



Cornell University University Assembly

U.A. Resolution #20

Advocating for a Tree-per-Graduate Program at Cornell University

1 **Sponsored By:** Erik Kirakosyan, Voting Member of the Student Assembly Academic Policy
2 Committee; Bennett Sherr, Undergraduate Student Representative; Jacob Feit,
3 Undergraduate Student Representative
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5 **Abstract:** This resolution calls for Cornell University to begin a Tree-per-Graduate program
6 requiring the University to plant one tree per degree issued.
7

8 **Whereas,** in 2014, the Climate Action Plan Acceleration Working Group concluded that
9 “achieving climate neutrality by 2035 is imperative and feasible”;
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11 **Whereas,** during the 2018 fiscal year, Cornell University’s Ithaca Campus produced 205,193
12 metric tons of CO₂-equivalent (MTCO_{2e});
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14 **Whereas,** Cornell University reduced carbon emissions 36% from its 2008 baseline;
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16 **Whereas,** Cornell University’s net carbon emissions have not changed since 2016;
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18 **Whereas,** recommendation 15 of the Climate Action Plan Acceleration Working Group states
19 that “If the university does not actively plant new trees and manage its mature forest stands, the
20 carbon abatement capacity of these lands will diminish over time”;
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22 **Whereas,** an estimated 3000 acres of land owned by the University are abandoned fields or
23 marginal farmland that could be used to plant native tree species;
24

25 **Whereas,** a study conducted by the South Carolina Forestry Commission found that one acre of
26 land can accommodate between 435 and 726 trees for the purpose of reforestation;
27

28 **Whereas,** Cornell reforestation guidelines already call for reforesting 100 acres of unused crop
29 and pasture land per year;
30

31 **Whereas,** 46 trees will offset one metric ton of CO₂ emission per year;
32

33 **Whereas,** the undergraduate class of 2021 alone represents nearly 4,000 students;



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35 **Whereas**, numerous non-profit organizations allow for donors to plant trees at reduced cost
36 away from Cornell land, trees can be donated for as little as \$1;

37

38 **Whereas**, funding for this program can be provided by corporate sponsorship, alumni donation,
39 or in conjunction with state sustainability grants;

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41 **Be it resolved**, Cornell University will commit to donating or planting one tree for every
42 diploma awarded;

43

44 **Be it further resolved**, every graduating student will be given a certificate with the location and
45 species of a planted tree, how long the tree will take to mature, and an environmental impact
46 statement;

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48 **Be it further resolved**, the environmental impact statement shall contain a list of the species
49 native to the trees in the area the gifted tree is planted and how much CO₂ is offset by the tree
50 over the course of 10 years;

51

52 **Be it finally resolved**, Cornell University will cooperate and consult with the native nations with
53 connections to the lands where the trees will be planted or donated.