

Faculty Senate
February 12, 2025

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Good afternoon. We're going to do testing, prototyping. The Gayogohó:nq' are members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, an alliance of six sovereign Nations with a historic and contemporary presence on this land. The Confederacy precedes the establishment of Cornell University, New York state, and the United States of America. We acknowledge the painful history of Gayogohó:nq' dispossession and honor the ongoing connection of Gayogohó:nq' people, past and present, to these lands and waters. We begin, the meeting is called to order. Approval of the minutes. These are the minutes from the December 11th, 2024 meeting. They have been posted and distributed online as a verbatim transcript. Therefore, there shouldn't be any corrections, and by unanimous consent, unless I hear some objections, we will approve the meetings, approve the minutes. And if you do find some typos, just bring them to the attention of the Dean of Faculty. Our first order of business is an introduction to the new provost, Kavita Bala, provost from computer science. We'll have 10 minutes to address the Senate, and then there'll be another 10 minutes for Q&A. Kavita is online. Go ahead. Unmute yourself and begin.

KAVITA BALA: Thank you. Thank you for inviting me to attend today. I am sorry I'm not there in person. I had a prior commitment in my role as provost that was out of town, could not manage the travel to get back to Ithaca in time. Sorry about that. I will come in person for the next Senate meeting. I know I only have a short time today, so I'll just get started. Some of you may know my history, but I'll recap a bit. I came here more than 25 years ago to Cornell in 1999 as a postdoctoral researcher, and I've been a faculty member in computer science since 2002. I was a chair of computer science, and then became the dean of the Bowers College of Computing and Information Science. I've been on the job for about 43 days, and I will split my tenure as I describe it in this job into two halves, approximately the part before January 20th and after January 20th. Talk about both of them, and you can imagine why. So, let me start and talk about the part before. This is a consequential moment in the history of higher education. It is a time of incredible opportunity. Scientific innovation and tech are driving great scientific discovery, which can result in better health, medicine, transportation, new kinds of enterprise. And it is also clearly a time of immense societal challenges, increased polarization, threats to institutions and democracy, and an erosion of public trust in higher education. Adding to these challenges is the breathtaking pace of change, and society, I would say, is really struggling to keep up with the pace of change. And that's why I really believe this next decade is going to be very consequential, not only for the future of higher ed, but for society writ large. Universities like Cornell can lead the charge in shaping how higher education should respond to these challenges and opportunities through our research that builds on the opportunities, but also helps understand the rapidly changing landscape and hopefully guide research and development and impact for the greater good by educating our students to lead in it and by our engagement and impact, which we have a deep commitment to. Cornell is a very different kind of an Ivy. We have a unique voice with our "Any person, any study" motto, our multiple diverse campuses. Of course, we have our presence in Ithaca and our AgriTech campus in Geneva, but we also have our medical college in Weill Cornell Medicine and our presence in Cornell Tech, our land grant mission with its

engagement and impact, and our do the greatest good ethos. I'll say, in my 25 years, I personally have not felt one of the things that I love about Cornell. I've seen no barriers to collaborate across the university. I have worked with crop scientists, medical doctors, perception psychologists, cultural anthropologists, and more because of the nature of my research, and they've been deeply rewarding experiences with that desire to engage across campus. That is what I love about Cornell, and the sort of any study aspect of Cornell really plays a role there. As Dean of the Bowers College, as you all know, it's not an admitting college. We have this in our unit in the past, I felt like I got exposed to a microcosm of the broader university with the social sciences, humanities, the physical sciences, then the computing and engineering disciplines all represented in one college. So, that really was sort of what I cut my teeth on. That intellectual breadth across the whole university is, I think, what we continue to need to address the big challenges of our time. As Provost, I'm honored and privileged to be able to work with our incredible faculty, staff, and students. I took on the role because I wanted to foster an academic environment that will let all Cornellians do our best work and have a positive impact in this very fast changing time in the world. So, that's just a preamble. As I said, it's been a very busy 40 days. Let me talk about some of the things that we're doing. I've been on listening tours with the leaderships of different units. I've come to you. I've come to different groups. I went to the chairs meeting last week, and I hope to continue to meet with different groups of faculty in varying sizes, varying disciplines, et cetera, and come later in the semester to town halls in all the units, either end of spring or early fall, depending on how busy everybody ends up being. I also want to give some updates on topics that I'm sure are important to everybody. One is that you may be aware that our colleague, Kathryn Boor, who serves as the Dean of the Graduate School, is retiring. So, we've begun a search for the next Dean of the Graduate School. Avery August is a chair of that search. So, keep an eye out. That impacts all the fields across campus. I was in the Bowers College. So, of course, there's an interim Dean of the College, Thorsten Joachims, and we are searching for his permanent replacement. Rachel Dunifon, Dean of HUMEAC, and Steve Jackson, Vice Provost for Academic Innovation, are chairing that search committee. If you have feedback, please contact them. I want to talk about two task forces that we are standing up. We already announced this last week, a task force on sexual assault. We unfortunately had an extremely disturbing case of sexual assault on the Ithaca campus in the fall semester, which led to full academic suspensions, and it prompted a broader discussion on campus and across the leadership. The president and I have asked Deans Rachel Dunofin and Marla Love to lead a task force on this. They're going to recommend a holistic framework for addressing and preventing sexual assault on campus. They've been charged with gathering data, reviewing the research, examining strategies, consulting with the campus community, so I hope all of you will engage, and with subject matter experts, and come up with actionable recommendations for reducing and preventing sexual assault at Cornell. It represents our ongoing commitment to creating a campus culture where everyone can thrive in an environment of respect and safety. Sexual assault has no place at Cornell, and we will continue to take a comprehensive public health oriented approach to address it. I know this is a difficult topic, but we need to do more and get committed to doing more. We are also going to stand up another task force on institutional voice. What is institutional voice? This issue has actually been raised by the Senate recently. Who speaks for the university and about what issues? We're completely committed to academic freedom for our faculty. This is not about the individual voice of faculty, students, or staff. But the question is, does a provost speak for the whole university? And if the provost does or a dean, what are the topics they should opine on? Because the whole university has very diverse views on almost all topics. This task force

will be co-chaired by Jens Ohlin and Avery August, and they're still forming the task force. So, I went to the chair's meeting to talk about it. I'm coming here. Please send suggestions of people if you want to serve on that committee or names of people you want to have serve on the committee. They're managing the size of it and the process, but we're happy to hear from everybody. And finally, I want to talk about the second half of my 42 days as provost. Over the past three weeks, President Trump has issued more than 60 executive orders. Some of these directives have the potential to have a major impact on the university in many ways. And that's an understatement. The most recent one was last Friday on the NIH IDC, and I'll come back to that issue shortly, but I just want to sort of talk a little bit about the climate, so to speak. It's quite chaotic and it remains so. We don't expect that that'll improve. This onslaught of executive orders has meant we need to respond rapidly and often with very complex considerations of legal aspects, HR, student life, etc. So, as we did in our response to COVID, we have a standing committee, a response planning committee to help us respond appropriately and in a coordinated manner. The group brings together leaders with different perspectives and responsibilities to discuss the impact of these executive orders and think about a thoughtful, focused response from us. We have student and campus life, research, faculty, the international office, undergraduate education, Counsel's office, HR, and more on this team. And its cross campus, so we also have Cornell Medicine involved because there are many issues coming up also in the medical school that we have to consider. I'll just talk about the most recent one. This team meets regularly three times a week and we have smaller planning groups so that we end up basically meeting every day of the week, including the weekend. And our approach has been to consider each EO and its impact on a case by case basis to make sure we understand the legal basis and then can act accordingly. So, I'll give a little background on this latest Friday federal change on indirect costs. The impact of this would be existential, particularly for the medical college. So, we worked with other universities to be part of the lawsuits. In case you weren't following this case, the lawsuit that has led to a temporary restraining order for the nation was filed by the Association of American Medical Colleges. But there was also one lawsuit by the AGs of 22 states and the third lawsuit that we were a plaintiff in from the Association of American Universities. So, it was very intense and difficult work to be a plaintiff in this role. If you see our Office of General Counsel, folks, please thank them. Our research team, our HR, our Counsel team, and many more work tirelessly starting on Friday to really respond to this particular directive around IDC. I do know that this is a time of immense anxiety for our students, staff, and faculty as these chaotic executive orders unfold. We have a web page that we send out information on. We are trying to keep that as updated as possible. Please go and look at that. We have an email address so that you can get in touch with us if anything impacts you so that we can triage and try to get your help as soon as possible. And so, please reach out to us. This has been an intense few weeks, but we expect much more to come, and we are working on all the defenses we need as the situations arise. When I started, as I said, the next few years are going to be very consequential for the future of higher ed, not only in how we respond at this particularly difficult time, but in the longer arc of opportunities and challenges we're going to face. And I look forward to working with all of you together on this. I'm happy to come to all of your units, as I will be trying to do over spring semester. And with that, I'll turn over and happy to take questions.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Thank you. If there are questions in-house, just come up to the microphone so I can see you. If you have questions online, then raise your digital hand, and we will try to alternate. We're going to start online with Bryan Sykes. Unmute yourself and try to

keep to two minutes, please.

BRYAN SYKES: Thank you for your statement. I wanted to ask about the intrusion into science because one of my federal grants, like literally a few hours ago, I just received notification that gender, a question about gender is only supposed to be asked in biological sex form, male or female. And I'm wondering how-- So now, I have to stop the study, go through IRB, all of these other things, and that's just one agency right now that's in response to a presidential action, and I'm just wondering how the university is going to handle this with respect to intrusions into science, and measurement, and other issues, as well as compliance with state laws against non-gender discrimination. And so, I'm just at a loss right now. I'm still shell-shocked by this email. So, can you help me?

KAVITA BALA: Thank you, Brian. Yes, it is shocking, these emails that have been going out. First, I would say please send it to the OVPRI office. They are keeping track. Anytime anybody hears about a single grant, we keep track. And what we do is we will help triage it through the office of general counsel to understand exactly what-- We have to do it on a case-by-case basis because actually, each case ends up being slightly different and we have to respond according to that. You're absolutely right. In this case, when there's a disconnect between the federal and state, that's exactly when we need the general counsel. Again, I just want to say since Jan 20th, our office of general counsel has been working overtime, nights, weekends. They have been incredibly impressive. I'm really proud and feel really privileged that we have their support through this very difficult time. Please reach out, send an email to the OVPRI, and we will help you with that particular case. That's one piece of what you asked. The second piece is the longer - again, the bigger context of all of this. The president actually was in DC yesterday talking to Congress, to different congressional members about the importance of science, and what we're doing here, and the impact of it. We continue to work on taking our message out. I don't know how effective currently. I don't know who's listening on the other end, but we are going to Congress. All the presidents of many universities are there, and we are doing our best to get the message out on the importance of the scientific and all the work that we're doing. But in specific cases where we have examples, we can point to what it is that they are going to take away by their particular ruling, and we're working with people on that. We will keep doing that.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We have a comment or question in house. Identify yourself and keep it to two minutes, please.

YUVAL GROSSMAN: Yuval Grossman, Physics. And first, I am happy to welcome you to this role, and I hope you will lead us to a better direction. And what I wanted to talk about is about the email that you sent about the film stand for academic freedom and open shop. I was very pleased to see this email, and I wanted to tell you that after talking to many professors and graduate students, I want to tell you that I feel there's a very strong support for your standing on this. Thank you.

KAVITA BALA: Thank you, you all for sharing that.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We have another comment or question in house. Identify yourself.

LIZ: Hi, I'm Liz. I'm in the ILR school. I have a question about all of this chaos that you mentioned. Obviously, we're all feeling it in all of the different ways. And I know that chaos is really challenging for us to navigate, obviously, on individual bases, also as organizations and being people in organizations. So, I'm wondering how the leadership is thinking about how we're supporting the community in navigating all of this change together, knowing that it's going to be messy, knowing that it's going to bring up lots of things for all of us. I'm hoping for, yeah, just more tangible support, and having conversations about how messy it's going to be, and sort of getting comfortable with the uncertainty and the chaos, and then supporting each other through it.

KAVITA BALA: Thank you. A very good point. And yes, we are working on figuring out what are the mechanisms that we can-- We want to support our faculty, students, and staff. And I will say, we've been trying to even understand a lot of these executive orders. You know, they take a position, but it's not at all clear they have any legal standing. And so, we don't want people to panic over something that ultimately has no legal standing. This is something that we want to respond to the ones where actually there is a response we have to mount. Some just, you know, seem to be statements that are unactionable or probably illegal, and therefore will eventually not stand up. So, I hear what you're saying, though, that the anxiety and the pressures felt on the ground are very-- And so, I would suggest for students, reach out to student and campus life. I hear your point. Let me think about what are the kinds of events we can organize. I am seeing that people are organizing smaller group events for people to talk together, but we will help. We will help in bringing groups and supporting more. And I think about mechanisms to do that. I think different constituents have different concerns. And so, we'll have to figure out the right, more localized mechanism to support each group for what its particular concern is, like a faculty with grants probably talking to the research officers makes more sense because they can help you navigate understanding what a work stoppage means. And different students have a different level of anxiety about different issues. So, we will work on that. But thank you. It's a great point. And you continue to think and work on it.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: There's enough time for one more question/comment. If I see any hands raised. Thank you. Begüm Adalet.

BEGÜM ADALET: Hi, government senator. Thank you. Thank you for this and really appreciate the emails that have been sent out from the administration about the NIH and the administration reiterating its commitment to prioritize the greater good of our community. So, that's great. And I guess it's kind of building on Liz's question about support for different groups. I think the email about NIH was really appreciated. I know that there's a lot of going back and forth about kind of what is perceived as kind of commenting on political events and kind of a reservation to do that. But when universities are at the front and center of political conversation, I guess kind of what I'm hearing from especially vulnerable and anxious students are undocumented ones, immigrants, international students, trans students, but also colleagues, and staff, and others. So, can they expect to receive messages of support and reassurance, if not along the lines of the response that the university gave to the NIH issues, then something about kind of what can be expected? Let's say if the names of our students are passed on to the administration for targeting for deportation, etc., would the university tell us how it might be responding? So, those types of reassurances publicly, are those possible?

KAVITA BALA: Thank you. Thank you for sharing. There are some guidelines on the website. So, please check that for international students. In case I didn't mention this, I was an immigrant. I came to this country a while back, but I did immigrate to this country. There are guidelines that we are giving. We don't want to scare people about things that have not come to pass. This is actually something we do have to be careful about because if you say, "Imagine this truly horrible thing," if we don't believe that's happening now, it's better not to try to give guidance towards things that are not yet come to pass. So, we are trying to respond to specific things that have come to pass and we give guidelines. I mean, we give it before so that they can actually use them. So, there is some amount of guidance we're giving to students. You can take a look at it on our website, and certainly feel free to use that email address to contact us if you're worried that there are some other issues that we haven't covered, but that are imminent. We need to hear from you, and we monitor that carefully because we don't know. I mean, it's a very large university. We don't know everything that's going on on the ground. And when we hear, we do what we can to mobilize. Thank you.

BEGÜM ADALET: Thank you. I appreciate that as a fellow international student.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Okay, I think we're going to move on to the next agenda item. Thank you, Provost.

KAVITA BALA: Thank you again for having me, and I look forward to seeing you in person next time. Thank you.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Our next order of business is a presentation on local childcare development from Michelle Artibee, Director of Workforce Wellbeing, Human Resources, who will have 10 minutes. After which, we'll have five minutes for Q&A. Is Michelle online?

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: I am.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Go right ahead then.

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Good afternoon, everyone. And just for some context, as director, within my role, I lead teams responsible for work life, mental health, and physical health. So, I especially appreciated the dialogue around supports and the question from Liz. For today's short presentation though, I am focused on childcare supply growth and Tompkins County for children under the age of five and Cornell's recent investment in it. Slide, please. For context, we have about 975 children up to the age of four living in Tompkins County that are on Cornell's endowed or contract college health plans. 31% of those children are those of Cornell faculty and RTE faculty, 62% are of staff, and 7% of post graduates. While I don't have it represented here, we do understand that many graduate students within our community also have children and have childcare needs. Slide, please. The Child Development Council of Tompkins County reported in 2023 that Tompkins County had one spot for every three children in need who are under the ages of five. The childcare industry has unfortunately experienced a lot of difficulties over the past couple decades. We know that the number of Tompkins County family childcare providers plummeted from 100 providers to about 14 over the prior 10 years. And this was a data

point from 2023, so 2013 to 2023, due to regulatory demands and some of the industry challenges. And as the cost of providing care has increased due to these regulations, salaries and benefits competition, food and supplies. They're really not been significant ongoing investments at the federal or state level in support of childcare, especially supports that can go to capital and startup costs or ongoing labor costs. Of the programs that have been created, there have been so many challenges with the design of them, and they've been so limited in terms of the regions that have access and are prioritized that we really haven't seen a lot of traction locally. And we are also knowing that there are fewer people interested in entering the field of early childhood as a career. Slide, please. So, university leadership has recognized the challenges that the lack of childcare supply have created for our faculty, staff, and students, and for us as an employer, from both a recruitment and a retention perspective. Childcare is a very complex social issue and service, which requires us understanding the industry and some of the regional challenges, as well as unique strategies to address them. In the fall of 2023 with leadership support, staunch support, Cornell announced an investment of \$372,000 per year for up to five years, about a \$1.86 million investment in total, to grow childcare supply in Tompkins County. And this is being done in partnership with the Child Development Council of Tompkins County. Every year, \$300,000 will be earmarked to assist potential and existing providers with costs like construction, furnishings, materials, fees with obtaining a license, and meeting other requirements for opening their program. \$72,000 annually goes toward funding a Child Care Development Director role, which is managed by the Child Development Council. The developers focused on growing the childcare workforce and providing potential providers business coaching. Most people who go into the field of early childhood development aren't going into it with a lot of business experience or knowledge. The providers themselves must meet quality standards to receive any funding, and they may leverage our funds from this grant to apply for other New York State funding where possible. Our original goal with the program was to increase the net childcare supply in Tompkins County by a minimum of 50 slots each year, primarily infant through preschool spots. And at the end of those five years, this would be an additional 250 spots. Slide, please. The childcare developer was hired in April of 2024, and the grant program was launched. We are about 10 months into this program and have distributed \$121,000 in funding to 10 different programs, three centers and seven home based programs, to open or expand, resulting in 191 new slots in Tompkins County. To be very clear, 48 of those slots opened in 2024, 78 opened in January, and the rest will open at different points in time within 2025. The developer's also coaching nine additional providers that we expect to receive grant applications for over this coming year. One of those providers is a new center, which expects to open this fall in the Ithaca Southworks development and will offer 144 slots, both early childhood and school aged care. My own personal perspective is construction is very challenging and we know the schedules can often get off track, so I'm eyeing this very closely because we certainly need these spots for our fall semester. Slide, please. Spectrum News One interviewed one of our providers, Danby Daycare, and if the tech works today, we'll watch the first two and a half minutes of this segment, which spotlights one of the many ways that the program is helping. I'm just going to give Jill one second to get it up.

Spectrum News One interview:

JULIE: Starting a business, it can be overwhelming and expensive.

DAN: Meanwhile, there is a need for more daycare providers across New York State.

JULIE: Our Krystal Cole joins us this morning after visiting a group family daycare in Tompkins County. And Krystal, how are providers getting a little extra help with their businesses?

KRYSTAL COLE: Well, Dan and Julie, back in the fall, Cornell announced a big donation they're making to the community. It's called the Community Child Care Supply Growth Initiative. It's a \$300,000 contribution annually for five years, and it's already helping daycares.

KARLEM SIVIRA GIMENEZ: It's a game changer. Completely. Yeah, so exciting.

KRYSTAL COLE: Karlem Sivira Gimenez is a child care provider. She recently got a couple grants to enhance her group family daycare.

KARLEM SIVIRA GIMENEZ: Then, we have this awesome fence, which was thanks to that grant from the Child Development Council. This is huge, and it's going to be awesome to start building in here. So, we're just getting started.

KRYSTAL COLE: Her program is new. She started accepting children in February after having her own baby and wanting a way to stay at home and use her teaching skill.

KARLEM SIVIRA GIMENEZ: So, this room is where the babies hang out, but also is where the naps happen.

KRYSTAL COLE: Her Montessori modeled program cares for children under one year through school age.

KARLEM SIVIRA GIMENEZ: These are dressing frames. We use these for them to practice getting dressed, or practice buckling, practice buttoning.

KRYSTAL COLE: Back in October, Cornell University announced a commitment of \$300,000 a year for five years to help start and enhance childcare for places like Damby Daycare to buy furniture and a fence.

KARLEM SIVIRA GIMENEZ: That money was a huge help in getting us to where we needed to be to take on more children. It would have been a really long time before I would have been able to do that on my own, so it really is able to set me on a great trajectory to provide care for all these children and have a comfortable environment for them.

BARB MECHALKE: So difficult. We have such a shortage of childcare slots in Tompkins County. We're in the driest part of the desert here.

KRYSTAL COLE: Barb Machalke key works with the Child Development Council, which is helping distribute Cornell's financial contribution with the goal of starting five new programs each year.

BARB MECHALKE: The opportunity to go out of the house for moms and have a job really is

based on the ability to get childcare. And if you can't, then it kind of limits what you can do.

KRYSTAL COLE: Making the world go round for more parents.

KARLEM SIVIRA GIMENEZ: That's awesome. What is this called?

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Yeah, thank you for showing that, Jill. While you're working to get the slides back up, we are very pleased with the progress of the program so far. This was just one small example of the impact that it's making. With the Child Development Council, we are very closely monitoring the impact of the funding levels and the design and adjusting the program to ensure it is meeting needs. This is a novel approach to supporting community childcare for employers in general, especially in higher education. I want to be really clear that Cornell does not own or have first rights to the new spots that are created. This was considered during the program's inception and ultimately was determined that the increase in care supply for our county is beneficial to all, even in situations where a Cornell child may not fill that specific spot. Increased supply gives families options and creates opportunity for them to move among those options. We will be informed on an annual basis of how many of the slots have gone to Cornell affiliated individuals and what their affiliations are. The Work Life office in HR is knowledgeable of the new providers and slots and able to promote them to our incoming and current faculty along with other family life benefits. You could go to the next slide, please. Ruth Merle-Doyle serves as our Work Life Program Manager in Human Resources. She works directly with our prospective and current faculty to help them understand the child and elder care landscape and find options that work well for their family. So, please don't hesitate to refer individuals to our team. While we have a range of other resources available, I wanted to quickly call your attention to the Faculty Dependent Care Travel Fund, which provides eligible faculty with up to \$1,500 annually and reimbursement for qualified dependent care expenses due to their professional travel. Slide, please. Actually, that is the end of my slides, but before taking questions, I just want to share that addressing this complex issue, leadership is examining all possible approaches, including the feasibility of opening a second university sponsored center. It's a reasonable question to ask if the demand is so great. It's important to understand the university subsidizes the operation of the Cornell Child Care Center, as the parent fees alone do not cover the total cost, and this is very typical for employer sponsored childcare. The cost of having a center is ongoing, not just related to the construction and renovation, and the Community Growth Initiative has shown great initial success, which we're going to monitor very closely, and diversifies the type of care that people are desiring and have available. We are seeing an increase in families preferring home-based options for a variety of reasons, which can include the comfort of a small group environment, hours of operation, and others. But to be clear, this isn't an either/or, you pick one program or the other. Rather, we need to really closely evaluate and revisit this investment and all of our approaches, recognizing also the uncertainty and some of the constraints of our current environment right now. Lastly, I want to acknowledge that we have many employees in New York City, Geneva, other locations that experience childcare challenges like these and also some other unique ones. We're aware of those challenges as well and working to be inclusive of those and honing our strategy. I am also acutely aware of the challenges families with school age children face and finding before and after school care, summer camps, things like that. I do encourage folks, again, to reach out to Ruth to get guidance and support if they're experiencing any difficulties with us. And now, I'm happy to take any

questions that you have and appreciate the time on your agenda today.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We have time for one or two short questions and comments. Come down if you're in person, and I'll try to see if there's any hands online. I don't see any yet. I guess the presentation was just crystal clear. Okay, I think we'll move on then to our next agenda item. Thank you very much. This is about a proposed new School of the Environment and Sustainable Development. The speaker will be Benjamin Houlton, Ronald P Lynch Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, who is in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Benjamin will have 10 minutes. After which, we'll have five minutes for discussion. Is Benjamin online.

BENJAMIN HOULTON: I'm right here.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: You're here. Alright, nice. Let me see if I can make this higher.

BENJAMIN HOULTON: [Indiscernible]

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: No, use this one.

BENJAMIN HOULTON: This one?

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Yeah, thanks.

BENJAMIN HOULTON: Yeah. Okay, thanks a lot. Everyone hear me okay online? Good. Great. Well, you know it's a pleasure to have this chance to talk to you about hopefully something that you find as exciting as I do, which is the formation of a new school in an area where not only the college but Cornell has great depth and much to offer society. Coming from the College of Ag and Life Sciences, we think deeply about our mission and commitment to the world around us. And that's purpose driven science to serve the public good. Now, we do that in myriads of ways, whether it's our global extension programming, our land grant emphasis here in New York State, or just the research that's happening in the labs and the way we train the students. And today, I want to talk about this new administrative home base that we believe will allow us to continue to affect change in a very positive way in the world around us, especially now when we are seeing another assault on science. So, let's move forward to the next slide. Why not start here? This should be a home favorite. While this didn't happen to my college, I am a huge fan of Carl Sagan. Who wasn't, growing up in the 80s and 90s? But I think back to this particular quote where not only does he talk about this amazing planet, the only one we found with life, as we know it. I know we're searching for life on other planets, as my colleagues here talk to me about, but when you think about all of the interactions, all the people, all the plants, the organisms, everything that has constituted our life supporting systems, the air, the water, the climate system, everything that we enjoy, all the people that we associate, there is nothing more important to our future than making sure that this planet is not only intact, but is thriving for generations and generations to come. And we know that Carl Sagan was a champion of space around us. But what's interesting is he was very much focused about this blue planet that we all share, and he was also focused on challenges like climate change in 1985. Some of you may have seen his testament to where he testified to Congress about the incredible challenge of climate. Now since then, all we've seen is the world get warmer and warmer and carbon

emissions get higher and higher. And we are truly on a pathway toward a future that is becoming more and more risky, and it's playing out in myriads of ways. Next slide. So, I believe now is the time, especially as we're seeing a retreat from many of our global programming in our college USAID funding, many other elements of climate science that we double down on our commitment to that sustainable future. And this idea has emerged, as I'll go through in a little bit, through a consultative process, empowering the faculty to think deeply about a vision that we can come together around to make sure that we continue to train students and affect change through extension programming and research. But to affect change, you must be bringing disciplines together. You must have strong disciplinary understanding and incredible crosstalk across the disciplines. We need what I would call disruptive innovation because clearly, what we're doing, while we're all working hard, is not doing enough. We have a biodiversity crisis. We have around 1 billion people on the planet who wake up hungry every day. We have a climate system that is presenting itself in more and more extremes. So, this moment calls for all of us coming together to think deeply about how we can use this university as a beacon for hope and change. And it also is in the context of the UN sustainable development goals, the idea of linking all elements of environmental challenges together to create a better future, things like the Paris Agreement, which it turns out is a shell of an agreement. However, we do know that there are commitments, and we need to figure out how to uphold these commitments in terms of deep emission reduction, carbon dioxide removal, and justice for those who are facing the brunt of the impact of a changing climate. We have right here in New York State, the Climate Leadership Community Protection Act and how we have to get to by 2045 effectively net neutrality, as well as things like the Convention on Biological Diversity, as we continue to see great threats to these precious resources of all the species on Earth. So, this is the context through which we are now driving this new innovation of creating a school in the college. Next. So, this school will be formed on two really strong units, the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment and Global Development, and merge them into one to launch what the faculty have named the new school. Well, they didn't call it new, but is the school-- That sounds like hip hop, right? It's the School of the Environment and Sustainable Development. So, the idea here is to marshal our efforts in economics, human migration, in environmental science, natural resources, and many other areas and fuse them together. Also, there's two majors, one of which links from CALS to arts and sciences, which is environment and sustainability, and another in global development, which will now have much more crosstalk between them by creating this school. Next. We have engaged in a consultative process with the faculty, which involved a lot of spirited debate, some disagreement, which is always positive in my opinion, some criticism, but fundamentally through that process, we have been able to address some of the critical challenges around what this school could do. The process started back last year, and this involved first consulting with the chairs just to get their sense for how this school could possibly come together. Then, initially proposing just kind of a straw man idea to the faculty, and then meeting many times with the faculty, whole groups of faculty, individual faculty, hearing the excitement, also hearing the despair, in some cases. Then, we did some benchmarking, which I'll show you against other institutions and why we feel we have some differentiation to offer. We did open meetings and feedback. Then, we had a whole on faculty retreat, where we spent a full day talking more and more about what this school could accomplish. And then, I left the room after the first half hour, which is where the good conversation happened. And then, the faculty got together and talked more and more about the excitement for what they could create. We then brought it to our faculty executive committee, which is an elected committee that reports to the dean's office but talks

about policy and process, and they've provided their feedback. We engaged in a vote, and we found that 93%, and initially the vote breakdown was a little different. Then, over time, we saw it evolve to about 93% supportive of the formation of the school, and about 30% were neutral. 63% were supportive, 30% were neutral. The neutral voters mainly just had questions about the future, which we also shared, but in large measure, they were supportive of moving forward. And we had about 7% that were opposed, but that included-- It was hard to find a specific pattern across all units. Some faculty tenure tracks, some RT faculty, and a couple of staff. So, now here we are bringing it to you. And then, ultimately, we'll get some ideas from you, and then go to the provost. Next. So, we did some benchmarking. We looked at several institutions, including Yale School for the Environment, we looked at the Brand school at Duke, we looked at Michigan, and what we found was some similarity between the strengths that we offer, but also some distinct differences. None of the schools are in the land grant with extension programming. That is a major distinctive feature what we offer. Moreover, we were by far and away the strongest in development in international studies, where we have programming in 61 countries around the world working to empower communities, and make sure they have sustainable healthy food, secure future in terms of climate adaptation, and even thinking about mitigation. So, it was really an interesting exercise. I won't show you the data on that. We presented this faculty and we talked a lot about how to make sure that we were had strong distinction as we created the school. Next. I won't talk a lot about this, but we have 30 programs in extension that are either centers or institutes that run through the college, and many of them will also be centered in this new school. That's our Maple Program, things like our Agrivoltaic Center, so on and so forth. So, we're really excited about linking local to global and back again through the formation of the school. We believe there will be enhanced funding opportunities, at least we did a little bit ago. I think there will be in the future, but we're navigating that right now. We also want to continue to build partnerships and strengthen synergies with New York State NGOs on a world scale. And then finally, we want to continue to reach the constituencies and make sure that we are doing impactful work that helps them. Next. We have new space that we have now capital funding that is being secured from the SUNY Construction Fund. So, we're excited about space. Next. This is a statue. So, I just want to really quickly here. I'm a scientist, but this is from last summer and it really struck me. Now, for you in Humanities and Arts, you just think I'm an absolute fool scientist, but I learned this story about how Michelangelo created this amazing, breathtaking statue of David. And for those who haven't seen it, it is so big. But the beauty of Michelangelo is that what I learned instead of focusing, and chipping away, and going around to try to create these beautiful statues out of this monolith of limestone, he would kind of just do one part, and then do another part, and another part. Everyone said he was crazy. And his response was, "Well, David's already in there. I'm not doing anything." And you know what? I feel the same way about this school. This school is being formed by faculty feedback, this school is a part of who we are, and this school is going to be a big part of our future, and I'm so excited to continue to think about the creativity and innovation that can come out of its formation. And I think that's it. Yes, thank you. Any questions?

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We have a few minutes for comments and questions. Come up if you're in house.

BENJAMIN HOULTON: Let me also add Sahara Byrne is my senior associate dean, and she gets all the credit for making this happen. So, I really just want to shout out Sahara, and she may

also help with some questions.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Okay. I'm waiting for some hands to be raised digitally or actual physical people to come down here. We do have a couple for those of you online. Go ahead, identify yourself.

STEPHAN SCHMIDT: Stephan Schmidt, City and Regional Planning. Two quick questions. When are you expecting, I guess, the school to launch and to start admitting students? You touched on the degrees being offered, but I didn't quite catch that.

BENJAMIN HOULTON: Great questions. Yeah, thanks for asking those questions. So, we would like the school to launch officially in the fall. And in terms of, the degrees already exist. So, there's not actually going to be new undergraduate degrees. We're just bringing them together with the core faculty. You do a lot of teaching. Although, as I said, one of the degrees links to arts and sciences, and that's going to maintain. We're not changing that. Some of the things we're looking at, though, are new professional masters programs, new way of training people, new way of enhancing our global extension. Does that address your questions? Great, thanks.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Identify yourself.

BILL KATT: Bill Kat, Molecular Medicine. I'm wondering if you could just speak briefly, this may have gone over my head, to the importance of forming the new unit, as opposed to just maintaining the units that are already on campus.

BENJAMIN HOULTON: Yes. Great. So, there were several reasons to create this school. First, we know that these majors are attractive, but we did start to see that the number of students applying to some of these majors had flatlined. And some of the feedback we're receiving is that it's hard for students to basically grab on to a home base structure that they feel a sense of purpose around, a sense of solidarity to. And so, the school, we believe, is going to help differentiate that aspect of what the student experience is all about. Moreover, we do believe this is a major philanthropic opportunity for the college. And third, we are looking at adding quite a few new faculty lines into it. So, there were a couple of different ideas that led to the strategy, whereas when they set separately, you don't get that distinctiveness. It's hard to get the philanthropy. So, we felt by bringing them together, we could really create a synergy. And the final point is just thematically thinking about linking New York State to the world and back again is something that now we can start to enhance much more, as opposed to when they were sitting separately.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Thank you. We have time for one more. If you would just identify yourself.

TARA HOLM: Thank you. Thank you. Tara Holm from Math. Thanks, Ben. This is really inspiring. I do have a question. I'm sort of curious about the scale. What's the size of the departments we're talking about? And what sort of new administrative costs is this going to incur? Who's paying to hire new deans? Things like that.

BENJAMIN HOULTON: Yes, great. So, we're not going to have a Dean. We went through this with the School of Integrative Plant Science. And there was a lot of painful experience that we took advantage of to make this go a little faster. That took about 10 years, and that was five units. But the model that works is we'll have a director, and then there'll be like associate directors, and then there's core themes because we do want to protect the themes that are vital to tenure and the junior faculty. So, I think the model will administratively be-- There hopefully will be some cost saving. It's definitely not going to add. It's all in the college's budget, by the way, so it's not coming outside the college. Does that address most your questions? In terms of faculty size, it's about 35 tenure track faculty and an equivalent number of RTEs already combined, and we are looking at possibly building 10 additional tenure track faculty lines into the school.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Thank you. I think we can move on to our next agenda item.

BENJAMIN HOULTON: Thank you, everybody.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: The next item is Student Evaluations of Teaching project. Steve Jackson, Vice Provost of Academic Innovation from Information Science will talk for 10 minutes, and then we'll have actually 10 minutes for Q&A. Go ahead.

STEVE JACKSON: Great. Thank you. Thanks for the time. I will try and cover a long project quickly. It's a bit of a mixed audience. Some of you have been intimately involved, and you will know all of this, and some of you may be seeing this for the first time or early on. I wanted to say everything I'm going to talk about here is available online. We've just gotten a new website up this morning actually. So, if you want to go to academicinnovation.cornell.edu. AI was taken. I apologize for all the letters. SET history, you can follow along most of what I'm talking about here today. Next slide. Okay, so this project goes back to 2019 is when it first kicked off. I'll tell you a bit more about that in a minute. And it's really responding to four central concerns and problems in our existing student evaluations of teaching system. One is disparate and aging legacy systems across colleges. We have many colleges. There are 200 plus systems used around the university right now. Many of them are on or beyond life support. There are people who retired 15 years ago who are being called back each fall and spring to run systems that were coded in some weird obscure language that no longer exists and three people on the planet know it. There's deep concerns around bias and efficacy in the way student evaluations, evaluations of teaching have been constructed in the surveys and also how they're being brought into promotion and tenure and faculty review processes. And then finally, poor response rate. So, I'll say a little bit about that, not a lot about that today. In response to that, we have worked up a new system, which involves a new software tool system called Explorance. I'm not going to talk a lot about that today. Although, I'm happy to take questions. You can read a bit more about it on the website I indicated. We've developed a research based common core question set. And the model is that students would get a common set of questions. There are 18 to 20, I'll explain that variance in a minute, plus an additional set of questions that can come from the college, or department, or instructor level following college protocols on that question. Some colleges allow instructors to add questions and some don't, so we're going with college preference on that. A really important document, I think, which is Guidance to Chairs and Deans on the use, I will say the use and abuse, of sets data in promotion and tenure decisions and some strategies for alternative mechanisms for evaluating teaching. And finally, a recommendation on improving response

rates. Next slide, please. Way too much text. I'm not going to talk through all this. It started in 2019. Basically, a group of educational researchers and survey researchers around the university responding to concerns that were coming forward from faculty primarily about the questions of bias and efficacy in our systems did a deep dive into the literature. They developed an initial set of questions. You can see some of the people involved. The names in black are kind of involved in the first phase of the project. Names in red are people who came into the second phase of the project. You'll see the project expanded post Covid. Came up with a pilot set of questions, sort of a model core question set that was piloted in 14 classes. Results were taken. We talked to students in those. They, I wasn't involved at that time. They talked to students involved in those classes, faculty involved in those classes. COVID hit, everything went quiet for a while. It went on the back burner. And then, when we came back, we struck an expanded content committee now with all college representation. So, in addition to education and survey researchers, we brought in representatives from all colleges. There's a long process whereby we work with that original question set I described. We go through two or three iterations. We test it. We travel. Some of you I've talked to before. I've been traveling around the university over the last year, year and a half presenting to Chairs, to Deans, to Faculty meetings in colleges. Ran it by students. This is an important part. We arrived at a pretty good penultimate core question set. We field tested it with students through a method called cognitive interviews and also to test length, how long it was taking them to do this. Cognitive interviews basically meaning do they think the question means the same thing that we think the question means to make sure that we are getting answers that were sound. Talked to the Faculty Senate Educational Policies Committee this September. Got really good feedback and I think very positive response from that. And I'll be going to the student-- Speaking with you all today. I'll be going to the Student Assembly next month. And the first colleges are slated to transition this spring. So, ILR, AAP, and Human Ecology will be moving into the new software system with a new core set. We've been working very closely with them over the last year, basically, last few months at least, and also with other colleges. Next slide, please. Okay, Guidance for Chairs and Deans. This is a long document that summarizes the research, right? This is us distilling the research, what we found when we did that deep dive, and provides what we think will be hopefully some actionable and useful procedures as chairs and deans, but by extension, faculty in general put together and evaluate their colleagues in terms of teaching for purposes of review, promotion, and tenure. You can see some general themes here. So, we expand the range in this document of how we evaluate tenure. So, the version of tenure where you sort of take two meta scores and kind of just say what the scores are, and then you kind of speed through and talk about other things. There's many other ways to evaluate and many other and better ways to evaluate teaching. We provide some guidance on that. And if you want to think about the overall project here around SET status, Student Evaluations of Teaching data, I'd say our effort has been to improve and decenter. So, we think the system we've arrived at is much sounder than the systems that were in place before, and they're also a somewhat smaller part of the overall evaluation of teaching portfolio. Next slide, please. I'm not going to go through this. This is all on the slide. Sorry, on the website. Why don't we skip one more ahead? One more ahead. Okay, core question set. This is something people have been asking about and have been very interested in. So, I'll give you a very quick description. There are 18 to 20 questions in the core question set. 12 to 14 of those are fixed response, and six are open field. The variance of 18 to 20 or 12 to 14 comes from the fact that courses that have lecture and discussion say we ask about those components separately. So, if a class was lecture discussion lab, it would have three, and if it was only a single thing, it wouldn't

have that component breakdown at all. Students would see the core question set plus whatever questions are added on at the college or instructor level. And in general, there are sections on sort of an overall section. There's a section on course components, a section on course organization and workload, course support and climate, and then some general reflections and suggestions. And in general, the questions center on the student's own experience, concrete specific evaluation of course elements and ideas or suggestions for instructors. These are meant to provide much more actionable feedback to instructors than many of our evaluations deliver right now. So, next slide, please. All right, we start out by anchoring in student learning. Next slide, please. We also anchor in self reflection. So, this is one example of an open field question where we ask students to tell us what they think they learned in the class. Next slide, please. There's a mixture of what you might think of as descriptive elements and elements that are directly sort of evaluative or assessment based. So, the first one is a descriptive. It's kind of describing how often did you do these things? The answers to that should be read contextually. For some kinds of classes, you wouldn't expect them to do that that often, others you would. So, that's out in the sense descriptive. And then, more evaluative, like how effective was this component in supporting your learning in its class? Next slide, please. We've gone with a model of substantive anchoring versus Likert scales, and I can talk about why that is. We believe that follows best practice in surveys of this kind, and we believe that's what our best practice peers are adopting. Next slide, please. And some of the questions, there's a mix. In this question in particular, you'll see a radio list. So, what elements of course organization could be improved? Check all that apply. And then, an opportunity to also assess overall how well organized was this course? Next slide, please. There's a question on academic integrity, open field question on academic integrity. Next slide. And there's a set of questions on course support and climate. And you can see the first question here is about course support. How well did the team support your work? And then, questions 12 and 13. First of all, an evaluative question, and then an open field response inviting people to elaborate. Next slide, please. Open ended time reporting. You can skip through this. And I'm quite excited about this. This is a question we stole directly from Stanford. What advice would you give to a student who's considering or preparing to take your course? At Stanford, they take these results and broadcast it back to students. That's not what we're proposing to do. But if you were an instructor, you could go up first day of class, say, "This is what students who took my class in the past said." "Really pay attention to those first homework. That really help set up the later work." Or, "If you feel overwhelmed in week three, it's okay. It gets better after that." Next slide, please. I'll do one or two more minutes. The last thing are two to three things working well to support your learning in the class. Tell us what's working about the class. And then, conversely, what is not working? And what are some ideas or recommendations for improvement? Next slide, please. This is really important. There is an analog to an overall course score. How would you assess the overall quality of this course? Next slide. But there is no single question overall instructor score, right? This is the core finding, I would say, that comes out of the bias literature. And I can talk ad nauseam about the research that establishes this. And it's in the guidance to chairs and deans. Next, next slide. No common questions for TAs. TAs do different kinds of work all across the university. Colleges can use the Explorant software system to deploy whatever TA questions they have. Midterm evaluations are not run through this. Midterm evaluations continue to be done in the way they are normally done now. Next slide, which may be the last. Okay. Improving response rates. This is down the road. Once we get the whole system in place, we plan to adopt a system that our peers have very successfully adopted, which is that if you complete your teaching about your course evaluation, you get early access to

your grades, right? Meaning that everyone else's grades are on a three day delay or something like that. Institutions who have done this have reported response rates that have gone back up to 70 to 90% with no evidence of junk evaluation quality. It's been a really remarkable thing. So, response rates is a core problem for us. Next and last slide, I believe. Right. We have a new advisory council that's governing this with all college representation. Some of these people were involved in the development of this in either the question set or involved in the technical side. We are open and interested. Of course, most of these are faculty members. Even, we've had some email on this. If we would like a specific Senate representative in the committee, that's great. Also, I will be talking to the student assembly in March, and we will be inviting a student representative as well. So, I apologize for the extra time. And I'm done.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Are there questions? If you're in-house, come to the microphone. And if you're online, raise your digital hand. I think we'll start right here. Identify yourself.

ELLIOT SHAPIRO: All right. Thank you. Elliot Shapiro, RTE from Arts and Sciences, from the Knight Institute for Writing and the Disciplines. A quick question and a perhaps longer question that I should just check your website on. The quick question, as you said, this is not used for TAs, but I assume instructors of record. So, for example, first you're writing some on our instructors who are grad students. They would be evaluated using this tool. Is that correct? Okay, great. And then, the longer question, which again, tell me to go to your website if you want to. And that is I appreciate what you said about a holistic assessment of teaching and the impact of that. And you had a lot of stuff you didn't read, but I wonder if you could give us like a 30-second summary of some of what you consider some of the best ways to do holistic teaching evaluation.

STEVE JACKSON: Yeah, it's a great question. And a lot of it is in the guidance to chairs and dean's doc, which talks through a teaching portfolio approach and some specific guidance and formatting and structure for that. It talks about best practice recommendations for peer observation. For example, sometimes we just say, "Oh, go look at Professor So-and-so's class and tell me what you think," but that's actually not an effective mode of peer evaluation. Part of the portfolio is inviting actual pieces of teaching, like actually inviting syllabi, reviewing syllabi, including assignments, seeing the instructional design of the faculty member. There's a lot more there, and I'm happy to talk more, but I think there are some things that we can do that will greatly improve this process.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Identify yourself.

GILLY LESHED: Gilly Leshed, Information Science. Thanks, Steve. What great work. It looks like a lot of work. My question is about achieving learning objectives. It doesn't look like there are any questions that address this, whether students achieve the learning objectives. And on the other hand, there is a question about the quantity of learning, which might bias against or for courses that are four credits versus two or one credits. And so,, I wonder how you're planning to normalize for that.

STEVE JACKSON: It's a great question. Each of these questions has a long, complicated, sorted history. Not sorted, a long, complicated history. The original, the first question I put up, how

much did you learn in the class? The original version of this was something like, how well did you meet the learning outcomes in this class? And we love that model. However, after much discussion, it was believed that at this time, students don't consistently enough recall the learning outcomes that we could put that on the survey at this time. There is a model. At some point in time, learning outcomes may be systematically enough collected around the university, we could import them into the instrument. How did you learn the learning outcomes? But we have them, so we can put them in for the students to reference. But we didn't feel at this time that we were able to do that and that it would confuse students in the first question. The normalizing on credit on volume is a good question that I'll take back to the group. It's important to note that a lot of these things, as always, should be read contextually. Right? And so, it's not the case that we expect-- We know courses have different features, and we interpret the results in light of those features. And that may be an instance in which contextual reading is part of that. We wouldn't expect somebody who did a little one credit, smaller one credit course to report in the same way.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Please identify yourself.

MAKDA WEATHERSPOON: Hello. Makda Weatherspoon, Near Eastern Studies. I was wondering if there will be, or it's possible to add like an open field where we can enter our own specific questions that we'd like to ask our students. Thank you.

STEVE JACKSON: Yeah. So, that's really at the level of the colleges. The system will support that, and we welcome and encourage that from our end. Some colleges do that now as a matter of course, and some colleges don't have that as a policy. I actually think it's a really good policy, and it supports a lot of the things we're interested in, too. So, for example, if I'm trying out a new thing I've never tried before, like some new technique or some new piece, I may want really specific feedback on that. I may want to ask, like, how well did this thing that I tried out for the first time work? So, we will encourage that, but ultimately, anything that's added beyond the core set is at the discretion and following the policy of the colleges and practice of departments.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: I see there's two hands raised digitally. We only have a little more than three minutes, so try to make it quick starting with Marina.

MARINA CAILLAUD: Hi. Can you hear me?

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Yes.

MARINA CAILLAUD: Yes, Marina Caillaud from Entomology. Hi, Steve. I would like to come back to the question of earlier to about TAs because in my experience in large biologic classes, very often, the TAs, which are graduate students and sometimes undergraduate students, are the only people in front of 25, 30, 35 students. So, it is very important that they are getting some feedback. And in the current system, I'm at CALS. In the current system I'm working with, I am building questions for them. But I'm wondering if in the new system you have better ways to give feedback to the TAs. It would be good for them because this is part of their learning experience that will make them better for their career and it would also make them better TAs for the next class that they are teaching.

STEVE JACKSON: Thank you, Marina. So, I totally agree with that. We did not include TA questions in the core instrument because the variance on that around the university is very wide. Some colleges don't provide evaluations of TAs at all, actually. Some do in a very comprehensive way, and they all do in different ways, partly reflecting different functionalities of TAs in different colleges. So, we couldn't tackle it as part of the core kind of central part. But the software is designed to be able to support that, too. So, the student would see the core questions, as I've described, whatever the department or college adds on or maybe what an instructor adds on, plus it would also deliver whatever TA question set is in practice in that college or in that area. One of the functions of the advisory council that I've talked about is also as colleges come into the system to compare notes on that. So, right now, I think even in a little bit of work we did, I think we saw some really great practices around TA evaluation and colleges who haven't really talked to each other very much on that question, who could probably benefit from that. So, it could be that we work toward at some point in some future version, we work towards a more consistent set of TA questions around the university, but we're not able to do that at this point.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: OK, we have about a minute left. Risa Lieberwitz.

RISA LIEBERWITZ: Yeah, thank you. Steve, could you perhaps respond to a question of how satisfied are you and the working group with having addressed the problem of bias, which, as you noted, is so deep, has been so deep in these kinds of evaluations? And how will that be monitored in terms of whether it's been successful?

STEVE JACKSON: It's a great question. I think we have made really important steps, and I think we've stepped away from some very obvious and known pitfalls of bias that the research shows very clearly. So, for example, in the research literature, the kinds of questions that are most prone to bias are things that are anchored on a person and are very general. So, what is your overall opinion of your instructor? That is known to be-- The research shows this time and again. And to be clear, there's a variety of ways of testing that as a bias. One is obviously differential outcome according to a variety of factors. It's also measured against things like people have done all kinds of studies, like measures of actual learning in comparison to the rating of instructors or success in downstream courses relative. There are courses where the instructor gets a super high rating, but then when people run the studies, not here at Cornell, at other institutions, it turns out actually students in subsequent classes do much worse than the instructors that were rated more lowly in the first case. So, I would say that we've gotten better. I'm pretty confident we've gotten better in the instrument. And then, I also think the move to kind of decenter it also helps manage the bias problem somewhat. It's good not to be too anchored on like two or three meta numbers, which is sometimes how we shorthand these things when we do reviews and promotion. It is not and will not be bias free. I don't think that that's a-- I can't say that that's the case. I don't know that we can ever say a tool is definitively bias free, but I'm convinced it's much better on that question. In terms of the monitoring, this is one of the things that we want the advisory council to check, and work, on and follow as the system is rolled into place kind of college by college. We will be able to run studies that kind of check that. We would do it in a spot check and sort of run studies to check that question. And that is indeed one of the intents of the committee going forward.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Okay, we need to move on to announcements and updates with Eve

DeRosa, Dean of faculty, Chelsea Specht, Associate Dean of faculty. And there'll be a few minutes for questions and comments.

EVE DE ROSA: Hi, everyone. Welcome to the spring semester. Thank you to those of you who came to the faculty forum at the end of last month. It was a wonderful conversation about maintaining and improving decorum in the Senate. So, very appreciative of the people who attended. And we will set up a working group, a small, nimble working group to review some of the suggestions and basically build Robert's rules for us. So, more to come on that. And last night, I sent out the response to our three approved resolutions. So, you now have a response from the president and provost. I wanted to give the new provost some grace. So, it took her a little bit more time to read over all the history and the conversations about our resolutions. And so, we now have a response. I just want to bring attention to that. I'm very sad to announce that we will be having on our ballot the Associate Dean of Faculty position, but I just wanted to let you know that if you have other names, self-nomination, just send it to the office of the Dean of Faculty. We're building the ballots as we speak. And so, these are all the open positions. We have the university faculty committee nominations in the elections, associate dean of faculty, and senators at large. Next slide, please. So, I wanted to make an announcement. And for anybody who cares about this topic, just email the office directly. But those of you who rely on the evening prelims, we had David Schmoys, who's a faculty member here, who models a lot of data from the scheduling system for us. He had a graduate student work on historic data to understand because we have a lot of scheduling conflicts for the evening prelims. And their model showed that if we added two additional slots, we would reduce the conflicts by 30%, which is very compelling. And so, they would like to add two more slots. And I have an email out to the office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and also out for the office of student and campus life to see what the impact would be for the students. But for the faculty, I'm getting the sense that this would be actually really preferable to decrease the scheduling conflicts. And so, if all are in support, we're going to try to go for fall 2025. And if not, we'll wait to spring 2026 after we have feedback, appropriate feedback. So, just if you care about this topic and you have feedback for us, let us know. And I just wanted to remind people you're going to get an invitation. We're going to go on a field trip to the Agri Tech campus to understand the faculty experience there. And so, hold that date on April 23rd. And then, I guess before we get to questions, I just want to say to Steve, my hope is that the Chair of the Education Policy Committee will be on your advisory committee. But if not, remember, whomever that is, then we'll have somebody from that committee. And with that, I sped through so that I'm leaving enough room for people who might have questions.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Why don't you go first since you haven't spoken yet. OK, well, we'll go here first, and then online.

HAROLD HODES: Harold Hodes, Philosophy. Just out of curiosity, why not have a few evening prelims on Wednesday nights? That would certainly lower the level of conflict.

EVE DE ROSA: So, I've been working with the registrar, the Office of the University Registrar. I don't know historically why Wednesdays haven't been used, but they have used Fridays. And so, there is an open mindedness about it. So, I will bring that possibility to them.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Online, Hadas Ritz.

HADAS RITZ: Hadas Ritz, College of Engineering RTE. Just in response to that, I always thought it was because there are Monday, Wednesday evening classes scheduled. So, you would have conflicts with classes. But anyway, my question is actually, how have you chosen-- How did they choose the specific dates that would avoid conflicts if the prelim-- My understanding is that the prelim schedule hasn't been hashed out for the fall yet. How do they know exactly which dates are the ones?

EVE DE ROSA: Oh, sorry, Hadas. So, actually, we have been working on the academic calendar for fall 25, and we have those dates already selected for the later times. So, you noticed on the slide that the 7:30 to 9, I believe it is, slot is already available for those dates. And what they want to add is just the hour and a half or two hours beforehand. And yes, you're correct about the Wednesday night courses.

TOM FOX: Tom Fox. Molecular Biology and Genetics. Isn't there a dead period, 5:30, for clubs, and athletes--

EVE DE ROSA: Hence the outreach to office for student campus life and also the vice provost for undergraduate education. I'll say there's been penetration of that. So, that zone isn't as protected as it used to be. And currently, when students have a conflict with the current schedule, that's the time slot that's used. So, there's precedent, the students haven't complained.

TOM FOX: You may have whole teams of people who can't--

EVE DE ROSA: Absolutely, and they would be accommodated. So, athletes have special accommodations.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Chris Schaffer, online.

CHRIS SCHAFFER: Hi. Chris Schaffer, Biomedical Engineering. Would there be assurances that students wouldn't have back to back prelims on the same day? Because if you're adding a slot on the same day to avoid a conflict, does that mean you potentially have back to back prelims? Because if so, that sounds like something students are not going to be pleased about.

EVE DE ROSA: I've actually called Tara up because Tara has a lot of knowledge about evening prelims and is helping us with this.

TARA HOLM: Tara Holm from Math. Chris, I think that is possible and probably likely given how many students take evening prelims. I'm not sure how to avoid it. I mean, already, that happens when students have a conflict. The most typical accommodation I've seen to handle that conflict is to offer an earlier time slot, 5 to 7:30. So, more of a problem is maybe that now students will have three or four exams for one night, and I don't know what we'll do. But this is reducing the total number of conflicts by 30%. And so, the hope is that this will make it better, not worse.

EVE DE ROSA: And the constraint is that they can't have more than two.

ELLIOT SHAPIRO: Hi. Elliot Shapiro, RTE Arts and Sciences. So, I know very little about how prelims work because I don't work in any classes that do that. But periodically, it's a kind of annual ritual for me to try and write to people suggesting we try and keep exams off of the fall Jewish holidays, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, September 30th and October 7th in any given year. The odds are really good that it's going to conflict with one or another of those, and I just hope Cornell will consider. We can't work around everything, but is it possible to avoid scheduling exams and prelims on those days?

EVE DE ROSA: That is already a constraint. So, we work with the Hillel on campus. And so, we always try to address that.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: I think we need to move on. I know there's one more person online, but I think we have good of the order that starts now. And so, those who still have comments, I would recommend just contacting the Dean of Faculty. William Katt for two and a half minutes. And this will be followed by Meredith Holgerson for two and a half minutes. No?

BILL KATT: Whatever. It's fine. It's fine. Bill Katt, Molecular Medicine. And I'll be pretty quick, I think. So, when I was elected about a year and a half ago, I sent an email to the people I now represented and asked if there was anything they'd like me to work on. And one of the things that came up, and I think maybe I've been here long enough to actually push forward on a little bit, is the incredible lack of electric car charging stations on campus. And if you look at the bigger parking lots on campus, there are no electric car chargers. And if you look at some of the smaller, more expensive parking lots on campus, there are often one or two broken electric car chargers. And so, I think I'd like to push forward a little bit on this, and I do understand, and the provosts have previously told us that Cornell has more good ideas than it has money to pursue good ideas, but we also just heard about maybe opening a new environmental type college on campus. We know that this is a very environmental area in Ithaca. We're probably attracting a lot of people who want to have a positive environmental impact on their own. So, more car chargers or any car chargers could be an aid to a recruitment. So, anyway, if this sounds like a good idea to you at a base level, please contact me. I'd like to try to put something together moving forward, whether you're newer like me and have no flipping idea on how to move legislation forward or if you've been here for a little while and would like to help mentor us through this process, please just drop me a line. Thank you.

EVE DE ROSA: I would love if something like this came from the Senate. And I also will share this request informally with the vice president of facilities and operations because they do have a few committees between the University Assembly and also his office on sustainability for the campus.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Okay, there's been a switch. It's Roxanne Marino from Ecology and Evolutionary Biology for two and a half minutes. Oops, shorter.

ROXANNE MARINO: Hi. Thank you very much. I'm a senator in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. And I'm here today to just introduce a topic of concern to our faculty

and see if there's interest in working with us towards a resolution. I just have these things up here on the slide. The issue is a recent change to university travel policy that now prohibits more than one person from staying in any lodging that's booked under eCommerce category, so that's Airbnb, the BRBO, or camping. And so, the stated reason is that the one person doing the booking cannot accept the risk on another person or groups behalf. And so, the implications are pretty large for people who do a lot of field research, especially if they're gone for extended periods of time. It could become unaffordable or impossible. Hotels might not be available, they might be untenable financially in some areas. And it also can impact conference travel, making it more expensive and limiting the ability for graduate students or multiple lab members to attend. And also, it just seems very counter to efficiency in spending grant funds. Next, please. We surveyed our faculty in ecology and evolutionary biology, and these are just some examples of impacts. I don't have time to go through them all, but a lot of our faculty do research and destinations where hotels are either very expensive at certain times of the year, the Adirondacks, the White Mountains, Cape Cod, or like the Galapagos, which might only have luxury hotels, which also are not allowed to stay in under the travel policy. So, it becomes really problematic. Or they go to very remote field locations for two or three months at a time. In those kind of places, the travel to the hotels can take two or three hours. It adds unnecessary risk. There's other safety issues with group travel and working together at field locations. Grad students may have trouble being able to do their projects because they have limited budgets. Shared housing is obviously helpful for meals and kitchen facilities. It lowers costs and it makes more flexibility and work time so that people don't have to go to restaurants. I already covered the conference point. And so, next, please. So, our next steps, we were thinking that we'd like to survey the faculty in other departments and see if this policy impacts them and develop a summary of that, and then discuss these results with some university offices, risk management, and others to explore possible solutions and develop a faculty Senate resolution potentially. So, if you're interested in joining either of us, Meredith Holgerson is my colleague in our department or I, that's our contact info. So, thank you.

EVE DE ROSA: Roxanne, thank you for bringing this to the Senate, and I will include a Qualtrics link for people to give feedback.

ROXANNE MARINO: Okay. Yeah, that would be helpful. Thank you.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Okay, we have come to the end of our agenda. The meeting is adjourned.