

CPEP Advisory Board Meeting Minutes. November 7, 2023 via Zoom 2pm-330pm.

In attendance: Jamila Michener (Chair), Ghazah Abbasi, Paula Ioanide, Thomas Jones, Mary Katzenstein, Stephen Kim, Katherine McComas, Maddie Reynolds, Rob Scott, Keisha Slaughter, Brian L. Sykes, Jan Zeserson.

2pm. Introduction and agenda (Jamila Michener)

- Jamila Michener introduced Bryan Sykes to the Board.
- Paula Ioanida volunteered to take minutes for the next Board meeting.
- Jan Zeserson asked if we could post the minutes on the CPEP portal in a week or so.
- Ghazah Abbasi made a motion to approve minutes from the last meeting. Jan Zeserson seconded the motion. All voting members voted in favor of approving minutes from the last meeting.

215pm. General Updates from the CPEP Program. (Keisha Slaughter)

- Cayuga Community college has added to the curriculum requirements for new students. The first is a diversity requirement, which can be met by Sociology of Race or Sociology 101. The second requirement is a communication course on Public Speaking. The third requirement is Effective Speech. Traditionally, it's been hard to get Cornell PhDs approved as Instructors, but hopefully they can get some Instructors from the Cornell Communication Department. The new courses will be taught in Fall 2025.
- Minnesota Prison Writers Workshop came to Cayuga Correctional Facility. In addition, another Instructor workshop was offered on gender. In the future, Maddie Reynolds will offer an Instructor training for new and old Instructors.
- Cayuga and Five Point had some challenges with classes getting cancelled, so they had to rush and make up the difference in order to align with financial aid requirements.
- Graduation. The graduation went very well. Unfortunately, a vocal student was transferred during the week of the graduation. The facility placed some restrictions on the ceremony, did not allow lunch, and limited the number of guests.
- On Dec 4, the student-run Debate Club will hold a tournament in a policy style debate, featuring CPEP staff and up to 20 Cayuga students. The students will debate the moral pros and cons of continued immigration.
- Bruce Levitt is starting an acting club.
- Stephen Kim's publication co-authored with students Julio C. Iglesias and Chester "Al" Woods on Shakespeare in the prison has been approved. The approval process took over a year, had to be approved at the facility level and then in Albany. The article, titled, "Shakespeare at Auburn: Teaching & Learning in the Prison Classroom" will appear in the edited collection 'Shakespeare in the Age of Mass Incarceration' under contract at Routledge. Expected publication is in 1 or 2 years. On Dec 1, SK will do a reflection wrap up at Auburn on the co-authoring and publishing process.

Katherine McComas left the meeting at 2:31pm.

Discussion about the BA program. (Thomas Jones, Jamila Michener, Rob Scott, Keisha Slaughter, Jan Zeserson)

- 232pm. KS. Plant Pathology class and other classes are being taught for the Cornell BA.

- JM suggested inviting Mary Loeffelholz, Dean of the School of Continuing Education to CPEP Board Meeting on Feb 13 to discuss the BA program. Maybe some people from CPEP committee could meet beforehand to discuss strategic objectives for the meeting.
- 238pm. RS offered that an even more radical course of action would be to have a meeting with the Dean, Board members, and Cayuga students, the current prison administrator may be amenable to the idea, perhaps towards the end of the Spring semester.
- 240pm. JM said that's a great idea, the strategic purpose of the meeting would be to see students as real people rather than as an abstract category. JM said we can think about this more in the February 2024 meeting.
- 242pm. JZ said that students at Five Points and Auburn who have the longest sentences want to know why the Bachelor's program is happening at Cayuga rather than at the other facilities.
- 245pm. KS plans to be in the three facilities more next semester and is happy to have conversations with students. Lots of people have asked why Cayuga and the reason is that's where there is the most support for the initiative. The advice of the Bachelor's Symposium is to start in one place first and do it well. The hope is to extend the Bachelor's program to other facilities. It might also be possible to have students moved from the maximum-security prisons to the medium-security prisons for their education when those students become eligible.
- 247pm. PI asked if there has been any conversation about transferring credits from Cornell to Hudson Link or Bard.
- 249pm. KS responded that traditionally, Bard has accepted very few Cornell credits.
- 249pm. RS responded that there is a range of options, Bard accepts one semester of credits, Hudson accepts up to 60 credits. SUNY is going to start more prison education programs. Katherine has gotten a grant to see if there is a way to apply transfer credits *into* the Cornell program, broadly in the remote Cornell program, because there are similarity across Associates programs.
- 252pm. TJ said that one of the problems he experienced firsthand was that individuals who have longer stays can clog up the pipeline for medium-security prisoners who will return to society faster. TJ would like to be involved in the planning committee, given his experience at Rutgers. Further, TJ said it's important to track student success.
- 253pm. JM agreed and said that it's important to track student success. Collecting data on this will be important for helping to expand the program in three to five years. We cannot ignore either people with longer or shorter sentences. Maybe something or the CPEP Futures Committee to take up.
- 256pm. RS traced the inequality between prisons to the inequality that is built into the prison institution. There is zero support for the state. New York State does not support academic transfer, which other states offer. Wherever we go, we're leaving all the prisons out no matter what. Cornell started at 1 facility, Auburn, out of 60 prisons in New York State.
- 3pm. KS. Three out of seven graduates in the Bachelor's graduation were CPEP graduates.

- 3pm. SK. The Student Engagement Committee. Organizing a consortium on prison education programs.

Brian L. Sykes left at 3:01pm.

CPEP Archives Project. (Mary Katzenstein, Maddie Reynolds)

- 303pm. MR. The CPEP archives project involves conducting interviews with founding members of CPEP. MR is applying for a grant to be able to conduct interviews. MK did a lot of work to write the proposal with Judy.
- 304pm. MK. The grant is targeted to professors emeritus who are conducting research.

Student Engagement Committee (SEC) Update. (Stephen Kim, Jamila Michener, Maddie Reynolds, Rob Scott, Jan Zeserson.)

- 305pm. SK. TA program was on the backburner for a while. SEC's recommendation is to give the advisory board time to read the proposal and table it until the meeting in February 2024. Details are in the proposal that was circulated to the board. SEC is focusing on Instructor recruitment right now because that affects student engagement. The current stipend for Instructors is \$3500 and the SEC proposes an increase to \$5,000.
- MR. SEC reached out to twenty comparable programs, heard back from sixteen, learned about programs stipends, what kind of degree they offer, if they partner with an institution. Rochester Education Justice Initiative is the most comparable because they work in NY, offer SUNY Community College degrees, employ faculty and grad students (REJI) will go up from \$4200+ \$400 for transportation to \$5000 next year.
- 314pm. SK. The total anticipated increase for the budget is about \$70,000 to \$80,000 of operating costs.
- 315pm. JM. The proposal is very thorough. The CPEP staff has to figure out how to address with this additional cost. Compared to the other programs, it does seem like CPEP is lagging. What can the advisory board do to support CPEP? Should the board try to get money from Cornell or find other funding opportunities?
- 318pm. RS. SEC has been extremely thoughtful in presenting their proposal. Cornell has never provided for any of the Instructor stipends, which have come from foundations. The current grant with Mellon runs out in 2024. Cornell fundraises based on the prison education initiative but does not contribute to it financially. Instructor pay rates should also be compared with current pay rates community colleges adjunct rates, for example with SUNY colleges. We should pay all our instructors a minimum of \$5,000 but it's unclear how that will happen.
- 322pm. JM. Cornell's lack of financial investment in CPEP compared to its reputational boost is unacceptable. The advisory board can think about how to get Cornell to invest in CPEP.
- 323pm. RS. Currently CPEP is not part of the Cornell budget. If some of the staff income can be paid by Cornell then the revenue sharing with PEL grants that they're doing with the community college can go towards paying for increases in Instructor rates.

Nominations Committee Update. (Mary Katzenstein, Stephen Kim, Jamila Michener, Rob Scott)

- 328pm. JM. We need someone for the Nominations Committee because we need a Board Chair. If anyone is interested, contact JM. The board will probably get to work on that in February 2024 meeting.
- Volunteers for Nominations Committee are MK, SK, and RS.

331pm. Jan Zeserson said that it would be good to have a Secretary who can take minutes instead of being on a committee.

332pm. Jamila Michener adjourned the meeting.