



Resolution 7: Condemnation of the dangerously late closure of Ithaca campus on 7 February 2020

Abstract: On 6 and 7 February an anticipated winter storm hit Ithaca. Despite dangerous conditions before the start of classes and the suspension of all bus service soon after classes began, classes on Ithaca campus were held until 10:02 AM and campus remained open until 12:02 PM, at which time students, instructors and staff who had or were already required to travel to campus were advised to not travel. This late closure needlessly endangered the community and was especially callous toward those with mobility barriers.

Sponsored by: Jaron Kent-Dobias

Whereas, as early as 2 February the National Weather Service (NWS) issued a Winter Weather Advisory for Tompkins County, forecasting a ‘potent’ storm Thursday night into Friday morning.

Whereas, midday 6 February the NWS upgraded this forecast to a Winter Storm Warning, the highest level of winter weather alert.

Whereas, the Ithaca City School District announced schools were to be closed 7 February on 6 February at 7:07 PM.

Whereas, the Winter Storm Warning was renewed 7 February around 3:50 AM as snow accumulated.

Whereas, many Cornell staff and students were required to travel to campus before Cornell’s eateries opened at 7:00 AM and Cornell’s first classes began at 8:00 AM.

Whereas, TCAT suspended all bus service at 8:42 AM.

Whereas, graduate instructors and students continued to travel to campus by foot and private vehicle for 9:05 AM, 9:30 AM, 10:00 AM, and 10:10 AM classes they are required to take and instruct.

Whereas, through this time campus walkways and roads went unmaintained, with most “Winter Maintenance” staircases harboring a dangerous half-foot of snow and ice.

Whereas, at 10:02 AM on 7 February 2020—80 minutes after bus service was suspended—the Cornell University Office of Emergency Management issued a CornellALERT cancelling classes on Ithaca campus and encouraging staff, students, and instructors “to prioritize their safety” and “not to travel at this time.”

Whereas, at this time the many staff, students, and faculty who had traveled or were traveling to campus faced unsafe conditions to travel home.



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32 **Whereas**, the absence of maintenance and closure of buses while campus remained open was
33 especially treacherous for students who face mobility barriers and rely on accessible transit and clear
34 sidewalks.

35 **Whereas**, at 12:02 AM on 7 February 2020 the Cornell University Office of Emergency
36 Management issued a CornellALERT closing Ithaca campus and encouraging staff, students, and
37 instructors to “consider remaining on campus until roads improve.”

38 **Be it therefore resolved**, holding classes the morning of 7 February until 10:02 AM and keeping
39 campus open until 12:02 PM needlessly endangered staff, students, and faculty.

40 **Be it further resolved**, Cornell University must prioritize the safety of its community and act on
41 serious weather warnings before students, instructors, and staff are required to arrive on campus.

42 **Be it further resolved**, Cornell University must prioritize the accessibility of its institution and
43 never expect that students, staff, and instructors can navigate a campus with snow and ice on
44 sidewalks, hills, and stairs.

45 **Be it finally resolved**, the GPSA condemns the choice to wait until late in the morning of 7
46 February to cancel classes and close Ithaca campus.

47 Respectfully Submitted,

48 Jaron Kent-Dobias

49 Chair of the Student Advocacy Committee