

Attn: President Martha Pollack, Board of Trustees, Vice President Ryan Lombardi, and other members of the Cornell University administration

300 Day Hall

Ithaca, NY 14853

President Martha Pollack and Vice President Ryan Lombardi:

On behalf of the student body, we urge you to take a stronger stance against the issues of racism, transphobia, and misogyny in our society. Cornell is founded on the principle of “Any Person, Any Study,” and thus, we should be the forerunners in creating change. We insist that, as an institution, we recognize the faults in our own system and implement changes to systematically end the injustices that people of color face at Cornell.

In order to fully support a sense of belonging for all students on campus -- especially those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and racial injustices in the country -- we propose the following measures be reviewed prior to the Fall 2020 semester. Our demands are meant to stress the importance and lack of inclusivity, safety, and financial security for Black students on campus. These demands are to be implemented regardless of whether the Fall 2020 semester is in-person or remote given that racism knows no physical boundaries.

During this time, we would like to remind you that the issue of systemic racism is not a new problem for the university. As recently as Fall 2019, demands have been made to the administration in order to address these issues. In order to acknowledge the fact that the university has ignored previous calls for change, we have also included unmet demands from Julia Feliz (2019), the Black Students United (2017),

and the Black Students United (2015) below. The demands requested below are not unreasonable, nor are they impossible to implement. In remembering the Willard Straight Takeover of 1969, which led to the powerful creation of the student, faculty, and university assembly, as well as student representation on the Board of Trustees, we recognize the impact student action can have on the university.

1. Universal Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Learning

The efforts of the university to teach the incoming freshmen about social issues via the Intergroup Dialogue Project are not enough. The current program is not only insufficient, but also places an undue burden on individuals from marginalized groups. We demand that Cornell develop a mandatory ‘Universal Learning’ program for students, faculty, and staff. A model for this learning can be found [here](#) from our peer school, Wellesley College. Cornell is behind our peer institutions and must catch up.

2. Fire Faculty member Dave Collum and Replace Him with a Black Faculty Member

Professor Collum’s statements involving transphobia, tolerance to police brutality, and sexual assault are appalling. Professor Collum has not only voiced these opinions in the classroom setting, but also on a Twitter account that is linked to his Cornell chemistry website. As President Pollack admitted on June 5th, these statements are not in line with the university values. This behavior reflects poorly on the university and all who attend it. In a department filled primarily with white men, opinions such as Professor Collum’s often go unchecked and continue to spread. The Cornell Department of Chemistry does not have a single Black faculty member; therefore, we demand that Cornell fire Professor Collum immediately to protect students from his bigotry and replace him with a Black faculty member that will be given support from the department and university.

3. Involve Student Leaders in the Search Committees and Hiring Process for New Faculty Members

Cornell prides itself on diversity, yet falls short on the number of URM POC tenured professors. As of [Fall 2019](#), almost 75% of Cornell's professors are white, with only 8% being URM POC. Cornell should be ashamed in their lack of substantial effort in order to change these numbers. To increase the number of diverse faculty at Cornell, student leaders should be a part of the hiring process. Departments, such as SDDI, already use student leader input as a part of the hiring process in order to bring in Cornell members who will pride themselves on a diverse campus of race, thoughts and experiences.

4. Disarm/Defund CUPD

The Cornell University Police Department (CUPD) should not have guns. There is no reason students should be confronted with the possibility of lethal force on this campus, particularly students of color. Moreover, Cornell Housing and Residential Life should move away from relying on CUPD for incidents such as mental health crises, underage drinking, etc. It is an act of violence to bring armed police into the homes of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and LGBTQIA+ students.

5. Establish the Cornell University Police Department Oversight Committee

As proposed by the Student Assembly, we are demanding the establishment of the Cornell University Police Oversight Committee that will oversee the activities of CUPD and provide recommendations based upon them.

Whereas, institutions have implemented some form of a Police Oversight/Advisory Committee, including but not limited to, Brown University, University of Michigan, Villanova University, Northern Michigan

University, and etc. This committee is a way of providing increased agency and autonomy to marginalized communities and communities of color. Please refer to Resolution 50 [here](#).

6. Abolish the Student Contribution

The student contribution disproportionately affects first-generation, low-income, and URM students who must seek paid jobs during the school year and summer while their mostly affluent, white peers do not. Marginalized students do not have the luxury of accepting unpaid internships or focusing entirely on academics and extracurricular activities, which affects their competitiveness as graduate school, professional school, and job applicants. This issue is particularly pressing for the upcoming year due to the cancellation of many on-campus jobs and summer internships due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. Support Groups for Victims of Bias and Discrimination

Although the university has mechanisms to report acts of bias and discrimination, students face many microaggressions in the college environment and may not want to go through the whole process of reporting all the incidents they face. Even if incidents are reported, that does not guarantee that students will get the justice they want. Therefore, it is a minimum that Cornell provides accessible ways for students who have dealt with professor bias and discrimination to come together. Additionally, by allowing students to engage with other victims, the university can find patterns and repeat offenders among faculty, allowing for improved accountability to the Cornell community.

8. Empower Service Workers

Cornell employs many service workers, including people of marginalized identities. Just as we strive to make this university the best learning environment for students, it should also be making the best environment for staff at every level. Cornell students have been able to come together in groups to find

solidarity and enact change. However, current systems leave service workers isolated from other people who work in different departments or schedules. Cornell should encourage service workers to build solidarity, especially by making space for people of color and LGBT+ people to connect. Service workers deserve respect and the ability to protect themselves from bias and discrimination from co-workers and students.

Continued Demands from Julia Feliz, October 2019

Julia Feliz, asks for...

An Acknowledgment and Apology from Cornell University

[Julia] was 3 weeks away from completing their program and only one week from presenting their project when [Julia] was unjustly removed from the program. Therefore, [Julia] wants their certificate on science communication from Cornell University.

Required Courses/Training for All Staff and Faculty Members

Anti-racists courses should be led by African American and Indigenous people such as Catrice Jackson, who is already working on Institutional anti-racism education. Required training of staff, professors, etc by neurodivergent people to provide mandatory accommodations for people with disabilities and for neurodivergent people. (This also includes people with mental health challenges. As an explicit addition to Julia's demands, we ask for required training and continued professional development around student mental health as well.) Required training on understanding pronouns and gender identity and implementation of pronoun use and respect of trans and nonbinary people at Cornell.

Clear Reporting and Guidelines for Oppressive Behaviors

Required reporting of racist, sexist, and all other oppressive behavior by staff of staff they give a platform to. Actions must be taken when even a visiting professor or worker is abusive or oppressive. Clear guidelines as to how staff are required to deal with someone experiencing racism or any other form of abuse with timelines.

Clear guidelines as to how students, fellows, and other staff can address discrimination, bullying, and violence from other staff and students at Cornell without fear of retaliation and deportation.

Required land rights acknowledgment

Cornell and cultural training by Cayuga-Haudenosaunee people and other local Indigenous communities to staff, students, and visitors.

Julia Feliz

Continued Demands from BSU Cornell, September 2017

We demand that all employees of the university, academic and otherwise (including tenured professors), to have appropriate, ongoing training (tied to evaluations and payroll) that deals with issues of identity (such as race, class, religion, ability status, sexual/romantic orientation, gender, citizenship status, etc.). We want this coursework to be explicitly focused on systems of power and privilege in the United States and centering the voices of oppressed people.

We believe that if the university truly wants to foster an environment of inclusion for all students, we should see this support in the university's commitment to ensuring that those entrusted to guide our academic pursuits possess a meaningful understanding and sincere respect for the cultures, heritages, and backgrounds of their students. We believe this principle holds true across all areas of study, and that this objective is best achieved when educators are, in themselves, reflections of the students they serve. We believe that tenure should not pose a challenge to this commitment, given that these professors should be leaders in the Cornell community.

We demand that a Minority-Liaison at-Large position is created for the University Assembly so that the Assembly reflects our marginalized perspectives.

Whereas the student assembly has two appointed Minority Liaison at-Large positions to emulate the diverse views of Cornell's marginalized community. We want the University Assembly to add a minority liaison at-large position to make sure that we have more representation in decisions that affect our safety and ability to thrive at

Cornell. This should go into effect immediately as part of the upcoming election cycle. A Minority Liaison has proven to be effective on the Student Assembly and we would like the University Assembly to follow in this precedent.

We demand that Cornell Health hire at least two more psychologists and psychiatrists of color in the next two years. We also want Cornell Health to hire at least one more physician of color in the next four years.

We believe, and research shows, that people of color historically have reason to mistrust medical professionals.

We believe that there should be qualified psychologists and psychiatrists of color that can sufficiently address

the way that racism affects the mental and emotional health and well-being of black students at a predominately white institution. We also believe that hiring more physicians of color could make students of color more comfortable addressing their physical health while at the university.

We demand that there be a creation of a Student Honor Board or Alternative Justice Board as an alternate method for Cornell's dispute resolution process.

Currently, only faculty have the power to discipline students at Cornell. In order to increase student power, we are demanding the creation of a Student Honor Board that will oversee various judicial cases.

Students should be able to have a direct say in the punishment of their peers. Student Honor Boards allow

for the resolutions of student situations on a case by case basis that the university either does not have a mechanism to resolve or is too busy to resolve. Additionally, most honor boards use suspension, academic sanctions, and/or community service hours as a punishment, which allows the individual or party to be punished to resolve their issue without leaving the school, and more importantly force them to contribute back to their community. The creation of the Honor Board will work to restore student trust in Cornell's judicial system and ensure justice in these cases.

We demand the creation of an Anti-Racism Institute where Cornell can centralize its efforts to educate the campus and community about the horrors of white supremacy and political education.

Cornell has a variety of decentralized efforts to address racial bias on campus. Programs such as the Intergroup Dialogue Program, Engaged Cornell, the Skills for Success program, and others are important, but if Cornell is going to commit to changing campus climate they must create a centralized department or program that has the explicit purpose of fighting racism.

We demand that the university hires a position in Engaged Cornell to ensure Cornell is supporting the local black community in Ithaca. Cornell has a history of not giving enough back to the Ithaca community. Ithaca is a segregated city, and it is imperative that Cornell puts as much effort and resources into supporting the African-American population in Ithaca that began with the Underground Railroad as it puts into the white community just below our hill.

Continued Demands from BSU Cornell, November 2015

Curriculum demands:

Mandatory, ongoing coursework for students and training for university employees on the topic of racial, religious, gender, etc. identity “explicitly focused on systems of power and privilege in the United States and centering the voices of oppressed people.” Hire a scholar in pre-European contact African history. [We demand the creation of] Latinx studies, American Indian studies, Asian-American studies majors.

Compositional diversity demands

Hire more black faculty, administrators, staff; increased involvement in hiring process. Increase university contracts with women- and minority-owned businesses.

Support services demands

Space for multicultural Greek fraternities and sororities. Staff in each college career office dedicated to counseling students of color and other marginalized students; more full-time staff in diversity departments.

Symbols demands

Commemorations to the old Africana Center and Cornell students who lost their lives in the Civil Rights movement.