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S.A. Resolution #8

Requesting the Restoration of the Economics Department’s CPT Policy

ABSTRACT: This resolution asks for the restoration of the CPT work authorization by the Economics Department.

Sponsored by: Akhilesh Issur ‘17

Whereas, Whereas, according to the Student Assembly (SA) Charter, Article II, the SA is charged with “the authority and the responsibility to examine any matters which involve the interests or concern the welfare of the student community and to make proposals concerning those issues to the appropriate officers or decision making bodies of the University.”

Whereas, the Cornell University Economics Department has, in the past, provided independent study courses to allow its majors who are international students to obtain Curricular Practical Training (CPT) work authorization for paid summer internships; and

Whereas, the Economics Department, after 2016, will cease to allow international students to obtain CPT authorization for paid internships;

Whereas, the reasons cited for the change in the Economics Department’s policy in the extracts of the report provided by the Director of Undergraduate Studies are:

1. Abuse of the system by “inventing a course and claiming that the internship is required for it.”
2. “Little educational value in having our majors undertake these independent studies.”
3. Unfairness towards U.S. citizens who do not have the option to complete a one-credit independent study course relating to their summer internship.

Whereas, the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) clearly stipulates that CPT can be used for internships “if you receive academic credit in an independent study or course that uses the employment experience as research” in addition to “internships or other work that is required by the degree program (as defined in the course catalog)” (ISSO Website, 2016);

Whereas, many of the internships that Economics majors pursue in fields, such as banking, finance, and general business, are integrally related to the study of economics;

Whereas, the independent study courses in Economics can be a truly valuable academic experience that uses the practical training of an internship experience as research and merges it with theoretical concepts learnt in class;

Whereas, independent studies that give CPT authorization can indeed be monitored in a more proficient way by various Economics professors who are experts in their respective fields, and need not

43 be the concern of only the Director of Undergraduate Studies, and the Associate Director of
44 Undergraduate Studies as has been the case until now;

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46 **Whereas**, a longer paper than a six/seven page paper for the independent study that uses internship
47 experience as research, with clear requirements and set expectations, can be asked from Economics
48 majors;

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50 **Whereas**, careful guidance from Cornell Economics professors paired with an equally careful research
51 proposal from Cornell Economics majors before undertaking their internship to show how it would be
52 integral to the independent study, should be expected to lead to an academic project with significant
53 educational value;

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55 **Whereas**, getting credits for an independent study that uses internship experience and research as the
56 basis for an intellectual project is significantly different than getting academics credits for an internship;

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58 **Whereas**, instead of cancelling independent study courses that use internship experience as the basic
59 research for an intellectual project for international students, the Economics Department could give this
60 opportunity to all students including American citizens if they are able to show how their internship
61 experience relate fundamentally to the study of Economics, and are willing to pursue such independent
62 studies that lead to educational value;

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64 **Whereas**, the purpose of an independent study is to pursue an academic project in an original way;

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66 **Whereas**, international students are open in submitting research proposals before undertaking
67 internships to demonstrate concretely how there is a significant link between their internship experience
68 and intellectual project;

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70 **Whereas**, many universities across the US, including Columbia, Stanford and the University of Michigan
71 allow international undergraduate students majoring in Economics the possibility to obtain CPT
72 authorization for independent study courses;

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74 **Whereas**, most other majors at Cornell both in the College of Arts & Sciences and other colleges allow
75 international students to obtain CPT authorization;

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77 **Whereas**, the CPT authorization is the only practical work authorization for summer internships, as
78 Optional Practical Training (OPT) - the other work authorization possible with the F-1 student visa - is
79 virtually used in all cases for post-graduation jobs only, taking on average 3 months to be granted, and
80 costing \$380;

81 **Whereas**, international students are permitted by the Federal Government of the United States of
82 America to remain in the United States for 12 months after graduation under the Optional Practical
83 Training program (OPT) if they are able to be hired for a job related to their major;

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Whereas, even if international students are able secure OPT authorization for summer internships by surmounting its time and financial constraints and risks, the number of months that the internship lasts will be deducted from the 12 months of work allowed under OPT;

Whereas, the effect of the granting of CPT credit for jobs related to an international student's area of study is that it allows them to remain in the United States after graduation for a full 12 months instead of 12 months minus the total time they spent working during the summers under OPT;

Whereas, because US firms will not hire recent college graduates unless they can remain in the US for at least 12 months because most job contracts require at least a one year ability to work before other types of sponsorship work visas become open to international college graduates;

Whereas, summer internships are in most cases an essential requirement to get a job offer, especially in areas fundamentally related to Economics such as banking and business;

Whereas, getting a job is one of the ultimate goals of an undergraduate education, along with character development and shaping of critical skills;

Whereas, international students make up 10% of the undergraduate student body at the University and their ability to succeed as Cornellians is contingent upon their ability to obtain internships and job opportunities;

Whereas, a very significant number of international students want to be able to pursue at least an initial career in the United States;

Whereas, international students majoring in Economics, as a result of the Economics Department ceasing to offer independent studies that use internship experience as the integral basis of a research project, now necessarily face a tradeoff between:

- a) Taking a summer internship (but cannot get a summer internship without reducing 12 OPT months in the case that they are even able to get the OPT which has heavy constraints in the case of summer internships, and has virtually only be used for post-graduation jobs by Cornell international students)
- b) Getting hired after graduation (cannot get hired without internship experience or if they cannot work for at least a one year contract)
- c) Remaining an Economics major (other majors in the College of Arts & Sciences such as Government, Mathematics, and Information Science, continue to give CPT work authorization)
- d) Remaining in the College of Arts & Sciences (ILR, CALS, the Dyson School, the School of Hotel Administration and the College of Engineering all have majors related to Economics that give CPT work authorization)

125 e) Remaining at Cornell (many big research universities, private liberal arts and IVY league
126 institutions continue to give the CPT work authorization).
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128 **Whereas**, as a result, the Economics Department, the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), and Cornell
129 University will lose high-performing and ambitious international students who would have otherwise
130 majored in Economics, studied in CAS, or attended Cornell, due to the strong disincentive to be an
131 international student majoring in economics at Cornell generated by the recent change in policy;
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133 **Whereas**, it is in the best interest of the Economics Department, CAS, and Cornell University to
134 continue to attract high-performing international students; and
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136 **Whereas**, independent studies that use internship experience as the basis of a research project can be
137 very formulated and coordinated when there is appropriate faculty supervision and requests of research
138 proposals before the start of the internship to see whether there is indeed a fundamental link between
139 the internship and a worthwhile academic project relating to Economics and leading to high educational
140 value, when expectations are clearly stipulated by the Department;
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142 **Be it therefore resolved**, that the Student Assembly strongly recommends that the Economics
143 Department restore independent studies giving CPT work authorization for all Economics majors;
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145 **Be it further resolved**, that the Student Assembly strongly recommends that independent study
146 opportunities continue to be offered to all Economics majors, international and domestic students, who
147 can thoroughly demonstrate that their internships would be a valuable experience to merge intellectual
148 and practical knowledge in an academic project before being granted the ability to pursue the
149 independent study;
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151 **Be it finally resolved**, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the President of the University, the
152 Office of the University Counsel, the Dean of the Faculty, the Faculty Senate, the Dean of the College of
153 Arts and Sciences, the Chair of the College of Arts and Sciences Educational Policy Committee, the
154 Chair of the Department of Economics, and the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department
155 of Economics for their review.
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157 **Be it finally resolved**, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will hold a meeting with the
158 Economics department chair and Economics Director of Undergraduate Studies along with student
159 leaders to discuss this issue.
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161 **Respectfully Submitted,**
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175 *(Reviewed by: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 5-0-0, 9/13/16)*