

A MEETING  
OF THE UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2021

NEEMA KUDVA: Okay. Great. Thank you everybody for joining us. My name is Neema Kudva, the Associate Dean of Faculty, and I just wanted to start with a land acknowledgement, and following that, an introduction to the new Dean of Faculty, Professor Eve De Rosa. So, we want to start by acknowledging that Cornell University is located on the traditional homelands of the Gayoghó:nq'. The Gayoghó:nq' are members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, an alliance of six sovereign nations with a historic 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 Gayoghó:nq' dispossession, and honor the ongoing connection of Gayoghó:nq' people, past and present, to these lands and waters.

So, I'm going to just introduce briefly the new Dean of Faculty, Eve De Rosa. This is not a formal Senate meeting. So, we'll have a formal introduction in the Senate meeting at the end of September, but this is the first large meeting that she's chairing, so I just want to welcome her in that role. So, Eve, this all yours.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Neema. And welcome everyone to today's listening session. We wanted, as an office, so the Office of Dean of Faculty, to be here to serve as a forum for the faculty to voice and listen to each other's experiences and concerns about in-person teaching. And so, I will serve as the facilitator for this session. It's not a formal Senate meeting, so we won't have a speaker today. And the ground rules for today, I want everyone to know that we're going to record this listening session and post it on our website, immediately share it with the provost as he prepares for his town hall tomorrow, and we'll also share it as part of next week's Monday message. And we're also going to share

the chat. And so, the chat goes directly to our Dean of Faculty team. And so, I just wanted to let you know that we will be reading your contributions to the chat.

And we ask that you raise your electronic Zoom hand, and I'll just call people as queued by Zoom. Because we only have one hour together, we're going to limit each speaker to two minutes, and I have also asked one of the signers of the letter to Provost Kotlikoff and Vice-Provost Nishii that was published in the Cornell Sun yesterday, and we can place that in the chat for you. I've asked Kathleen Long to give voice to the hundred plus faculty who signed that letter, and we're hoping that that will also give opportunity to other faculty who did not have -- who did not sign the letter.

And I guess I would just open with saying that I'm sure all of you have experienced the hunger of our student body to be back in the classroom, and despite my anxieties about returning to in-person, I think their enthusiasm is palpable. But, you know, our cautiousness and our anxieties as a faculty are valuable. So, our use of public health controls is valuable to the university. And hopefully this will isolate that bolus, that positive cases that have arrived on campus, and primarily through en masse socializing. And so, hopefully our students will now appreciate that the use of simple public health controls is essential to protecting the safety of unvaccinated people in our lives, and also their ability to have their in-person experience.

And I think what I'd like to do is just start with Kathleen to represent the hundred plus faculty who signed on that letter.

KATHLEEN LONG: Thank you very much, Eve. So, I'm just going to be reading from a statement, and hopefully other people will chime in later. Many faculty are very concerned about the reduction in classroom and campus safety measures that were in place last year. Many of us want to teach in person, but only in conditions in which all possible risk reduction measures have been taken, measures that adapt to the changing circumstances created by the Delta variant.

Proper PPE should be distributed to faculty. Ventilation should be restored to or installed in the classrooms that lack it. Or at the very least, air purifiers should be put in those classrooms. Classes should be de-densified so that social distancing is possible. There should be methods in place to enforce mask mandates. Requests by faculty, staff, and graduate students at risk, or with family members at risk, to teach online should be honored. This would help with the de-densification of classrooms as well.

In fact, many of these measures were in place last year and have been abandoned. There is no student contact and there are no consequences for ignoring mask mandates, and no way of instilling a sense of ethical responsibility to the community. We would also like to see Cornell exercising greater care in the management of this situation, because they are increasing the risk for everyone by dropping certain safety measures.

For example, the recent change in rules on masks for the yellow risk level just the other day left the impression on some students that they do not have to wear masks inside or out if they think they're social distancing. We would like to call on university administration to engage and consult with faculty representatives, like the Faculty Senate, in their management of the situation. We feel that such mediated engagement with the faculty would reduce the possibility of this becoming an adversarial situation in which solutions will not be found to the problems raised here.

I do have a list of concerns raised by faculty, if I could take some more time. May I do that?  
Okay.

Faculty, staff, and grad students with unvaccinated children are concerned about transmitting the virus to them, and so are faculty who live with elderly and/or vulnerable adults who may be immunocompromised. We still see many students without masks, a very large number outdoors and some indoors. Enforcement of the mask mandate has been left to individual faculty, staff, and students.

We want to know exactly how contact tracing and testing is being carried out. Many of us know of students who have tested positive, yet we have not been contacted through official channels, even if we are in classrooms where social distancing is not possible. Faculty want to be informed if a student in their class has tested COVID positive. This can be done while protecting the anonymity of the student. At least in small classes, the entire class should be notified so as to get tested and take special precautions.

Faculty in the law school believe that Cornell is violating the ADA in not following the CDC guidelines for universities. Members of the law faculty are prepared to speak further about this. We are told to go to deans and unit leaders with requests for accommodations, but what standards are to be applied? There's no consistent procedure at this point. Do we follow the ADA, the CDC? How do we ensure consistency of treatment of different faculty?

Faculty teaching in older buildings say there are no ventilation measures being taken to protect them. There is confusion about how to acquire PPE through the university. Channels suggested have not worked. Will the university pay for this expense? There is also confusion about how to accommodate both students and faculty, including grad students, who test positive. Although some faculty are willing to tolerate moderate risk of catching a disease that is not serious, we're very concerned about evidence that long COVID can result from breakthrough infections. Thank you.

EVE DE ROSA: That is perfect timing, Kathleen. Thank you. And Cecilia -- Celia, sorry, you're first in the queue.

CELIA: Thank you very much, Eve, and thanks everybody for being here. So, I'm here in two capacities, one is just like the rest of you, as an educator who also shares the students' enthusiasm about establishing some form of contact and interaction with each other this year after a long year alone in our homes, but also an educator who, like many of you, was kind of shocked by the conditions last week in which we were all teaching. In closely packed together spaces, where mask wearing appears

from day one not to have been universally respected, and with a lot of the COVID protections, as Kathleen alluded to, COVID protections from last year having been peeled away.

So, I have that perspective, share that perspective also with many of you, having two unvaccinated children at home. They're not unvaccinated by choice. The vaccine is not available to them, and I worry that these conditions are putting my children directly at risk. Like many of you, again, last year I was in a position of caring for two elderly and in one case, fairly immune compromised, parents. They're not with us. They passed away. But if they were with us and I was taking care of them, I would be considering quitting my job right now because of the risks in which I'd be placing them.

So, I have that general perspective, and I know a lot of people chime in. Interested to hear all of your thoughts. I've been asked to speak on behalf of a few law professors and from other departments who work on the employment related issues. So, I'm a business lawyer. I'm not an employment specialist. So, I defer to others who are. I do, however, advise on employment related issues, and in the past 18 months, have spent a lot of time with my clients helping them figure out their rights and responsibilities during a pandemic.

So, in the interest of time, not going to give sort of general context or background. As you know, we have Federal law, the ADA, that requires employers to grant reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities. The Federal authorities in charge of administering the ADA have, from the start of COVID, recognized that certain underlying conditions that make individuals particularly vulnerable to the effects of COVID are disabilities for purposes of the ADA. Those Federal authorities, including the EOC, have also long stated the ADA requires a "flexible, cooperative, interactive process for employers and employees to discuss disabilities." And they've reiterated this in the context of COVID.

They also, the same authority, the EOC, has stated that even essential workers are entitled to reasonable accommodation for a disability. And the CDC, although not a binding legal authority, has indicated in its explicit guidance for universities, that remote teaching is a reasonable accommodation.

So, we are functioning in an atmosphere in which the university, the administration, has declared in-person teaching to be an essential function. Now, putting aside whether or not we agree that it is, I would think all of us agree that in-person teaching in masks is not the same as what we remember of in-person teaching in the good old days, but putting that aside, the university's position here is hypocritical, because the university has stated publicly, as a defendant in litigation, that it does not now and never has promised that education will be in person. So, the university is on record as a defendant stating that remote education is an equal substitute.

So, there's some justifying of policy now which is the exact opposite of what they had previously stated. So, with all this context, as you know, the university has backtracked from the first announced policy on August 11th, there would be no accommodations whatsoever, which seemed both contrary to law and inhumane, I think, to many of us. After backtracking, though, the university has said that deans and department heads have discretion to grant accommodations.

And as Kathleen alluded to, I think all of us share a lot of concerns about what that process looks like. Deans and department heads have all sorts of responsibilities, and I don't envy them their jobs, but many of them don't -- are not trained to make these accommodation decisions. We don't know with whom they are consulting, what experts have been made available to them, what uniform policies and principles they are operating on, if there are any uniform policies and principles. And so, it's very concerning to us to think that individuals who may need a disability accommodation lack the resources and the support that the university is required to provide by law, and as a humane measure to the community that it says it respects, should be providing in any event. So.

EVE DE ROSA: So, Celia [indiscernible].

CELIA: [indiscernible].

EVE DE ROSA: Okay, to wrap up.

CELIA: Yep. Yeah, no I missed out there.

EVE DE ROSA: Okay. Okay. And don't forget to take down your electronic hand. Okay, Risa?

RISA LIEBERWITZ: Thanks very much. I'm going to follow up on some of the points that have already been made, and then add some details on some of them. And I think that many faculty and staff, and I'm sure students as well, have been shocked by the rather rigid, ongoing approach since August 11th from the administration. And the lack of humanity and care and respect that's been shown to people's needs from the central administration. And the -- as Celia was saying, the lack of clarity even about, you know, what the deans' discretion would be with that change.

But what I want to focus on in particular is about the governance piece, which really should be viewed as, I think, very much an overarching question about how to deal -- how to create university policy, and how we should also create policies at the college and school levels. I want to mention that Cornell Chapter of the AAUP, of which I'm the president, sent a letter to President Pollack addressing all of these issues of the minimum legal requirements that Celia was talking about, the ethical obligations that both Kathleen and Celia were talking about with regard to the need for real responsiveness to health and health needs of families, individuals and their families.

And we also called on the administration in our letter to engage in good faithful and open consultation with the Faculty Senate and with other governance bodies. This is the way to avoid the problems that we're in right now.

Before I go on, I want to state that I hope that the Dean of Faculty will post our Cornell Chapter of the AAUP letter to the president on the Dean of Faculty website. I know many people have seen it, but I'd love it for everybody to be able to see it.

So, let me talk about, you know, how could we have avoided being in this situation right now? Well, one way to avoid it would have been for the Cornell administration to, early on, consult with the Faculty Senate, and with the other governance bodies that represent students and staff members. And this is not an empty exercise. This would mean respecting the expertise, and I'm just going to talk about the faculty here, expertise of the faculty; the experience of the faculty; the needs of the faculty, and their families; the scientific knowledge of the faculty; the knowledge of labor and employment law, that's my area of expertise; and we have lots of people on campus who can talk about that; ethical considerations. All of these should've been part of faculty participation in creating good policy for the university.

Instead, the Faculty Senate was not consulted, and what we have are rigid policies that are not responsive in either an ethical or a legal manner to the needs of the faculty, the students, and the staff on this campus. And this can be corrected. Fortunately, this can be corrected.

What the -- what we call on in our AAUP letter is for the university administration to consult immediately with the Faculty Senate and the other governance bodies, and to move from this rigid response that we're getting, to one which actually addresses the needs of all of us and has real participation, rather than an a priori kind of statement about university policy and simply a repetition that everything is working well. Everything is not working well.

EVE DE ROSA: So, Risa.

RISA LIEBERWITZ: So, I thank you and I appreciate everybody's comments to come.



EVE DE ROSA: And maybe what we can do, if maybe you could share the AAUP letter in the chat. Seems like it's actually not set up just to go to the four of us. And so, just feel free to upload it. And Denise. Oh, sorry, Desiree.

RISA LIEBERWITZ: Can I just state, it's quite a long letter. And so, I'm not quite sure where you want me to upload it. We don't have simply a link to it.

EVE DE ROSA: Oh, you don't have a link for it? Okay.

RISA LIEBERWITZ: But I think we can [indiscernible].

EVE DE ROSA: Okay. So then, we will share it. Okay. Desiree?

DESIREE: Thanks. I align myself with everything that Risa just said. As a member of the AAUP, I appreciated their efforts and pulling that letter together in such short time. My comments are just really brief. I know that this is more for awareness sharing. I know that one of the protections in place for faculty was supposedly that we would receive SDS letters the moment that a student in our class was, you know, declared ill by -- with COVID.

A student of mine volunteered that since she took my class and greeted me at the podium and spoke with me for some while, after the fact she was diagnosed positive with COVID. She's let me know that SDS apparently is bogged down, and cannot keep up with these notifications.

I'm seeing nodding of heads, so I'm assuming I'm not the only person who's experienced this. So, one of the things I'm saying to my students in my class is please don't just rely on SDS to inform faculty and other colleagues. Please do it, you know, on your own initiative. My unvaccinated three-year-old at home really appreciates the heads up so that I can get supplemental testing. The system is not working that I think our administration thinks it is. And so, I think that we should just be aware of that. Thank you.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Desiree. Risa, was that your new hand, or an old hand?

RISA LIEBERWITZ: I just put it down.

EVE DE ROSA: Oh, okay. Anyone else who wants to contribute? I mean, this is an opportunity for you to speak directly to the provost and his team in preparation for tomorrow's town hall. So, are there other issues that you would like them to consult? I know that you had the opportunity to upload questions yesterday, but this is yet another opportunity for those of you who didn't take advantage of that. Well.

KATHLEEN LONG: Well, if I can jump in and just say to Desiree, I am so sorry to hear that, and we need a contact tracing system. None of us are aware -- maybe somebody in this group is aware of how the contact tracing is working, but it needs to be transparent, we need to know how this system works, and there needs to be an actual system in place. They need to hire contact tracers. I think that's another piece that's missing from the safety measures this year. If they do have contact tracers, they don't have enough.

And honestly, when I heard that SDS was responsible for notifying faculty of students who had tested positive, I was horrified because at the beginning of August, when I was asking about making my materials accessible for a Disability Studies class, they already said they were overwhelmed just creating basic accommodations for students with disabilities. That was before they were responsible for notifying faculty of students who tested positive. So, this is not the solution. It is not working.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Kathleen. Ella?

ELLA: Hi. Hi, everyone. Thank you. I wasn't going to speak. I appreciate everything that's been said. But I don't necessarily have the sort of the professional or the clinical language for what I have to say, but I have three points I'd like to express, and hopefully it will reach the powers that be's ears.

I've really been a little concerned about the framing of where the positive rates have come from. We discussed this in my class with students, and this idea of illegal partying, this sort of blaming students for the mass outbreak. And it sort of does position the students -- it's a growing thing that's happening. I've spoken with colleagues who are younger than I that look at different social media outlets, and the students are talking amongst themselves, and there is a growing resentment towards the masking policies, et cetera. And I would hate for this to turn into a situation where it seems like adults versus kids. And I'm not trying to be condescending to our students who are all certainly adults.

And then, in talking with students, that seems to be what's happening. And so, breaking that wall down and understanding that there are -- the majority of students are deeply concerned and deeply invested in our safety as well as their own, that they come from multigenerational households. I don't know about anyone else, but what has fallen out of this conversation really since the beginning of the semester, and I would argue even last year, is there are many of us walking around who have been traumatized by the pandemic, that have lost family members, that have students who have lost family members, that are suffering right now.

And so, this idea that it's unfounded or not professional or irrational of me to be afraid, personally, I don't want to get infected at all. And the messaging that's been coming out from the provost around not that sick or, you know, that the infection is not that bad if you're fully vaccinated, I find that deeply troubling that that's the line that I am supposed to accept.

Now, I understand that a lot of work was done, and I was the first to applaud all of the efforts for last year and get on board and do my part, but I will say that I don't understand why all of the protections were rolled back within the first couple of weeks of this semester. It seems to me that leaving those vetted and well-done protections in place would've been probably the smarter way to start off this semester.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [indiscernible].

ELLA: It's interesting to me, as well, that --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [indiscernible].

ELLA: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm getting some feedback. I apologize. It's interesting to me that we do now have access to a pile of PPE, but it seems to me that would've just been smarter to have made that accessible to all of our departments and our staff before the semester started. The rules that were in place were working. Why roll them back at the beginning of this semester? So, those are sort of my points. I'm not very comfortable with the messaging as don't worry, you won't get that sick. The sort of blaming this on the student body. And that it seems to be the faculty and the staff that are the only ones concerned about their safety. I think that we're sort of going down the wrong road. Thank you.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Ella. Tara?

TARA: Thank you. And thank you, everyone, for the points you've shared. I think this is a really important conversation. One thing that I'm particularly -- I mean, I share many of the concerns that you've all shared so far, and I -- you know, I have -- I'm the chair of the math department. We have -- I have a number of colleagues who have reported students who have tested positive -- or who have self-reported to the faculty member that they have tested positive.

We have no guidance about whether to share that information with the class, and in a classroom of 250 students, there is no way they're doing contact tracing. Seats are not assigned. And, you know, on Friday, when the students went to their first day of class, who did you sit next to? Oh, the guy with yellow hair and the -- I mean, there's just -- there is no way to do contact tracing. So, it's frustrating that the university just decided there would be no problem, and therefore they needed no plans.

I would like some transparency from the university. Those of you who think that chairs somehow -- I mean, I forgot who suggested -- I think Celia said that it's problematic to rely on chairs to be doling out accommodations as appropriate when we have no such training. We also have no -- we have no more information than any of the faculty. It was news -- it was the same news to us as it was to the rest of the faculty when we moved to Code Yellow. We haven't had any opportunity for live Q&A with any administrators in the last few weeks.

Finally, I've noticed there is a discrepancy between the testing data and the positivity data being reported by Cornell and being reported by the county. And I would like to hear -- I would like to hear what the procedures are there just, you know, just for transparency's sake. When Cornell is reporting a certain amount of testing and the county is reporting much lower testing, and the positives can't line up in any sensible way, I'd just like to have -- to hear an explanation of how that's working, and whether we're also relying on the county for the contact tracing, or whether Cornell's playing any role.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Tara. Ella and Tara, if you could put your hands down, that would be helpful. Chloe?

CHLOE: Yeah, hi. Thanks for holding this event, and to everyone for the comments that have already been voiced. Just a small ask, in addition to the many more substantial ones. I have honestly found the previous town halls and email communications to be quite dystopian. And I would like to request that the provost post anonymously the questions received by faculty in full, including those left unanswered. Thank you.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Chloe. Risa, do you mind if we go -- okay, thank you. Darlene? You're muted, Darlene.

DARLENE: Sorry. I'm sorry. I was teaching, so I came in late, and I apologize if what I'm saying has already been said. Yeah, I'm also concerned, and I share the concerns of everyone who's spoken. But

I really have, at this point, no confidence in the administration. And it's not simply the protocols that were just, you know, given us without any consultation, but also the messaging, which I have found really disturbing and disrespectful. It's as if our concerns don't mean anything, that if we are told that students aren't getting that sick, that's somehow going to make us feel better, those of us who go home to vulnerable families. It doesn't speak to that at all.

Letters aren't answered. We've asked for the science to be made more transparent. We don't have idea if the modeling was done prior to this rampant Delta variant, and the science changes daily. So, to say that we're relying on the science doesn't inspire really any confidence at all.

And the provost's messaging just keeps saying the same thing over and over, as if we are not concerned or as if we shouldn't be concerned. So, my confidence in both the handling and the messaging is like all-time low. So.

And I also want to talk about our graduate students, and someone else may have already done that, but they're teaching in cramped, elbow to elbow seminar rooms. Many of them teach first year writing seminars. And they cannot distance at all. And many of them have small children at home. And just to say that oh, the undergraduates who are sick aren't that sick, doesn't speak to any of these concerns.

So, yeah. I'd like to see the science made more transparent, and our issues to actually be taken seriously. Thank you.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Darlene. David?

DAVID: Hi. Sorry about the noise in the background, and my apologies for arriving late. And so, I apologize if this has already been covered. It is on the point of graduate students and graduate instruction. So, right now, you have a faculty -- the guidance from the university is that if a faculty test

positive, they should look for other solutions before moving online. And those solutions include having a colleague fill in or a TA fill in. And I have to say that well, it's going to be difficult to find colleagues to fill in for some of the specialized courses that we teach. It is very inappropriate to ask a TA to fill in, in a context in which the faculty cannot be there themselves to supervise this responsibility.

It also seems to be sort of closing the barn door quite a bit late. Right now, you can sort of move to online, or the guidance seems to be that you can move online after faculty has tested positive, and these other options aren't available, rather than, for instance, if, as we have in our -- at least one case I know, a third of the class has -- almost a third of the class has come forward and told the faculty member that they've tested positive. And the faculty member in question is themselves vulnerable, given their household situation. But they don't have the flexibility to go online, to make that choice themselves.

So first, just on the graduate instructor, I think it's wholly inappropriate to be requiring graduate students, or asking graduate students, to fill in for faculty when they cannot be there, and the lack of discretion in moving online temporarily when you have known issues in your classroom, seems to be a deep oversight. Thank you.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, David. Neema?

NEEMA KUDVA: This is just a request to everybody. Thank you for bringing your concerns, and I was hoping -- I know this is a privacy concern, but I was hoping that those of you who are actually in conversation with the Medical Leaves Office to get accommodations, you know, your experience with that. You don't have to talk about it publicly here in this meeting, but if you could let us know how that's going. Just like when somebody else spoke up about the problem with SDS, right, that many of us are facing. If you could let us know about your experiences with the MLA, that would be useful, I think, to the Dean of Faculty Office as well. So, just a request. Thank you.

EVE DE ROSA: That's an excellent reminder. Thank you, Neema. Maria?

MARIA: Yes. I came a few minutes late, and I appreciate everything that has been said. I share the same concerns. I have a question, and a comment, about why is it that they allegedly rolled back the HVAC system protections for classrooms? I would like transparency about what kinds of protections are offered exactly in the classrooms we teach, because we have the right to know. We are exposing our lives in those classrooms.

And I also would like to echo something I just recently heard, and I think it was from David, about graduate students. Some of them are teaching in crowded classrooms, but so are we. I have a classroom in which there isn't -- students are literally shoulder to shoulder, touching each other's bodies, and I would like to know, really, if the CDC is recommending six feet of distance, or you know, or some kind of distance between people now that the Delta variant is rampant. What are the assumptions of the administration that it's acceptable to be shoulder to shoulder in a classroom?

And that the last thing I would like to bring up is that I've noticed the removal of things that are basic like hand sanitizer from entire buildings. So, there is, for example, one or two in an entire building. Why are they rolling back even those basic protections?

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Maria. Ken?

KEN BIRMAN: Yeah. Ken Birman, Computer Science. In Computer Science, we have some very large classes, similar to what Maria was just actually asking about. My class a little later today, for example, has 200 students. It'll be completely full. Every seat taken. So, of course the students are shoulder to shoulder and right in front of -- now, I would say mask compliance has been quite good.

The kind of questions that arise in my department are these face shields, for example. It seems that the students find, in large rooms, find it hard to understand the faculty if they can't see their faces



and their lips moving. So, in the spring, in hybrid, everyone who taught some in-person students would use these face masks, shields, and no mask. And that was considered acceptable. This fall, we were urged to continue to accommodate the students, and that's one of the student preferences. I reached out to Lisa Nishii, and she was very helpful, and she actually specifically said that the administration felt that we should continue doing this if we were comfortable. So, I felt that they were responsive. But it did strike me that having to reach out to Lisa directly to ask that question was sort of surprising. I would've -- you know, there are a lot of large classes.

So, what I would urge the provost would be to set up some form of panel for kind of interactive Q/A where we could post these questions, like on Slack for example, where we could just pose these questions and get prompt answers, without having to go all the way up to Lisa or to the provost to get an answer for a relative -- now, I'm faced still with the question of whether in fact I am comfortable using one of these plastic face shields and taking my mask off while I lecture. They're not comfortable. You're broiling hot under this stupid thing. And now there's this other question that Maria asked fairly accurately, is it in fact safe to do? And I have no idea. So.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Ken. Kathleen, you've had your hand up for a while, and I know Risa, you had your hand up before as well.

KATHLEEN LONG: Well, I just want to say quickly, I would've put what I wanted to say in the chat, but apparently, I can't put it in the chat. So, I apologize for that. Just with the grad students, to add one point with that, if the grad students take over a faculty's class, they could end up being over time and that's in violation of the rules of the graduate school. They could be working more than 20 hours a week. And in fact, that's almost inevitable.

With the medical leaves, this is not a solution for faculty with disabilities. I know a faculty with a disability who needs a specific accommodation. She was told to take a medical leave. She said I am not

ill. I have a disability. The other thing about medical leaves is different -- it's different for different -- people with different status. So, and I know of a number of cases among lecturers, and other non-tenure line faculty, where they've been told to take an unpaid leave. Period.

For tenure line faculty, it is a partially paid leave, and that has not been made transparent. And at first, what has been proposed to faculty is you're teaching -- you're not teaching any of your courses, so we'll give you like a quarter or a half of your salary. So, this is something that people have to take into consideration because a medical leave can be a significant financial hardship. Thanks.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Kathleen. Risa, did you want to contribute?

RISA LIEBERWITZ: Yes. Thank you. Yeah, I so appreciate hearing all of the comments, and I think that these are all great examples, great not in a good way, but excellent examples of the many issues that could've been addressed had the Cornell administration done what they are obliged to do. Right? The governance issues are not a choice of the administration. They've chosen not to comply with their obligation. But they are obligated to consult with the Senate about matters of educational policy and about issues of general concern, general policy, and they did not.

Had they done it, we could have brought all of these questions and all of these issues, all this experience, all the expertise and science and ethics and health and safety that we have on this campus, I mean, it's just shocking to me. Not only that, there should be an ongoing process of consultation because that's the nature of what we're engaged in is the science is changing, and we don't have a moment frozen in time.

I want to recommend one thing that could be done in terms of data. Clearly, the administration is selecting data as it wishes to select to put out there, and many people have pointed that out. One piece, one area where it would be very, very useful, and I think the Dean of Faculty could do this if the provost won't, and maybe the Dean of Faculty should do this even if the provost will, which is to survey

the full faculty to say we don't have a -- any data on this. What is the -- what are individual's positions on -- what are their preferences in terms of teaching? Are they willing to and able to teach in person, if there are safety and health measures taken to make the environment safe and healthy? As people have said.

How many people, even if we don't have those conditions, would still need to be engaged in remote teaching for the various reasons that people have talked about? We don't know that information. And I'm -- and I think that would be very useful because had we that information, and could then move forward on it to respond to people's needs, we would then also de-densify, the way that Kathleen was talking about, the classrooms, and actually improve the situation. But that's data that we don't have.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Risa. Celia, I see that you have your hand up, and Maria, is this an old hand or a new hand? I'm going to assume Maria has an old hand, so go for it, Celia.

CELIA: Great, thanks. And I'm happy to defer, also. I don't see anybody else in the queue yet who hasn't yet spoken. But I'll speak quick. If in the spirit of conveying information and views to the provost, I'd just like to chime in, I really agree with the suggestion that we should see questions that are submitted for town halls, even those that are unanswered.

Just to follow up with some of the general points that have been raised about questions about classroom conditions, under what circumstances contact tracing is being done in classrooms, et cetera, I think what really, for me, makes this an acute concern is the fact that the administration has cited two main justifications for peeling back some of the COVID protections from last year. One is the vaccination status of the population, and the other is that last year showed no evidence of classroom transmission. But I don't think we can compare -- it's apples to oranges comparing this year's classrooms to last year's.

And this year's classrooms are packed. There's no sanitization between class sessions. As we've said, there's some concerns that air filtration is inferior to the protections that were put in place last year.

So, I would like to hear from the administration why they are confident that last year's model of no classroom transmission holds true, when we are facing, quite honestly, a more virulent variation of the virus.

And then secondly, the administration -- I heard a journalist yesterday saying that some people are serial monogamists with one form of protection against COVID, whereas we need to -- we need to be polygamists, right? We need to be embracing all forms of protection. And the CDC has said universities can't just be relying on masking. We need masking, social distancing, air filtration, testing. We have a couple of those, not perfect. We don't have others.

Given the numbers, of the number of breakthrough infections that are being seen nationally, locally, within our county, and within Cornell, I would like to understand to what extent, when the university says it's relying on science and on vaccination rates, to what extent they are taking into account this recent data.

Tara raised the fact that there are discrepancies between the county data and the Cornell data, which is absolutely the case every day, but if you look at the county data, I would just say 36% of the total number of COVID positive tests in the last week were among fully vaccinated people. Many of those would be asymptomatic, but not all. And of course, a lot of us, if we are asymptomatic, we're carrying it home to our kids or our vulnerable family members.

And the county also announced that of 32 hospitalizations at the medical center from July 1st to mid-August, 13 of those were in fully vaccinated individuals. So, here we're not talking about cases, we're talking about actual hospitalizations.

Finally, that same week of -- this past week, 22% of positive tests in our county were in individuals not eligible for the vaccine, which is obviously, again, overwhelmingly those children under 12 who don't have access to the vaccine, even if our -- we, the parents, want it for them. So, this is just to underline why, you know, we as a faculty, certainly I personally, and I believe many of you, would just like more information from the administration about what measures they have put in place and what they are relying on in protecting us. Thanks.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Celia. David, I saw that you were back in the queue, and now you're out of the queue. Just want to make sure that you have opportunity to add to the conversation.

DAVID: Yeah. So, thank you. I guess I was going to make a very small point. One, I just wanted to second the calls for more -- for all of the questions that were posted, even the ones that are unaddressed, to be posted so that it's clear what the conversation is, and what the conversation that's selectively being responded to is. And just on that note, and maybe this is just me, I was surprised when -- like some people were posting in the chat, and I was surprised when I was turned off, and I found the chat to be very useful. And so, you know, if it was just me, or is [indiscernible] that's one thing. But I do think that the basic pattern of the administration not fully responding to faculty concerns, and not really providing opportunity for faculty to air their concerns in such a way that is open and transparent, is a sort of recurring theme over the last several weeks. Thank you.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, David. Cynthia?

CYNTHIA: Yeah. I'm wondering what the Faculty Senate is going to do about these concerns.

EVE DE ROSA: So, I am meeting with the UFC today, and we're considering convening a special Senate meeting. Drew?

DREW: Thank you. And thank you for hosting this. It's been very interesting. I agree with a lot of the feelings, you know, in my other interactions when they used to have the, you know, roster team. You know, I always felt like, you know, the way things are communicated could be better. Our communication with professors. So, like, you know, how we feel also, you know, matters. You know, there's the physical and then there's the emotional, and there's small things you can do to make a big difference on that.

One thing just on this notion of, how do we convey our voice? I strongly like the idea of a survey or something where everyone is represented, not just the most vocal. I think that if it works -- it's a cutting edge -- double edged sword. I study sort of social media, so I know kind of what it looks like when you select oh, these are the questions that were not answered and, like, that gives power to people who ask the kind of most -- it's not just the 20 questions that were answered. Some will catch your eye and it focuses attention. It's not representative of voices. And that also would allow, if you're concerned about, you know, being dismissed, it allows that to be dismissed. Because you can say well, that's just one question. Right?

So, something that really represents our voice in total. I'm -- I only know from my colleagues how they feel, how I feel. Those of you I know personally. I don't really have a sense of how everyone feels. And so, it would be useful to know that to kind of calibrate, I think.

And the other point that I strongly endorse is just transparency in process. This SDS thing, you know, just knowing, knowing that SDS is delayed is helpful. Not to have a student tell you that. Like it shouldn't -- basically, like, I don't think it's right that we would learn any of this stuff from the students. That doesn't seem -- like why are they the ones telling us? Administration should tell us. Tell us that SDS is delayed. Tell us what the process is. Tell us what it means when a student tells us and there is no SDS

letter. Was that a lie? Well, it's not, but I wouldn't know. Right? So, like, what's the process going to be?  
Thank you very much.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you so much, Drew. And I think it was Risa, Kathleen.

RISA LIEBERWITZ: On the survey piece, if that's to be done, not going to come as a surprise to anybody what I'm going say, this should be done with faculty governance involved, not the administration asking the questions in a way that makes it impossible for us to actually respond. I am not an expert in how to do surveys, but I do know about the kinds of things I'd like to know. But we do have experts on this.

EVE DE ROSA: Agreed. Kathleen?

KATHLEEN LONG: So, this is partly out of your purview, but if surveys are done, I would like to see that not only the faculty be surveyed, but all instructional staff because there are people in classrooms who are not counted as faculty. All graduate TAs who are in the classroom, because they are teaching in some of the worst conditions. And I would like to also see the staff be surveyed. And it should be by their own governing bodies. I agree with Risa on that.

EVE DE ROSA: And we can reach out to the other assemblies. So, we -- we're -- we have 10 more minutes. Jane? You're muted.

JANE: Thanks for doing this. Sorry about that. Thanks for doing this, Eve, by the way. It really means a lot. I just have two questions. I think the first is, are there any metrics of cases by which the university would consider moving online? And would they -- for a temporary period, or permanent period of time. And would they ever be willing to specify that? Or are we in a situation where cases are just going to climb increasingly, and we are just to put up with it essentially?

And then second thing is, I've always been uncomfortable, and I don't know if other people share this or not, so I'm open to feedback, with this idea that the only way to move to teaching remotely is for one's own personal disability status. And there are a number of things that make me uncomfortable with that, and Celia and Risa and a few others have articulated them. But is there any metric in which our communities and our connections could play a role in petitions to teach online? Because if any of us brings home COVID that we take in the classroom to medically vulnerable loved ones, that is a horrible predicament for us to be placed in at the expense of our jobs. And it's not the agreement we made when we step forward to teach.

So, I guess all I can say is that I really thought Cornell was better than this. I've always been so proud to be a faculty member here, and it's been really disheartening to see how the last few weeks have been unfolding for faculty. So.

EVE DE ROSA: Appreciate that contribution, Jane. Risa, you can keep going.

RISA LIEBERWITZ: Yeah. Well, I'd like to respond, because I think Jane is absolutely right to raise this in the specific way you have. I think we've alluded to it in the discussion. But, you know, as people have discussed, Cornell is not meeting its minimum legal obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act and New York state law. But that should not be the target here. Of course, the university should meet its minimum legal obligations, but I think what Jane is raising is a matter of ethics. That there are ethical obligations that the university has to all of us. And those ethical obligations are ones that should not be sliced and diced in ways that just meet some kind of small piece that's shrouded in secrecy. Ethics require transparency. The people are talking about. Ethics requires the reciprocal relationship where we're putting ourselves out, and have, to make this university work well, and we are not receiving that in return. And I think the specific aspect that Jane is raising is part of that.



What are people's needs? They are not defined simply by a legal definition of disability. They are defined more broadly, and that's where the participation and the more democratic process would enable us to reach for that ethical standard.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Risa. Ernesto.

ERNESTO: Hi, thank you. And thank you all for the very useful questions and comments. I have a question that it's related to something Celia mentioned. I think she mentioned percentages of breakthrough cases, right? And so, my question is that we have been sort of asked to trust a model, a model that for sure is very, very complicated, and very well developed, but I have not heard in the invitations to trust the model references to breakthrough cases, to effectiveness, to the inclusion in the model, time since vaccination and how that affects the effectiveness of the vaccine. Right? I would like to hear some information on that. Right?

Is it -- should it -- is the model incorporating that? What does it mean that I was vaccinated four months ago? What does it mean that some people were vaccinated almost eight months ago? Right? What does it -- what does that do to the -- to what the model -- to the model results, right? Because if -- I would like transparency in the sense of seeing if once this time since vaccination is incorporated, the model stops looking so bright and positive. Thank you.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Ernesto. Cynthia?

CYNTHIA: Yeah. We get constantly told that this is just a sort of a blip, these numbers and all, and it's mostly frats and jocks, and we do all of this adaptive testing, and then we turn up more numbers because we do that. So, we're punished for our own carefulness. And in fact, I -- in my first week, the law school's taught for a week, I already had someone in class, certainly not a frat, certainly not a jock, far from it, and other people are having the same experience. And if we -- how about the university just go remote for 10 days to 2 weeks? And if it's a problem like that, or a blip, it should all go away. Right?

And then we could all come back when we see it's safe to do so.

I think, as Jane spoke so eloquently, that the university doesn't realize that it's in a real serious crisis right now, that its faculty have lost trust in it, that they don't trust the reports they're being given, they don't really trust that the modeling has taken into account long COVID or children or -- and that that's a very bad situation.

One of Cornell's, you know, best points has been this kind of belief in the institution and in its, you know, caring for all members of the community. And we just get these bland oh, we care about you all. You know? These bland repeated statements that go on to say, but we know best, and we don't need to do the things that you think need to be done. And it's being really destructive of the atmosphere here, and I think they need to hear that. It doesn't seem to be getting through in a way that's meaningful.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Cynthia. This is the point of this forum, to give voice to things that people have been writing, and expressing, but I'm hoping that by listening to this, that tomorrow a lot of these concerns have been brought forward, and the personal experiences of faculty will be addressed. And I guess we are coming together on an hour, so I'm very, very appreciative. If there's one last comment, Maria, please?

MARIA: Yes. I have a question, and I hope that it doesn't sound, you know, threatening or anything of the sort. But I am really mystified. What would happen if given the current rates of infection, God forbid, a number of people were going to get sick, you know, get sick and get hospitalized, result with long COVID, some die, what kind -- I mean, are we supposed to just say this was just the pandemic and so what, when it's actually totally preventable? Or is the university planning to take some kind of responsibility? That's my question.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, Maria. And so, what we will do is share all of these to -- both the recording and the chat with the provost team, and then I think Neema has one last thought.

NEEMA KUDVA: Yeah. I just wanted to read out something, Eve, that Kathleen sent to me, which was that the time of the [indiscernible] vaccination also affects the most vulnerable people more significantly than others. And I think it's an acknowledgement of what has already been said by Ernesto and others. Because you know, those of us who received the vaccine first were often the most vulnerable. So, this is something important, and of course, it's nine months ago now. So, that was something that Kathleen wanted to post, and I wanted to just make sure. Something's going on with my computer, so I couldn't do that.

Eve, if I could mention one other thing.

EVE DE ROSA: Of course.

NEEMA KUDVA: You know, we thank you for coming here and letting -- you know, and sharing the concerns and information, and we will do everything that Eve said, but I was hoping also that each one of us, because things are now decentralized across the university, that each one of us would also be reaching out to our deans. I know for many of us, you know, we are under one college, but we're teaching in another. I live in yet a third place on campus, along with 15 or 20 other of my faculty colleagues. And so, we come under many different heads, and this decentralized policy that is being implemented right now means that we're having to engage with many different units.

So, if -- you know, so for all of us, I think, coming here, sharing our concerns with the Dean of Faculty who, of course, represents faculty voice, faculty interests, but also moving our concerns into your dean's office is important. So, you know, as many avenues as we can reach people would be good, and I thank AAUP for bringing that letter together, and for Kathleen and everyone else who also put that letter together from the faculty. So, thank you for that.

EVE DE ROSA: And we will post both of those things on the Dean of Faculty website. And thank you all, and hopefully we'll have sort of informed tomorrow's town hall. Have a good afternoon and stay safe.

KATHLEEN LONG: Thank you so much.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

NEEMA KUDVA: Thank you, everyone.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you, guys, for attending.

[technical difficulties].

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- are going to remove chat, and maybe I'd be supportive of it, but right now, I'm actually not supportive of removing it.

EVE DE ROSA: So, my intention is to recreate the in-person experience as much as possible, and in-person, I would assume that most people are not chatting while somebody's speaking on the floor.

So, I really wanted people to attend to what's being said and not to have back-channel conversations, and be distracted from -- I mean, the idea is that we're a community, and that when somebody's speaking on the floor, we really want people to be taking it in. And so, that is my intention. And these, everything that's shared here will be public. So, people will see if there were resources that people wanted to share, and we will make those resources available. And so, that's the intention behind it.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. I think I'll stick with my disagreement with that. But you're in charge, so I'll be supportive of you.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: We have a tradition, I think, of ending these meetings on time. So, 30 seconds for Peter, and then I'm going to cut you off at 5.

PETER: Why wasn't this meeting in person?

EVE DE ROSA: Timing only. I really wanted to be responsive. And so, after the listening session actually, and the day of the listening session, we created this. And so, we just didn't have -- we still actually -- we've been asking this since July 1st for a location for our Senate meetings, and we still do not have one because the registrar is doing all space assignments for the entire university. So, on the 22nd, we still hopefully -- we don't have a physical location yet. So, in order to be responsive, we have to make it all online.

My hope is that we're not going to have to do this for much longer.

JONATHAN OCHSHORN: Okay. Out of respect for everyone's time, I move to adjourn this meeting. Thank you.

EVE DE ROSA: Thank you.