

EA R6: Reducing Community Violence and Hate through Staff Involvement and Support

Abstract: In response to recent cases of violence and discrimination on campus, the EA makes this statement in opposition and calls on the administration to take specific actions to challenge institutional inequity.

Sponsored by: Jeramy Kruser, Executive Vice Chair, Research, Tech Transfer & Information Technology Representative

Reviewed by: Executive Committee, 09/18/2017

Whereas, over the past year there has been an increase in hate-based incidents reported on college campuses across the country; and

Whereas, the data collected by Cornell's Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity shows that Cornell has experienced a similarly steep increase in reports of bias; and the current resource centers tasked with addressing issues of bias are underfunded and understaffed.

Whereas, on September 6, 2017 it was reported that students from Zeta Psi, a Cornell University fraternity, shouted "build a wall" and "let's build a wall around the LLC" at the Latino Living Center; and

Whereas, on September 15, 2017 students from the Chi Chapter of Psi Upsilon, a fraternity no longer affiliated with Cornell University, allegedly used racial slurs against a Black Cornell student and violently assaulted him; and

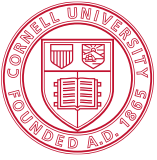
Whereas, later that same day on September 15, 2017, two or more Cornell students were captured on video using racial slurs against another student; and

Whereas, Policy 6.4 states that "Cornell University is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning, living, and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff members"; and

Whereas, it is a violation of the Campus Code of Conduct to "harass another person...by acting toward that person in a manner that is by objective measure threatening, abusive, or severely annoying and that is beyond the scope of free speech;" and

Whereas, it is a violation of the Campus Code of Conduct to "assault or cause any physical injury to another person on the basis of disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation or affectional preference;" and

Whereas, the standard of evidence employed by Policy 6.4 and the Code of Conduct are inconsistent; and



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Whereas, pursuant to New York State Penal Law Article 485, hate crimes “do more than threaten the safety and welfare of all citizens” because they “inflict on victims incalculable physical and emotional damage and tear at the very fabric of free society,” “send a powerful message of intolerance and discrimination,” and “disrupt entire communities and vitiate the civility that is essential to healthy democratic processes;” and

Whereas, bias, discrimination, and hate crimes, by their nature, affect the fabric of the Cornell community, prevent the fulfillment of Cornell’s motto “I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study,” and

Whereas, these acts are contrary to all that we, the representative employees of Cornell, stand for; and

Whereas, these recent events place the onus on Cornell University to establish and justify its members’ trust in our community.

Be it therefore resolved, the Cornell Employee Assembly unequivocally condemns these and other violent, racist, and bigoted actions that deny our staff, faculty, and students the right to physical safety and the right to express themselves with the expectation of mutual respect from their peers and colleagues; and

Be it further resolved, the administration will include staff, in a regular and meaningful way, in strategic diversity and inclusion planning efforts across the university.

Be it further resolved, the administration will develop a more effective institutional accountability structure for diversity and inclusion efforts across the university by:

- considering the creation of a central office focused on institutional equity and the hiring of an executive to oversee initiatives for all populations; and
- defining the roles of the University Diversity Officers, or implementing a more effective administrative model and more thorough accountability measures for progress on initiatives under Cornell’s framework.

Be it further resolved, the administration will bolster its investment in staff resources by:

- increasing investment in the staffing needs of the various resource centers and providing long-term funding for additional full-time positions; and
- investing in staff to support employees and faculty of various identities in the workplace, and forming strategic partnerships with local agencies to support employees and faculty living in the Ithaca and surrounding areas.



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Be it further resolved, the administration in collaboration with representative staff, will invest in the ongoing education and development of staff and enhance initiatives that build interpersonal skills and promote mutual understanding by:

- developing, on an as-needed basis, programming that is responsive to current events and provides a space for staff to engage in dialogue and collectively process and understand why particular actions take place; and
- developing and implementing an ongoing, longitudinal education model for employees that builds awareness of identities, examines the impact of identity on others in the workplace, and provides opportunities for practical application of inclusive strategies in the workplace for the entirety of the employee lifecycle; and
- increasing the frequency of intentional, informal interactions between staff to foster trust, meaningful connections, and innovation.

Be it finally resolved, the administration will engage the staff community in discussing and defining any changes to policies around freedom of speech, including:

- clarifying the limits of free speech in the context of the workplace, particularly the ability to participate in faculty and student-led demonstrations or for staff to voice their own concerns and opinions in the workplace; and
- working with the University Assembly to institute a consistent standard of evidence for bias-related/hate crimes under the Campus Code of Conduct and Policy 6.4, and clearly articulating the interaction with and role of HR in assisting in the resolution of these matters.

Adopted by Vote of the Assembly (19-1-0), January 16, 2018,

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeramy Kruser, *Executive Vice Chair and Research, Tech Transfer & Information Technology Representative*