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2 **GPSA Resolution 13: Calling For the Accommodation of**  
3 **International Students as Leaders Maplewood Apartments**

4 *April 9th, 2018*

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6 Sponsored by: Manisha Munasinghe, GPSA Executive Vice-President; Ekarina Winarto, GPSA  
7 President; Nathaniel Rogers, GPSA Counsel; Aravind Natarajan, General Committee, Graduate School;  
8 Prateek Sehgal, GCA, Hasbrouck Apartments; Hao Shi, GCA, Hasbrouck Apartments

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10 **Whereas**, “about 13% of Cornell’s graduate and professional students (GPS) live on campus” in housing  
11 complexes such as Hasbrouck Apartments or Thurston Court<sup>1</sup>; and

12  
13 **Whereas**, international students make up 47% of the GPS community, and these students can often face  
14 difficulty finding affordable and secure housing while overseas<sup>2</sup>;

15  
16 **Whereas**, about 72% of graduate and professional students living in University Housing are international  
17 students, a testament to their reliance on on-campus housing as a safe space <sup>1</sup>; and

18  
19 **Whereas**, Graduate Community Advisors (GCAs) are GPS who live and work among their peers in the  
20 GPS on-campus communities<sup>3</sup>; and

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22 **Whereas**, while a GCA’s “primary role is to help create a sense of community within their respective  
23 areas”, they also serve as a general resource to all residents and a main point of contact during  
24 emergencies; and

25  
26 **Whereas**, Maplewood Park was an on-campus housing complex built in 1989 had a capacity of 360 beds  
27 for graduate and professionals students; and

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29 **Whereas**, Maplewood Park was an attractive housing option for graduate and professional students as it  
30 was family-friendly both in price and programming, walking distance from campus, promoted community  
31 building/support, had global leadership, and had payment/deposit options that are adjusted to Cornell’s  
32 payroll calendar; and

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34 **Whereas**, in May 2015, students were notified that that Maplewood Park would be closing at the end of  
35 the 2015 - 2016 academic year<sup>4</sup>; and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://living.sas.cornell.edu/live/wheretolive/gradhousing/upload/Graduate-and-Professional-Housing-Guide-2016-17-web-version.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cornell.edu/about/facts.cfm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://living.sas.cornell.edu/participate/employment/GCA.cfm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2015/05/cornell-addresses-short-and-long-term-student-housing-needs>



**Cornell University**  
**Graduate and Professional**  
**Student Assembly**

37 **Whereas**, on January 28th, 2016, the Buildings and Properties Committee of the Cornell University  
38 Board of Trustees approved the selection of EdR for a new housing complex on the site of Maplewood  
39 Park<sup>1</sup>; and

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41 **Whereas**, Cornell entered into a Public Private Partnership (P3) with EdR “outlining a framework for  
42 Cornell to retain ownership of the land, but with EdR financing, constructing and managing the new  
43 housing project”<sup>5</sup>; and

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45 **Whereas**, the Graduate & Professional Student Assembly (GPSA) was asked for input and partnership  
46 during the redevelopment planning, culminating in testimonials to help EdR, Cornell’s P3 partner, gain  
47 the permit for construction; and

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49 **Whereas**, the GPSA recognizes that EdR has listened to many student concerns such as keeping unit  
50 prices comparable to other current on-campus housing, providing in-unit washer and dryer, and allowing  
51 pets; and

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53 **Whereas**, during a meeting between EdR, Cornell administrators, and GPS designed to solicit feedback  
54 regarding GPS housing needs, students discovered that international students would no longer be eligible  
55 to serve as community leaders/GCAs in Maplewood and voiced concerns; and

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57 **Whereas**, the inability to hire international students as GCAs in Maplewood effectively strips  
58 international students, who make up a significant portion of the demographic in GPSA on-campus  
59 housing, the opportunity for equitable representation in leadership positions that provide programming  
60 and mental health support to residents; and

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62 **Whereas**, while GCAs are not hired based on nationality, international students have always been  
63 strongly represented among the current and previous GCAs at Hasbrouck and the old Maplewood  
64 complex;

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66 **Whereas**, international students are an especially vulnerable group with students having concerns ranging  
67 from a language barrier, stark cultural differences, new and challenging academic setting, unfamiliar  
68 environmental conditions, and isolation from family and support networks, leading to significant mental  
69 and emotional stresses; and

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71 **Whereas**, these arduous experiences are further exacerbated by cultural norms that disincentivize  
72 reaching out for help and rampant imposter syndrome that impedes their ability to reach out to students  
73 who do not have a shared experience for assistance; and

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76 **Whereas**, international students, therefore, are generally more comfortable seeking support from other  
77 international student leaders in their community who may have a similar experience; and

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<sup>5</sup> <http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2016/02/board-gives-green-light-new-grad-student-housing>



**Cornell University**  
**Graduate and Professional**  
**Student Assembly**

79 **Whereas**, we believe that international student GCAs play an important role in building international  
80 student community, helping international students acclimate to life at Cornell, and serving as a  
81 community leader in GPS housing complexes; and

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83 **Whereas**, while we recognize that, under the new P3 model, it is illegal for EdR to hire international  
84 students as GCAs, students reached out to Cornell administrators in the hopes of finding a way to ensure  
85 the continued existence of international community leaders at Maplewood, even if it would be in a  
86 different form; and

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88 **Whereas**, GPS leaders suggested that Cornell University engage Residence Community Leaders as  
89 Fellows paid and appointed through Cornell's Off-Campus Housing Office (a branch of Student and  
90 Campus Life administered by Dean Vijay Pendakur), where their appointments would be made by  
91 Cornell University, thus allowing international students to apply and potentially serve as Community  
92 Leaders; and

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94 **Whereas**, despite repeated attempts to find a solution, it was made clear that the University will not be  
95 investing resources to create alternative opportunities for international students to serve as community  
96 leaders in Maplewood and receive compensation for their services; and

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98 **Whereas**, EDR may encourage international students to volunteer their time and effort to assist their  
99 endeavors, as yet another form of unpaid labor imposed GPS and a burden on a minority group; and

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101 **Whereas**, it was callously suggested that domestic students can be trained to understand and support the  
102 unique challenges of international students, and that international students can be "on-boarded" through  
103 presentations and workshops; and

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105 **Whereas**, the GPS leadership was shocked by the proposed idea that a homogenous group of students can  
106 be "trained" to empathize and support populations of different identities, or that students of different  
107 identities can be "on-boarded" to adapt to a new environment through presentations and meetings – ideas  
108 that undermine the value of diversity in leadership roles and trivialize the experience of being a minority;  
109 and

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112 **Whereas**, we are distraught by this in this proposal and reject the idea that community leadership teams  
113 exclusively consisting of domestic students can provide the same level of community support compared  
114 to a diverse team of students that includes international students;

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116 **Whereas**, we think that Cornell's refusal to explore ways to accommodate international community  
117 leaders at Maplewood Park, based on the fact that Maplewood is now an off-campus housing, is  
118 misleading because this housing complex is advertised specifically in the official Graduate School  
119 Announcements, unlike other off-campus housing options; and

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121 **Whereas**, acknowledging that Maplewood Park is exclusively off-campus housing means that Cornell  
122 has taken away an existing on-campus graduate housing with this new funding model;



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**Be it therefore resolved,** that the GPSA reiterates its commitment to international students and their right to apply and serve as community leaders in graduate and professional student housing complexes; and

**Be it further resolved,** that we urge Cornell University to find a solution that allows international students to serve as community leaders at the new Maplewood Apartments; and

**Be it finally resolved,** if Cornell is unable to find a solution that allows international students to serve as community leaders in off-campus housing complexes under the P3 model with Cornell University, we ask that the University

- 1) Retain the remaining on-campus housing options for graduate and professional students on-campus and away from the P3 model so that international students can continue to serve as community leaders and resources to peers.
- 2) Stop providing Maplewood exclusive marketing opportunities that selectively present it over other off-campus housing options.
- 3) Introspect its commitment to creating an inclusive welcoming space for international students where leadership positions for this community are diminished