



# Cornell University Faculty Committee on Program Review

**CHARGE TO THE EXTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF  
[Name of Department]  
at CORNELL UNIVERSITY, [Date of Site Visit]  
from [Name of Dean], [Title of Dean]**

Committee Members:

The review team is charged with evaluating the department *per se*, but also the department's relationships with the other disciplines and constituencies to whom its subject matter is of critical concern. The scope of the review is broad, encompassing the undergraduate and graduate programs, the quality of life in the department and of efforts to facilitate its members' progress toward tenure, promotion, and distinction in research and scholarship. With that in mind, the following list suggests pertinent topics to address and questions the review team should endeavor to answer.

## 1. FACULTY

Comment on the:

- department's goals and priorities;
- size of the tenure-track faculty compared with national norms, and considering the presence of faculty in related departments;
- departments' diversity in gender and ethnicity of faculty compared with that at peer institutions; and
- department's evolving strategies for peer evaluation of teaching for mentoring junior faculty.

## 2. RESEARCH

- Review, and evaluate relative to peers, the department's research programs.
- What will be the most important research areas during the next decade or two?
- In what areas is Cornell best positioned to make significant contributions?
- In what areas is Cornell seriously deficient?

## 3. UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

- Assess the undergraduate curriculum with respect to:
  - the projected needs of the profession;
  - prospects for our students' employment; and
  - the need for instruction in these subjects by the students from other parts of the university.
- What strengths, weaknesses, problems, and opportunities for improvement do you perceive?
- Are the intended learning outcomes described by the department well-served by the structure of the curriculum and the requirements for majors, minors and graduates? Can you suggest improvements in the way student learning is assessed in courses at critical points in the undergraduate experience?
- Are the departmental resources allocated in a way to provide a strong curriculum?
  - How large would you expect the major to be, given the size of the faculty?
  - Is the curriculum for majors coherent and well-articulated from the introductory through the advanced levels? How does it stand up by comparison to the norms in high quality

program around the country, including the breadth of curricular offerings and the size of our courses?

- Is the use of lecturers well-conceived and managed?
- Is the use of graduate teaching assistants well-conceived and managed?
- Comment on the relationship between faculty size and teaching loads in this department.
  - What is the teaching load at other (e.g., your) departments – overall, including courses and the number of graduate students per faculty member.

#### **4. GRADUATE EDUCATION**

- Comment on the graduate program, including characteristics of the current pool of prospective graduate students and the time to degree among students in the graduate field at Cornell.
- Are there well-articulated, desired learning outcomes for students in the graduate program? Are there mechanisms in place to assess how well these are achieved?
- Are our graduate students receiving adequate mentoring in developing both teaching and research abilities?
- Are there distinguishing features of our graduate program that give it an identity we should try to sustain?
- Comment on the number of graduate students in the field and the quality of financial support provided.
- How do our students compare qualitatively with students in the better graduate programs at peer institutions?
- What lessons should we draw from what the graduate students say about their experiences in the Cornell program?
- What do the jobs obtained by graduates tell us about the strengths, weaknesses, needs and potential of the Cornell program?
- Comment on the size of the faculty in relation to the graduate program.

#### **5. POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS**

- Comment on how common it is at your departments and at peer institutions to host one or more postdoctoral fellows, how they are funded, what arrangements are made to advance their preparation for future careers, and what success they have in placements.

#### **6. COMPARISON WITH PEERS**

- Where, in the committee's judgment, does the department now stand in relation to competing programs in peer institutions?
- Was the information from Academic Analytics summarized in the self-study helpful in forming this judgment?
- Are there specific steps the department can take to enhance its standing *vis à vis* its peers (assuming limited new resources)?

#### **7. SPACE / FACILITIES**

- Comment on the adequacy of space and facilities.

#### **8. CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND PROGRAMS AT CORNELL**

- Comment on the contributions of the department and of individual faculty to neighboring fields of teaching and research at Cornell. Are there areas in which collaborative efforts should be pursued more aggressively?