

# Resolution 46: Support of a New Natatorium (Pool) in the ‘Do the Greatest Good’ Campaign

**Abstract:** This resolution calls for Supporting the Faculty Senates Resolution on a New Natatorium (pool facility) to be included in the ‘Do the Greatest Good’ Campaign, overall increasing the access and equity of one of Cornell’s central facilities of physical recreation.

**Sponsored by:** Duncan Cady ’23, Anuli Ononye ’22

**Reviewed by:** Executive Board, 4-0-1

**Type of Action:** Legislation

**Originally Presented:** 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**Current Status:**

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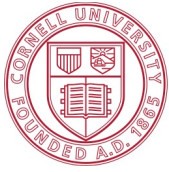
**Whereas,** the Student Assembly endorses the [Faculty Senate Proposed Resolution: Inclusion and Prioritization of a New Natatorium in the ‘Do the Greatest Good’ Capital Campaign](#), included here as an Addendum to this resolution,

**Whereas,** the University Assembly has endorsed this Faculty Senate resolution in the March 8<sup>th</sup> (eighth), 2022 meeting through [University Assembly Resolution 5: Support for Faculty Senate Proposed Resolution: Inclusion and Prioritization of a New Natatorium in the ‘Do the Greatest Good’ Capital Campaign](#),

**Whereas,** the Faculty Senate Proposed Resolution outlines specific background on the current situation and that context which remains unsatisfactory and will likely be unusable in the near future,

**Whereas,** the needs of the Cornell community for universal access to free, indoor recreation, sporting event facilities, and exercise facilities are not being satisfied and at this current rate Cornell will fall behind our peer institutions,

**Whereas,** some faculty, staff, students, are no longer able to participate in aquatic fitness at Cornell and the access of this facility has significantly declined,



Cornell University  
Student Assembly

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31 **Whereas**, the Student Assembly is charged in Article II of the Charter with the authority and  
32 responsibility “to examine any matters which involve the interests or concern the welfare of the  
33 student community”,

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35 **Be it therefore resolved**, the Student Assembly aligns its support with the Faculty Senate  
36 Proposed Resolution imploring the administration to include and prioritize a new natatorium to  
37 the list of fundraisings items donors may directly contribute to in Cornell University’s ‘Do the  
38 Greatest Good’ capital campaign for the benefit of the University and the community the  
39 University serves,

40

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

46

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

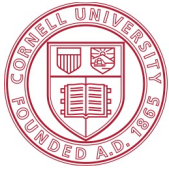
52 Respectfully Submitted,

53 Duncan Cady ’23

54 *Students With Disabilities Representative At-Large, Student Assembly*

55 Anuli Ononye ’22

56 *President, Student Assembly*



## Appendix A: Background

### 57 Background

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

61  
62 The Campus Welfare Committee (hereby, the Committee) is charged with ensuring that diversity and  
63 inclusion, family support, and health services for the Cornell student body, faculty, and staff is prioritized in  
64 both conversation and action. The F.S. Proposed Resolution advocates for the construction of a new  
65 natatorium to benefit the mental and physical health of the entire Cornell community. As such, the  
66 Committee is compelled to support the F.S. Proposed Resolution.

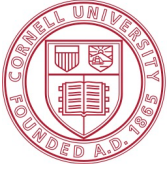
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68 As outlined in the F.S. Proposed Resolution, swimming and access to water-based exercise have proven  
69 benefits for mental health. These benefits include increasing self-esteem among college students, combatting  
70 Seasonal Affective Disorder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

74  
75 Unimpeded access to swimming facilities (meaning indoor swimming facilities, given Cornell's climate during  
76 most of the academic year) is also an equity concern. As outlined in THE F.S. Proposed Resolution, people  
77 of color make up the majority of enrolled students in beginning swimming classes offered at Cornell. Citing  
78 the Resolution, "students who have completed this course out of necessity report undergoing a  
79 transformative experience starting with reluctance, fear, and dread to one of immense pride and  
80 accomplishment when they learn how to swim and pass Cornell's swim test."

81  
82 Additionally, the Committee has been made aware that, due to a limitation of access to the pools made in part  
83 to extend the lifespan of the existing pools, women's open swimming hours have been cut. Women's swim  
84 hours have historically provided a safe space for women to access swimming facilities, to network, and to  
85 build community at Cornell. The elimination of this program has been met with disappointment from the  
86 female aquatic community at Cornell.

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

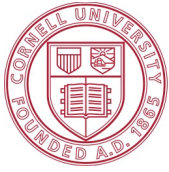
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95 In alignment with THE F.S. Proposed Resolution, the Committee recommends incorporating the  
96 construction of a natatorium at Cornell within the scope of the “Do the Greatest Good” campaign. To quote  
97 THE F.S. Proposed Resolution, “a modern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





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135 Swimming and other water-based exercise have proven benefits for both physical and mental health,  
136 including an increase in self-esteem in college students.<sup>2</sup> In particular, swimming during the winter has been  
137 shown to improve general well-being.<sup>3</sup> This is relevant for the Cornell community, as many suffer from the  
138 winter blues and Seasonal Affective Disorder due to Ithaca's long, cloudy winters.<sup>4</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic  
139 has also resulted in an increase in depression symptoms<sup>5</sup>, bringing to the forefront the need to prioritize  
140 preventative measures that benefit mental health. <sup>6</sup>

141  
142 While Cornell has three pools on campus [two in Teagle Hall (1951) and one in Helen Newman Hall (1963)],  
143 they are 71 and 59 years old, respectively, and no longer meet industry standards for a modern facility. Two  
144 are six-lane, 25-yard pools, and the third is a "learn to swim" four-lane, 20-yard pool, all with insufficient  
145 surrounding deck space. A modern natatorium is an eight-lane, 50-meter by 25 yard pool that is at minimum  
146 9 feet deep, with 14 foot depth in the diving well (for 3-meter springboard diving). The main pool in Teagle  
147 Hall is the sole facility that can be used for swimming and diving competition, as Helen Newman lacks diving  
148 boards and swimming starting blocks, with undersized swimming lanes that are too narrow and shallow. Even  
149 at Teagle, the varied depth is not ideal for water polo play, and swimming and diving cannot occur  
150 concurrently, as the diving well is integrated into the 25-yard main pool footprint. The smaller pool in Teagle  
151 Hall is used for physical therapy, physical education classes, and aspects of varsity use (e.g., cooling down for  
152 meets), but cannot be used for competition, water polo play, or the underwater vehicle club, due to the  
153 truncated length and/or insufficient depth.

154  
155 While Cornell's current aquatic facilities have long been out-of-date and inferior to our Ivy League and many  
156 non-Ivy League peers (see Appendix 1), in recent years, there has been increased closures of the pools,  
157 including those of longer duration, due to unsafe water quality conditions and failed regular maintenance. A  
158 2019 study of the pools concluded the pools do not meet current New York state standards for swimming  
159 pool turnover rates, contributing to the poor water quality.<sup>7</sup> Decreased pool usage was recommended as one  
160 way to prolong the life of these facilities. As a result of this recommendation and the frequent, unexpected  
161 pool closures, there has been progressively reduced pool availability for all the stakeholders detailed above.  
162 This has been the source of increasing frustration for Cornell pool users, as publicized in the Cornell Daily  
163 Sun.<sup>8</sup> In 2020, 1.1 million dollars were invested in all three pools for new sand filters and the repair of some  
164 plumbing. These improvements are expected to extend the life of the pool by approximately five years but are

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<sup>2</sup> [Health Benefits of Water-based Exercise](#), Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Howley, EK. [4 Reasons Why Swimming is Great for Mental Health](#). *U.S. Masters Swimming*. January 6, 2021.

Zhang, Hui, Luo Shi. [Empirical Analysis of the Influence of Swimming Training on Mental Health and Positive Emotions of College Students](#). *Revista Argentina de Clinica Psicologica*; Buenos Aires. Vol 29, Issue 1, 2020: 242.

Muhamad, TA et al. [Effects of Swimming on Self-Esteem among Female College Students](#). *Asian Social Science*. Vol. 9 No. 16; 2013:74-80.

<sup>3</sup> Huttunen P, et al. 2004. [Winter swimming improves general well-being](#). *Int J Circumpolar Health*, 63:2, 140-144.

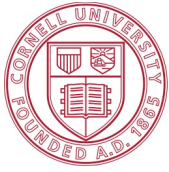
<sup>4</sup> Cornell Health. [Beating the Winter Blues: A Guide on Getting Through Winter at Cornell](#). October 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Ettman, CK et al. [Prevalence of Depression Symptoms in US Adults Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). *JAMA Network Open*. September 2, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Lieber, M. [What regular swimming does for the body and mind](#). CNN health. July 16, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Helen Newman and Teagle Halls Pool Study. 2019. *Councilman-Hunsaker Aquatics for Life*.

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



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165 in no way a permanent solution to the aging facilities' problems. Cornell Facilities Management warns that the  
166 pools may fail at any time despite these recent palliative measures. No other college or university in Appendix  
167 1 is without a functioning pool.

168  
169 One consequence of no pool on campus would mean the termination of the beginning swimming class (PE  
170 1100), in which people of color represented 89.7% of enrolled students from 2018 – 2020.<sup>9</sup> Students who  
171 have completed this course out of necessity report undergoing a transformative experience starting with  
172 reluctance, fear, and dread to one of immense pride and accomplishment when they learn how to swim and  
173 pass Cornell's swim test (see Appendix 2).<sup>10</sup> By having this requirement, Cornell University makes a statement  
174 that swimming is an important life skill that will help break the cycle of parents who do not know how to  
175 swim and therefore do not encourage their children to learn to swim.<sup>11</sup> In the United States, an average of  
176 3,957 unintentional drowning deaths occurred each year from 2010-2019.<sup>12</sup> Drowning death rates for  
177 American Indian or Alaska Native and non-Hispanic Black persons are higher than that of White persons<sup>13</sup>,  
178 likely due to generational inequities in access. Implementing community-level interventions such as basic  
179 swimming instruction are encouraged as means to reduce racial disparities in drowning rates. Therefore,  
180 providing Cornell students access to pools and swimming instruction is a matter of diversity, equity, and  
181 inclusion importance, as well.

182  
183 Even if all three existing pools were fully operational, they no longer meet the ever-expanding needs of the  
184 Cornell community. Due to the limited number of lanes and inability to have multiple groups in a pool at one  
185 time, the pools are used up to 15.75 hours per day (6:00 am – 11:15 pm) to accommodate all stakeholders.  
186 Whereas at Ithaca College, for example, their natatorium can accommodate eighteen, 25-yard, lanes of  
187 swimming, *as well as* diving at the same time. This maximizes the number of occupants in the facility at one  
188 time, allowing for increased availability and at more ideal times of day.

189  
190 In addition to the inadequate swimming pools, the programmatic changes over the life of the facilities no  
191 longer provide sufficient and equitable use for visitors. When Teagle Hall was originally constructed, it was  
192 built as a male-only athletic facility and the modifications for female and transgender and gender non-  
193 conforming persons are inequitable and insufficient. In 2018, the University Assembly passed U.A.  
194 Resolution #12: Increasing Access to Gender Neutral Bathrooms on Campus<sup>14</sup> to expand inclusion and  
195 comfort. The Student Assembly similarly passed S.A. Resolution #21: Availability of Accessible Gender-

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<sup>9</sup> Cornell University PE 1100 enrollment data. Fall 2018 – Spring 2020.

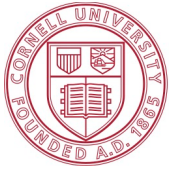
<sup>10</sup> Jain, A. [A Changing Perspective of the Swim Test](#). Retracting a Former Column. Cornell Daily Sun. March 29, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> [History of the Cornell Swim Test](#).

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

<sup>13</sup> Clemens T, et al. [Persistent Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Fatal Unintentional Drowning Rates Among Persons Aged ≤29 years – United States, 1999-2019](#). MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2021;70:869-874.

<sup>14</sup> 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](https://assembly.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/ua_resolution_12_gender_neutral_bathrooms_amended_as_of_04.10.18.pdf)



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196 Neutral Bathrooms and Locker Rooms on Campus.<sup>15</sup> Although the current facilities have been either  
197 modified or are being prioritized to meet this resolution, they will not be equitable in their distribution to all  
198 parties due to design and structural limitations to the buildings. A new facility designed with these  
199 programmatic requirements would be the most cost efficient and effective way to address this University  
200 priority.

201  
202 In April 2020, Cornell University published its Mental Health Review Final Report. It was stated that Cornell  
203 has a “culture of competition [that] may take on an unhealthy cycle of expectation and behavior that can  
204 reach traumatizing levels for students, faculty, and staff.”<sup>16</sup> In examining and exploring the ways to improve  
205 the mental health of the Cornell community, the report was broken down into four sections: A) foster a  
206 healthy educational environment; B) promote social connectedness, and resilience; C) increasing help-seeking  
207 behavior, and identifying people in need of care; and D) provide mental and medical health services. In  
208 Section B under Opportunities, it reads, “It is important to note that when asked for their recommendations,  
209 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students consistently prioritized the need for access to free physical  
210 fitness opportunities to cope with stress and build resilience. With Ithaca’s climate, students want free and  
211 convenient indoor fitness options.” The report acknowledged “the challenge that this presents given both  
212 financial and facility constraints.” Recommendation B.2.2 under Wellbeing reads, “Prioritize fundraising for  
213 free physical fitness under Affordability within the capital campaign.” It is important to note that pool access  
214 is free to all Cornell students, unlike other fitness centers on campus that require a paid Cornell Fitness  
215 Center membership. Ideas such as “virtual fitness classes” and the use of “virtual and augmented reality”  
216 were proposed in the report as alternatives to fitness centers on campus. There is no virtual equivalent for  
217 aquatic activities, and these suggestions simply fail to meet the mental health needs of Cornell’s students, as  
218 well as faculty and staff.

219  
220 In an email to the Cornell community on October 18, 2021, President Martha Pollack announced Cornell  
221 University’s new capital campaign project, “To Do the Greatest Good.” The campaign’s official website lays  
222 out the goal of raising at least \$5 billion over the next five years through the connections of at least 200,000  
223 Cornellians.<sup>17</sup> This campaign provides the rare opportunity to reach major donors across all of Cornell and  
224 finally raise the funds necessary to make this long overdue project a reality. A modern natatorium on par with  
225 our peers both in Ithaca and beyond, would do an enormous amount of good for Cornell and the broader  
226 Ithaca community benefitting physical and mental well-being. The fact that this need is not even listed as a  
227 university priority is disgraceful. The process of project approval, architectural planning, demolition, and  
228 construction is likely to take 7-10 years. If this process began today, this timeline is well beyond the estimated  
229 5-year remaining lifespan of the pools. Our aged, failing facilities cannot wait.

230  
231 The thought of a Cornell University with no functioning pool is unfathomable and unacceptable.  
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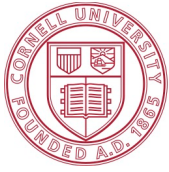
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<sup>15</sup> Cornell University, Student Assembly, S.A. Resolution #21: Availability of Accessible Gender-Neutral Bathrooms and Locker Rooms on Campus. <https://archive.assembly.cucloud.net/SA/20111103R21.html>

<sup>16</sup> Cornell University Mental Health Review Final Report. April 2020.

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





## Cornell University Student Assembly

233

234 **The Resolution:**

235

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

240

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

243

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

246

247 *Whereas*, Cornell University has long valued swimming as an important life skill to prevent fatal unintentional  
248 drowning, as demonstrated by its graduation requirement for all undergraduate students to swim 75 yards.

249

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

253

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

256

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

259

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

263

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