

Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

Resolution 3: Establishing concrete, survivor-centered reforms to Cornell University's sexual-violence policies, procedures, and support systems

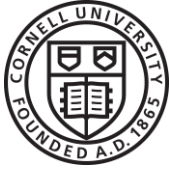
Abstract: This resolution calls on Cornell University to implement concrete, survivor-centered reforms to its sexual-violence policies, procedures, and support systems. It seeks to ensure that survivors have clear and accessible information about their rights, confidential support services, forensic examinations, and law-enforcement reporting options; that sexual-violence allegations are handled through fair, independent, and trauma-informed processes; and that University policies comply with applicable New York State law. The resolution also calls for stronger protections and clearer procedures for students involved in sexual-violence cases, improved access to off-campus advocacy and medical resources, and more transparent communication about reporting and support options. Finally, it requires an annual, research-informed review of the University's public-facing sexual-violence guidance, consultation with independent experts, and publication of their recommendations alongside the University's responses— including explanations for recommendations it declines to adopt. Together, these reforms aim to make Cornell's response to sexual violence more accessible, consistent, transparent, and accountable to survivors and the campus community.

Sponsored by: Michelle Heeney (*Ex Officio* Member) & Claire King (Finance Commission Chairperson)

Reviewed by: Executive Committee, 22OCT2026

Whereas, Cornell University ("the University") has been receiving due scrutiny nationally and internationally for its handling of Jane Doe's allegations of horrific sexual assault in November 2024;

Whereas, N.Y. State Education Law mandates specific response policies and procedures for reports of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking under Article 129-B (N.Y. EDN §§ 6439-6449);



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34 **Whereas**, On October 15, 2026, a statement signed by 26 leaders and stakeholders serving the
35 Ithaca and Tompkins County communities, including those in state and local government and
36 leaders of local survivor advocacy institutions such as Jennifer Brownell of the Advocacy Center
37 of Tompkins County, “demand[s] that the Cornell University Board of Trustees and senior Ithaca
38 campus officials take immediate, transparent, and effective steps toward terminating the campus
39 sexual assault culture that Cornell acknowledges has persisted for too long”, specifically
40 “immediately implementing robust, zero-tolerance policies and practices for preventing sexual
41 violence, including: educating its students about sexual assault and its root causes; procedures
42 ensuring effective Title IX and criminal investigations of assault allegations; and meaningful and
43 timely penalties placed on perpetrators as well as Greek organizations and other entities
44 responsible for tolerating sexual assault on their premises”;

45
46 **Whereas**, The University, including Cornell University Police Department (CUPD), has proven
47 incapable of handling reports of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking
48 with care or in a trauma-informed manner that affords victims the rights guaranteed under N.Y.
49 EDN §§ 6443 (¶¶ 4-6), 6444;

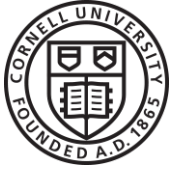
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51 **Whereas**, N.Y. EDN § 6444 ¶ 7 mandates that “institutions that lack appropriate resources or
52 services shall... enter into memoranda of understanding, agreements, or collaborative
53 partnerships with existing community-based organizations... to refer students for assistance or
54 to make services available to students”;

55
56 **Whereas**, The October 15, 2026 Community Statement Concerning Cornell University also
57 notes that “our medical and emergency services, behavioral health providers, and sexual assault
58 advocates are directly involved in supporting Cornell students who experience sexual assault or
59 are affected by it in other ways”, referring to off-campus local resources;

60
61 **Whereas**, N.Y. EDN § 6444 ¶ 8 mandates that the University “ensure that students have access
62 to a sexual assault forensic examination (SAFE exams) by employing the use of a sexual assault
63 nurse examiner in their campus health center or entering into memoranda of understanding or
64 agreements with at least one local health care facility to provide such a service”;

65
66 **Whereas**, Neither the Cornell Title IX Office nor Cornell Office of Civil Rights (COCR)
67 webpages present any information about the necessity and urgency of sexual assault forensic
68 examinations (SAFE exams) in seeking justice for sexual assault, nor are they available at
69 Cornell Health;

70
71 **Whereas**, Current guidance provided to Designated Reporters recommends reporting suspected
72 instances of a crime to CUPD, who report directly to the University;



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74 **Whereas**, The University, in implicit acknowledgement of the inadequacy of its internal
75 investigators, recently implemented the use of N.Y. State Police investigators for allegations of
76 sexual assault temporarily.

77
78 **Whereas**, There is currently no clear procedural standard for implementing “no-contact” orders
79 after a Formal Complaint is filed via Title IX alleging sexual violence nor statement that the
80 violation of one subjects the Respondant to further disciplinary action as required by N.Y. EDN
81 § 6444 ¶ 4;

82
83 **Whereas**, The University's current policies outlined in the Procedures for Resolution of Reports
84 Against Students Under Cornell University Policy 6.4 for Acts of Sexual and Related
85 Misconduct§ 17.1 for determining whether a respondent constitutes a "continuing threat to the
86 health and safety of the community" and is thus subject to Emergency Suspension are currently
87 insufficient;

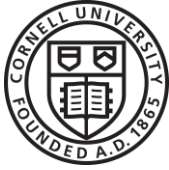
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89 **Whereas**, Transcript notations for those found responsible of sexual violence, and those who
90 withdraw from the University while conduct proceedings are ongoing, are explicitly mandated by
91 N.Y. EDN § 6444 ¶ 6, yet no procedure is outlined in the Procedures for Resolution of Reports
92 Against Students Under Cornell University Policy 6.4 for Acts of Sexual and Related
93 Misconduct. The University’s procedures should clearly identify the administrative process,
94 responsible office, and applicable timelines for implementing these requirements;

95
96 **Whereas**, There are currently no minimum sanctions for students found responsible for sexual
97 assault in the Procedures for Resolution of Reports Against Students Under Cornell University
98 Policy 6.4 for Acts of Sexual and Related Misconduct;

99
100 **Whereas**, N.Y. EDN § 6446 ¶ 1f requires the University to provide "information about existing
101 and available methods to anonymously disclose including but not limited to information on
102 relevant confidential hotlines provided by New York state agencies and not-for-profit entities" ;

103
104 **Whereas**, The University’s own Presidential Task Force on Sexual Assault Final Report (2026)
105 recommends the University "increase knowledge and clarity about support and reporting
106 options", "improve communication with the Cornell community" and "improve understanding
107 about the Title IX process";

108
109 **Whereas**, Students’ ability to understand their rights, reporting options, confidentiality
110 protections, and available support services depends in part on clear and accessible guidance for
111 the Title IX Coordinator and other University-employed Designated Reporters;



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113 **Whereas,** Public access to applicable guidance, protocols, and reporting standards would enable
114 students and members of the University community to better understand how reports of sexual
115 violence are received, referred, and addressed, and would strengthen institutional transparency
116 and accountability;

117
118 **Whereas,** Students and University personnel currently have to follow a series of links to access
119 Title IX complaint resolution procedures, and the disclosures of affirmative consent definitions
120 mandated by N.Y. EDN § 6441 and Student's Bill of Rights guaranteed by N.Y. EDN § 6443 are
121 buried within the 49-page Procedures for Resolution of Reports Against Students Under Cornell
122 University Policy 6.4 for Acts of Sexual and Related Misconduct PDF;

123
124 **Whereas:** The “report it” hyperlink on the Cornell Title IX Office homepage
125 (<https://titleix.cornell.edu/>) leads to a form that is submitted to CUPD, yet that is not disclosed.

126
127 **Whereas,** There is blatantly misleading language on the COCR webpage on Designated
128 Reporters (<https://officeofcivilrights.cornell.edu/policies-procedures/designated-reporters/>) under
129 the heading "Is it possible to speak with someone before filing a report?" with the answer
130 suggesting that students can speak to someone at the Title IX office about an incident of sexual
131 harassment or assault without filing a report, when procedures require that a report is made as
132 soon as the Title IX Coordinator is made aware of these instances and similarly misleading
133 information on the Title IX FAQs webpage ([https://titleix.cornell.edu/support-and-](https://titleix.cornell.edu/support-and-resources/faqs/)
134 [resources/faqs/](https://titleix.cornell.edu/support-and-resources/faqs/)) referring students to the COCR to speak with someone without filing a
135 complaint, when these employees are in reality Designated Reporters;

136
137 **Whereas,** Students experiencing sexual violence should be able to distinguish confidential
138 support resources from University employees whose reporting obligations may require them to
139 share information with the institution, and should be able to access clear, accurate information
140 about confidentiality limitations before disclosing sensitive information;

141
142 **Whereas,** The accessibility and accuracy of information about confidential resources, external
143 reporting options, and support services should be maintained on an ongoing basis so that students
144 can make informed decisions about seeking assistance, regardless of whether they have decided
145 to make a formal report;

146
147 **Whereas,** Current mandated sexual assault prevention trainings for students are clearly
148 inadequate, and they must be continually assessed and changed to improve effectiveness as per
149 N.Y. EDN § 6447 ¶ 7.

150
151 **Be it therefore resolved,** The GPSA calls on the University to establish a memorandum of
152 understanding with the Advocacy Center of Tompkins County and Cayuga Medical Center



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providing significant financial support in order to afford survivors essential services pursuant to N.Y. EDN § 6444 ¶¶ 7-8 and commensurate to the rate of sexual assault uncovered in the University's own data-gathering, with neither agreement conditioned upon University oversight or reporting to the University by either entity;

Be it further resolved, Information regarding the necessity and urgency of SAFE exams in seeking justice for sexual assault and where one can be performed (Cayuga Medical Center) must be readily available and accessible to all students and staff anywhere reporting information for instances of sexual violence is made available;

Be it further resolved, Guidance provided to Designated Reporters should recommend that in instances where criminal acts are suspected that reports be filed with Ithaca City Police or the N.Y. State Troopers as opposed to CUPD;

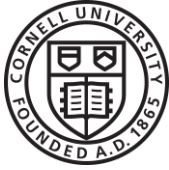
Be it further resolved, The University should mandate in its procedures regarding the handling of Title IX investigations that independent, third-party investigators, in the form of trained and licensed attorneys, be employed for any allegation of sexual assault in perpetuity;

Be it further resolved, "No-contact" orders must be issued to Respondents in all Formal Complaints of sexual assault, guidance must be provided that the Respondent is responsible for upholding the order, including re-arranging their class schedule if necessary, and is subject to further disciplinary charges pending its violation;

Be it further resolved, In order to satisfy University Policy 6.4 and N.Y. EDN § § 6443-6444, Procedures for Resolution of Reports Against Students Under Cornell University Policy 6.4 for Acts of Sexual and Related Misconduct § 17.1 must be amended so that respondents accused of sexual assault are immediately subject to an Emergency Suspension pending resolution, as is explicitly required as per N.Y. EDN § 6444 ¶ 4;

Be it further resolved, Procedures for Resolution of Reports Against Students Under Cornell University Policy 6.4 for Acts of Sexual and Related Misconduct must be amended to establish clear and consistent procedures for implementing transcript notations for those found responsible for acts of sexual violence, and those who withdraw from the University before conduct proceedings are resolved pursuant to N.Y. EDN § 6444 ¶ 6;

Be it further resolved, Procedures for Resolution of Reports Against Students Under Cornell University Policy 6.4 for Acts of Sexual and Related Misconduct must be amended to include a minimum sanction for a finding of responsible for allegations of sexual assault of expulsion from the University or revocation of any degree conferred after the alleged event occurred in order to



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fulfill the University's duty to provide a safe and non-discriminatory environment for all members of the University community, including the Complainant;

Be it further resolved, Information about support resources outside the University must be provided in Procedures for Resolution of Reports Against Students Under Cornell University Policy 6.4 for Acts of Sexual and Related Misconduct § 6.1;

Be it further resolved, COCR must change the Title IX homepage (titleix.cornell.edu) to explicitly state that following "report it" link leads you to report to CUPD (i.e. change hyperlink text to "report it to CUPD") and include a link for students to report to local law enforcement (i.e. NY State Troopers SA hotline, Ithaca Police, Tompkins County Sheriff);

Be it further resolved, The University shall also maintain a clearly identified and readily accessible section of the Title IX homepage that identifies confidential resources, explains the distinction between confidential resources and Designated Reporters, describes the limits of confidentiality and the circumstances in which information may be shared, and provides direct links to relevant University and community-based support services;

Be it further resolved, The University shall publish and maintain a publicly accessible collection of applicable guidance, protocols, and standards governing the responsibilities of the Title IX Coordinator and University-employed Designated Reporters concerning reports of sexual violence, including guidance on mandatory reporting, confidentiality limitations, referrals to support services, and options for reporting to external law enforcement. The University shall review and update these materials regularly and make material revisions readily identifiable;

Be it further resolved, The University shall conduct an annual review, guided by current research and evidence-based best practices for preventing and responding to sexual violence, in consultation with independent experts in sexual violence prevention, survivor advocacy, trauma-informed response, and relevant legal and investigative procedures, of its publicly available sexual-violence reporting and support information, including the Title IX homepage, Office of Civil Rights webpages, Designated Reporter guidance, and relevant reporting and resource documents distributed to students. The review shall identify and correct inaccurate, inconsistent, outdated, or hard-to-access information and ensure that information about confidential resources, external law-enforcement reporting options, off-campus advocacy services, and sexual assault forensic examinations is readily available. The University shall publicly publish the experts' recommendations and the University's responses to each recommendation, clearly identifying which recommendations are accepted, which are not accepted, and the reasons for declining or modifying any recommendation.



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231 **Be it further resolved**, COCR must update the Title IX FAQs webpage
232 (<https://titleix.cornell.edu/support-and-resources/faqs/>) and the COCR Designated Reporters
233 webpage (<https://officeofcivilrights.cornell.edu/policies-procedures/designated-reporters/>) to
234 eliminate misleading language surrounding confidentiality of conversations survivors may have
235 with COCR employees;
236

237 **Be it finally resolved**, All students must receive mandatory, annual, in-person training designed
238 by survivor advocates and sexual assault experts on sexual assault prevention on campus in order
239 to participate in student activities.
240

241 Respectfully submitted,
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243 Emma Scales
244 Graduate Student
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246 Michelle Heeney
247 *Ex Officio* Member
248

249 Claire King
250 Finance Commission Chairperson