

E.A. Resolution #4

**Support for Faculty Senate Proposed Resolution: Inclusion and Prioritization
of a New Natatorium in the ‘To Do the Greatest Good’ Capital Campaign**

February 22, 2022

1
2 **Sponsored by:** Kristine Mahoney, EA, Chair, EA Welfare Committee; Brandon
3 Fortenberry, EA/UA, Chair; Debra Howell, EA/UA, Chair, Campus Welfare Committee;
4 Ruth Merle-Doyle, Cornell Wellness
5
6
7 **Whereas,** the University Assembly endorses the [Faculty Senate Proposed Resolution: Inclusion](#)
8 [and Prioritization of a New Natatorium in the ‘To Do the Greatest Good’ Capital](#)
9 [Campaign](#), included here as an Addendum to this resolution, and
10
11 **Whereas,** the F.S. Proposed Resolution outlines specific background on the current situation and
12 that context which remains unsatisfactory, and
13
14 **Whereas,** the needs of the Cornell community for universal access to free and accessible, indoor
15 recreation, sporting event facilities, and exercise facilities are not being satisfied, and
16
17 **Whereas,** some faculty, staff, students, are no longer able to participate in aquatic fitness at
18 Cornell.
19
20 **Whereas,** the Employee Assembly is charged in Section 2 of the Charter to examine matters
21 which involved the interests or concern the welfare of the non-academic employee
22 community and confers that responsibility to the Employee Assembly Welfare
23 Committee is charged in Section 3.4 of the By-laws.
24
25 **Be it therefore resolved,** the Employee Assembly aligns its support with the F.S. Proposed
26 Resolution imploring the administration to include and prioritize a new natatorium to the
27 list of fundraisings items donors may directly contribute to in Cornell University’s ‘Do
28 the Greatest Good’ capital campaign for the benefit of the University and the community
29 the University serves.
30
31 **Be it further resolved** that a new natatorium should be of sufficient size and quality to meet the
32 current and future needs of the Cornell community. To help ensure this, the planning

33 needs to involve Cornell leaders with knowledge and expertise in this area including the
34 Directors of Athletics, Aquatics, Cornell Wellness, Physical Education, Recreational
35 Services, and Head Varsity Swimming Coaches.

36
37 **Be it finally resolved** that the president of Cornell University support the faculty, students and
38 staff communities and constituencies represented through the Employee Assembly by
39 advocating for the inclusion and prioritization of a new natatorium in the “Do the
40 Greatest Good” capital campaign. A copy of this resolution shall be shared with the
41 Provost and the Vice President for Alumni Affairs.

42
43
44 **No signature block is present until the resolution has been disposed of by the Assembly**
45 **(Passed, Failed, Withdrawn, etc.) Then a block with the certifying member (customarily**
46 **Chair/Vice-Chair) verifying the authenticity and vote tally of the resolution.**

47

48 **Appendix A: Background**

49
50 **Background**

51 This resolution arises from the imminent need for Cornell University to develop plans, fundraise, and
52 construct a new natatorium. This resolution seeks to support the F.S. Proposed Resolution, sponsored by
53 Faculty Senate senators Ashleigh Newman, Yuval Grossman, and at least 11 other faculty senators.

54
55 The Campus Welfare Committee (hereby, the Committee) is charged with ensuring that diversity and
56 inclusion, family support, and health services for the Cornell student body, faculty, and staff is prioritized
57 in both conversation and action. The F.S. Proposed Resolution advocates for the construction of a new
58 natatorium to benefit the mental and physical health of the entire Cornell community. As such, the
59 Committee is compelled to support the F.S. Proposed Resolution.

60
61 As outlined in the F.S. Proposed Resolution, swimming and access to water-based exercise have proven
62 benefits for mental health. These benefits include increasing self-esteem among college students,
63 combatting Seasonal Affective Disorder (common in climates similar to Cornell’s), and potentially
64 alleviating mental health concerns brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Indoor swimming facilities
65 play a key role in providing access to free, indoor recreation and exercise options for students seeking to
66 exercise their mental and physical well-being.

67
68 Unimpeded access to swimming facilities (meaning indoor swimming facilities, given Cornell’s climate
69 during most of the academic year) is also an equity concern. As outlined in THE F.S. Proposed
70 Resolution, people of color make up the majority of enrolled students in beginning swimming classes
71 offered at Cornell. Citing the Resolution, “students who have completed this course out of necessity
72 report undergoing a transformative experience starting with reluctance, fear, and dread to one of immense
73 pride and accomplishment when they learn how to swim and pass Cornell’s swim test.”

74
75 Additionally, the Committee has been made aware that, due to a limitation of access to the pools made in
76 part to extend the lifespan of the existing pools, women’s open swimming hours have been cut. Women’s
77 swim hours have historically provided a safe space for women to access swimming facilities, to network,
78 and to build community at Cornell. The elimination of this program has been met with disappointment
79 from the female aquatic community at Cornell.

80
81 As a result of decreased pool hours, unexpected pool closures, and an overall reduction in pool
82 availability, the aquatic community and culture is being pushed out of Cornell. Specifically, many
83 faculty, staff, and retirees are now swimming off campus (YMCA, Island Fitness, Borg Warner). In
84 addition, the Cornell Varsity swimming and diving teams had to hold all home fall meets at Ithaca
85 College, and the Cornell water polo team is only able to obtain one hour of practice time per week at
86 Ithaca College. In an effort to attract and retain both academic and athletic talent, the offerings must
87 improve.

88
89 In alignment with THE F.S. Proposed Resolution, the Committee recommends incorporating the
90 construction of a natatorium at Cornell within the scope of the “Do the Greatest Good” campaign. To
91 quote THE F.S. Proposed Resolution, “a modern natatorium is an eight-lane, 50-meter by 25-yard pool
92 that is at minimum 9 feet deep, with 14-foot depth in the diving well (for 3-meter springboard diving).”

93 **Appendix B: Faculty Senate Proposed Solution; Updated 2/21/22 to reflect changes in the**
94 **F.S. Resolution**

95
96 **Proposed Resolution: Inclusion and Prioritization of a New Natatorium in the ‘To Do the**
97 **Greatest Good’ Capital Campaign Faculty**

98 **Senator Co-sponsors:**

99 Ashleigh Newman
100 Yuval Grossman
101 Carrie Adler
102 Doug Antczak
103 Alexandra Blackman
104 Elizabeth Bunting
105 Thomas Bjorkman
106 Abigail Cohn
107 Laura Goodman
108 Kelly Hume
109 Steven Jackson
110 Carolyn McDaniel
111 Thomas Overton
112 Itziar Rodriguez de Rivera
113 Tracy Stokol
114 Joe Wakshlag
115 David Zax

116

117 **Committee Sponsor:**

118 Faculty Advisory Committee on Athletics and Physical Education

119

120

121 **Background:**

122 This resolution arises from the imminent need for Cornell University to develop plans, fundraise,
123 and construct a new natatorium.

124

125 Many Cornell community members utilize the aquatic facilities on Cornell’s campus including
126 students, faculty (both current and Emeritus), and staff. It is estimated that over 600 students use
127 Cornell’s pools from the following groups: varsity swimming and diving teams, physical
128 education classes (beginner, intermediate, and conditioning swimming; diving, scuba diving,
129 lifeguarding, synchronized swimming, and kayaking), swimming and water polo club teams,
130 physical therapy, inner tube water polo intramural, naval reserve officer training corps (ROTC),
131 and autonomous underwater vehicle club. In addition, in fiscal year 2018-2019, 1,875 students
132 and 742 faculty, staff, and retirees swam during open swim offerings resulting in 23,987 total
133 swims (43% of which were students, 57% non-students).¹ Cornell recreation services also offers
134 Aqua Fit and Zumba classes.

135

136 Swimming and other water-based exercise have proven benefits for both physical and mental
137 health, including an increase in self-esteem in college students.² In particular, swimming during

138 the winter has been shown to improve general well-being.³ This is relevant for the Cornell
139 community, as many suffer from the winter blues and Seasonal Affective Disorder due to
140 Ithaca’s long, cloudy winters.⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in an increase in
141 depression symptoms⁵, bringing to the forefront the need to prioritize preventative measures that
142 benefit mental health.⁶

143
144 While Cornell has three pools on campus [two in Teagle Hall (1951) and one in Helen Newman
145 Hall (1963)], they are 71 and 59 years old, respectively, and no longer meet industry standards
146 for a modern facility. Two are six-lane, 25-yard pools, and the third is a “learn to swim”
147 fourlane, 20-yard pool, all with insufficient surrounding deck space. A modern natatorium is an
148 eight-lane, 50-meter by 25 yard pool that is at minimum 9 feet deep, with 14 foot depth in the
149 diving well (for 3-meter springboard diving). The main pool in Teagle Hall is the sole facility
150 that can be used for swimming and diving competition, as Helen Newman lacks diving boards
151 and swimming starting blocks, with undersized swimming lanes that are too narrow and shallow.
152 Even at Teagle, the varied depth is not ideal for water polo play, and swimming and diving
153 cannot occur concurrently, as the diving well is integrated into the 25-yard main pool footprint.
154 The smaller pool in Teagle Hall is used for physical therapy, physical education classes, and
155 aspects of varsity use (e.g., cooling down for meets), but cannot be used for competition, water
156 polo play, or the underwater vehicle club, due to the truncated length and/or insufficient depth.

157
158 While Cornell’s current aquatic facilities have long been out-of-date and inferior to our Ivy
159 League and many non-Ivy League peers (see Appendix 1), in recent years, there has been
160 increased closures of the pools, including those of longer duration, due to unsafe water quality
161 conditions and failed regular maintenance. A 2019 study of the pools concluded the pools do not
162 meet current New York state standards for swimming pool turnover rates, contributing to the

163
164 ¹ 2019 Summary on Cornell pool use.
165 ² [Health Benefits of Water-based Exercise](#), Center for Disease Control and Prevention.
166 Howley, EK. [4 Reasons Why Swimming is Great for Mental Health](#). *U.S. Masters Swimming*. January 6, 2021.
167 Zhang, Hui, Luo Shi. [Empirical Analysis of the Influence of Swimming Training on Mental Health and Positive](#)
168 [Emotions of College Students](#). *Revista Argentina de Clinica Psicologica*; Buenos Aires. Vol 29, Issue 1, 2020: 242.
169 Muhamad, TA et al. [Effects of Swimming on Self-Esteem among Female College Students](#). *Asian Social Science*.
170 Vol. 9 No. 16; 2013:74-80.
171 ³ Huttunen P, et al. 2004. [Winter swimming improves general well-being](#). *Int J Circumpolar Health*, 63:2, 140-144.
172 ⁴ Cornell Health. [Beating the Winter Blues: A Guide on Getting Through Winter at Cornell](#). October 2019.
173 ⁵ Ettman, CK et al. [Prevalence of Depression Symptoms in US Adults Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).
174 *JAMA Network Open*. September 2, 2020.
175 ⁶ Lieber, M. [What regular swimming does for the body and mind](#). CNN health. July 16, 2021.
176 poor water quality.⁷ Decreased pool usage was recommended as one way to prolong the life of
177 these facilities. As a result of this recommendation and the frequent, unexpected pool closures,
178 there has been progressively reduced pool availability for all the stakeholders detailed above.
179 This has been the source of increasing frustration for Cornell pool users, as publicized in the
180 Cornell Daily Sun.⁸ In 2020, \$750,000 was invested in all three pools for new sand filters, repair
181 of some plumbing, as well as structural shoring. The decision was made to use the less expensive

182 wooden beams, instead of steel, because the steel would last longer than the lifespan of the pools
183 they were supporting. These improvements are expected to extend the life of the pool by
184 approximately five years but are in no way a permanent solution to the aged facilities' problems.
185 In addition, Teagle Hall needs a new roof, which is estimated to cost between ten and twelve
186 million dollars and would require all occupants to vacate for at least a ten-month period, which
187 comes with it additional relocation costs. A better investment of the University's money would
188 be to put this towards the construction of a new natatorium. Cornell Facilities Management
189 warns that the pools may fail at any time despite these recent palliative measures. No other
190 college or university in Appendix 1 is without a functioning pool.

191
192 One consequence of no pool on campus would mean the termination of the beginning swimming
193 class (PE 1100), in which people of color represented 89.7% of enrolled students from 2018 –
194 2020.⁹ Students who have completed this course out of necessity report undergoing a
195 transformative experience starting with reluctance, fear, and dread to one of immense pride and
196 accomplishment when they learn how to swim and pass Cornell's swim test (see Appendix 2).¹⁰
197 By having this requirement, Cornell University makes a statement that swimming is an important
198 life skill that will help break the cycle of parents who do not know how to swim and therefore do
199 not encourage their children to learn to swim.¹¹ In the United States, an average of 3,957
200 unintentional drowning deaths occurred each year from 2010-2019.¹² Drowning death rates for
201 American Indian or Alaska Native and non-Hispanic Black persons are higher than that of White
202 persons¹³, likely due to generational inequities in access. Implementing community-level
203 interventions such as basic swimming instruction are encouraged as means to reduce racial
204 disparities in drowning rates. Therefore, providing Cornell students access to pools and
205 swimming instruction is a matter of diversity, equity, and inclusion importance, as well.

206
207 Even if all three existing pools were fully operational, they no longer meet the ever-expanding
208 needs of the Cornell community. Due to the limited number of lanes and inability to have

209
210 ⁷ Helen Newman and Teagle Halls Pool Study. 2019. Councilman-Hunsaker Aquatics for Life.

211 ⁸ Kempff, Brendan. [Cornell's Pool Problem Needs a Fresh Solution](#). Cornell Daily Sun. September 23, 2021.

212 ⁹ Cornell University PE 1100 enrollment data. Fall 2018 – Spring 2020.

213
214 ¹⁰ Jain, A. [A Changing Perspective of the Swim Test](#). Retracting a Former Column. Cornell Daily Sun. March 29,
215 2017.

¹² [Drowning facts](#), Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

¹³ Clemens T, et al. [Persistent Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Fatal Unintentional Drowning Rates Among Persons Aged](#)

216 ¹¹ [History of the Cornell Swim Test](#).

217 [<29 years – United States, 1999-2019](#). MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2021;70:869-874.

218 multiple groups in a pool at one time, the pools are used up to 15.75 hours per day (6:00 am –
219 11:15 pm) to accommodate all stakeholders. Whereas at Ithaca College, for example, their
220 50meter pool can accommodate eighteen, 25-yard, lanes of swimming, *as well as* diving at the

221 same time. This maximizes the number of occupants in the facility at one time, allowing for
222 increased availability and at more ideal times of day.

223
224 In addition to the inadequate swimming pools, the programmatic changes over the life of the
225 facilities no longer provide sufficient and equitable use for visitors. When Teagle Hall was
226 originally constructed, it was built as a male-only athletic facility and the modifications for
227 female and transgender and gender non-conforming persons are inequitable and insufficient. In
228 2018, the University Assembly passed U.A. Resolution #12: Increasing Access to Gender
229 Neutral Bathrooms on Campus¹ to expand inclusion and comfort. The Student Assembly
230 similarly passed S.A. Resolution #21: Availability of Accessible Gender-Neutral Bathrooms and
231 Locker Rooms on Campus.² Although the current facilities have been either modified or are
232 being prioritized to meet this resolution, they will not be equitable in their distribution to all
233 parties due to design and structural limitations to the buildings. A new facility designed with
234 these programmatic requirements would be the most cost efficient and effective way to address
235 this University priority.

236
237 In April 2020, Cornell University published its Mental Health Review Final Report. It was stated
238 that Cornell has a “culture of competition [that] may take on an unhealthy cycle of expectation
239 and behavior that can reach traumatizing levels for students, faculty, and staff.”¹⁶ In examining
240 and exploring the ways to improve the mental health of the Cornell community, the report was
241 broken down into four sections: A) foster a healthy educational environment; B) promote social
242 connectedness, and resilience; C) increasing help-seeking behavior, and identifying people in
243 need of care; and D) provide mental and medical health services. In Section B under
244 Opportunities, it reads, “It is important to note that when asked for their recommendations,
245 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students consistently prioritized the need for access to
246 free physical fitness opportunities to cope with stress and build resilience. With Ithaca’s climate,
247 students want free and convenient indoor fitness options.” The report acknowledged “the
248 challenge that this presents given both financial and facility constraints.” Recommendation B.2.2
249 under Wellbeing reads, “Prioritize fundraising for free physical fitness under Affordability within
250 the capital campaign.” It is important to note that pool access is free to all Cornell students,
251 unlike other fitness centers on campus that require a paid Cornell Fitness Center membership.
252 Ideas such as “virtual fitness classes” and the use of “virtual and augmented

253
254 reality” were proposed in the report as alternatives to fitness centers on campus. There is no
255 virtual equivalent for aquatic activities, and these suggestions simply fail to meet the mental
256 health needs of Cornell’s students, as well as faculty and staff.

257

¹ Cornell University, University Assembly, U.A. Resolution # 12: Increasing Access to Gender Neutral Bathrooms on Campus, March 2018. https://assembly.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/ua_resolution_12_gender_neutral_bathrooms_amended_as_of_04.10.18.pdf

² Cornell University, Student Assembly, S.A. Resolution #21: Availability of Accessible Gender-Neutral Bathrooms and Locker Rooms on Campus. <https://archive.assembly.cucloud.net/SA/20111103R21.html>

¹⁶ Cornell University Mental Health Review Final Report. April 2020.

258 In an email to the Cornell community on October 18, 2021, President Martha Pollack announced
259 Cornell University’s new capital campaign project, “To Do the Greatest Good.” The campaign’s
260 official website lays out the goal of raising at least \$5 billion over the next five years through the
261 connections of at least 200,000 Cornellians.³ This campaign provides the rare opportunity to
262 reach major donors across all of Cornell and finally raise the funds necessary to make this long
263 overdue project a reality. A modern natatorium on par with our peers both in Ithaca and beyond,
264 would do an enormous amount of good for Cornell and the broader Ithaca community benefitting
265 physical and mental well-being. The fact that this need is not even listed as a university priority
266 is disgraceful. The process of project approval, architectural planning, demolition, and
267 construction is likely to take 7-10 years. If this process began today, this timeline is well beyond
268 the estimated 5-year remaining lifespan of the pools. Our aged, failing facilities cannot wait.

269
270 The thought of a Cornell University with no functioning pool is unfathomable and unacceptable.

271
272
273 **The Resolution:**

274
275 *Whereas*, participation in physical, cultural, and social activities outside of one’s primary studies
276 or work provides individuals with a sense of belonging at Cornell and enriches their overall
277 wellbeing.

278
279 *Whereas*, the pools in Teagle Hall and Helen Newman Hall (further referred to as “the pools”)
280 serve a large and diverse population of Cornell community members including students, faculty,
281 and staff in endeavors including varsity athletics, physical education classes, aquatic-based
282 physical therapy, clubs – both academic and athletic, open lap swimming, ROTC training, and
283 group fitness classes.

284
285 *Whereas*, the pools no longer meet the needs of the Cornell community as detailed above, and
286 have a finite lifespan, which are estimated to end at any time between now and 2025.

287
288 *Whereas*, approving, planning, fundraising, and building a new natatorium can take up to ten
289 years. Cornell University faces the certain reality of having no operational pool on its campus.

290
291 *Whereas*, Cornell University has long valued swimming as an important life skill to prevent fatal
292 unintentional drowning, as demonstrated by over 100 years of a graduation requirement for all
293 undergraduate students to swim 75 yards or pass two semesters of beginning swimming (PE
294 1100).

295
296 *Whereas*, providing an inviting, modern, safe, and accessible environment for aquatic activities
297 provides Cornell students, faculty, and staff the ability to exercise year-round, which is a proven
298 positive contributor to mental health.

³ 17 <https://greatestgood.cornell.edu/>

299

300 *Whereas*, recommendation B.2.2 of the Cornell University Mental Health Review Final Report
301 reads, “Prioritize fundraising for free physical fitness under Affordability within the capital
302 campaign.”

303

304 *Whereas*, we recognize there are many needs of the University, it would be in the University’s
305 best interest to serve those that are of the most imminent need to its community.

306

307 *Be it resolved*, that the Faculty Senate implore the administration to include and prioritize a new
308 natatorium to the list of fundraisings items donors may directly contribute to in Cornell
309 University’s ‘To Do the Greatest Good’ capital campaign.

310

311 *Be it further resolved*, that a new natatorium should be of sufficient size and quality to meet the
312 current and future needs of the Cornell community. To help ensure this, the planning needs to
313 involve Cornell leaders with knowledge and expertise in this area including the Directors of
314 Athletics, Aquatics, Physical Education, Recreational Services, and Head Varsity Swimming
315 Coaches.

316

317

318 **Faculty Co-Sponsors**

319

320 Jessica McCart

321 Allison Miller

322 Susan Fubini

323 Paul Nadasdy

324

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326