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2 **GPSA Resolution 13: Calling For the Accommodation of**
3 **International Students as Leaders at Maplewood Apartments**

4 *April 9th, 2018*

5
6 Sponsored by: Manisha Munasinghe, GPSA Executive Vice-President; Ekarina Winarto, GPSA
7 President; Nathaniel Rogers, GPSA Counsel; Aravind Natarajan, General Committee, Graduate School;
8 Prateek Sehgal, GCA, Hasbrouck Apartments; Hao Shi, GCA, Hasbrouck Apartments

9
10 **Whereas**, “about 13% of Cornell’s graduate and professional students (GPS) live on campus” in housing
11 complexes such as Hasbrouck Apartments or Thurston Court¹; and

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13 **Whereas**, international students make up 47% of the GPS community, and these students can often face
14 difficulty finding affordable and secure housing while overseas²;

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16 **Whereas**, about 72% of graduate and professional students living in University Housing are international
17 students, a testament to their reliance on on-campus housing as a safe space ¹; and

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19 **Whereas**, Graduate Community Advisors (GCAs) are GPS who live and work among their peers in the
20 GPS on-campus communities³; and

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22 **Whereas**, while a GCA’s “primary role is to help create a sense of community within their respective
23 areas”, they also serve as a general resource to all residents and a main point of contact during
24 emergencies; and

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26 **Whereas**, Maplewood Park was an on-campus housing complex built in 1989 had a capacity of 360 beds
27 for graduate and professionals students; and

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29 **Whereas**, Maplewood Park was an attractive housing option for graduate and professional students as it
30 was family-friendly both in price and programming, walking distance from campus, promoted community
31 building/support, had global leadership, and had payment/deposit options that are adjusted to Cornell’s
32 payroll calendar; and

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34 **Whereas**, in May 2015, students were notified that that Maplewood Park would be closing at the end of
35 the 2015 - 2016 academic year⁴; and

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¹ <https://living.sas.cornell.edu/live/wheretolive/gradhousing/upload/Graduate-and-Professional-Housing-Guide-2016-17-web-version.pdf>

² <https://www.cornell.edu/about/facts.cfm>

³ <https://living.sas.cornell.edu/participate/employment/GCA.cfm>

⁴ <http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2015/05/cornell-addresses-short-and-long-term-student-housing-needs>



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37 **Whereas**, on January 28th, 2016, the Buildings and Properties Committee of the Cornell University
38 Board of Trustees approved the selection of EdR for a new housing complex on the site of Maplewood
39 Park¹; and

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41 **Whereas**, Cornell entered into a Public Private Partnership (P3) with EdR “outlining a framework for
42 Cornell to retain ownership of the land, but with EdR financing, constructing and managing the new
43 housing project”⁵; and

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45 **Whereas**, the Graduate & Professional Student Assembly (GPSA) was asked for input and partnership
46 during the redevelopment planning, culminating in testimonials to help EdR, Cornell’s P3 partner, gain
47 the permit for construction; and

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49 **Whereas**, the GPSA recognizes that EdR has listened to many student concerns such as keeping unit
50 prices comparable to other current on-campus housing, providing in-unit washer and dryer, and allowing
51 pets; and

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53 **Whereas**, during a meeting between EdR, Cornell administrators, and GPS designed to solicit feedback
54 regarding GPS housing needs, students discovered that international students would no longer be eligible
55 to serve as community leaders/GCAs in Maplewood and voiced concerns; and

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57 **Whereas**, the inability to hire international students as GCAs in Maplewood effectively strips
58 international students, who make up a significant portion of the demographic in GPSA on-campus
59 housing, the opportunity for equitable representation in leadership positions that provide programming
60 and mental health support to residents; and

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62 **Whereas**, while GCAs are not hired based on nationality, international students have always been
63 strongly represented among the current and previous GCAs at Hasbrouck and the old Maplewood
64 complex;

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66 **Whereas**, international students are an especially vulnerable group with students having concerns ranging
67 from a language barrier, stark cultural differences, new and challenging academic setting, unfamiliar
68 environmental conditions, and isolation from family and support networks, leading to significant mental
69 and emotional stresses; and

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71 **Whereas**, these arduous experiences are further exacerbated by cultural norms that disincentivize
72 reaching out for help and rampant imposter syndrome that impedes their ability to reach out to students
73 who do not have a shared experience for assistance; and

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76 **Whereas**, international students, therefore, are generally more comfortable seeking support from other
77 international student leaders in their community who may have a similar experience; and

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⁵ <http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2016/02/board-gives-green-light-new-grad-student-housing>



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79 **Whereas**, we believe that international student GCAs play an important role in building international
80 student community, helping international students acclimate to life at Cornell, and serving as a
81 community leader in GPS housing complexes; and

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83 **Whereas**, while we recognize that, under the new P3 model, it is illegal for EdR to hire international
84 students as GCAs, students reached out to Cornell administrators in the hopes of finding a way to ensure
85 the continued existence of international community leaders at Maplewood, even if it would be in a
86 different form; and

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88 **Whereas**, GPS leaders suggested that Cornell University engage Residence Community Leaders as
89 Fellows paid and appointed through Cornell's Off-Campus Housing Office (a branch of Student and
90 Campus Life administered by Dean Vijay Pendakur), where their appointments would be made by
91 Cornell University, thus allowing international students to apply and potentially serve as Community
92 Leaders; and

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94 **Whereas**, despite repeated attempts to find a solution, it was made clear that the University will not be
95 investing resources to create alternative opportunities for international students to serve as community
96 leaders in Maplewood and receive compensation for their services; and

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98 **Whereas**, EDR may encourage international students to volunteer their time and effort to assist their
99 endeavors, as yet another form of unpaid labor imposed GPS and a burden on a minority group; and

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101 **Whereas**, it was callously suggested that domestic students can be trained to understand and support the
102 unique challenges of international students, and that international students can be "on-boarded" through
103 presentations and workshops; and

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105 **Whereas**, the GPS leadership was shocked by the proposed idea that a homogenous group of students can
106 be "trained" to empathize and support populations of different identities, or that students of different
107 identities can be "on-boarded" to adapt to a new environment through presentations and meetings – ideas
108 that undermine the value of diversity in leadership roles and trivialize the experience of being a minority;
109 and

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112 **Whereas**, we reject the idea that community leadership teams exclusively consisting of domestic students
113 can provide the same level of community support compared to a diverse team of students that includes
114 international students;

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116 **Whereas**, we think that Cornell's refusal to explore ways to accommodate international community
117 leaders at Maplewood Park, based on the fact that Maplewood is now an off-campus housing, is
118 misleading because this housing complex is advertised specifically in the official Graduate School
119 Announcements, unlike other off-campus housing options; and

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121 **Whereas**, acknowledging that Maplewood Park is exclusively off-campus housing means that Cornell
122 has taken away an existing on-campus graduate housing with this new funding model;



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Be it therefore resolved, that the GPSA reiterates its commitment to international students and their right to apply and serve as community leaders in graduate and professional student housing complexes; and

Be it further resolved, that we urge Cornell University to find a solution that allows international students to serve as paid community leaders at the new Maplewood Apartments; and

Be it finally resolved, if Cornell is unable to find a solution that allows international students to serve as community leaders in off-campus housing complexes under the P3 model with Cornell University, we ask that the University

- 1) Retain the remaining on-campus housing options for graduate and professional students on-campus and away from the P3 model so that international students can continue to serve as community leaders and resources to peers.
- 2) Stop providing Maplewood exclusive marketing opportunities that selectively present it over other off-campus housing options.
- 3) Introspect its commitment to creating an inclusive welcoming space for international students where leadership positions for this community are diminished