

CPEP Board Meeting Minutes – April 29, 2022

**Members present:** Jamila Michener (Chair), Darnell Epps, Maddie Reynolds, Ken McClane, Judy Appleton, Sheri Johnson, Bob Turgeon, Julilly Kohler-Hausmann.

**Ex-officio members present:** Katherine McComas, Keisha Slaughter, Rob Scott

**Absent:** Richard Rivera, Ella Diaz, Peter Enns, Patty Keller, Elie Bilmes

*Minutes by Rob Scott*

**Jamila:** I've circulated the minutes from last meeting. Do we all vote to approve? [All voting members vote yes.] Okay, approved.

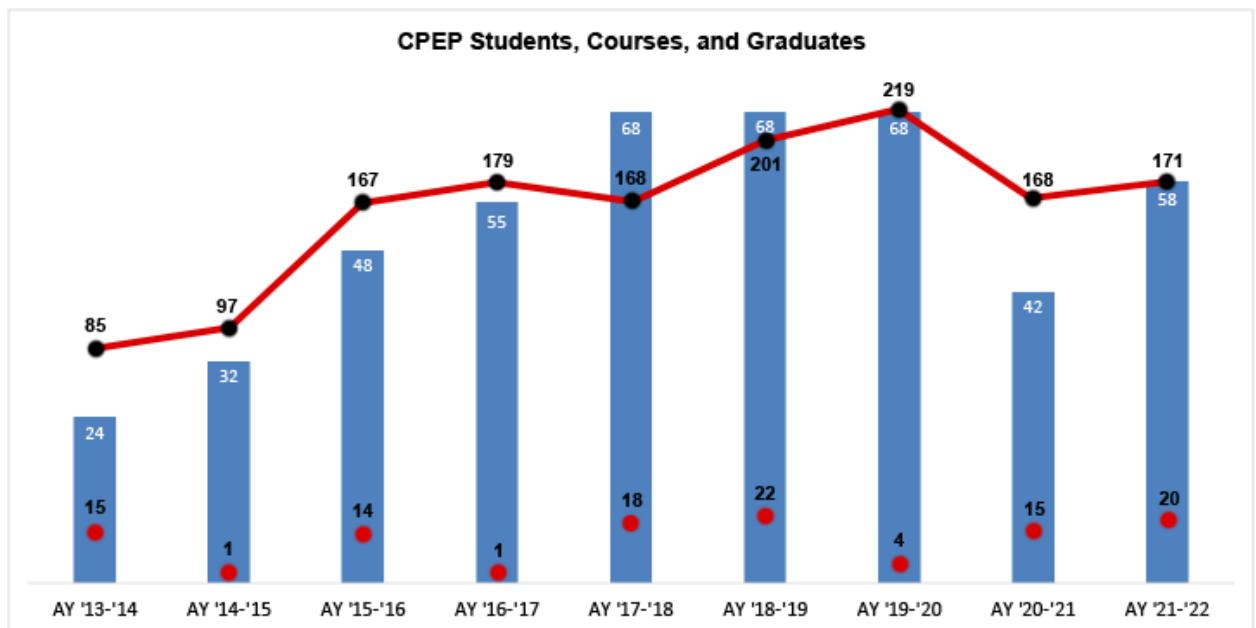
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**Jamila:** First we will hear from Keisha for a broad overview of the program.

**Keisha:** We are on our second semester back inside since the beginning of the pandemic.

There has been turbulence at the prisons resulting from new prison staff arriving after the prison closures of March 2022. These DOCCS employees are pushing out existing staff we coordinated with because they have seniority and union rules that determine who should be allowed to take the preferred jobs at the prisons we work with. Prison leadership has been shaken up as well.

Here is an image of how many CPEP students, courses, and graduates we have had over almost a decade. Note that a rebound pattern has begun to emerge since the 2020 COVID shutdowns.



[Key: red line with black dots = total unique students enrolled  
blue bars = number of courses offered; red dots = AA graduates]

We have returned to recruiting new instructors for the program, a practice we had suspended when we were locked out of the prison due to COVID. We have 9 new instructors teaching for us this Summer, and we have 15 more new instructors joining us in the Fall. There will be more recruitment going forward.

Betsy is moving into a new role, and we are searching for a new Program Coordinator for Auburn CF.

We are rethinking the TA role for undergraduates – the  $\geq 21$  years old rule from DOCCS and the shifting environment (COVID, policy changes) have made this difficult, and we want to commit to high quality work with Cornell students.

Bob: When can we find out more about what is going on with the TA opportunities? I pitch this program to students in my 100-person class in the Fall.

Sheri: I didn't realize that grad students could be TAs in the classes in general. It would be great if the short pitch of what opportunities could be made available to us so that we can share this with students.

Jamila: It is also good to check out the Cornell Criminal Justice Coalition --  
<https://www.cornellcriminaljustice.org/members>

Sheri: There are other groups from the law school that we could try to link into this as well. And we need a quick entryway to connect these dots.

Judy: How many regular Cornell faculty are involved right now?

Keisha: A few – Bill Fry, Patty Keller, and a few others that might not be teaching full credit-bearing courses.

Judy: I would encourage you to keep faculty involved in prison teaching. Also, there is a bolus of retirees who are interested in teaching for CPEP – we should take advantage of that.

Jamila: Could we host an event in the Fall to recruit faculty to CPEP?

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Jamila: Over to Rob for some updates.

Rob: I am going to share two things: (1) an overview of our new grant and (2) an overview of the new financial aid situation.

First: we received a grant from Ascendium Education Philanthropy to help Higher Education in Prison (HEP) providers better serve their students and

alumni through data scraping and filtering. We are doing this via a piece of software that we are calling the Education Justice Tracker (EJT).

The new grant has supported three new hires:

1. Terrell Harris, a contracted computer programmer, is developing the software
2. Richard Rivera, Associate Director of Academic Reentry Services, is integrating the information from the software into our plan to better serve our students.
3. Tess Pendergrast, Research Associate, will evaluate the impact of the EJT in serving prison-impacted college students.

The technology provides automated reporting on HEP students' status in the criminal legal system. We will share this technology with 5 programs in NYS in 2022, and then expand to five other states in 2023... if we are successful, the hope is that this may be a resource for programs across the country in this new era of Pell grants and expanded college offerings.

Second: Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) grants have been restored for people in prison as of 2022, and Pell grants are being restored as of 2023. Our community college partners, and our proposed Bachelor's program, would benefit. There are many details to be ironed out.

Jamila: Plans for the EJT in terms of sharing, privacy, etc.? "Tracking" is a loaded term...

Rob: Quick answer is that we've thought a lot about this!

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Jamila: Time to go through the nominations for the new board term. Here they are:

Board Chair: Jamila Michener (second term) 2022-24  
Darnell Epps 2022-23 (renewed 1-year term)  
Stephen Kim (grad student, now full-time Cornell employee) 2022-23 (?)  
Mary Katzenstein 2022-25  
Jan Zeserson 2022-25  
Esta Bigler 2022-25  
Sadé Lindsay 2022-25  
Paula Ioanide 2022-25  
Wendy Wilcox 2022-25

Sheri: [in chat, asked for a reminder of outgoing members...]

1. Darnell Epps (until June 30, 2022)
2. Richard Rivera (until June 30, 2022)
3. Maddie Reynolds (until June 30, 2022)
4. Ken McClane (until June 30, 2022)
5. Ella Maria Diaz (until June 30, 2022)
6. Judy Appleton (until June 30, 2022)

7. Peter Enns (until June 30, 2022)
8. Sheri Johnson (until June 30, 2022)

Judy: One never really “leaves” the CPEP Board.

Someone: how will the new CPEP board be oriented?

Rob: (jumping ahead in the agenda) CPEP staff have a retreat planned for August 16-17 just outside of town at a vrbo house near Trumansburg – and we hoped to host a meeting with the CPEP Board and perhaps we could also have a convening where outgoing members are welcome as well and there could be a tandem moment of community and handoff amid the conversations about the future.

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Judy: The University Archive keeps record of things that have happened at Cornell and the Cornell Prison Education Program has sustained for a long time and there have been different phases and it is a very interesting story. As a university initiative it is quite interesting.

Evan (I’m missing who that is) is quite interested in this. Someone was thinking of interviewing Dave Roth.

Darnell: Ithaca S+R would also be very interested in this because they are interested in this type of work – I might mention it to Kurtis Tanaka, Manager of Justice Initiatives.

Keisha: Molly Reed has a PhD in History and she is explicitly interested in CPEP history.

Jamila: here’s another idea: could we bring on an undergraduate or graduate student who could do this as their engagement with CPEP.

[Time runs out and the meeting adjourns.]