



# Cornell University Student Assembly

Originally Presented On	2/19/15
Type of Action	Recommendation
Status/Result	New Business

## S.A. Resolution #48

### Reaffirming the Importance of the Performing Arts at Cornell

**Sponsored by: Juliana Batista '16, Brian Murphy '16**

**Whereas**, Cornell is an “institution where any person can find instruction in any study”;

**Whereas**, President David J. Skorton has publicly expressed “the absolutely essential role of the arts and the humanities in the modern research university, a place of education, discovery, service and, very importantly, a supporter, creator, and disseminator of public culture”;

**Whereas**, the Department of Performing and Media Arts, formerly known as the Department of Theatre, Film, and Dance, is the only academic unit at Cornell where undergraduate students can study the theory and practice of theatre, dance, and film;

**Whereas**, during the 2009-2010 academic year the administration of the College of Arts and Sciences “decided to invest strategically” in the different academic departments when determining how to balance the College’s budget, and the Department of Theatre, Film, and Dance was not seen as strategically valuable;

**Whereas**, during the 2009-2010 Academic Year the administration of the College of Arts and Sciences reduced funding for the Department of Theatre, Film, and Dance by slightly more than \$1 million, directly leading to the discontinuation of the undergraduate Theatre Arts major, Film major, and Dance major;

**Whereas**, the same funding reduction also directly led to 18 F.T.E. staff positions being eliminated, most of which were teaching support specialists or non-professorial academic staff that focused on undergraduate education;

**Whereas**, the same funding reduction directly alienated hundreds of Ithaca and Tompkins County community members from engaging with the University and traveling to the Collegetown area for performances and events at the Schwartz Center;

**Whereas**, the Student Assembly recognizes that the University faced tough budgetary decisions after the 2008 recession and chose to invest strategically in academic departments;

**Whereas**, results from the funding reduction to the Department of Theatre, Film, and Dance had unintended consequences, including a negative economic impact on the Collegetown area, a negative impact on the University’s relationship with the Ithaca and

42 Tompkins County communities, and a failure to realize Ezra Cornell's intent in founding the  
43 University;

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45 **Be it therefore resolved**, that the Student Assembly call for unity among undergraduates  
46 in support of the importance of the performing arts to life on campus;

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48 **Be it further resolved**, that the Student Assembly partner with the Schwartz  
49 Ambassadors to facilitate more student initiated projects that develop a community  
50 surrounding the Schwartz Center;

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52 **Be it further resolved**, that the Student Assembly considers an investment in the  
53 Department of Performing and Media Arts and the Schwartz Center for the Performing Arts  
54 to be an investment in the Collegetown area, the relationship between Cornell and the  
55 greater Ithaca and Tompkins County communities, and the overall quality of undergraduate  
56 life;

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58 **Be it further resolved**, that the Student Assembly recommends President Skorton  
59 convene a task force charged with creating a strategic plan on how the Department of  
60 Performing & Media Arts and the Schwartz Center for the Performing Arts can strengthen  
61 the relationship between the Cornell community and the greater Ithaca community and  
62 spark economic development in the Collegetown area. Additionally, the task force should  
63 make recommendations on how to improve the quality of undergraduate education in the  
64 Department's academic disciplines.

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66 **Be it further resolved**, that this Assembly recommends that the composition of this task  
67 force consist of the following:

68 • Three undergraduate students, including two PMA majors and one non-PMA major  
69 involved in Department activities

70 • One graduate student in the Theatre Arts PhD program

71 • Two members of the PMA staff

72 • Three members of the PMA faculty, including at least one non-tenured member of  
73 the faculty

74 • A representative of the administration of the College of Arts and Sciences

75 • A representative of the Division of University Relations

76 • An elected representative of Ward 4 of the City of Ithaca Common Council

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78 **Be it further resolved**, that this Assembly recommends that President David Skorton,  
79 President-elect Elizabeth Garrett, Interim Provost Harry Katz, and The Harold Tanner Dean  
80 of the College of Arts and Sciences Gretchen Ritter reconsider the strategic and pedagogical  
81 value of the Department of Performing and Media Arts and the Schwartz Center for the  
82 Performing Arts;

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**Be it finally resolved**, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to President David Skorton, President-elect Elizabeth Garrett, Interim Provost Harry Katz, the Harold Tanner Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Gretchen Ritter, Dean of Faculty Joseph Burns, and Department of Performing and Media Arts Chairperson Amy Villarejo.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Juliana Batista '16**  
*Executive Vice President, Student Assembly*

**Brian Murphy '16**  
*President, Schwartz Ambassadors*

*(Reviewed by: Executive Committee, 2/3/15)*