MINUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY FACULTY FORUM ON SOCIAL SCIENCES

February 7, 2000, 4:30 P.M.

Walter Cohen, Dean of the Graduate School: "It's about time, so I think I'm going to start. I'm going to moderate today. Phyllis Moen and David Easley are the co-chairs of the task force and I asked them to make some brief opening statements. After that, the plan is to open up for discussion, reserving the right for myself to launch into a passionate speech if I feel it is necessary or appropriate."

Professor Phyllis Moen, Human Development: "Thanks a lot for showing up and showing your interest in the Social Sciences at Cornell. I just wanted to tell you briefly what David's and my charge was on co-chairing this committee. We were asked by Ron Ehrenberg and Don Randel to address these issues: 1) What are the cutting edge areas of research, especially interdisciplinary research, in which Cornell must have strength if it is to be at the forefront of social science research in the years ahead? So, cutting edge areas and interdisciplinary were two key themes that were raised by the powers that be. 2) What research infrastructure is required for us to be at the forefront of social science research? So, the idea of social science infrastructure.

"We sought information from the Cornell community by giving a survey, inviting various faculty to come in to talk with us, and we sought social science information from the social science community at-large, outside of Cornell. We met weekly through the Fall of 1998 and more erratically in the Spring of 1999. But we met for almost a year.

"I want to give you a sense of the operating principles that people, both inside and outside of Cornell, told us that we should key in on. One was to support interdisciplinary work. Everyone that we talked with, the NSF, other social scientists, said that the focus of social science research in the future is going to be on interdisciplinary work. At the same time, we were mindful that we have to support core disciplines and that interdisciplinary work has to strengthen core disciplines or it can't be useful. Also, we are aware of the problems that young Ph.Ds with interdisciplinary fields face because they don't fit in anywhere. So we're very sensitive to that. The second was to support policy relevant and problem relevant research, especially given Cornell's unique mission as both a land-grant university and a private university. We really have this opportunity to do basic research that addresses societal issues. The third was to build the growth areas, looking to the future and not to the past, not where were we strong, but where can we be strong. The fourth was to build on and strengthen and to know that we cannot be good at everything. So therefore, an intelligent investment structure would be on problems of growing importance."

David Easley, Henry Scarborough Professor of Social Sciences: "I'm the other co-chair for the task force and I'll just make a few remarks about what we found, what we decided, and a couple of things that are on the way. The first thing that we decided on was that one of the highest priorities had to be attracting high quality faculty. It makes sense to talk about areas to focus on, but everything is going to depend on the faculty. The second thing that we decided was that we did agree that interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research was the way to go and the three areas that we have picked all focus on this kind of research. The final thing that we decided was that we really didn't want to build on strengths that we already had; we wanted to repair the damage. That meant that there were some areas that we thought might be very interesting but where Cornell had no apparent strength, so we didn't put them down on our list of potential areas. We see this as a beginning of the process, not necessarily the end. The three areas that we put down are areas that we think are promising, but others may have merged. They are not set in stone.

"The three areas are listed in the Task Force Report, so I'm not going to go into any detail, but I will give you what the areas are. The first was 'Social adaptation and decision research'; the second was 'Life course transitions and social policy'; and the third was 'Wealth, Poverty, and International Development.' So, the first thing we did was to identify those areas. The second thing that we did was to look at infrastructure that we thought would be important to make us create research in those areas and in social sciences in general. All of the ideas are listed in the report, but I will mention a couple. One idea that we argued for was that the University should support CISER and should include it in future funding, and that has already been done to a large extent. The second thing we argued for was the establishment of a Social Science Coordinating Committee -- the idea that a committee of senior social scientists, run out of a Vice Provost's office, would coordinate activities in the social sciences across the campus. The committee is supposed to work in coordination in terms of hiring and retention, but also to keep social science at the forefront of the administration's attention. So it's a group that is supposed to be arguing for resources, presenting interesting ideas, getting interesting ideas from the faculty and going forward to the administration. We think that's an important activity. Next, we argued that we should really have an 'innovative grants program,' which is an internal funding mechanism for
research grants and funding at Cornell. The social sciences at Cornell have not been successful, in general, at raising outside money. We feel we need to do something to change that. This is one of those things that can be done relatively inexpensively. There are a number of other areas that we mention, but those are the three that may be the most problematic in terms of an infrastructure.

"Now, I want to mention some things that are already underway or are under serious consideration. First, because of this report and some of the Trustees and the Arts College Advisory Council, we have been offered some money to establish something that is very tentatively called the 'Society for Social Sciences.' I'm not sure if that's the right name; it is reminiscent of the Society for the Humanities and the idea is something like that. That is, an organization that would provide internal funding for specific projects in social sciences. The second thing is that there are discussions underway about a study group in what might be called 'Trans-disciplinary Research' -- that is, looking at interactions between social scientists and others on the Cornell campus. Our report focused mostly on the Social Sciences because we took that to be our charge, but there are interesting things to be thought of when looking at the relationship between the Social Sciences and the Humanities or the Social Sciences and the Natural Sciences or Social Sciences and Law. There are many ways to study those possible interactions."

Dean Cohen: "Okay, this is the part where we open the floor for general discussion and as part of the process, please give your name before you speak because we are creating a transcript. Second, the format I intend to follow is to start off with a general discussion of the report and then move to specific items. I know that I can't hold those hermetically sealed, but at a certain point I'm going to ask people to focus in on particular elements of the report if we already haven't done so. I was pleased with the way Bob Cooke framed the meeting so that we discuss the preliminary administrative response to the report, which you all received a copy of. I hope that it will provide something of a focus. I have to say that I reread the entire report yesterday, which it took me most of the day, and it's a fairly long document to assimilate. Anyway, I will open the floor for general comments. Ron?"

Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Irving M. Ives Professor of ILR and Economics: "I have privately thanked the Social Sciences Task Force, but I would like to publicly thank them for the work that they have put into this. They have been a tremendous support and I appreciate all of their efforts."

Dean Cohen: "Do we have the wrong format here?" (Laughter).

Associate Professor Abby Cohn, Chair, Linguistics: "Bob Cooke was just clarifying something for me. I was confused by what was being referred to as the preliminary administrative response. I understood that to be something different than what had been posted, something additional. But it is the document that was posted?"

Dean Cohen: "Yes it is. Just by way of clarification, that response was generally favorable. I suppose if I were writing it now, I would make it slightly more favorable than I did then without radically changing the meaning."

Professor Moen: "Well, for those who haven't read the response, could you briefly summarize it?"

Dean Cohen: "All right. Basically, when I read the report there were nine recommendations. I've split them up differently than the Task Force did, but basically, there were nine. The first was about CISER, as David said, and in the Spring of 1999 some efforts were made to accommodate those concerns and to try to find a more stable relationship for CISER. That is not essentially useful to discuss at this point. Then there is the small grants program, which refers to inspiring faculty to go after external funding. The Social Science Coordinating Committee is one that could be a fairly important matter to discuss because the more significant a matter is, the more controversial. That is to say that if it has an influence, it will be controversial. I would like it to have some influence and I would be glad to explain why if people care to know. The three areas that were selected are all things that are favorable in the preliminary response. The question of interdisciplinary collaboration -- and I am including increased support for graduate education -- had no response because I forgot to bring it up in my discussions. In fact, it doesn't involve controversial issues and strikes me as one of the least controversial findings of the report. What I would add to that is that at the graduate level, probably the most substantive thing that has happened so far is rather than use indirect cost recovery, I have done something different in my capacity as Dean of the Graduate School to provide tuition fellowships and research assistantships for an amazing number of social science graduate students. The difference between the two is that I can do one and I can't do the other."

Associate Professor John Bishop, ILR: "Can you elaborate on that? What was the original proposal and what you did?"
Dean Cohen: "The proposal in the report involved various ways of returning indirect costs to units. It's not spelled out in detail. Prior to that proposal being made and in response to requests, initially from the field of Economics but no longer limited to that field, we provided increasing and now I would say open-ended amounts of tuition fellowships to faculty obtaining external grants who are in the field of Economics. Those fellowships enable faculty to support a student on a stipend on indirect costs. The difficulty there was on the statutory side and the way we've done that is with endowment money so as not to have the statutory deans being charged back for the indirect costs. I think that this is not -- though still an imperfect system -- a reasonably functional one that has made things a little easier. That was an initial Ad-Hoc response that has become more and more systematized. John Abowd spent three hours with me one morning to try to figure out how the money would actually flow in that."

Professor John Abowd, ILR: "I give you all the credit for spending a whole year getting that matrix to work."

Dean Cohen: "No one will ever know if it's correct, but it's pretty close to providing a true movement of funds in relationship to where they are actually charged. So we didn't discussion interdisciplinary collaborations in the Provost's staff, but I don't really see this as a fighting issue one way or another. Due to the amount of funds to incur it are on a relatively small scale, that looks to me to not be a big deal. There are two issues that we need to step back from but I'm willing to have people discuss. They are the notion of creating a relatively large group of postdocs and research associates to provide some support for research in targeted areas, but not limited to targeted areas; and endowed chairs. We stepped back from them mostly because of costs. Endowed chairs, at 2 to 3 million dollars a pop are not something we could say, 'Sure, we'll have ten.' Nonetheless, I'm willing to have those on the floor. I just don't want to make promises today of a financial sort that I am in no position to guarantee. So those are the issues."

Professor Richard Schuler, Economics and Civil and Environmental Engineering: "I was a member of the Task Force, so obviously I agree with its conclusions. My concerns throughout were what kinds of institutional mechanisms might we put in place to encourage and foster continuation. I find exciting the notion of something like the 'Society for Social Sciences' because one of the ingredients of fostering this kind of collaboration is simply getting people together on a regular intellectual basis. I think that the Social Sciences Task Force is another vehicle, more of an administrative vehicle of which you have identified the pluses and the minuses associated with it. The third ingredient is an ongoing, continuing source of support and encouragement so that the people who engage in this aren't viewed as high risk, but as doing the University's work. One thought that occurred to me while you were talking that might incur collaborative activity -- not only if it is salary recovery of some sort for kickback of indirect costs for people who are successful but also grants at the more formative stage -- was that in both cases there is tying in and buying into academic departments where the resources come from faculty members and students engaged in research but that there is some kind of matching for the individual department so that we can integrate their focus with the whole."

Dean Cohen: "Where would you like me to go with this? Phil?"

Professor Philip McMichael, Rural Sociology: "I want to get back to the general issue that you raised in the beginning about having a general discussion and then getting into specifics. I just wanted to make a comment that my department came up with a response to the Social Sciences Task Force Report, which we conveyed to the Provost. I imagine it's sitting on his desk right now. The guts of that were to make a couple of points. The first is that we believe that this report should not be seen as a finished product. I believe David mentioned that this is an ongoing process, and we want to emphasize that the report is just the beginning and that it's raising some very important issues that we believe the social science community at Cornell should be addressing. But we felt that, by and large, the report is rather narrow because it privileges certain methodologies over others. It loses sight of the richness that the social science community at Cornell has and can contribute to the social sciences. In particular, one of the feelings that we had was that the report in all of its thrusts tends to privilege a positive science view of science, and there's a strong dose of rational choice methodology that underpins the three areas of focus for the social science community to move towards. We feel that there are many other methodologies on campus practiced by social scientists. In particular, when you're talking about interdisciplinary research, it seems to me that it would be important to recognize that social science is quite diverse. There are other methods that ought to be taken seriously in social science and that can only be done when others of us who practice these methodologies can actually have some input. I think it's pretty well-known that two of the original members of the Task Force left at a certain stage. I don't pretend to know all of the reasons that was so, but their leaving the Task Force took out two members of the social science community who represented other methodologies. That's the sense in which we felt that the Task Force Report should be seen as a beginning and not an end. There ought to be some kind of procedure whereby further discussion of this issue should be allowed to continue. The big point is that Cornell social science should be seen as reflective, not simply of excellence within social science within the national or
international community, but also should be reflecting the specific strengths that Cornell's social scientists have. We should not be trying to make a carbon copy of other institutions that have this kind of social science setup. Thank you."

Dean Cohen: "Does anyone want to follow-up on that? Steve?"

Professor P. Steven Sangren, Anthropology: "The Anthropology Department articulated some concerns quite similar to what was just summarized. I don't want to go back and rehash those concerns; some materials were passed out at the Arts College faculty meeting as well. I guess what I would like to say is that I had time to look over the report on the Web briefly and it doesn't seem to have changed a whole lot."

Dean Cohen: "No, it hasn't changed at all since a year ago."

Professor Sangren: "Well, yes. And nothing on there seems to be objectionable, but it does seem to represent a rather narrower spectrum of what some of us might consider social science, not just methodologies but philosophical interests and orientations. What concerns me is the bureaucratic. I like the idea of a 'Society for Social Sciences' as a way of encouraging interdisciplinary dialogue but having other sorts of administrative innovations, like a Vice Provost for Social Sciences, concern me because of how they might work and also how other administrative mechanisms will affect us. If it is the case that what defines social science is social science as reflected by the kinds of things that appear as initiatives in the Task Force Report, then it seems to exclude the kind of social science that is done in the Anthropology Department. My main point, however, is that I would be concerned if the administration adopted the recommendations of the report as addressing the need to improve the social sciences at Cornell, and might deflect other ways that social sciences at Cornell might be improved. In my own discipline, which favors ethnographic methodology, we think there are lots of ways that we can improve the Anthropology Department that are very cutting edge but they would not fall nicely within this grouping. Would there be a diverging of administrative commitment and attention to the social sciences from other kinds of ways of improving the social sciences than only those that are specified, which we have no argument against but would not like to see as the only ones we use?"

Dean Cohen: "Any other comments along those lines? Abby?"

Professor Cohn: "Not only do I want to echo that, but I think one of the things that was mentioned as a response is that we need to get away from defining the social sciences and the humanities. As a field that constantly falls between the cracks, we don't count as the humanity -- that typically gets done in the Society for the Humanities -- and we certainly wouldn't count as one of the social sciences along the lines of what has been listed. And even though we actually think of ourselves in some ways as a natural sciences, no one else counts us as one of those. So I'm very concerned about that not everything in the report isn't exciting but that we have very limited resources and once we start siphoning off those resources and labeling things, I'm concerned what that means for anthropology, linguistics, and so on."

Dean Cohen: "Gary?"

Professor Gary S. Fields, ILR: "The report has said that one of the important issues is the poverty initiative and I have spent my career working on that and hope to contribute to it, but my question is, and it might be the most naïve question in the world, what are we talking about here? Are we talking about cheerleaders who are saying 'yes, let's strengthen the social sciences and we'll help you out a little bit'? Or, are we talking about major budgetary initiatives? In particular, I think that we can create some truly world-class, best-in-the-world, types of institutions within this University, but it's going to take money. A lot of people, I think, are willing to put in the time and energy to do that if we're talking about a hard money commitment of the form of creating the equivalent of a department on a smaller level whereby it's the ongoing business of the University to do this. The alternative model, and this is where I may be entirely naïve, is all about raising money and what we're really talking about is creating a bunch of soft-money institutions that will exist as long as some members of the faculty are willing to go out and raise millions of dollars. I honestly don't know what we're discussing right now and I would like to get clarification."

Dean Cohen: "Let me go back to the previous three comments before I make a feeble stab at answering your question. All of the three previous speakers know me from my academic career well enough to know that in my own intellectual area I'm closer to and have more sympathy for the kinds of social sciences that are either underrepresented or unrepresented in the report. With that as a prelude, let me say that I think Phyllis and David made repeated and serious efforts to avoid precisely the narrowness that I think with some justification you note. They were unsuccessful in doing that. By repeated efforts, I mean that they solicited faculty from, loosely speaking, the interpretive social sciences and
referred to them repeatedly to try to put together interdisciplinary proposals and similar activities like that. I think they bent over backwards to do that. They were unsuccessful in the sense that they did not get one proposal. It wasn't that they weighed some proposals against others. That simply didn't happen and it poses for me, as an academic administrator, something of a dilemma because of the things we conspire when we're sitting in Day Hall is to talk about if it's possible for us to encourage something good academically in the faculty if there are no faculty members lined up to do it. We concluded that the record of the last twenty years tells us that it's not possible. So we need, in all cases, faculty initiative. One can go over the composition and dynamics of the committee, but when I joined it in the fall, this was by no means a done deal. Other initiatives were possible and David and Phyllis went out of their way to get them, but they didn't get them. Now, that's the first point.

"The second point is that in thinking about the status of social sciences in the University, one of the ways that I understand our academic and intellectual situation is that it's rather different from what Don Randel said about the Humanities in the 1980s. He said that the reason the Humanities improved in the 1980s was because no one was paying attention to them administratively. I don't think that's a winning strategy right now in any area. I don't think benign neglect is the way you want to go. So it is of some collective importance for the social scientists on campus to achieve and retain a level of visibility administratively, at all times. Even if it doesn't mean that one particular or several particular social sciences are currently at the highest part of the screen. It is certainly not the case that there will be no other initiatives in the social sciences. It is the case that if we step back from this that we will lose what little momentum we have right now. I believe that would be bad for the social sciences at this point. It's my best guess right now, but I think that there are a number of reasons to think that at a time when there is some positive administrative attention, it's a good thing to be responsive rather than send it back to committee. I don't hear anyone saying that, but I'm trying to show an extreme position and to warn against that. How to set up a mechanism to encourage an ongoing supply of proposals is something that requires thinking and maybe the Social Sciences Committee can be constructed in such a way to do that.

"That leads me to answering Gary's question. The answer is that we have not made a decision on that and I would say that, at this point, as far as administrative thinking goes, both ideas are alive. I don't feel confident enough about how things will go to say, 'Don't worry there are millions a year' or 'Forget it, it's out of the question.' I don't have enough clout to answer that. If you think I'm being evasive or holding back, I am to some extent and you're right. John?"

Professor Bishop: "What was the administration's response to the Physical or Hard Sciences Initiative in Math that had computers and three areas in microtechnology? I think there's been a big push to raise outside money and build what Gary termed as 'hard-money' institutions. Am I correct there or is it the faculty's second option to go out and raise more money?"

Dean Cohen: "Hunter?"

President Hunter Rawlings, III: "Let me try to answer that question and support what Walter just said. We really are looking for good ideas from the faculty and, in the case of the Physical Sciences, which you rightly bring up as a good model, we have followed through with a report brought to us from a faculty committee that said that we should concentrate efforts on three areas -- not to the exclusion of all other areas. But we should, nonetheless, try to give special attention and investment to three areas, namely Advanced Material Science, Genomics -- which is a new idea that bubbled from over fifty faculty members from all over the University in different colleges -- and Computing and Information Sciences. We have now said publicly that we will support all three areas and the first two, Advanced Material Sciences and Genomics, are areas where we're now putting a lot of institutional effort into bringing in new funding. This effort is not only in Day Hall. It means that Deans like Phil Lewis and John Hopcroft get busy and support the initiatives just as we do. We also go out to the State of New York, as in the case of Genomics. We go to the federal government and also to our alumni and friends to try to raise funds in these areas. I would say that those are often very good starts. In the area of Computing and Information Sciences, there's been a big campus debate over what should be done and, in fact, the Faculty Senate will be taking it up on Wednesday of this week. Nevertheless, there is a clear institutional desire to invest in that area as well and to taken advantage of some very good faculty ideas. So I would like to support what Walter said in that we really are seriously interested in what comes from the faculty but we're not going to support things that have no faculty support. Because that's a clear losing proposition. So I applaud the efforts of the Task Force in general and I applaud the suggestions being made here today that there are other possible areas that are worthy of support, but we need to have those in some kind of crystallized form if we're going to eventually support them in some fashion. So I don't think it's a matter of hard money or soft money. I think it's a matter of both in the long run where we get behind an idea that has sufficient faculty interest. We get behind them in very different ways and the
deans join in the effort. Overall I think it can produce quite a lot."

Dean Cohen: "Shelley?"

Associate Professor Shelley Feldman, Rural Sociology: "I'm really appreciative of the comments by Steve, Abby, and Phil but it's interesting that it represents three departments. While I'm sympathetic to Phyllis' talk about interdisciplinarity, at the same time we have separate departments. It strikes me that despite the efforts that you make to try to contact people that somehow these three departments perhaps didn't get as included in some way. My concern is, to follow up on what Walter said, the extent to which these three core areas, which are all important, don't eclipse other areas. On the one hand, we can talk about the methodological and epistemological concerns that cut across the areas and that's relatively easy to do. We can make them more robust in the ways in which they are articulated so that people will feel more likely to be embraced by them and respond to them in terms of small grants, reading groups, and so on. I think that it's very important to reformulate those in ways that are more open. I also think that substantive areas that have not been embraced by those fields and core areas would be revealed. My next concern is how do we move ahead following this so we don't stop the process but at the same time slow down enough so that the final book is not closed yet. There are two ways to be open: one is to say 'let's table this and go back to the drawing board,' and I hear Walter that it's not an appropriate mechanism and I think I agree. But how do we keep it open enough so that it doesn't become somehow the icon against which we all have to respond and therefore add to it as opposed to rethink some of these? My first question regards the epistemic kinds of methodological concerns across the three and the easy solution would be to make those more robust and not seem as narrow. The second regards how to keep up with the substantive areas so that we move ahead but at the same time don't close the door while keeping up the conversation in which those three are the best three to build the synergies across the campus, particularly since you said many bridges can be built with the social sciences. It seems to me, and I speak from a fairly narrow perspective I suppose, that critical legal theory and post-modern, post-colonial studies in the Humanities are the most robust fields in which sociology has been engaging and those things are precluded by both the substantive and the methodological traditions that were laid out in the report. That is my narrow view, but it suggests to me that there may be other fields like anthropology and linguistics, that are similarly very robust that would benefit from a different kind of discussion than merely a response to the report. How do we keep it open enough so that it really can be embraced fully and how do we open up the other areas to address some of the concerns that have been expressed by members of these departments?"

Dean Cohen: "I take those questions to be open to the floor."

Professor Feldman: "Yes."

Professor Moen: "I think that the first is easier than the second, as you pointed out. It's a lot easier to take the areas and try to be more inclusive than exclusive. This really gets to the point that we really need to have an institutional mechanism so that we can continue this dialogue and continue creating opportunities to develop emerging areas on topics that are important and that we're strong at Cornell. That's the issue that I'd like all of you to address. I know I can speak for myself but I think we're done." (Laughter).

Professor Ron Herring, John S. Knight Professor of International Studies: "I was on the Task Force and I don't think it's productive to continue to fight this battle. As a member of the committee, let me reinforce what Walter said. We tried very hard, even in my department, to get people to identify research clusters, trajectories that had some synergy across departments and colleges with which we could move forward and that's the basis on which the Task Force made decisions. I don't think any of the three of those has methodological or epistemological exclusionary bases. For example, I think that the theoretical decision of the report moves far from the pure deductive logic to what I would call 'methodographic sensibility.' I think that the anthropologists should welcome that kind of initiative; it's a magnet for people who do ethnographies. The poverty section talks about why girls in Africa don't get education. There's no deductive logic there; there's no positivist assumption. The section on life course transition is indeed primarily an aggregate data analysis but I don't think there's anything in that research strategy that precludes other ways of looking at transitions across life courses. I don't think that the Task Force meant to have methodological strictures in any sense and I'm sorry that it's been interpreted that way. None of us who were sitting around that table were trying to be exclusionary. In fact, I think it was quite the opposite. We sent out many e-mails asking people to propose alternatives."

Dean Cohen: "I can answer one issue that you raised, Steve, and I want to make sure it doesn't get swept under the rug. If we do these things, does that mean we are going to exclude other things? It seems to me that the answer is if you imagine a zero-sum intellectual financial game, clearly one has to conclude 'yes' because if you favor one thing then
other things have to suffer by comparison. My view is that tacitly most faculty and maybe administration as well at this University carry around a zero-sum model in their minds, but I believe it to be false or at least possibly false. In the metaphor that I try to imagine the University working with is if the sea rises, so do all of the ships. That requires an act of faith, I grant you. I know that as I look at the faculty here, your implicit unquestioned faith in the wisdom of the University administration, you would never imagine challenging. Nonetheless, I think it's important to try to imagine the social sciences from that point of view. That is, that if we can develop some visibility, some momentum, some commitment there, that it will make things possible rather than pushing things away. If I can be more clear about it I would say that insofar as the social sciences slipped from the University-wide screen, what will happen without intent is that resources for the social sciences will be gobbled up on the margin by other areas. It won't be a conscious strategy, but I think it will just happen because if you don't bring anything out, you lose out along the edges. So my hope is that whatever we do in the social sciences will be energizing for the social sciences and for the University as a whole. I can't promise that in any way, but I think it's a thought to take seriously rather than be in the 'winners-vs.-losers' mode. As far as trying to develop some of the areas a little further, in rereading this, the social adaptation group talks about developing connections with cognitive studies, but this is a work that clearly has not been completed. People from the international group who have met with me have had discussions with me about both the difficulty and the necessity of the disciplinary and methodological base of that and I believe there is good will in that group to try to achieve that. However, it's not something that's going to happen automatically and one of the challenges here is that most of the faculty are not comfortable working in large groups. They want to work on their own. I'm hoping that we can work on this."

Professor McMichael: "Let me see if I can match your metaphor. A rising tide can lift all ships but it can also swamp some. So let me just pick up on something that Ron Herring mentioned and give you an example of some of the frustration I've felt with the Social Sciences Task Force Report and its procedures. What's very interesting is that one of the core areas that's seen as one in which we should do better is this area of poverty and inequality. My department was delighted to see that at least half of our faculty were mentioned as key faculty players in that area and we thought that we were included in that respect. But we were certainly not included in the respect that Ron talked about where he went back to the members of his department and asked them for input because we have no members from our department on the Task Force in the first place. Since we are from a specialized area sociology unit on campus, an area that grew up in sociology, it seemed to me pretty obvious that we ought to have some representation because development studies is one of Cornell's enduring strengths and it seems to me that we ought to have a sociologist who understands the range of development and methodologies of sociology and its substantive issues. When Ron was going back to the Government Department, and asking them for input and specific ideas to put into the Social Sciences Task Force Report, I was writing e-mail memos to people like Ron Ehrenberg and the Provost asking for representation from sociology in our college, and I was met with a blank wall. Effectively, I had no channel like Ron had to put some voice into the process. I'm not here trying to descend into a tit-for-tat kind of situation, but I want to make the point that voices and representation are very important issues. We are delighted to be involved in this and our faculty was pleased with the initiative but we would just like to see it open."

Professor David Brown, Rural Sociology: "I think this whole issue that Professor Fields brought up about what institutions there will be on campus to build these bridges is critical and Phil's comments just now underline this as well. But you can't have a representative of every theoretical paradigm, every methodological position, and possibly not of all the departments that consider themselves part of the social sciences. I guess the point that I would like to make is that if this coordinating committee for the social sciences is going to have any legitimacy with the faculty, you're going to have to give serious thought to how representatives are chosen. Otherwise, there are going to be too many people who feel locked out. At the same time, I think it's critically important that we have this committee because at the present time, the social sciences don't have, at least to my knowledge, a direct line to the upper level administration of the University. That's one point I'd like to make. The other point is how do we build institutions within these areas? I would just like to compliment Phyllis Moen because the Bronfenbrenner Life Course Institute is a model that we ought to look to because it joins people who have a basic interest in a substantive area and she forgets all about the colleges or disciplines you come from. Money is available for graduate students, wherever they are. Grants are available for the best proposals and the speakers are of interest to a wide range of disciplines. If we're serious about building an infrastructure that supports multidisciplinary research on these subject matter areas and on other ones, the inclusive institute is a way to go about it."

Dean Cohen: "There were some other hands before and I didn't get to them. Abby?"

Professor Cohn: "This might fall under the category of a more specific question, but in terms of the three strategic initiatives, I had a question for the committee about the deliberations. In the preliminary report, one of the possible
strategic areas was cognitive studies but it wasn't highlighted in the final report. I would just be interested to know what led to that evolution."

Professor Easley: "We decided not to pick cognitive studies as one of the areas, but we did feel it was included in the social adaptation section. So, we didn't totally ignore it, we had deliberations about it, but it wasn't one of the final choices, although it's an important part of the social adaptation section. Cognitive studies is a broad area so we weren't sure how it would fit."

Dean Cohen: "Steve?"

Professor Sangren: "This is just a brief remark to address why you didn't get proposals from the more interpretive social sciences. We discussed this in my department and I'm guessing that something similar may have been at play elsewhere. I think that the reason one wouldn't get proposals from Anthropology was because it was in the implicit ground rules of what kinds of proposals were being called for. They were to be interdisciplinary and collaborative. Our interpretation was that you were looking for groups of faculty from a number of different departments. Well, anthropology's main methodology is ethnography, which works best when one person does it. I consider the discipline intellectually to be intrinsically interdisciplinary; it's both a social science and a human study field. People are interested in all kinds of collaborative relations with other disciplines; that's why we can muster up enthusiasm for something on the order of collaborative discussion that might take place in something like a Society for Social Sciences across the campus. But to put together a proposal for you to pursue is not something that anthropologists are generally predisposed to do given the opportunity with the work involved and so on. I just wanted to register that point. It's important."

Dean Cohen: "Like I said earlier to Shelley today on the phone that given the chance, the number of proposals coming from the humanists would have been zero. (Laughter). Ron?"

Professor Ehrenberg: "A lot of this discussion really breaks my heart because what's happening here is what's happening on the national level in the social sciences. There's a lot of stabbing each other in the back as opposed to sort of getting together and working on things that have meaning or great interest. When you think about all the different social sciences research institutes that have been set up to represent the different departments and faculty of social sciences, the notion that a department should feel slighted because they're not represented on the committee seems ludicrous. There are more people who are slighted than there are included. I was in Day Hall when the Genomics Initiatives came forth. If you look at natural scientists, they don't sit around and say, 'How do we get a piece of the money?' They say, 'What are the interesting intellectual problems and what types of people do we need here to address these problems?' And then they go and marshal support. Nobody at the University level told Steve Tanksley that he should start a genomics initiative. He got a group of faculty members together, they started speaking to deans, and convinced them that what they were doing was of interest to the colleges. They started thinking of what kinds of external funds they would get and what types of temporary money they would need in loans from the administration, when permanent positions would come on line that they could count on, and before you knew it this was happening. Somehow, in social sciences, we don't understand that this is what we should be doing. We shouldn't be saying that we want so many endowed positions freely funded; we should say, 'these are the types of people that we need and these are the areas we need them in,' and go in and make the case. We would be much more successful in that type of situation. And just to echo what Hunter and Walter have said, there's this law in the history of economics that says 'supply creates its own demand' and has been proven patently false, but it actually works that way in terms of University financing. The supply of good ideas is very effective in generating external and internal money. So rather than argue about the three things that are already down there, you should say, 'Our blessings to you for getting your act together; we're now going to go and get our acts together.' You've identified four departments that are not happy because they were excluded and you see a commonality of interests that you have, then you should pull a group of people together and get an idea going and eventually it will bubble up."

Professor Richard Baer, Natural Resources: "I put a memo on the Web last October and linked it to the Social Sciences that had to do with diversity. I had one faculty member respond. I actually sent it out last October to the President, the Provost, the Dean, and some chairs, and never got one of them to acknowledge that they had received it. I'm not a social scientist, but I think that there's a lot of evidence that has never been addressed that some of the departments, such as Human Development, are abusing the public trust. It has become so ideological and so lacking in diversity. I have had students in that department come to me over the years because they knew I was interested in these issues that told me some of what's happening in some of their large, introductory courses. You may recall Newt Gingrich was put on trial for abusing 401C funds, but that's penny ante and strict amateurship compared with what Cornell is doing in a
department like HD. We are abusing the public trust by simply indoctrinating students in a whole range of controversial social issues and all of the efforts that have been made so far to encourage the college to deliberately look for more diversity have been rebuffed. When we tried this six years ago when a group of students came to me, we were really quite astounded after we met four or five times to discuss it that the deans and the chairs even refused to meet with us to talk about it. It was not until President Rhodes called the dean and said that it might be a good idea that they even would agree to talk with us about this kind of issue. I think Cornell has become extraordinarily hypocritical in its talk about diversity because there are a whole range of respectable, important points of view that have to do with conservative secular perspective, traditional religious perspectives that have to do with the family and marriage, which simply are excluded from the curriculum. There is massive censorship by omission and I have seen very little effort to address this question. I would welcome some responses and I would gladly debate any of you, publicly, because I think that what is happening in some of the departments is not worthy of a University that considers itself a non-sectarian institution. It is more ideology in some cases than science, and there are students that I talk with frequently who feel very put down and alienated by the fact that their beliefs and values are either ignored, caricatured, or ridiculed in some of these departments. We have amassed a good deal of evidence over the years establishing this. Students put dozens and hundreds of hours into working on this individual faculty who has refused to even discuss with them what they had found, even after we had made clear that we had no interest in censorship or questioning anyone's academic freedom. I challenge faculty in those departments to stop being so damned hypocritical about what's happening and publicly debate some of these issues. This is an abuse of the public trust to indoctrinate students in the way that it is happening in departments like that. I think Cornell ought to be ashamed of what is happening. At least those issues ought to be addressed and when the students and some of us have put a lot of time working on it, not even to have the courtesy of an acknowledgement of having received these memos on the part of administrators and key faculty really makes some of us feel bad. I would hope that as the part of the future of considering the roles of social sciences we would address some of these questions of social justice and fairness and remember the fact that some of our social sciences are being paid for by tax monies. Thomas Jefferson had some nice things to say about being forced to underwrite the spread of opinions with which he fundamentally disagreed and Cornell should, I think, pay some attention to that.

Dean Cohen: "Let me respond to that personally and administratively. Personally first, I got the memo a few days ago &mdash; not several months ago &mdash; and I spent a lot of time thinking about it and for those of you who didn't, that was a rough summary. The way I thought about it was that I thought back to my experiences as an undergraduate with very different beliefs than yours. Nonetheless, sharing with you a sense that the ideas that I took seriously were not being taken seriously in the university. At that level, if not at the substantive level, I have some sympathy for the position you're articulating. Now, that and 90 cents will get you on the subway, I understand. Administratively, I tried to think about your concerns and there is a guarantee that we don't do anything about it in the report. On the other hand, that isn't a way of rejecting any administrative considerations of those concerns. One of the things that we've been batting around this year in Day Hall and also in the Arts College is the question of ethics, which I think underlies much of what you're doing. I recognize your position that this is not simply a question of professional ethicists, it is more related to that and more easily adaptable for me to do something with it. So my intention is to bring it up with those administrators and faculty members most concerned with that issue right now and try to get it on their agenda. That's what I have to offer right now and it may not be totally satisfactory."

Professor Baer: "No, I appreciate that very, very much. They're serious questions and if I shared some of the stories of what students have told me about their dismay and their feelings of alienation, I think it will get us thinking about some of these issues."

Margaret Rossiter, Marie Underhill Noll Professor of History of Science: "Some people like the idea of a 'Society for Social Sciences,' so what would it take to get one? These people need a place where they can get up and perform. So what will it take? Does it need a building? Does it need five million? Ten million? Do you need the money before you get the talent? Maybe the Russell Sage Foundation or other foundations would be interested in the great talent we have here in the social sciences and give us a chance to do our thing."

Dean Cohen: "I guess all I'm willing to say about that at the moment is that it's something that I, and not I alone, have been thinking about. I know I'm not in a position to make any promises about that, but I do think that the numbers 5 and 10 million are too low. So let me put it this way: It's not something we can do with the back of our hand. If that looks like the most powerful way to advance the social sciences, you need to understand that it's going to be a major commitment on the part of the University. I don't know whether we can do it. If we do it, it's a big ticket item and there would have to be some reasonably optimistic bet for a big ticket item that we would get something big in response. It's discussible."
Professor Rossiter: "It's attainable?"

Dean Cohen: "It's definitely attainable."

Professor Rossiter: "We have a lot of talent that can handle it and we could all work together."

Dean Cohen: "I want to make sure people who haven't spoken get a chance."

Professor Douglas Heckathorn, Sociology: "When I read the report, I was struck not by the narrowness, but by the breadth of the three areas that were chosen because they essentially correspond to social action, social structure, and social process which encompasses everything the social sciences do. I thought that within those three general areas, the committee did a reasonably find job of trying to find the areas that were vigorous. In any discipline, areas that were vigorous at one time may not be as vigorous ten years later. I think they've done a reasonable job given the three general areas that they chose pretty much encompass the social sciences. I think it would be useful to think in terms of minor additions to each of the three areas rather than trying to think in terms of new possible issues and delaying everything for a year or more."

Erik Thorbecke, H. Edward Babcock Professor of Economics and Food Economics: "Over the years a number of us have worked very hard to attract resources, faculty members, and graduate students and we feel that at this time we've reach a level of competence which makes the poverty initiative a really strong initiative. My thought was that even if the administration were to decide not to provide additional resources, there's a very good chance that this initiative will take off on it's own. What would be very helpful, and what has been relatively helpful, is a signal on the part of the Social Science Task Force and perhaps on the part of the administration that they feel that this is a strong initiative and an initiative that they are willing to support if not financially at least in terms of helping some of us to find the necessary funding to make it a goal. The point I'm trying to make is that even if today we leave this meeting without knowing quite where we're going, I think some of us will continue to work on this initiative and we're hoping that we at least get some signal on the part of the administration to go ahead and that they support us in name if not in resources."

Richard Burkhauser, S.G. Blanding Professor of Policy Analysis and Management: "I am a relative newcomer here -- I've only been here 18 months &emdash; and I don't claim to understand what's going on. I see this proposal as a first step in a process that essentially puts more resources in the hands of social sciences and so I applaud it. I believe in some sense that this agenda is sufficiently broad that it can be woven into whatever it is that people with good ideas have and can link to it. That's why I applaud it. I made the leap out of an Economics Department and into a multidisciplinary department and what I truly liked about this report is that multidisciplinary research is valued, highly valued, and may even be central. Since I've been here, I have had the opportunity to collaborate both across disciplines and across colleges and I see this initiative as emphasizing that as something that should be done if the idea is big enough. In response to this initiative, I have worked with John Abowd in CISER and some folks in ILR to, in fact, put a proposal on the table to the Social Security Administration to create a Center on Disability, which will have both empirical analysis in it and qualitative analysis in it. So I don't see this as exclusive in any sense. I see this as an opportunity for those people who have ideas to get on the board and to have Hunter listen to us. He's here, let him listen to our ideas."

Dean Cohen: "We have ten minutes left and I want to give a couple of people who haven't had the chance to speak some time and then I want to take the last few minutes and sort of build a structure, ask a couple of specific questions and figure out what I have to take away from this."

Peter Katzenstein, W.S. Carpenter, Jr. Professor of International Studies: "I'm still puzzling over Ron's remarks which basically said 'Come on get with the program.' Sometimes he said 'we' and sometimes he said 'you' and Ron was shifting in his remarks. I think what is most distinctive between the social sciences and the natural sciences is that in the social sciences, the foundational assumptions are always on the table. What differs is who carries the burden of proof in a particular setting or particular argument. Inciting social sciences will always improve carrying the burden of proof, but never in the sense of stymieing the process. So if you add the strong rations research project, which is basically what the task force approves, you want to have people challenging the envelope in this epistemological assumption, not to start with but to make itself effective. If you have somebody doing anthropology, rural sociology, and linguistics you would want them to have strong rationales in their proof but not to undercut the enterprise. I think that is what's distinct in the social sciences and what makes it hard for administrators to act on it because you have to always pay attention to the enterprise. If we don't have it, we're not doing social science. I think the problem with me and you, Ron, is that you were
talking sometimes 'we' as a part of the social science community and 'you' when it was the other side that didn't get it done."

Dean Cohen: "Anybody who hasn't spoken and has something to say? Okay, I want to ask about Social Science Committee members. Dave Brown earlier raised the problem of how to choose them and there are some issues I want to bring up -- criteria and membership, who does the choosing, and what the committee is going to do. The first criterion for membership, I would say, is strong social scientists maybe with a little bit of membership outside of the social sciences like a humanist, a biologist, and possibly a physical scientist. Obviously we want a majority to be in the social sciences.

"Second is, how do we choose a committee like this? We have a method that we've been using for the past few years, and I'm not saying it's perfect or that it doesn't cause problems, but the mechanism is there, in that the Provost chooses half and the Faculty Senate chooses the other half. That's how we've done possibly all of the committees in the past few years. If that's a bad method, then it's important to tell me that. It's the default method.

"Third, what is the committee going to do? I assume that everyone here feels the goal is to make the social sciences better. There can be enormous areas of disagreement of how to do that, but I was assuming that one thing would be both to encourage and evaluate proposals for areas of investment in the social sciences, whether they are strictly on the model of this report or things that are of different areas or character. Another thing would have to do with faculty appointments and promotions. Of course this is extraordinarily contentious because we have a traditional structure for handling that which doesn't include standing committees. We've had some movement away from the traditional structure in that the field of Economics gets to opine on tenure appointments for anyone who would be a candidate in the field of economics. I forget the phrasing, but it's something like that. I would assume that anything like this would be advisory to the relevant people like the department chair, the college dean, and the Provost, but I would like to see something like that happen for two reasons, both from personal experience. I'm in the Department of Comparative Literature and we don't search very often because it's a tiny department, but for our last search the search committee, which I happen to be on, got down to it's final 20 candidates either they were in the field of Comparative Literature or they had joint appointments in it. They represented 10 departments, 2 or 3 of them outside of literature and maybe 1 outside of the humanities. It was a reality check and I found it enormously reassuring to do that because I felt that I could make a better appointment. The second is that in reading tenure cases for six and a half years it's fair to say that it's not true that everyone we tenure is excellent. That's just the reality of it and we ought to be able to do better without spending another penny. The key to this in my own view is not tenuring but hiring, and so I would like to see an advisory mechanism set up to encourage departments to do the best they can. I am really open on this point. I have my views on it, but I really plead to all of you that if the goal is to improve the social sciences that it's important to take seriously the different possibilities that are open to us. That is a heart-felt plea. I recognize that any mechanism that we set up is subject to all kinds of abuses but I don't think that we should be satisfied with the status quo. Another point I want to make is that this is not social science specific. My colleagues in the humanities would hate me for it, but I would say that this is present in the humanities as well. Anyway, we have a couple of minutes so if you have any thoughts on this committee, give me your thoughts, or you could write to me."

Professor Schuler: "The first thought I have is that although I don't disagree with any of those functions that you've indicated, I note that they're all reactive rather than proactive and it seems to me that the committee also ought to be constituted in such a way that people who are on the cutting edge themselves might identify new opportunities and bring that to the administration. I think that ought to be an important part of the committee structure."

Dean Cohen: "Are there any particular things besides the general sense of the meeting that I need to take away with me?"

Professor Ehrenberg: "I would suggest that it would be useful for you to put down your intended focus of what the committee would look like and send it to all of the social scientists on campus to get their reactions."

Dean Cohen: "Well, since half of the committee is not chosen, I don't understand what you want me to put down."

Professor Ehrenberg: "Well, the nature of what the committee would be and what it would do."

Professor Bishop: "I'm not sure exactly what you're saying. I agree that we need to raise the quality of our hiring and our tenure decisions. I've served on FACTA for two years and it's had some deterrent effect by my judgement and I quit
after a while, but we are very reluctant to look over our colleagues' shoulders in another department. In fact, our very rules told us that we do not evaluate the work directly, we only evaluate the other stuff. So to do this at the hiring stage, where there are so many more decisions and people have so much smaller records, I don't see how outsiders can get involved in that. Maybe you have an idea of how it can be done, but from my FACTA experience, I don't see how it can be done. It would need to be with people who have expertise in the area, the way the economists are trying to do it. That's the only way. You can't have people from all over the university evaluating the evaluators in a hiring decision because you don't have a record like you do for tenure. I'm a bit concerned about having this committee do this because then it becomes a contentious matter and it takes a huge amount of time. It would take even more time to do if for hiring than for tenure, so I sort of would avoid having this committee trying to manage it. I think that needs to be done ad hoc by groups of people in similar areas."

Dean Cohen: "The last word goes to the Dean of Faculty."

J. Robert Cooke, Dean of the University Faculty: "I just wanted to let you know that as soon as the transcript is prepared, it will be put on the web and you'll be notified so that we can use this conversation to reach a larger audience. Parenthetically, I'd like to comment on John's observations about the FACTA Committee, which I share. The membership of that committee is not chosen by subject matter. It is not an ad hoc committee, so by it's very nature it could not fulfill the job that John wanted it to serve. Thank you."

Professor Moen: "I just wanted to thank the members of the committee and I'd like to thank our moderator, who attended almost every meeting and so we gave him membership as an honorary social scientist out of Day Hall."

Dean Cohen "Thank you all."

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Rasmussen, Associate Dean and Secretary of the University Faculty