

U.A. Resolution #5

Support for Faculty Senate Proposed Resolution: Inclusion and Prioritization of a New Natatorium in the ‘Do the Greatest Good’ Capital Campaign

February 22, 2022

1 **Sponsored by:** Debra Howell, UA/EA, Chair, Campus Welfare Committee; Kyle Karnuta,
2 GPSA; Roberto Bertoia, Faculty Senate; Melia Matthews, GPSA; Preston Hanley, UA;
3 Duncan Cady, UA
4
5

6 **Whereas,** the University Assembly endorses the [Faculty Senate Proposed Resolution: Inclusion](#)
7 [and Prioritization of a New Natatorium in the ‘Do the Greatest Good’ Capital Campaign,](#)
8 included here as an Addendum to this resolution, and
9

10 **Whereas,** the F.S. Proposed Resolution outlines specific background on the current situation and
11 that context which remains unsatisfactory, and
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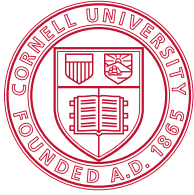
13 **Whereas,** the needs of the Cornell community for universal access to free, indoor recreation,
14 sporting event facilities, and exercise facilities are not being satisfied, and
15

16 **Whereas,** some faculty, staff, students, are no longer able to participate in aquatic fitness at
17 Cornell.
18

19 **Whereas,** the University Assembly is charged in Section 3.1 of the Charter to examine matters
20 which involved the interests or concern the welfare of a substantial segment of the
21 campus community.
22

23 **Be it therefore resolved,** the University Assembly aligns its support with the F.S. Proposed
24 Resolution imploring the administration to include and prioritize a new natatorium to the
25 list of fundraisings items donors may directly contribute to in Cornell University’s ‘Do
26 the Greatest Good’ capital campaign for the benefit of the University and the community
27 the University serves.
28

29 **Be it further resolved** that a new natatorium should be of sufficient size and quality to meet the
30 current and future needs of the Cornell community. To help ensure this, the planning
31 needs to involve Cornell leaders with knowledge and expertise in this area including the
32 Directors of Athletics, Aquatics, Cornell Wellness, Physical Education, Recreational



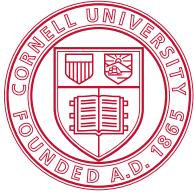
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33 Services, and Head Varsity Swimming Coaches.

34

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

This resolution was passed by the University Assembly with 16-0-1



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Appendix A: Background

40 **Background**

41 This resolution arises from the imminent need for Cornell University to develop plans, fundraise, and
42 construct a new natatorium. This resolution seeks to support the F.S. Proposed Resolution, sponsored by
43 Faculty Senate senators Ashleigh Newman, Yuval Grossman, and at least 11 other faculty senators.
44

45 The Campus Welfare Committee (hereby, the Committee) is charged with ensuring that diversity and
46 inclusion, family support, and health services for the Cornell student body, faculty, and staff is prioritized
47 in both conversation and action. The F.S. Proposed Resolution advocates for the construction of a new
48 natatorium to benefit the mental and physical health of the entire Cornell community. As such, the
49 Committee is compelled to support the F.S. Proposed Resolution.
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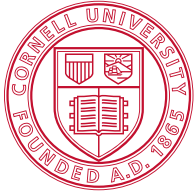
51 As outlined in the F.S. Proposed Resolution, swimming and access to water-based exercise have proven
52 benefits for mental health. These benefits include increasing self-esteem among college students,
53 combatting Seasonal Affective Disorder (common in climates similar to Cornell's), and potentially
54 alleviating mental health concerns brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Indoor swimming facilities
55 play a key role in providing access to free, indoor recreation and exercise options for students seeking to
56 exercise their mental and physical well-being.
57

58 Unimpeded access to swimming facilities (meaning indoor swimming facilities, given Cornell's climate
59 during most of the academic year) is also an equity concern. As outlined in THE F.S. Proposed
60 Resolution, people of color make up the majority of enrolled students in beginning swimming classes
61 offered at Cornell. Citing the Resolution, "students who have completed this course out of necessity
62 report undergoing a transformative experience starting with reluctance, fear, and dread to one of immense
63 pride and accomplishment when they learn how to swim and pass Cornell's swim test."
64

65 Additionally, the Committee has been made aware that, due to a limitation of access to the pools made in
66 part to extend the lifespan of the existing pools, women's open swimming hours have been cut. Women's
67 swim hours have historically provided a safe space for women to access swimming facilities, to network,
68 and to build community at Cornell. The elimination of this program has been met with disappointment
69 from the female aquatic community at Cornell.
70

71 As a result of decreased pool hours, unexpected pool closures, and an overall reduction in pool
72 availability, the aquatic community and culture is being pushed out of Cornell. Specifically, many
73 faculty, staff, and retirees are now swimming off campus (YMCA, Island Fitness, Borg Warner). In
74 addition, the Cornell Varsity swimming and diving teams had to hold all home fall meets at Ithaca
75 College, and the Cornell water polo team is only able to obtain one hour of practice time per week at
76 Ithaca College. In an effort to attract and retain both academic and athletic talent, the offerings must
77 improve.
78

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



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Appendix B: Faculty Senate Proposed Solution; Updated 2/21/22 to reflect changes in the F.S. Resolution

83 **Proposed Resolution: Inclusion and Prioritization of a New Natatorium in the ‘To Do the**
84 **Greatest Good’ Capital Campaign**

85 **Faculty Senator Co-sponsors:**

86 Ashleigh Newman

87 Yuval Grossman

88 Carrie Adler

89 Doug Antczak

90 Alexandra Blackman

91 Elizabeth Bunting

92 Thomas Bjorkman

93 Abigail Cohn

94 Laura Goodman

95 Kelly Hume

96 Steven Jackson

97 Carolyn McDaniel

98 Thomas Overton

99 Itziar Rodriguez de Rivera

100 Tracy Stokol

101 Joe Wakshlag

102 David Zax

103

104 **Committee Sponsor:**

105 Faculty Advisory Committee on Athletics and Physical Education

106

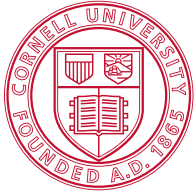
107

108 **Background:**

109 This resolution arises from the imminent need for Cornell University to develop plans, fundraise,
110 and construct a new natatorium.

111

112 Many Cornell community members utilize the aquatic facilities on Cornell’s campus including
113 students, faculty (both current and Emeritus), and staff. It is estimated that over 600 students use
114 Cornell’s pools from the following groups: varsity swimming and diving teams, physical
115 education classes (beginner, intermediate, and conditioning swimming; diving, scuba diving,
116 lifeguarding, synchronized swimming, and kayaking), swimming and water polo club teams,
117 physical therapy, inner tube water polo intramural, naval reserve officer training corps (ROTC),
118 and autonomous underwater vehicle club. In addition, in fiscal year 2018-2019, 1,875 students
119 and 742 faculty, staff, and retirees swam during open swim offerings resulting in 23,987 total



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120 swims (43% of which were students, 57% non-students).¹ Cornell recreation services also offers
121 Aqua Fit and Zumba classes.

122
123 Swimming and other water-based exercise have proven benefits for both physical and mental
124 health, including an increase in self-esteem in college students.² In particular, swimming during
125 the winter has been shown to improve general well-being.³ This is relevant for the Cornell
126 community, as many suffer from the winter blues and Seasonal Affective Disorder due to
127 Ithaca's long, cloudy winters.⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in an increase in
128 depression symptoms⁵, bringing to the forefront the need to prioritize preventative measures that
129 benefit mental health.⁶

130
131 While Cornell has three pools on campus [two in Teagle Hall (1951) and one in Helen Newman
132 Hall (1963)], they are 71 and 59 years old, respectively, and no longer meet industry standards
133 for a modern facility. Two are six-lane, 25-yard pools, and the third is a “learn to swim” four-
134 lane, 20-yard pool, all with insufficient surrounding deck space. A modern natatorium is an
135 eight-lane, 50-meter by 25 yard pool that is at minimum 9 feet deep, with 14 foot depth in the
136 diving well (for 3-meter springboard diving). The main pool in Teagle Hall is the sole facility
137 that can be used for swimming and diving competition, as Helen Newman lacks diving boards
138 and swimming starting blocks, with undersized swimming lanes that are too narrow and shallow.
139 Even at Teagle, the varied depth is not ideal for water polo play, and swimming and diving
140 cannot occur concurrently, as the diving well is integrated into the 25-yard main pool footprint.
141 The smaller pool in Teagle Hall is used for physical therapy, physical education classes, and
142 aspects of varsity use (e.g., cooling down for meets), but cannot be used for competition, water
143 polo play, or the underwater vehicle club, due to the truncated length and/or insufficient depth.

144
145 While Cornell's current aquatic facilities have long been out-of-date and inferior to our Ivy
146 League and many non-Ivy League peers (see Appendix 1), in recent years, there has been
147 increased closures of the pools, including those of longer duration, due to unsafe water quality
148 conditions and failed regular maintenance. A 2019 study of the pools concluded the pools do not
149 meet current New York state standards for swimming pool turnover rates, contributing to the

¹ 2019 Summary on Cornell pool use.

² [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.

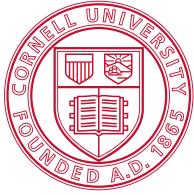
Muhamad, TA et al. [Effects of Swimming on Self-Esteem among Female College Students](#). *Asian Social Science*. Vol. 9 No. 16; 2013:74-80.

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

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

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

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



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150 poor water quality.⁷ Decreased pool usage was recommended as one way to prolong the life of
151 these facilities. As a result of this recommendation and the frequent, unexpected pool closures,
152 there has been progressively reduced pool availability for all the stakeholders detailed above.
153 This has been the source of increasing frustration for Cornell pool users, as publicized in the
154 Cornell Daily Sun.⁸ In 2020, \$750,000 was invested in all three pools for new sand filters, repair
155 of some plumbing, as well as structural shoring. The decision was made to use the less expensive
156 wooden beams, instead of steel, because the steel would last longer than the lifespan of the pools
157 they were supporting. These improvements are expected to extend the life of the pool by
158 approximately five years but are in no way a permanent solution to the aged facilities' problems.
159 In addition, Teagle Hall needs a new roof, which is estimated to cost between ten and twelve
160 million dollars and would require all occupants to vacate for at least a ten-month period, which
161 comes with it additional relocation costs. A better investment of the University's money would
162 be to put this towards the construction of a new natatorium. Cornell Facilities Management
163 warns that the pools may fail at any time despite these recent palliative measures. No other
164 college or university in Appendix 1 is without a functioning pool.

165
166 One consequence of no pool on campus would mean the termination of the beginning swimming
167 class (PE 1100), in which people of color represented 89.7% of enrolled students from 2018 –
168 2020.⁹ Students who have completed this course out of necessity report undergoing a
169 transformative experience starting with reluctance, fear, and dread to one of immense pride and
170 accomplishment when they learn how to swim and pass Cornell's swim test (see Appendix 2).¹⁰
171 By having this requirement, Cornell University makes a statement that swimming is an important
172 life skill that will help break the cycle of parents who do not know how to swim and therefore do
173 not encourage their children to learn to swim.¹¹ In the United States, an average of 3,957
174 unintentional drowning deaths occurred each year from 2010-2019.¹² Drowning death rates for
175 American Indian or Alaska Native and non-Hispanic Black persons are higher than that of White
176 persons¹³, likely due to generational inequities in access. Implementing community-level
177 interventions such as basic swimming instruction are encouraged as means to reduce racial
178 disparities in drowning rates. Therefore, providing Cornell students access to pools and
179 swimming instruction is a matter of diversity, equity, and inclusion importance, as well.

180
181 Even if all three existing pools were fully operational, they no longer meet the ever-expanding
182 needs of the Cornell community. Due to the limited number of lanes and inability to have

⁷ Helen Newman and Teagle Halls Pool Study. 2019. Councilman-Hunsaker Aquatics for Life.

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

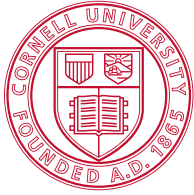
⁹ Cornell University PE 1100 enrollment data. Fall 2018 – Spring 2020.

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

¹¹ [History of the Cornell Swim Test](#).

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

¹³ 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.



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183 multiple groups in a pool at one time, the pools are used up to 15.75 hours per day (6:00 am –
184 11:15 pm) to accommodate all stakeholders. Whereas at Ithaca College, for example, their 50-
185 meter pool can accommodate eighteen, 25-yard, lanes of swimming, *as well as* diving at the
186 same time. This maximizes the number of occupants in the facility at one time, allowing for
187 increased availability and at more ideal times of day.

188

189 In addition to the inadequate swimming pools, the programmatic changes over the life of the
190 facilities no longer provide sufficient and equitable use for visitors. When Teagle Hall was
191 originally constructed, it was built as a male-only athletic facility and the modifications for
192 female and transgender and gender non-conforming persons are inequitable and insufficient. In
193 2018, the University Assembly passed U.A. Resolution #12: Increasing Access to Gender
194 Neutral Bathrooms on Campus¹⁴ to expand inclusion and comfort. The Student Assembly
195 similarly passed S.A. Resolution #21: Availability of Accessible Gender-Neutral Bathrooms and
196 Locker Rooms on Campus.¹⁵ Although the current facilities have been either modified or are
197 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
199 these programmatic requirements would be the most cost efficient and effective way to address
200 this University priority.

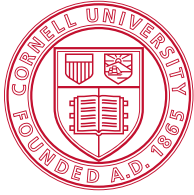
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202 In April 2020, Cornell University published its Mental Health Review Final Report. It was stated
203 that Cornell has a “culture of competition [that] may take on an unhealthy cycle of expectation
204 and behavior that can reach traumatizing levels for students, faculty, and staff.”¹⁶ In examining
205 and exploring the ways to improve the mental health of the Cornell community, the report was
206 broken down into four sections: A) foster a healthy educational environment; B) promote social
207 connectedness, and resilience; C) increasing help-seeking behavior, and identifying people in
208 need of care; and D) provide mental and medical health services. In Section B under
209 Opportunities, it reads, “It is important to note that when asked for their recommendations,
210 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students consistently prioritized the need for access to
211 free physical fitness opportunities to cope with stress and build resilience. With Ithaca’s climate,
212 students want free and convenient indoor fitness options.” The report acknowledged “the
213 challenge that this presents given both financial and facility constraints.” Recommendation B.2.2
214 under Wellbeing reads, “Prioritize fundraising for free physical fitness under Affordability
215 within the capital campaign.” It is important to note that pool access is free to all Cornell
216 students, unlike other fitness centers on campus that require a paid Cornell Fitness Center
217 membership. Ideas such as “virtual fitness classes” and the use of “virtual and augmented

¹⁴ 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

¹⁵ 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>

¹⁶ Cornell University Mental Health Review Final Report. April 2020.



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218 reality” were proposed in the report as alternatives to fitness centers on campus. There is no
219 virtual equivalent for aquatic activities, and these suggestions simply fail to meet the mental
220 health needs of Cornell’s students, as well as faculty and staff.

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

233
234 The thought of a Cornell University with no functioning pool is unfathomable and unacceptable.

235
236

237 **The Resolution:**

238

239 *Whereas*, participation in physical, cultural, and social activities outside of one’s primary studies
240 or work provides individuals with a sense of belonging at Cornell and enriches their overall well-
241 being.

242

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

248

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

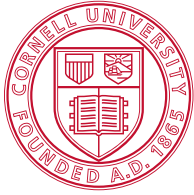
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252 *Whereas*, approving, planning, fundraising, and building a new natatorium can take up to ten
253 years. Cornell University faces the certain reality of having no operational pool on its campus.

254

255 *Whereas*, Cornell University has long valued swimming as an important life skill to prevent fatal
256 unintentional drowning, as demonstrated by over 100 years of a graduation requirement for all

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



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257 undergraduate students to swim 75 yards or pass two semesters of beginning swimming (PE
258 1100).

259
260 *Whereas*, providing an inviting, modern, safe, and accessible environment for aquatic activities
261 provides Cornell students, faculty, and staff the ability to exercise year-round, which is a proven
262 positive contributor to mental health.

263
264 *Whereas*, recommendation B.2.2 of the Cornell University Mental Health Review Final Report
265 reads, “Prioritize fundraising for free physical fitness under Affordability within the capital
266 campaign.”

267
268 *Whereas*, we recognize there are many needs of the University, it would be in the University’s
269 best interest to serve those that are of the most imminent need to its community.

270
271 *Be it resolved*, that the Faculty Senate implore the administration to include and prioritize a new
272 natatorium to the list of fundraisings items donors may directly contribute to in Cornell
273 University’s ‘To Do the Greatest Good’ capital campaign.

274
275 *Be it further resolved*, that a new natatorium should be of sufficient size and quality to meet the
276 current and future needs of the Cornell community. To help ensure this, the planning needs to
277 involve Cornell leaders with knowledge and expertise in this area including the Directors of
278 Athletics, Aquatics, Physical Education, Recreational Services, and Head Varsity Swimming
279 Coaches.

280

281

282 **Faculty Co-Sponsors**

283

284 Jessica McCart

285 Allison Miller

286 Susan Fubini

287 Paul Nadasdy

288

289

290