

Cornell University
Graduate and Professional
Student Assembly

1 Resolution 5:

2 In Support of the Proposed Renaming of
3 Cornell Plantations

4 Sponsored by: Alexander Loiben, Anna Waymack

5 **Whereas**, in 2004 Leaders at Cornell Plantations questioned the appropriateness of the name
6 “Cornell Plantations” and whether a different, more descriptive name was needed; and

7 **Whereas**, in 2009 and 2010 Plantations went through a rebranding process in an effort to better
8 define themselves, working with outside firm Lipman Hearne, to develop marketing tag lines that
9 captured the essence of experiences at Plantations and to redesign their logo to try to visually depict
10 what and who they are more clearly; and

11 **Whereas**, in 2014, Dr. Christopher Dunn started as the E. N. Wilds Director of Cornell Plantations
12 and was tasked by Dean Kathryn Boor to take an in-depth look at Plantations, their mission and
13 vision, and to see if it should be adapted to inform modern needs. She noted that one possible result
14 of this examination is the Plantations that we know today could end up looking somewhat different
15 in the future. Prospective changes could include rebranding; and

16 **Whereas**, from April 2014 through April 2015, Dr. Dunn met with Plantations’ staff, the advisory
17 council, university leadership, CALS leadership, and other community stakeholders to better
18 understand Plantations’ brand within the College and greater University context; and

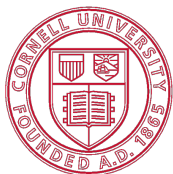
19 **Whereas**, in October of 2015 Cornell Plantations began a strategic planning process and hired
20 Beacon Associates to lead them through the process; and

21 **Whereas**, in December of 2015 Beacon held a series of focus groups amongst Plantations brand
22 fans both on the Ithaca campus and in New York City and conducted a follow-up survey to better
23 understand how they related to the mission, the vision and brand, which showed that 70-75% of
24 respondents felt the name Cornell Plantations did not fit with who they are, and what they actually
25 do; and

26 **Whereas**, in February of 2016 the Cornell Plantations name attracted distracting and negative press
27 from *Inside Higher Ed*; and

28 **Whereas**, in November of 2015, Black Students United provided the Cornell University
29 administration a list of demands that they felt needed immediate addressing, which included the
30 changing of the name of the Cornell Plantations; and

31 **Whereas**, the word “plantations” is, in the modern sense, strongly associated with slavery; and



Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly

32 **Whereas**, Liberty Hyde Bailey’s attempt in the naming of the Cornell Plantations to reinscribe an
33 increasingly archaic, horticultural meaning of “plantations” over the word’s connection to slavery
34 has not succeeded.

35 **Be it therefore resolved that** the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly encourages the
36 Board of Trustees to include the proposed name change of Cornell Plantations on their October
37 2016 board meeting agenda.

38 **Be it further resolved that** the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly encourages the Board
39 of Trustees to approve the proposed name change to “Cornell Botanic Gardens”, so that Cornell’s
40 botanic gardens, arboretum and natural areas may better represent what they do, and reach broader
41 audiences.

42 **Be it finally resolved that** this resolution be sent to the President, the Board of Trustees, the Dean
43 of Students, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

44 **Respectfully Submitted,**

45 **Alexander Loiben**

46 *GPSA Student Advocacy Committee Chair*

47 *GPSA Voting Member, Physical Sciences*

48 **Anna Waymack**

49 *GPSA Voting Member, Humanities*