ITHACA, N.Y. -- The Executive Committee of the Cornell University Board of Trustees today approved the creation of a university-owned and financed, for-profit corporation, to be known as "eCornell," for the purpose of producing, marketing and delivering nondegree educational programs developed in conjunction with the university's schools and colleges.

In a series of related actions, the Executive Committee:

- authorized the administration to take such steps as are necessary to implement the creation of eCornell;
- approved an initial capital funding allocation for eCornell of $12 million from the university's endowment for the period beginning July 1, 2000, and ending June 30, 2001; and
- elected an initial slate of members of the board of directors for eCornell, for one-year terms: Peter C. Meinig, chairman; Myra Maloney Hart; Jeffrey P. Parker; Inge T. Reichenbach; Philip M. Young; and a Cornell faculty member (to be appointed by the president/provost).

Commenting on the Executive Committee's action, Cornell President Hunter Rawlings observed: "This is a very important step for the future of the university. The creation of eCornell presents an extraordinary opportunity to extend the high-quality educational programs of Cornell to organizations and individuals far beyond the confines of our physical campus. Cornell's faculty and staff have a long and well-established record of providing first-class instruction to off-campus locations through our pathbreaking extension, executive education and continuing education programs. This initiative will permit Cornell to take this educational mission to another level."

Rawlings continued: "The board of trustees' decision today is the culmination of many months of deliberations and has benefited greatly from consultation with Cornell faculty members, particularly the University Faculty Committee of the Faculty Senate and the Provost's Advisory Committee on Distance Learning. The deans of our colleges and schools as well as many individual faculty members also offered sound advice and recommendations. The deliberations of the trustees on this subject today and yesterday involved detailed discussions in the board's Finance Committee, Distance Learning Committee, Investment Committee and Executive Committee."

Provost Biddy Martin noted that the programs to be created by eCornell will be fully subject to the academic supervision of the university and that they will produce substantial benefits for the teaching, research and service efforts throughout the entire university. She said: "The trustees' authorization of the creation of eCornell is predicated on the negotiation of an Overarching Agreement between eCornell and the university (and subsequent individual agreements for each program between eCornell and the sponsoring colleges, schools and units) that will clearly vest responsibility for the creation of course content in the hands of the Cornell faculty. The entire university will benefit not only from the revenues that will be generated by eCornell but also from the instructional techniques and materials that eCornell will develop and make available across the campus."

The board of trustees' Committee on Distance Learning will receive quarterly reports on the operations and finances of the newly formed corporation.

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