

Fall 2025 Referendum

Question 2: As a result of the 1969 Willard Straight Hall Takeover, the conduct of students, faculty, and staff was collectively governed under the Campus Code of Conduct. In 2021, the Student Code of Conduct replaced the Campus Code. Should Cornell University return to a community-wide Campus Code of Conduct?

Pro Statements

1. A community-wide campus code of conduct is necessary at a time where the administration continues to make biased and subjective rules. This is especially seen with the Interim Expressive Activity Policy, "a set of rules that attempted to crack down on student protesters and limit their mobility and activity. When administration believes that by using intimidation tactics, police force, and unfair suspensions are a morsel of justice, it is clear that the administration is corrupt. The graduate and faculty office of assemblies backed resistance against the Interim Expressive Activity Policy because it was so useless in its governance. This is just one example of the current administrations incapability to do their jobs without bias. Islamophobia and xenophobia are rampant among administration, with their constant targeting of international and Muslim student protesters. Therefore, the power that lies their corrupt hands must be taken away to protect Cornell from falling deeper into national embarrassment. A community-wide Campus Code of Conduct is needed when administration believes they are the judges and the jury to all student conduct cases.
2. Currently political power on campus is fractured between faculty, grad students, and undergraduates, leading to control of Cornell's institutions by administration and the trustees. This arrangement is a perversion of the system of shared governance which was integral to the operation of the university throughout its history. By binding together the rights of students and faculty, these two constituencies will be bound together in solidarity against administrative overreach. By giving both parties equal standards, Students will not be so easily taken advantage of because of their youth. Likewise faculty will not be isolated in times of conflict and can draw on the support of students. This greater cooperation will lead to students and faculties interests aligning in the classroom to a greater degree. Such cooperation will likely improve learning outcomes as the two parties will see each other as allies instead of potential adversaries.
3. At Cornell, it has become painfully obvious that the administration under Kotlikoff is drawing its own arbitrary line about what counts as "dangerous," and it's student protesters who end up on the receiving end of fast punishment. Everyone on campus knows the names of students who were suspended for political protests, yet a reported gang rape from last semester still sits in limbo, "under investigation," with no visible urgency. That disconnect says everything. Instead of prioritizing the safety of students, the university seems more focused on controlling dissent and protecting its own image. The result is a culture where students fear speaking out even when it's about defending themselves. Made worse by the administration aligning itself with the Trump Administration that puts women, students of color, and queer students at greater risk. Cornell should be confronting the real dangers on campus, not punishing the people trying to call them out. It's clear that the we should return to the cold campus code of conduct.
4. As the University celebrates 100 years of Willard Straight Hall, Cornell must also honor its commitments to BIPOC students by upholding the legacy of the 1969 Willard Straight Hall Takeover. Returning to a community-wide Campus Code of Conduct is one way to reaffirm that shared accountability.
5. Cornell should return to a community-wide Campus Code of Conduct. The current Student Code moves the university further away from the shared-governance model Cornell has long promised. The original Campus Code, created in the aftermath of the 1969 Willard Straight Hall Takeover, was built on the principle that students, faculty, and staff all play essential roles in shaping community standards. It recognized that campus life is inherently interconnected, and that meaningful governance requires the participation of everyone who is affected by the rules. Today, student presence in the conduct system is minimal. Students cannot elect the individuals who represent them, and those representatives lack the authority and visibility that shared governance requires. Instead of building a model where the entire community collaborates on expectations and solutions, the current structure isolates students as the sole group regulated by the code

while giving them almost no real influence over how those regulations are written or enforced. This disconnect weakens legitimacy and erodes trust. A restored Campus Code would not only honor Cornell's commitments but also create a more transparent, equitable, and participatory system. It would ensure that conduct standards reflect the perspectives of all campus stakeholders (students, faculty, and staff) rather than being unilaterally shaped by administrative bodies. When everyone is included, the code becomes more balanced, more reflective of lived experiences, and more responsive to the needs of the community as a whole.

6. Before 2020, Cornell's Campus Code of Conduct applied to the entire community. Students, faculty, and staff were all held to the same standards under a system grounded in shared governance and a fair judicial process. But when the administration pushed through its new Student Code in 2020, they did so for one reason: it is far easier to strip students of their rights than it is to strip faculty or staff of theirs. By turning a community code into a student-only code, Cornell created a system where the least-protected members of the University – its students – could be suspended immediately, denied due process, and pressured into plea deals under the threat of losing semesters to OSCCS limbo and tens of thousands of dollars. The overhaul of the Campus Code, to warp it into the current Student Code, left students bearing the full weight of a disciplinary system that they had no voice in shaping. At the heart of both of these questions is a truth that Cornell used to supposedly believe in: students deserve their rights, even when the University fears them or the political repercussions of protecting them. Cornell was founded on the idea that “any person, any study” meant every member of this community was worthy of respect and voice. The way that President Kotlikoff, VP Lombardi, OSCCS Director Liang, and Dean of Students Marla Love have abandoned that is heartbreaking, but not irreparable. Cornell's legacy was built by generations of students fighting for what they believed was right in their time. I believe that the broader Cornell community still believes that today's students deserve that same chance. But without change, Cornell will lose what once defined it, if it hasn't been lost already. A return to an independent judicial system and the Campus Code is where that change must start.
7. I believe the Campus Code of Conduct is not only less controversial than the current Student Code, but also more fair.
8. As collective stakeholders within the same institutions, we should be overseen by a system that shares that equality amongst its participants. It makes no sense for separate sets of rules to apply to different individuals only dependent on the role they undertake. It is exactly that kind of slippery slope that allows corrupt systems to adhere to whatever rule system they judge as fair, and the exact loop hole Cornell already exploits to try students under a separate system that works to harm them under governance that discriminates openly. It is clear that the campus code as a product of shared governance works to establish equity, a value this university now lacks, using its code to suppress and stifle student life in target amendments to the code without any student input at all.
9. Former President Martha Pollack's changes to the Code of Conduct in 2020 were nothing short of undemocratic and a betrayal of shared governance. The Willard Straight Hall Takeover was abundantly clear in its demands for an independent judicial system. After students and faculty came together in Barton Hall to debate the future of Cornell, the administration acknowledged the shifting political culture of the time and created the Campus Code of Conduct. The Campus Code was intended to be administered by the University Senate, a decision-making body made up of faculty and students that had authority over finances, academics, and conduct. The University Senate was the first fully functional and most powerful body of shared governance; however, the administration sought to curb this power, dividing the one united body into the smaller assemblies we have today. The division of our campus community was the first step towards undoing shared governance. Pollack's seizure of the conduct process and creation of the Student Code of Conduct was the next. For the longest time, Cornell stood out as a radical experiment in student democracy, an experiment that went on to influence other universities' student governments. Having spoken with older alumni who were active in shared governance in the 70s, I realize just how much we have lost as a student body. I am a representative of the Student Assembly, a title that means very little today. Most students cannot tell you what shared governance is and, even more worrying, many cannot tell you what happened in 1969. The Campus Code of Conduct not only ensures the equal treatment of students in our disciplinary process, it is the first step in regaining the dignity of students and our right of shared governance. The

current administration cannot trample Cornell's legacy as it pleases, not with students, faculty, and alumni watching. The coming years will be difficult, and it is more important than ever that all voices are heard.

10. The Campus Code that governs all students, faculty, and staff, is something that students of the past fought for and won. It is not something that this university has ever had the right to take from us. We cannot let our administrators set a precedent that says that they can go back on their negotiations when negotiated terms are no longer convenient for them. In the four years since we lost the Campus Code, we have seen the disastrous effects it has had on students.
11. A community code of conduct would better serve students and the campus as a whole. There is a reason why the community galvanized for the campus code of conduct, in that it allows for student voices to be heard regarding the standards for conduct on this campus and the ways that conduct violations are addressed. Cornell's dedication to student wellbeing cannot be fulfilled if students are not able to contribute to conversations that directly impact them. The code of conduct impacts every facet of campus life and activity, and every student is affected by it. There is no reason that the code of conduct should not be community-wide, or should not have shared governance. The Student Code of Conduct being governed by appointed officials, not elected, who do not represent student voices or prioritize them is deeply concerning as a student on this campus.
12. Students are people, and all but a small minority are legal adults. Treating us, with respect to our basic rights, as any less than any other person on campus, is demeaning, and promotes a culture of separation. CORNELL SHOULD RETURN TO A CAMPUS-WIDE CODE OF CONDUCT. Give everyone the same rights, that promote free speech, social justice, and real academic freedom.
13. The creation of the Student Code of Conduct during covid when undergraduates were off campus and socially isolated, not to speak of being incapable of political action, is a flagrant attack on precedents set in 1969 by the legitimate actions of student protestors in negotiation with the administration. That Willard Straight continues to have a plaque remembering the anti-racist protestors while the administration flagrantly violates every principle that was won by those same students is immensely shameful; and indicative of the actively right-wing political character the administration has taken up, in contradiction of the mission of Cornell University proper.
14. Several University actions under the Student Code of Conduct have been worrying. I support the students advocating for a return to the Campus Code of Conduct.
15. Cornell should return to a community-wide Campus Code of Conduct. The 1969 Willard Straight Hall Takeover made clear that a fair and democratic conduct system requires shared responsibility among students, faculty, and staff, rather than unilateral control by the central administration. The community-wide Campus Code embodied this principle by ensuring that all Cornell constituencies participated equally in shaping and upholding community standards. The 2021 shift to a Student Code of Conduct fractured this shared framework and placed disciplinary authority more firmly under administrative control. Since then, students and organizations have experienced delayed case processing, reduced transparency, and diminished opportunities for meaningful input. A community-wide code would restore a system in which misconduct is judged by impartial representatives from across the University—not by the same administrative offices that may be party to a dispute. Reinstating a Campus Code would also reaffirm Cornell's historic commitments to shared governance, due process, and community self-determination. A unified system promotes clarity, fairness, and consistent standards for everyone on campus, while preventing administrative overreach and protecting individual rights. For these reasons, Cornell should return to a democratic, community-wide Campus Code of Conduct.
16. Yes, we should return to a community-wide code of conduct. The previous Campus Code of Conduct ensured our commitment to the University's shared governance model, our independent judicial system, and a code that applied to the entire campus community. With the revision of the current student code of conduct overseen by the central administration, the code of conduct will be revised on their terms without sufficient student input.
17. We must return to a Campus Code of Conduct. Every Cornell community member should be governed equally.
18. I believe the code of conduct should return to what it was after the 1969 WSH takeover and live up to the standards that were set in place back then. The code of conduct should not be exclusively managed by

Cornell administration since it creates a power dynamic with the student population. Without the input of a student population, the code of conduct becomes an imposed authoritarian tool to censure and criminalize students without taking into account restorative justice and the right to due process. While some actions are indeed worth investigation, this doesn't mean every action brought to the code of conduct is the same, nor that some actions shouldn't have due process. In order to build a collective, welcoming, and accountable community, we must start by including everyone in the code of conduct since it would be based on our values and mutual governance.

19. Cornell University return to a community-wide Campus Code of Conduct! Every student should have the right to explain themselves and have the right to a trial.
20. The community itself knows what issues they're facing, especially those concerning the university and faculty. Currently, it cannot be revised by the community to keep administration in check.
21. Why should different ethical standards apply to people in the Cornell Community? The fact that this is currently the case is a sign of poor governance in my opinion.
22. I believe Cornell's judicial system should be independent of the University's administration. How can a system be fair if there is an inherently biased judge making decisions.
23. Having experienced the OSCCS interim suspension process after engaging in nonviolent protest, I know that it is a deeply isolating and impersonal experience. The Student Code of Conduct is vague, unclear, and is consistently used by OSCCS to deprive students of due process when they are targeted for disciplinary action. Students don't protest alone — campus political action is important in large part because it connects students, faculty, staff, graduate student workers, and members of the Ithaca community around shared priorities and demands. By abandoning the Campus Code, which students fought for as an accountable and just procedure which protected the rights of student activists, the administration has divided our community and limited the ability of all campus stakeholders to express themselves freely. Vote yes to push the administration to restore a fair procedure for the entire campus community, and prevent more students from being subjected to an opaque and unjust disciplinary procedure.
24. Everybody on this campus is intelligent and mature enough to be held to standards that holds each of them accountable, including the staff who have influence over students. To separate the two groups of people makes being a student weakens the stake we have on campus, which is on purpose.
25. All members of the Cornell Community should be held to the same standards, especially those in power.
26. All members of the university should be held to same standards and to apply a harsher set to any group, regardless of age or education level, is wrong. also BDS.
27. It should be campus-wide.
28. While I care less about this question, I think that the Campus Code as a community-wide measure is far more productive for maintaining the important ideal of equity between students and professors. While professors are members of the faculty here, they also have a duty to position themselves closely to their students, which could be furthered by their adherence to the Campus Code.
29. Students should have a say in what behavior is tolerated on campus, especially in the case of free speech issues. By allowing the administration to decide the rules, they have free rein to make decisions that benefit themselves and the school's image without regard for what is actually in the student's best interest.
30. While there are definite differences between behavioral expectations of faculty, staff and students, there should be a universal understanding of what to and not to do and what is allowed. It is important to set a standard for the role models in order to positively influence the students.
31. A conduct code overseen by the University Assembly, instead of Student and Campus Life, provides more opportunity for students, faculty, and staff to collectively voice their support and grievances with policies, and provides an avenue for change that actually hear these voices.
32. If the Campus Code was the product of revolutionary students' struggles, it was good, and certainly better than the Student Code of Conduct.
33. Cornell University should return to a community-wide Campus Code of Conduct.
34. Yes. A community-wide Campus Code reflects a simple but important truth: Cornell is a shared community, and community standards should apply to everyone—students, faculty, and staff. The 1969 Campus Code

emerged from a moment when Cornell recognized the need for a more inclusive and democratic approach to conduct. Reinstating a community-wide code would restore that sense of shared responsibility and mutual accountability. It would also help ensure that conduct expectations are clear, consistent, and rooted in the values of the whole Cornell community, not just one segment of it. Returning to the Campus Code isn't about nostalgia; it's about fairness, transparency, and reaffirming that everyone who contributes to campus life should be held to the same principles. A unified code strengthens trust and reinforces the idea that Cornell functions best when we all play by the same rules.

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