

Cornell University Student Assembly



Annual Report 2014- 2015 Academic Year

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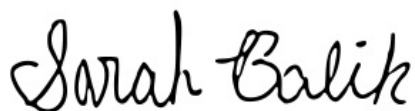
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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report summarizes the hard work that the Representatives on the SA have been able to accomplish this year. I thank them all for their time, and enthusiasm every step of the way. Our accomplishments this year would have been impossible to achieve without their diligence, dedication, and willingness to give back to the student body. I would also like to express my gratitude for the constant advice and wisdom provided by Kent Hubbell, Gina Giambattista, Amy O'Donnell, and everyone in the Office of Assemblies. Lastly, I would like to thank David Skorton and Susan Murphy for their unwavering support of the Student Assembly's mission and various initiatives, this year and every year during their tenures as members of the Cornell administration. Without their partnership and support, the Student Assembly would not be able to function. While their presence will be sorely missed next year, I am hopeful for what the future of Cornell's Shared Governance system holds. Thank you, to everyone, for showing me what leadership means and molding me into the person I am today.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. As always, feel free to reach out to me with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Sarah Balik, '15
Student Assembly President

LIST OF CURRENT STUDENT ASSEMBLY MEMBERS

Voting Members

Sarah Balik, *President*

Juliana Batista, *Executive Vice President*

Matthew Henderson, *Vice President for Internal Operations*

Matthew Stefanko, *Vice President for Finance*

Shivang Tayal, *Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion*

Lindsay Wershaw, *Vice President for Public Relations*

Yamini Bhandari, *Vice President for Outreach*

Syed Ali Khan, *Minority Liaison at Large*

Ben Bacharach, *Freshman at Large*

Blake Brown, *Undesignated at Large*

Maria Chak, *Freshman at Large*

Joseph Fridman, *Undesignated at Large*

Lauren Goldman, *Human Ecology Representative*

Emma Johnston, *Arts and Sciences Representative*

Gabriel Kaufman, *Freshman at Large*

Mark Lapointe, *Engineering Representative*

Diana Li, *Transfer at Large*

Erinn Liu, *Freshman at Large*

Lisa Liu, *Undesignated at Large*

Marc Masson, *Industrial and Labor Relations Representative*

Denzale Reese, *Minority Liaison at Large*

Justin Selig, *Engineering Representative*

Blair Sullivan, *Arts and Sciences Representative*

Philip Titcomb, *LGBTQ+ Liaison at Large*

David Vakili, *Arts and Sciences Representative*

Franklin Yang, *Hotel Administration Representative*

Alexander Zhou, *Art, Architecture and Planning Representative*

Ex-Officio Members

Kushagra Aniket, *Director of Elections*

Jordan Berger, *Parliamentarian*

Ross Gitlin & Annie O'Toole, *Student Elected Trustees*

Corey Ryan Earle, *Executive Archivist*

Matthew Battaglia & Connor McGrath, *University Assembly Liaisons*

Alassandra Olsewski, *Greek Tri-councils Liaison*

Daniel Kezerashvili, *Residential Student Congress Liaison*

Clerks

Chelsea Cheng

Brian Murphy

LIST OF COMMITTEES AND CHAIRS

Committee on Dining Services, *Laurel Moffat*

Committee on Community Life, *Emma Johnston*

Student Assembly Financial Aid Review Committee, *Franklin Yang*

Student Assembly Finance Commission, *Marissa Guiang & Spencer Nord*

Student Assembly Diversity Affairs Coalition, *Shivang Tayal*

Committee on Inclusion & Diversity Initiatives, *Maria Chak & Michelle Jeong*

Appropriations Committee, *Matthew Stefanko*

Elections Committee, *Kushagra Aniket*

Executive Committee, *Juliana Batista*

Communications Committee, *Lindsay Wershaw*

Student Assembly Infrastructure Fund Commission, *Philip Titcomb*

Ad-Hoc Quarter System Investigation Committee, *Diana Li*

Ivy Council, *Jessica Barragan & Lisa Liu*

SUMMARIES OF INITIATIVES

Please view the [Assemblies Dashboard](#) for complete versions of this year's 74 resolutions.

Campus Life

I. Dining Committee Initiatives

5 Days of 5: Over 2800 students pledged to eat five servings of fruits and vegetables a day for five days. The initiative was lead by Cornell's Dietician Michele Lefebvre as part of National Nutrition Month in March, and Cornell Dining rose to the challenge by highlighting produce of different colors every week throughout the month. Over 300 students came to judge the finalists of the fruit and vegetable recipe contest, and they chose vegan veggie brownies as the winner. After the pledge week, 64% of survey respondents said they were successful in eating all five servings each day, and 98% said they now plan to eat more fruits and vegetables. At the same time, Dining introduced a new buy-ten-get-one-free **Fruit and Veggie Punch Card** designed by sophomore Matt Engel that functions just like the current Beverage Punch Card.

Real Food Challenge (resolution not passed): The initiative resolves to have Cornell to pledge to source 20% of its food as real food by 2020, where real food is defined as either local, sustainable, humane, and/or unprocessed. The initiative is two-pronged: analyze current food sourcing to evaluate how much of Cornell's food is already real and aim to increase that amount to 20% of food purchases if the goal is not already met.

Addressing disposable packaging: A pilot program in Ivy Room increased permanent dishware and charged a fee for disposable take-out boxes and flatware. The response was mostly positive, and the increased permanent ware resulted in no increase in cleaning product use in Okenshields. The sustainability team also worked to **Kick the Cup** on campus as part of university-wide Recyclemania. They sold reusable mugs in retail units and offered \$1 brewed coffee and tea to customers with reusable mugs to try to reduce the over one million paper cups that are thrown away on campus every year. Mugs sold out in just a few days, and all sales of coffee and tea increased, especially the \$1 refills.

Other initiatives: Within Dining, a Committee member participated in Retail Selection Committee, plans were finalized for a Dining app, and offerings in vending machines were reviewed. Cornell was invited to the Best Campus Food Conference, where its classic campus recipes were very

popular. Dining also pledged to increase its produce offerings by 10%, reduce half of its protein servings by 25%, and serve whole grains at every meal in order to promote healthy eating. Over February break, unit hours were extended and the cost of all-you-care-to-eat meals was reduced. Dining halls offered themed dinners such as Little Italy and Game of Thrones at Risley, Mardi Gras and St. Patrick's Day at RPCC, and Chinese New Year at Okenshields,. Dining asked the committee for recommendations on where to target potential cuts. Bus Stop Bagels just opened in the former Trillium Express location. Finally, Dining offered \$1.50 cookies, individual pizzas, and ice cream scoops for the Sesquicentennial celebration, including a new "Sweet CORNell" ice cream made especially for the event.

II. Students Helping Students Fund

Emergency Funding: FARC funded over \$26,000 in emergency grants for students in need, including the students who were displaced by the fire in Collegetown during the Spring semester. This funding is perfectly in line with the mission and purpose of the Students Helping Students Fund.

Resolution 69: Clarifying and Expanding the Use of the Students Helping Students Fund: This resolution formalized FARC's processes for distributing these funds. This is the first time the SHS charter had been edited since 1989.

Mental Health

I. Educational Initiatives

CUnique: This was the Community Life Committee's second annual neurodiversity conference. This daylong event touched on mental health and student experiences at Cornell. It included information about how to handle stress, and students were able to have formal discussions about how mental health stigmas could be prevented within their communities on campus.

II. Mental Health in the Classroom

Resolution 8: Resources in Syllabi for Mental Health: This resolution called for faculty to begin adding additional information about mental health resources currently provided by Gannett in their course syllabi. This is optional, but some faculty members have already begun to include this information this semester. When students are struggling, they

often look for information regarding class details in their syllabus. We hope that this resolution can help students find the resources they need, when they need them most.

Safety

I. Lighting

Resolution 19: Improve Lighting and Fix Walkway on Libe Slope: This resolution called for additional lighting, and pavement improvements, to be provided on the Northwest portion of the slope. The SA has developed a close relationship with Facilities Services and CUPD's Crime Prevention Unit, and issues regarding lighting are frequently addressed directly.

II. Sexual Violence

Status of Sexual Violence Event: This event was hosted by the SA's Women's Liaison. This event brought students and administrators from communities across campus to discuss the realities of sexual assault, rape culture, domestic violence, and safety in general on our campus. About 200 students were in attendance. Mary Opperman and Mary Beth Grant were featured speakers.

Diversity and Inclusion

I. Bias

Resolution 43: Addressing Cissexism: This resolution recommended that Cornell collect more data about the LGBTQ+ statuses of applicants. It also recommended that intra-university documents and forms include gender identity options for students that are outside of the gender binary. While the effects of this policy would look different in every college, office and department, overall this would make more students feel welcome on campus.

Breaking Biases Event: Hosted by SACIDI (Student Assembly Committee on Inclusion and Diversity Initiatives), this event allowed students to discuss how bias affects Cornell's campus culture. This event was as touching as it was enlightening, and inspired students from different communities to collaborate on legislation that will be presented in the future.

Resolution 58: Know the Power of Your Words Campaign: This resolution called for the Know the Power of Your Words event to become an

annual event run by the Communications Committee. This event aims to foster respectful dialogue on campus.

II. Accessibility

[Resolution 72: Enhancing Hearing Impairment Services at the Cornell Commencement Ceremony:](#) This resolution aims to ensure that the community is made more aware of currently available services, and that there is a mechanism to provide feedback to improve these services for future years.

III. Legislation

[Resolution 73: Annual United Student Body Update:](#) Prior to creating this resolution, the sponsors spent a great deal of time analyzing and evaluating our past USB policies. The edited document will streamline processes, limit the number of groups that are required to follow USB's guidelines, and outline the use of a \$5,000 grant generously provided by Vice President Susan Murphy.

[Resolution 53: Suspend the Hiring of the S.A.D.:](#) This resolution encouraged the suspension of the hiring process for the Senior Associate Dean of Inclusion, Engagement and Community Support. The sponsors of this resolution were specifically advocating for the funds that would be used for the Senior Associate Dean's salary be put towards funding resource centers across campus. The search continued despite this resolution, and although Mary Beth Grant will be a great advocate in her new position, it is still critical that she and Dean Hubbell work with next year's Student Assembly to clarify the Student Assembly's ability to review the Dean of Students' Office budget, and to ensure that the resource centers are receiving the attention they deserve, and creative solutions for increasing funding that were alluded through throughout the process of hiring this Dean position.

Internal Policy

I. Student Input and Transparency of Initiatives

[Resolution 32: Appending the Referenda Process:](#) This resolution clarified language that already existed in the Student Assembly's governing documents that suggested that students could propose "referenda" through the Student Assembly. This resolution will allow interested students to submit questions that they would like the student body to be

polled on. These referenda, if approved by the SA, would be asked to students throughout the year via an online platform.

Resolution 38: Toward Greater Legislative Accessibility: This resolution required that representatives create short abstracts to summarize their resolutions. These abstracts are widely distributed across campus, including in the Cornell Daily Sun, to make Student Assembly agendas more clear and easy for students to follow and engage with.

II. Infrastructure Improvements

Resolution 4: Addressing the Student Activity Fee Endowment Fund: This resolution called for the Student Assembly to establish the Student Assembly Infrastructure Fund, using money that was formerly intended for an endowment that would make the Student Activity Fee self-sustaining. After determining that the fund would not be self-sufficient for over 100 years, this year's SA wanted to put the money to good use by allowing the Student Assembly Infrastructure Fund Commission to select student designed infrastructure projects to fund with up to \$75,000 per year. This year's commission has chosen to pursue projects ranging from placing nap pods in study spaces, increasing outlets in highly used areas, and adding more water bottle filling stations across campus. This resolution has allowed students to prioritize and fund services that they believe should be addressed.

III. Community Rights and Responsibilities

Community Bill of Rights (University Assembly Resolutions 9 and 10): Several members of the Student Assembly are working with the Judicial Codes Counselors to compile all existing codes and policies in one place. Every policy should be easily accessible for students and parents, as well as employees and faculty, at all times. Ideally, all of this information would be eventually compiled, along with a preamble stating clear rights that all members of the Cornell community possess on campus. This compilation of Community Rights and Responsibilities would then be distributed to all students and members of the community. These rights would not be new, but rather would be extrapolated from existing policies. Appendices to this document would be helpful to clarify more complicated topics. For example, there are many nuances about personal rights when approached by CUPD officers on or off campus, so one appendix could clearly state these rights, including explanations. Other potential appendices could explain rights when approached by an IPD officer, or even rights as a Cornell employee. This idea needs a lot of work before it can come to fruition, but the working group of the Codes and Judicial

Committee established by UA Resolutions 9 and 10 will be able to address these issues in the coming months.

IV. SAFC

Resolutions 61, 62, 63 & 64: Student Activity Funding Commission

Changes: The name change and simple changes to the SAFC appeals processes will provide some autonomy for the SAFC, and streamline many processes for Student Assembly members, SAFC commissioners, and student groups alike. The SAFC will still remain a Byline funded group under the authority and purview of the Student Assembly despite these changes.

Sustainability

I. Fossil Fuels

Resolution 36: Divestment from Coal: Toward a Sustainable

Endowment: This resolution was a recommendation that Cornell publicize that our university currently has no direct holdings in coal. This is something that got Stanford a great deal of praise last year, even from the NY Times, and would reflect very positively on Cornell. This is in consonance with widespread student discussion about financial transparency (see Student Pulse, Section IV). Lastly, it recommended that the Chief Investment Officer, Investment Committee, and fund managers continue to avoid investing in coal in the future.

II. Food Insecurity

Resolution 65: Developing and Funding a Student Run Grocery

Store: Several representatives are working with Cornell Dining, the Center for Transformative Action, and Dean Hubbell to provide a student run grocery store in Anabel Taylor Hall. Food insecurity is a silent problem on our campus: many students receiving financial assistance, and even those who do not qualify for financial aid, struggle to find healthy food that they can afford. This cooperative would provide nutritious, fresh fruits and vegetables, and other healthy food items to all students. The food would be sourced from the student run farm, and other farms in upstate NY. Students struggling financially would be able to get the food for a subsidized price without a stigma. While many details are still in the works, we hope the cooperative will open in August or September. Additionally, a new question was put on PULSE to ask students about their experiences with food insecurity on campus.

Academics

I. Coursework

Resolution 29: Calling for Implementation of Open Course

Evaluations: This resolution passed by the SA recommended that a committee be created to explore the feasibility and development of university-wide open course evaluations. Open course evaluations could allow students to access information about professors, teaching assistants, syllabi or content of their courses prior to enrolling. This already happens at other universities, including Yale and Columbia. The resolution's sponsor worked closely with the Educational Policy Committee of the Faculty Senate on the proposal, and is continuing to work with the University Assembly and the Deans of colleges to move forward.

Resolution 48: Reaffirming the Importance of the Performing Arts at Cornell: This resolution encourages that Cornell's administration reevaluate the educational and strategic value of the Department of Performing and Media Arts. It also encourages that a task force be developed to improve PMA as an academic discipline, and also strengthen the presence of Cornell in Collegetown via utilizing the Schwartz Center.

Resolution 51: Cornell's Inter-collegiate Global Affairs Major: This resolution expresses the Student Assembly's support for the creation of an inter-collegiate Global Affairs major, especially considering that Cornell already has an excellent International Relations program. It also recommends that an implementation committee be created to ensure the major is available as soon as possible.

II. Swim Test Requirement

Resolution 56: Hands-Only CPR: Students from the SA's Community Life Committee and CUEMS are working together with FACAPE to institutionalize hands-only CPR training, which would be administered with the swim test. Not only does hands-only CPR take a short amount of time to learn, but it also provides students with useful, practical skills.

III. Professional Development

Summer Experience Grants: Students from the SA's Financial Aid Review Committee established a pool of money that gave stipends for students who would like to participate in unpaid internships from the current Students Helping Students Grant. Likely, this stipend would cover

housing costs for these students. Access to this stipend could allow more students, from all economic backgrounds, to take on opportunities in their areas of interest, especially in the nonprofit sector. Although this year the grants were only provided to students in some colleges, FARC hopes to expand the program in the future.

Student Pulse

The following reflect larger issues in the campus community, some of which have been addressed by Student Assembly members, but will likely remain as long-term issues for the entire student body.

I. Collegetown

Legal advising: Many landlords take advantage of students, which is why providing legal services at a free or subsidized price could help students avoid outlandish fees, if they cannot afford or do not know a lawyer. We are looking into partnering with the Law School, or local lawyers (who might work pro bono). This initiative is new, and many more questions will need to be answered before this program can begin. Other universities, such as Duke, are our inspiration for designing this service. Ideally, these lawyers would also be able to advise students outside of the realm of tenant-landlord issues, in areas such as encounters with IPD, noise violations, drinking violations.

Housing availability: Affordable, decent housing is very limited in the Collegetown area. Not only does this decrease the quality of life of many students living in Collegetown, but it also prevents students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds from feeling included off campus. Many students are advocating for an increase in the number of cooperative houses, which provide affordable housing.

Enhancing the Lines of Communication: Cornell and Its Greater Community Forum: This event hosted by the SA Community Life Committee happened in place of a regularly scheduled SA meeting. Panelists from Cornell and the community spoke and answered student questions about how to improve relationships between students and the town of Ithaca. Over 100 students were in attendance.

II. February Break

Resolution 42: February Break Services: This resolution was passed by the SA at the beginning of the semester. The sponsors worked with staff at the libraries, Cornell Dining, and Cornell Fitness Centers to encourage expanded hours compared to last year's break. Because so many students

stayed on campus for February break last year (the first time it was scheduled), it became obvious that more services were necessary to accommodate the students who were unable to leave campus for break. Additionally, the SA Communications Committee compiled a pamphlet with accurate information about the hours of dining halls, gyms, libraries, and busses for the long weekend, which students found very useful.

III. Health Fee

Health Fee Forum: Hosted by the SA during our regular meeting time, students were able to directly ask Susan Murphy questions about the health fee in a controlled setting. This occurred a couple of days after the protests, and was beneficial because students were able to get the answers they were looking for. After the question and answer portion of the Forum, students had the opportunity to debrief.

Resolution 46: Opposing the Health Fee: This resolution was a recommendation recently passed by the SA. It calls for the students to be part of conversations regarding the future of the health fee. It also suggests that students be brought into conversations about major changes in campus policies earlier, rather than later, when possible. Many representatives felt that their input was unnecessary by the time they were brought into conversations about the health fee because it was already decided by then. The resolution also suggests that Gannett consider changing its current policy that SHIP is required for all international students.

IV. Financial Transparency

Much of the student aggravation surrounding the recently released health fee was related to the perceived lack of transparency of the University's finances. While most students do not believe that everything should be shared, the majority of students that have addressed the Student Assembly are very concerned that they do not know where their tuition dollars are going. My personal belief is that if tuition increases and fees were introduced with a simplified, but honest, breakdown of where that money will go, students would be more understanding. That being said, the SA recognizes current efforts to increase transparency, such as the Townhall President Skorton held March 16th.

V. The Future of Shared Governance

Many students are questioning the legitimacy of the Shared Governance system at Cornell. They feel that their representatives are

powerless. While students are heavily divided on this issue, as we look forward to a new group of top level administrators, I hope that they will continue to prioritize the role of the constituent assemblies in governance at Cornell, and empower students and all members of the community to participate, just as President Skorton, VP Murphy and Provost Fuchs have done during their time here.