begin advertising earlier.

For second event Kim Stockton (in Katherine McComas' office) helped with advertising and that was very useful. ILR tech team offered very helpful assistance.

#### *Certificate in Liberal Arts Review (Judy)*

Judy, Jan, Tom, Rob and Keisha worked on a report evaluating the certificate program. Topline is that it's going well. 66% of students enrolled completed it in the expected time frame. The second cohort finished in a pandemic with a similarly high level of completion. Those outcomes are good.

Highlights of report recommendations:

- First recommendation: Certificate program needs faculty oversight (was in original proposal for the certificate). Recommendation is that the curriculum committee take this responsibility on within the scope of its activities. This means that a sufficient number of faculty populate this committee.
- Second recommendation: in admissions, prioritize applicants who have already completed an Associate degree. Students can also be admitted if they only have three courses left to complete. We should think of the students as first or second semester Cornell sophomores.

Judy notes that feedback from instructors and TAs reinforced how powerful an experience it is for Cornell students to go into the prison in a teaching capacity.

- Third recommendation: Limit the certificate program to being run at one facility (Cayuga). Access to resources (technological and logistical) for students in the other prisons continues to be a significant challenge. Students need computer and access to search engines and databases. Because of variability in such access across facilities, it makes the most sense to concentrate programming at the prison where the challenge are least acute. One downside is that this means the long-time incarcerated students will not be able to participate.

Tom and Jan wrote a detailed review of the independent research course, which is another important resource that helped to inform the certificate review.

Peter Enns: would additional computing resources (if donated) be helpful in expanding student access?

Tom: The issue of computer resources is one thing; another is around storage and technological communication more generally.

Rob: There has been lots of change in the last few years. There are computer labs at three prisons, many of the incarcerated students have some ability to send email messages and have access to tablets. Some of this may help to lighten the labor of bringing documents and transferring information from within prison to outside of it. The issue is really around more organic and consistent access that is a closer parallel to a regular college environment.

Jamila: is the focus on the certificate program at Cayuga temporary based on constraints in this moment, or a more permanent arrangement?

Rob: there is dysfunction in several of the prisons, big changes are coming up with Pell grant funding being restored in 2023. The changes to the prerequisite requirement of an Associate

degree to apply to the certificate program derives from the fact that there will be many more opportunities for students in prison to get an Associate degree in NYS prisons. The logic of focusing on Cayuga CF is that the environment there is more amenable to facilitating the certificate program. So, the resources need to be channeled and it makes sense to channel them specifically to the most amenable locale.

Tom: what is the likelihood in the future that students would be able to transfer to Cayuga to get into the program? Will there be opportunity for students who really do want to get into the program to transfer to Cayuga?

Rob: people can generally get to Cayuga within 6.5 years of being released.

Jamila: this all makes sense given the present context and constraints. Let's commit to revisit periodically to ensure that changing conditions still align with the structure of the certificate program going forward.

Judy: we should plan on periodic reconsideration over time of the different aspects of the certificate program over time.

Jamila also (later in discussion, after a helpful reminder from Judy) notes that the curriculum committee will move forward with implementing the recommendations from the report.

#### CPEP Board Nominations (Jamila)

There are four nominees to join the CPEP Advisory Board July 1, 2021

- Darnell Epps (formerly incarcerated – renewal of second one-year term)
- Richard Rivera (community member – one-year term)
- Maddie Reynolds (grad student/postdoc member – one-year term)
- Julilly Kohler-Hausmann (faculty member – three-year term)

Some discussion over whether we still need to find an additional fifth or sixth person given that six people are rotating off the board. Jamila notes that finding an additional person is not necessary but invites any board members with suggestions for additional nominees to offer them.

No one expresses problems, questions or concerns with the proposed slate. No one suggests additional nominees. Board members present vote. There is unanimous approval.

#### Update on part-time BA committee (Jamila)

Jamila: Cornell is exploring the possibility of a part time BA for non-traditional students (working, in military, incarcerated, children of farmworkers, etc.). I (Jamila) and Katherine

McComas are on the committee, which is chaired by Lisa Nishii and Avery August. This may present an opportunity for currently incarcerated students to have access to a Cornell degree. The program would be remote and students could pursue their degrees part time. What we can say: if this happens—if there were a remote part-time bachelor's degree from Cornell—there would be a good chance that we could do a bachelor's in prison.

Rob inserts into the notes: were it to happen, it sounds like there would be a substantial “online” component for most groups in the part-time bachelor's program. It is not yet clear how this would occur in prison (sans internet) but we have had meetings via zoom/webex in prison, and this could be used to provide access to on-campus educators, events, etc.

Katherine McComas: while there are some misgivings about a remote learning BA option, this is one way of trying to advance towards a next step in making it possible for non-traditional students to access a Cornell education, over and above the pathway from community college.

Peter: There could be potentially be two axes: institutional (can't physically get to campus) or situational (can't get to a traditional undergraduate schedule). For these groups, the remote being part of the solution makes a lot of sense. But is part of this also financial? Remote won't solve the issue for this latter group.

Esta asks whether mentoring and student engagement will be part of the program. Jamila says that has been a key part of the discussion, the goal is to bring as many of the benefits and privileges of a Cornell education to the part-time students as possible.

Rob: for brainstorming purposes, think about how the mosaic of prison education offerings might be carried out in the future. We talked about a 5-day-per-week staffing of the computer lab... what if course TAs were available regularly, and professors could do office hours over zoom, etc. What if students could use zoom to virtually attend one-time events while still in prison? What kinds of new and great things would we be able to offer through this mechanism? There are things that have not been on the menu that may be possible through this opportunity, so this is a chance to think about them. Think of this as an opportunity for being creative.

#### Update on the current and upcoming semester (Keisha)

Keisha: spring semester ending on June 4<sup>th</sup>. Everything is relatively on time. Because of distance correspondence students are turning things in later but everything should be done by the end of June.

4 summer classes at Cayuga, no classes at other facilities because of insufficient staff. All prisons (except Auburn) had webex classes this semester. Students and instructors are appreciating them.

There will be 20 classes in the fall (4-5 classes per prison). Looks like we'll be back in person in the fall! Students and instructors are anxious to get back to normal, so that's exciting.

CPEP is planning a summer read. All students getting these books for a summer read. There will be a newsletter with questions, to keep students engaged.

- *The Vanishing Half*, Brit Bennett
- *Life After Life*, Kate Atkinson
- *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing
- *Klara and the Sun*, Kazuo Ishiguro
- *DUNE*, Frank Herbert