November 3, 1999

To: Members of the University Faculty

From: J. Robert Cooke

Subject: Corson Symposium, Distance Learning, and Seminar Listings

The Dale R. Corson Symposium on the Future of the Research University, December 6 and 7th.

You are invited to participate in this tribute to President Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of Physics Dale R. Corson. He also served as Provost and Dean of Engineering and, after "retirement", has led many national studies.

Guest speakers include: The Honorable Vernon J. Ehlers, Congressman of Michigan and Vice Chair of the Committee on Science; William G. Bowen, President of the Mellon Foundation and President Emeritus of Princeton University; Charlotte Kuh, Executive Director of Scientific and Engineering Personnel of the National Research Council; and

Joe B. Wyatt, Chancellor of Vanderbilt University.

Cornell Speakers include: Fred Plum, Professor Emeritus of Neuroscience, Medical College; Donald P. Greenberg, Professor of Computer Graphics; Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Professor of Labor Economics; Steven D. Tanksley, Professor of Plant Breeding; Joseph M. Ballantyne, Professor of Electrical Engineering; Donald F. Holcomb, Professor Emeritus of Physics; Frank H.T. Rhodes, President Emeritus; and Hunter R. Rawlings III, President.

Mark your calendar!


Interest in distance learning is sweeping through higher education. In this essay, I propose a conceptual framework to guide Cornell’s efforts.

The main ingredients are

1) to concentrate primarily upon Cornell’s greatest asset, the content expertise of its faculty, rather than upon the technology infrastructure,

2) to focus on "wholesale" rather than "retail" delivery of services to end-users, and

3) to commit to serving the lifelong educational needs of our alumni as a primary audience.

The proposal is available on the University Faculty website under On-Line Forums. I invite faculty comment and assistance in its refinement (http://web.cornell.edu/UniversityFaculty/index.html).

This proposal emphasizes multiple economic goals:
• generation of an alternative income stream to slow tuition growth which has become the University’s dominant revenue source, and

• creation of employment opportunities for emeritus faculty and spouses of faculty

Equally important, this proposal outlines an approach that circumvents some otherwise debilitating political obstacles to faculty acceptance of distance learning.

Seminar Listings.

All academic departments may now post their seminar notices online. To access these listings, look under "Seminars and Events" on the main menu of our website or at http://www.cornell.edu/Calendar/.