

## **CPEP Board Meeting Minutes Monday Feb 6, 2023, 1:30 PM**

### **In attendance:**

Mary Katzenstein; Jamila Michener; Wendy Wilcox; Esta Bigler; Rob Scott; Darnell Epps; Elie Blimes; Stephen Kim; Julilly Kohler-Hausmann; Jan Zeserson; Keisha Slaughter; Sadé Lindsay; Patty Keller; Betsye Violette

### **Announcement from Rob Scott:**

Grant: "Wire Project." It is from Ascendium Education Philanthropy, to support the development of a piece of software (the Education Justice Tracker, or 'EJT') and build out practices around supporting people better when we have information about their whereabouts in the CJ system.

In a nutshell, the Education Justice Tracker is a device to track students when they are done with college program. The software developed links to the DOCCS "inmate database"  
The total amount of the grant is \$750,000. And the idea is that this allows for better data, better tracking.

Q [Mary K]: What does tracking mean?

A [RS]: "Surveilling the surveillors"...We harvest information from the DOCCS site and use that to track students who have re-entered; Collating data to have the most update to date, accurate records for any given formerly incarcerated student.

### **Update from Keisha Slaughter:**

#### *Fall 2022 semester*

- Late finish to classes, snowstorm caused postponed classes
- Low attrition rates at ACF and ECF
- Two instructor happy hours – started back up, first time social events since pre-pandemic, good conversations happening
- Departure of Elmira coordinator; Hired new person: Susanna Hempstead on December 1, who will focus on Five Points CF
- Leaving Elmira after Spring '23 semester, but community colleges will continue and CPEP will offer support as needed but will focus on the three other facilities: ACF, FP, CCF
- This semester Keisha and Betsye will coordinate ECF for its final CPEP-run semester
- Molly Reed is on parental leave; Jill Lavetsky hired as interim CCF coordinator. She Just moved from FL and has experience teaching art in women's prison is interim coordinator of CCF

#### *Spring 2023 (just started)*

- 23 classes across the 4 prisons, with 149 (118 degree seeking) students
- Highest volume at CCF with 52 students (44 degree seeking); 8 classes; 2 Cornell
- Medium volume at ACF with 40 (32) students; 6 classes; 2 Cornell
- Lowest volume at ECF with 20 (15) students at ECF, 3 classes; 1 Cornell
- 8 Tutors at ACF; 6 at CCF with 1 TA in Eng 101, 4 tutors at FP, with 1 TA in psych class, 2 at ECF
- Cornell Faculty: David Levitsky, retired nutrition Prof teaching Nutrition & Health  
Paul Sawyer teaching ENG 101

Adam Walden teaching Intro to Business at CCF, Lecturer at the Johnson business school

Rebekah Ciribassi, adjunct faculty in Cornell Anthro teaching Medical Anthropology

Wrinkle in things – Cornell and Community College – difficulty getting our instructors approved to teach Community college classes. We're running more Cornell classes than anticipated. CCC has been more selective with their approvals

### *Announcements: Upcoming events*

-Instructor get together, Feb 24, 5 pm, Bar Argos

-March 27, TBD, SUNY staff visiting Ithaca. SUNY HEJI staff- instructor event surrounding this, they are visiting Rob's class too, the ECF facility- Rachael Sanders and Jose Pineda

-Entrance exam at ACF in May (TBD)

-May 5 Elmira graduation – the first!—7 men, 6 are from ELM, one transfer from ACF

-Instructor recruitment season for summer and fall – we need help getting the word out!

Email forthcoming – especially helpful if this email can be forwarded, endorsing the program and experience. Still struggling to cover: ENG, HIST, core classes. Please spread the word!!

### *Questions*

Q [PK]: clarification on #s and key points?

Q [Elie]: relationship b/t CPEP and community college?

Q [MK]: offering a BA...if/when could we offer courses at Elmira?

A [Keisha]: Will send numbers to fact check meeting minutes. CPEP will still support CCC but will delink from ECF. The plan is to launch the BA at CCF. There's still a lot to figure out re: coordinating with the Community College.

### **Update from Jan Zeserson on Faculty Recruitment:**

CPEP fellows in research & teaching

Formal thanks to those members who helped publicize the 4<sup>th</sup> and last *Fellows Talk*, Nov. 17: Suman Seth, Noah Tamarkin, discussant Julilly. It was fabulous, more than 100 attended. This 4<sup>th</sup> community lecture concluded the Fellows lecture pilot series. Esta expressed thanks to ILR for providing zoom expertise for all four lectures with no charge to CPEP.

The Fellows Committee (Esta, Jan) proposes the board continue to develop and formalize this tier of *CPEP Research & Teaching Fellows* but shift the effort from community-wide lectures to other ways of engaging faculty who don't have time to teach a full-on course in prison. Although the Fellows lectures themselves were all a stunning success, the pandemic meant they couldn't be the in-person, networking, community-building events envisioned originally. We (Jan, Esta) suggest the board's energy go instead towards, e.g., faculty giving one-time lectures in a prison class or a "Reflections" class; or mentoring students doing independent research projects for the Certificate program; or helping staff recruit for plenary lecturers at the facilities, all of which were included in the original vision for the Fellows tier.

Relatedly, we propose that the *ad hoc* committee be dissolved, and the Fellows initiative be folded into the Faculty Recruitment *standing* committee's purview on faculty development.

Fellows are important for visibility of program and to honor and promote faculty research that's integral to CPEP's mission. What we're asking today: Does the board feel the same way? Is this an important initiative to keep going?

### *Discussion*

Esta: proposal began with our "embarrassment of riches" ...wanted to continue our relations with CU faculty...the pandemic interrupted our vision...zoom? Alternative forms of engagement...

Jamila: building a diffuse strength of support for CPEP is important. I'd welcome Esta and Jan to meet with the Faculty Recruitment committee to provide continuity.

Jan Z: the idea would be collaborating/consolidating committee work to coordinate and re-enforce these collective efforts. Formalizing the "tier"...we would like to keep publicizing this.

Julilly: maintain the category of faculty fellow even if they don't give a lecture. Faculty engagement beyond teaching can take many different forms...perhaps best discussed in the small committee

Esta: how does this fit into the entire CPEP program? Recruiting faculty for teaching, etc...

Jamila: recommend staying connected with Rob and Keisha for maximum coordination/collaboration

Esta: I'd like to formally thank the ILR school – staff assistance, and general support for CPEP

### **Update from Elie Blimes on "Futures Committee":**

Committee comprised of: Elie, Stephen, Sadé

First meeting last month. Discussed various topics, including the expansion of PELL Grants and Cornell part time BA program. The committee's focus was to think about what might help shape CPEP for the better but might also come with risks.

-Quality control: Who's working with students?

-PELL Grants: Political winds might shift? Will it go away in the near future?

We envision the committee as a research partner for CPEP but want to do a deeper dive into these specific issues to gather more information and provide a range of perspectives. We want to offer insight but also want help to know what information would be most helpful to the program.

### *Discussion*

Sadé: we discussed looking at the landscape of BA programs...how are they structured? How do they handle faculty participation? Trying to tap into existing models so as to not re-invent the wheel

Jamila: recurring theme. Needing to know where we are at/real assessment of our program before moving ahead. Asking what's the most helpful next step?

Elie: we'd like to narrow our focus... operate as a kind of "consulting" group.

Stephen: if there are specific questions that leadership of CPEP, that could be a good starting point for committee research

Rob: difficulty recruiting faculty (Keisha) for courses in a sequence that has a curricular logic/rationale. Thinking about things like pre-reqs and creating the scaffolding for a solid college program. And also issues related to financial and fundraising (Betsy ). We need conversations about these issues, collaborative effort.

Mary: slightly different issue—concern about how we're keeping TA's grads connected to the program, now on the board, I feel a real relationship to CPEP...but how do others stay connected? Betsy does a fabulous job with formerly incarcerated students....what about former TAs or volunteers not in NY area? ...one can feel adrift. I think we could potentially do much more to keep that larger community connected. What's so exciting and fundamental about CPEP is this broader sense of community.

Jamila: the futures committee good place to think through these questions. This might overlap with "the engagement committee" ...engaging former TAs, UGs, and formerly incarcerated...but the idea would be to intentionally cultivate community. The committee should decide which issues to take up, keeping in mind it doesn't have to happen all at once.

Elie: We will schedule our next date and then we'll reach out to plan for a collective meeting with Rob, et al.

### **Update from Stephen Kim on the Student Engagement Committee:**

Will share slides with PK; Betsy is chair of committee.

#### *Student Engagement: Key Survey Logistics*

##### **(Slide 1)**

- Anonymous exploratory survey (with voluntary follow-up interviews)
  - Topics include: how they heard about CPEP, transportation, interest in certificate program, feedback/suggestions for improving student recruitment
- Survey sent out 12/20, reminder on 1/4, closed 1/6
- Emailed 88 participants, 34 responded
  - Roughly 40% response rate
  - Benchmark for meaningful surveys us around 30%
- Roughly equal numbers of Grads and UGs
- Met with Rob and Keisha to discuss survey results

#### *Key Takeaways*

##### **(Slide 2)**

1. Identified points of confusion for volunteers during recruitment
  - Working to streamline information for volunteers
  - Think of ways to best support volunteers and update resources for current volunteers (e.g. instructor's manual)
2. Clearer picture about how transportation and access impact volunteer experience
3. Learned how robust and creative student volunteer community is!
4. Word of Mouth = crucial for recruitment!

## Discussion

Mary: e-mail circulation would be great for maximum effectiveness

Jamila: you guys are amazing! Thank you for raising bar, this is incredible work. One question: with student engagement you're focusing on former volunteers—both UG and G, but there seem to be important differences. The real need is with Grads to teach. Of course we should keep in touch with former UGs. Seems like the logic is different for each group. Both are important but there are key differences. These are just thoughts that hopefully can be integrated into future thinking/research.

Betsy: UGs engagement has changed alot since the start of COVID.

New project ideas: 1. Student, UG volunteer fair. Use this as a networking strategy similar to creating a Criminal Justice website that gathers all groups on campus that are active; 2. Collaborating with other volunteer programs on campus; 3. Working with UGs (small group – 3 students plus work study), we're producing a template; 4. working with Tess Pendergast re: UG Independent Study and workshops, looking at resume development, justice impacted youth organizations, data collection; 5. Focus Groups re: financial literacy to develop literature, materials to circulate, improving access across the board. This especially includes working with UGs who aren't going into the prisons.

Rob: UGs could build coalition...sad to see that the Cornell Criminal Justice Coalition website expired — <https://www.cornellcriminaljustice.org>

Betsy: In short, challenges with getting a cornell.edu domain for website so that it doesn't expire. We're working on that.

Darnell: is there a way to engage former UGs who already participated in PREP who might still be interested on prison education? That might be a good resource to tap into

Mary: love this idea! Invite students to be part of a larger CPEP community...goes back to the question of whether or not we need UGs? We might need them less. But they contribute so much. Betsy's point: the inspirational piece.

Jamila: UGs are important in the larger ecosystem of CPEP but the question is *how* do we engage them? Which is a question that seems dynamic and changing....

Jan: enthusiasm from UGs and also their families...part of creating, maintaining bigger community

Jamila: we can't dictate this as a board...but the student engagement committee should create space for thinking through these questions/considerations.

## **Update from Faculty Engagement Committee:**

Jamila/Julilly/Wendy

Began with practical considerations: we want more faculty teaching more courses, as wide of a swath of faculty as possible. How can we create and sustain different forms of engagement?

Why faculty? What does that look like?

We discussed incentivizing faculty – course release? NSF grants—meeting certain grant standards?

Immediate next steps are to establish priorities and then tasks.

Rob: from staff side, it might be nice to include Maddie and Molly—both earned their PhDs at Cornell, and could join the ranks of faculty teaching and both who helped launch BA at CCF

*{{ !!!! Darnell enters with daughter baby Sadie !!!! }}*

Jamila: Check in with small committees before next board meeting; Please feel free to reach out; we can communicate updates as things progress and stay in the loop!

**Final Announcements:**

Send meeting minutes soon for circulation to the board!

Next meeting: April 27 @ 1 PM