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

4 *April 9th, 2018*

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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**, EdR, as a private entity, would only legally be able to hire international students if they have
58 Curricular Practical Training (CPT) work permission, which in practice would make international
59 students ineligible for these positions; and

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

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

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

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75 **Whereas**, these arduous experiences are further exacerbated by cultural norms that disincentivize
76 reaching out for help and rampant imposter syndrome that impedes their ability to reach out to students
77 who do not have a shared experience for assistance; 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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Whereas, international students, therefore, are generally more comfortable seeking support from other international student leaders in their community who may have a similar experience; and

~~**Whereas**, international students have issues unique to them and are generally more comfortable seeking support from other international student leaders in their community;~~

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

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

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

~~**Whereas**, despite repeated attempts to find a solution, it was made clear that international students will not be eligible for these positions and that the University will not be investing resources would not be to creating alternative opportunities for international students to serve as community leaders in Maplewood and receive compensation for their services; and~~

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

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

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

~~**Whereas**, Cornell and EdR attempted to assure students that domestic students serving in these positions would be well-trained in building community amongst international students; and~~



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122 **Whereas**, we ~~do not have confidence~~ are distraught by this in this proposal and ~~we~~ reject the idea that
123 community leadership teams exclusively consisting of domestic students can provide the same level of
124 community support compared to a diverse team of students that includes international students;

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

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

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134 **Be it therefore resolved**, that the GPSA reiterates its commitment to international students and their right
135 to apply and serve as **community leaders** ~~Graduate Community Advisors~~ in graduate and professional
136 student housing complexes ~~and have their identity represented in community leaders~~; and

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138 **Be it further resolved**, that we urge Cornell University to find a solution that allows international
139 students to serve as **community leaders** ~~Graduate Community Advisors~~ at the new Maplewood
140 Apartments; and

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

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

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